

NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI[®]

DISSERTATION

BLURRING THE COLOR LINE:
RACIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUALS IN
INTERRACIAL FAMILIES

Submitted by

Sandy Nesbit Tracy

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2005

UMI Number: 3173055

Copyright 2005 by
Tracy, Sandy Nesbit

All rights reserved.

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3173055

Copyright 2005 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Copyright by Sandy Nesbit Tracy 2005

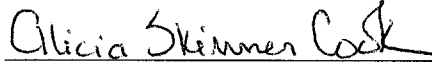
All Rights Reserved

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

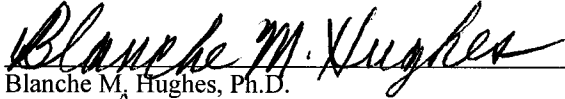
December 7, 2004

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED
UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY SANDY NESBIT TRACY ENTITLED BLURRING
THE COLOR LINE: RACIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUALS IN
INTERRACIAL FAMILIES BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

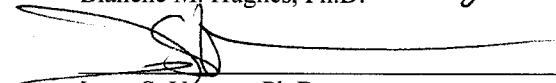
Committee on Graduate Work



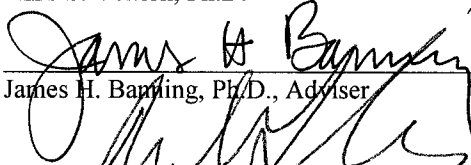
Alicia Skinner Cook, Ph.D.



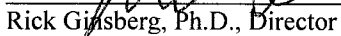
Blanche M. Hughes, Ph.D.



Irene S. Vernon, Ph.D.



James H. Banning, Ph.D., Adviser


Rick Ginsberg, Ph.D., Director

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

BLURRING THE COLOR LINE:

RACIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF

INDIVIDUALS IN INTERRACIAL FAMILIES

Stories provide meaning and challenge prevailing thinking. This interdisciplinary narrative inquiry uses lenses of feminist standpoint theories, critical race theories, family systems theory, and symbolic interactionism to select stories from twelve individuals from interracial families to tell the value of lived experience in understanding race and racial identity.

The twelve participants include seven women and five men ranging in age from 23 to 67 and in educational levels from high school to Ph.D. Their racial backgrounds include African American, American Indian, Japanese American, Mexican American, and Caucasian, including mixtures of the above. They are partners, wives, husbands, parents, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and grandparents in families in which individuals identify with different races, through marriage, partnership, birth, and adoption. One participant is the adult daughter of the researcher.

Each participant or couple is portrayed in an individual section with intercalary space, poetic representations, narratives, visual images of their hands, and a description by the researcher. A chapter on all participants' stories in different stages of harmony and cacophony compares and contrasts their stories on race, family, religion, community, work, school, historical context, adoption, and intersections of race, class, gender and

sexual orientation. Participants' own words on what they want educators and community professionals to know are included.

People in interracial families blur the color line that is so deeply entrenched within United States American culture. Their contexts – generation, geography, appearance, abilities, experiences, orientations, religion, families – influence their identities. They ask to be accepted, not “othered.” Their stories continue their family stories in past, present, and future, speaking to a time for healing and harmony.

This narrative inquiry reflects the tension of a push for traditional research according to certain formulas and a pull of feminist and borderland thinking that challenges the dominant culture. Privileging stories over numbers and questions over answers, this study invites the reader's participation.

Sandy Nesbit Tracy
School of Education
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1588
Spring 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My mother, the late Jewel Nesbit, who taught me to appreciate each person's uniqueness and whose stories of our Cherokee (Chickamauga) link helped maintain our connection even though we did not have tribal affiliation

Other members of my family of origin: my father, the late Robert Nesbit; my deceased siblings – Billie, Ralph, Bobby – and their life partners Kenny, Dosha, and Jerry; my living sister Pat; my nieces, nephews, their children and grandchildren – Amanda, Andrea, Andrew, Angela, Brandon, Brent, Bryan, Carolyn, Caty, Cheryl, Cheyenne, Celestial Jewel, Corey, Danielle, Erin, Hayley, Hillary, Ivy, Jacob, Jade, Jeff, Jeni, Jeremy, Jerry, Jesse, John, Johnny, Jordon, Joshua, Justin, Kendra, Kimberly, Leeson, Leon, Lisa, Louis, Maggie, Mandi, Marie, Meadow Rose, Mikie, Molly, Rachel, Rachel, Rosemary, Scott, Sean, Serenity, Shawn, Sosha, Stephanie, Steve, Sydney, Taylor, Teresa, Tim, Tim, Vicky, Wendy, Zaneta – and their partners and exes

People who introduced me to ideas of race and racial identity: high school psychology teacher, Walter Gough, M.D., Vernell Earl Dooley, and Virgil Cruz, Ph.D.

Carol Wood, who encouraged me to write

Others who influenced my decision to return to school, including the late J. P. McNulty, Kent Smith, Jr., Susan Panico, Malcolm Scott (graduate students with whom I worked as an administrative assistant); Cheryl Asmus, director of the Family and Youth Institute; Barb Wallner, office mate and confidante; Nancy Hartley, dean of the College of Applied Human Sciences; dean's office faculty and staff

National Science Foundation for my GK12 fellowship, especially Dave Swift, principal investigator at CSU, and Michael De Miranda, my project advisor, 2001-2004; and the providers of the Chamberlain Family Scholarship and the Margery M. Wilson Scholarship for my studies at Colorado State University, 2003-2004

Former advisors and committee members: Brian Cobb, my first advisor and statistics teacher; Angie Paccione, my second advisor (now a Colorado legislator), who shared many resources on biracial and multiracial identity; Val Middleton, my third advisor (now at the Northern Arizona University), who taught me about racial identity development and gave me an opportunity for supervised college teaching; Lynn Safarik, my first methodologist and teacher of qualitative research, who introduced me to ethnography and narrative inquiry

Fellow students (too many to list) who inspired and challenged my thinking

Other professors, instructors, and teaching assistants with whom I studied and other people who helped along the way, including Barb Hawthorne, Bill Timpson, Blane Harding, Bob Richburg, Carol Cantrell, Carol Mitchell, Carole Makela, Chance Lewis, Don Quick, Donald Crosby, Erik Aoki, Gene Gloeckner, Heidi Propp, Janet Moad, Jean Lehmann, Jessie Council, Jim Boyd, Joachim Viens, Johannah Baca, Karen Wedge, Lanita Doering, Len Albright, Mark Doggett, Mona Struhsaker Schatz, Nat Kees, Randi Fuller, Rick Ginsberg, the late Ronny Turner, Roxanne Gonzales-Walker, Sherry Neb, Tom Cavanagh, Wayne Viney

Special notes of appreciation go to

Kevin Oltjenbruns, who encouraged me to return to school and rooted for John and me in many ways throughout our doctoral studies

Deidre Magee, Jed Bowman, and Malcolm Scott, fellow students who provided intellectual, emotional, and spiritual group support in the doctoral journey

Jim Banning, my advisor, whose openness to new possibilities and ways of knowing and writing even as he traversed his three first retirement dates and returned to encourage and inspire more students, creating new courses and continuing to stretch to learn more, inspired me to continue to try new ways of making meaning

My committee (two of whom are part of interracial families): Irene Vernon, whose example of strong voice and presence provided a wonderful role model and whose perceptive insights encouraged my continual growth; Blanche Hughes, whose openness to nontraditional writing and interest in my subject matter and me as a student offered a powerful example of relating to students; and Alicia Cook, whose depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding, coupled with kindness and thoughtfulness, gave guidance in completing this work

John Roberts, who graciously volunteered to provide editing time and expertise – and who also is part of an interracial family

Our children, partners and former partners, and grandchildren: Adam, Alenah, Alex, Alison, Ayanna, Cashayla, Charles, Christopher, Cyann, Della, Elijah, Glenn, Jacob, Janelle, Justin, Kathy, Mandy, Michael, Monica, Nate, Percy, Sirena, Stephanie, Steve, Susie, Xylecia – and those to come

Those who participated in the research, with deep appreciation for sharing their time, feelings, insights, and most of all the stories that shape them and their families

Our cat Sheena, who draped herself over my arm as I typed, lay between the keyboard and monitor, or jumped from John's lap to mine as we wrote

John R. Tracy, friend, fellow doctoral student, lover, and partner in marriage and on spiritual and educational journey

DEDICATION

All my family

– past, present, and future –

whose stories are part of my story

with whom I continue our stories

BRIEF TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VIII
PRELUSION.....	XVI
CHAPTER ONE: OPENING.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: CRITICAL GROUNDING.....	14
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	60
CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE ON NARRATIVE.....	94
CHAPTER FIVE: VISUAL IMAGES.....	105
CHAPTER SIX: PARTICIPANTS' STORIES.....	122
CHAPTER SEVEN: CHORUS OF CACOPHONOUS VOICES.....	284
CHAPTER EIGHT: VOICE/OVER.....	326
CHAPTER NINE: COMPLEXITY AND RESEARCH.....	355
CODA.....	361
REFERENCES.....	363

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VIII
TABLE OF FIGURES.....	xv
TABLE OF TABLES.....	xv
PRELUSION.....	XVI
CHAPTER ONE: OPENING.....	1
RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	7
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	9
PREVIOUS STUDIES.....	10
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	12
CAPITALIZING [ON] RACIAL CATEGORIES.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: CRITICAL GROUNDING.....	14
RACE IN THE U.S.A.....	17
<i>History of Racial Identity in the United States.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Socio-cultural Meanings of Race.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Interracial Relationships and Multiracial People.....</i>	<i>21</i>
Racial Mixing in the American Colonies.....	21
Mixed Race People and Scientific Racism in the 18 th and 19 th Centuries.....	22
Segregation in the 20 th Century.....	24
Repeal of Anti-Miscegenation Laws.....	25
<i>Overview of Racial Classification.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Not Just Black and White.....</i>	<i>28</i>
Racial Terminology.....	29
Black, African American, Negro, person of color, mulatto.....	29
American Indian, Native American, indigenous, tribal names.....	31
Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano/a, Mexican American, Mexicano/a.....	32
White, Caucasian.....	32
Biracial, multiracial, mixed race, multicultural, mestizo/a, hapa.....	33
<i>Race and Ethnicity.....</i>	<i>34</i>
RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT.....	35
<i>Identity Development.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Racial Identity Models.....</i>	<i>36</i>

Black Identity Models.....	37
Cross Black Identity Model.....	37
Jackson Black identity development theory.....	38
White Racial Identity Models.....	39
Helms White racial identity model.....	39
Hardiman model of White identity development.....	40
Racial Identity Relating to Latino, Asian, and American Indians.....	41
Racial identity development and Latinos/Latinas.....	41
Asian identity development theory.....	41
Paradigm for American Indian identity.....	42
Biracial and Multiracial Identity.....	42
Biracial identity models.....	43
Root's ecological framework for racial identity.....	43
INTERRACIAL/MULTIRACIAL FAMILIES.....	45
<i>Interracial Intimacy</i>	46
<i>Transracial Adoption</i>	47
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	50
<i>Feminist Standpoint Theories</i>	50
View from the Borderlands.....	51
Problematizing.....	52
<i>Critical Race Theories</i>	52
<i>Family Theories</i>	54
Family Systems Theories.....	54
Symbolic Interactionism.....	56
NARRATIVE INQUIRY.....	57
REPRISE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT STUDY.....	58
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	60
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	60
<i>Methods and Methodology</i>	63
<i>Issues in Qualitative Research</i>	63
And that's the Truth.....	63
Value of Stories.....	65
RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE.....	65
<i>My Interracial Family of Origin</i>	66
<i>My Interracial Adoptive Family</i>	69
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	73
PARTICIPANT SELECTION.....	74
<i>Recruitment</i>	74
<i>Participants</i>	77
Including the Researcher's Story.....	78
Researcher's Family Contributions.....	79
DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING.....	80
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	83
<i>Confidentiality, Beneficence, and Caring</i>	83
<i>My Own Family</i>	84
<i>Technological Considerations</i>	85
Recording and Transcription.....	85
Costs of Qualitative Research: Time and Money.....	86
<i>Voice and Power</i>	87
DATA ANALYSIS.....	91
COMPENDIUM.....	92
CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE ON NARRATIVE.....	94
STORY/TELLING.....	94
<i>Marginalized Voices</i>	95
<i>Context</i>	97
POWER OF STORY.....	100
POETIC REPRESENTATION.....	102
STORY/TIME.....	103

CHAPTER FIVE: VISUAL IMAGES	105
SETTING THE STAGE	105
<i>Use of Visual Images in Research.....</i>	<i>105</i>
<i>Transformative Potential of Visual Research</i>	<i>106</i>
<i>Visual Research as More than Photographs.....</i>	<i>106</i>
<i>Why I Chose Visual Representation.....</i>	<i>107</i>
Family and Photography Background.....	107
Visual Focus	108
CREATING AND USING VISUAL IMAGES	109
<i>Negotiating and Sharing Photographs.....</i>	<i>109</i>
<i>Stories about Visual Images.....</i>	<i>111</i>
<i>Photography and Power</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Using Visual Images in Analysis.....</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Phenotype and Visual Images.....</i>	<i>114</i>
Physical Descriptions.....	114
Skin Color Variations.....	116
IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES	118
<i>What I Might Have Done</i>	<i>118</i>
<i>Visual Images in the Media.....</i>	<i>119</i>
VISIONING	120
CHAPTER SIX: PARTICIPANTS' STORIES	122
SCOTT AND JANE DRIVER	126
<i>Scott and Jane: Poetic Representations.....</i>	<i>127</i>
Minority	127
Getting Together	128
In the Neighborhood	130
Biracial Families and People.....	130
Strangers' Looks	132
Family Acceptance.....	132
<i>Scott and Jane: Stories.....</i>	<i>134</i>
Jane: Defending	134
Scott: Hang Out with Your Own Kind.....	135
<i>Scott and Jane: Descriptions</i>	<i>136</i>
<i>Scott and Jane: Interviews.....</i>	<i>138</i>
CINDY LINK	141
<i>Cindy: Poetic Representations.....</i>	<i>142</i>
Both Sides of the Coin	142
My Parents	142
Workin' on the Railroad.....	142
Indian Baby.....	143
She's with Me	144
Matchmaking	145
Wanting to Date	146
Invisible Wall.....	146
Show Them You're White	148
Men are Men.....	149
<i>Cindy: Stories</i>	<i>149</i>
Hairy Experiences	149
My mom had to come get me	150
Corn rolled, cut, cute.....	151
White Barbies and Black Raggedy Ann.....	152
When I Grow Up.....	154
Love at First Touch.....	155
Made for Each Other.....	156
Where Are You From?.....	157
<i>Cindy: Description.....</i>	<i>158</i>
<i>Cindy: Interviews.....</i>	<i>158</i>
MAGGIE AND SAMUEL RULE	159

<i>Maggie and Samuel: Poetic Representations</i>	160
Samuel: Getting a Suntan.....	160
Samuel: A Place I Can Live	161
Maggie: My Dad Was Okay	162
<i>Maggie and Samuel: Stories</i>	164
Samuel: Dropping Out, Signing Up	164
Maggie: Discrimination Lawsuit.....	165
Samuel: That Was a Day.....	167
Maggie: You're My Favorite	169
Maggie: That's My Grandma.....	171
<i>Maggie and Samuel: Description</i>	171
<i>Maggie and Samuel: Interviews</i>	172
FRANCISCO STRONG.....	175
<i>Francisco: Poetic Representations</i>	176
Black and White.....	176
My Advisor, My Wife.....	177
My Wife's Father Stopped Talking to Her.....	179
Welcoming Family.....	180
We're Not Going There!	181
Is This Two Different Families?	182
<i>Francisco: Stories</i>	182
Playing in the Back Yard	182
High Schools Coming Together.....	183
My Kids Know Who They Are	184
<i>Francisco: Description</i>	185
<i>Francisco: Interviews</i>	186
KATHI MORGAN.....	188
<i>Kathi: Poetic Representation</i>	189
Two Girls Came to Town.....	189
Defining Point.....	192
Exception	194
Baking and Bonding.....	195
Multicultural Not Multiracial	197
<i>Kathi: Stories</i>	198
Black Bar and Beauty	198
What My Brother Said	199
What My Grandmother Said.....	201
It's Just Hair, Honey	204
Am I Adopted?.....	205
<i>Kathi: Description</i>	207
<i>Kathi: Interviews</i>	208
IVY WASHINGTON	210
<i>Ivy: Poetic Representations</i>	211
Watermelon.....	211
Dad's School.....	211
Strong Women's Voices	212
<i>Ivy: Stories</i>	214
Dad's Driver's License	214
Picking Crops: Ivy and Researcher Exchange.....	215
White Man Bashing	216
Choosing a House at Stanford.....	218
<i>Ivy: Description</i>	220
<i>Ivy: Interviews</i>	221
TRIXIE JOINER	222
<i>Trixie: Poetic Representations</i>	223
French Fries	223
Dad's (Not) Dance	223
Getting Together	224
Colorado Surprises.....	225

<i>Trixie: Stories</i>	225
Polish Salute	225
Racism in the 20 th Century	226
Carrying Boxes	228
Racism in the 21 st Century	229
<i>Trixie: Description</i>	230
<i>Trixie: Interviews</i>	230
JULIE PLACER	232
<i>Julie: Poetic Representation</i>	233
Getting Made Fun Of	233
How to Do My Hair	233
I Know What I Am	235
Teach Everybody How To Dance	236
You Can Be Whoever You Want	236
<i>Julie: Stories</i>	237
Adoption Story	237
What Are You?	239
Researcher's story: What the neighbor girls asked	240
Researcher's story: What the elderly neighbor asked	240
Researcher's story: Are they adopted?	240
Researcher's story: Am I adopted?	241
Dolls That Look Like Me	241
Researcher's doll story: Children	242
Researcher's doll story: Grandchildren	243
Hair Supplementary	243
<i>Julie: Description</i>	244
<i>Julie: Interview</i>	245
OSCAR HENDERSON	246
<i>Oscar: Poetic Representation</i>	247
Family Man	247
Adoptions	247
The Only Incident	250
A Happy Place	251
<i>Oscar: Stories</i>	254
Colonialism	254
Adoption	256
Changes at Puberty	260
Lesbian Wife and Daughter	263
<i>Oscar: Description</i>	265
<i>Oscar: Interviews</i>	265
ALEXANDER GUERROKI	267
<i>Alexander: Poetic Representations</i>	268
Coming Together, Playing Out	268
Internment and Assimilation	270
Ebb and Flow	272
Politics of Hands	273
Coming Out	273
Visible and Invisible Intersections	275
<i>Alexander: Stories</i>	276
Text in Motion	276
Coding Differences: Color, Class, and Power	276
Negotiations	277
The Brave Little Tailor	277
Passing as Asian; Embracing Mexican American Heritage	278
<i>Alexander: Description</i>	282
<i>Alexander: Interviews</i>	283
CHAPTER SEVEN: CHORUS OF CACOPHONOUS VOICES	284
BLUE NOTE	285
RANDOM NOTES	286

THOSE WERE THE DAYS.....	286
WE ARE FAMILY	288
<i>Power of Parental Stories</i>	288
<i>Coming Together</i>	288
<i>Open Families</i>	288
<i>Resistance</i>	288
<i>Estrangement</i>	289
<i>Divorce</i>	289
<i>Single Parents</i>	290
RACE.....	291
<i>In and Out of Boxes</i>	291
Alexander: Boxes.....	292
You Must Choose One.....	292
<i>Looking/Not Looking Like Family</i>	293
Beautiful and Disorienting.....	294
Are You My Mother?.....	295
Interracial Families More Familiar.....	295
Adoption.....	296
<i>Hair Here and There</i>	297
Hair Was Not an Issue.....	298
Hair Was an Issue.....	298
<i>Human Race</i>	299
<i>Affirmative Action</i>	299
COMMUNITY	300
<i>Where We're Coming From</i>	300
<i>Diversity and Isolation</i>	302
White Adoptive Parents in Diverse Areas.....	303
White Adoptive Parents in White Area.....	303
WORK	305
<i>Race at Work</i>	306
<i>Navy</i>	306
RELIGION	306
<i>Christianity</i>	307
Catholicism.....	307
Other Christian Religions.....	308
Multicultural Churches.....	309
Crimes.....	309
<i>Buddhism</i>	310
<i>Spirituality</i>	310
SCHOOL DAYS.....	311
<i>Teachers of Color</i>	311
<i>What Happened in School</i>	312
Catholic School.....	312
Outstanding Students.....	312
Getting into Trouble.....	313
Dropping Out.....	313
INTERSECTIONS	314
<i>Class</i>	314
<i>Gender</i>	314
<i>Sexual Orientation</i>	315
<i>Fluid and Multiple Identities</i>	316
<i>When Race Takes a Back Seat</i>	317
FOR THE RECORD	317
WHAT THEY WANT YOU TO KNOW	318
<i>Let Us Choose Our Own Identity – Francisco</i>	319
<i>Use All the Diversity Variables – Alexander</i>	320
<i>Interracial Families Are Normal – Julie</i>	321

<i>Family is Family – Samuel and Maggie</i>	322
<i>Interracial Families Are Not Different – Scott and Jane</i>	323
<i>We Belong Together Even If We Don't Look Alike – Trixie</i>	324
<i>Interracial Families Are Wonderful – Ivy</i>	324
CONCORD AMONG POLYPHONIC REVERBERATION	325
CHAPTER EIGHT: VOICE/OVER	326
OVERALL	326
JUST THE FACTS	327
HESITATIONS AND SILENCES	327
LENS: CRITICAL RACE THEORIES	329
<i>Racism in the United States</i>	329
Racist Slurs	329
Subtle and Overt Racism	331
Ku Klux Klan and Racism	333
<i>Critique of Liberalism</i>	335
Liberalism as Way of Life	335
Colorblindness	336
All the Colors	337
<i>Whiteness as Property</i>	337
<i>Whites as Primary Beneficiaries of Civil Rights Legislation</i>	338
<i>Storytelling to Transform</i>	339
<i>Oppression</i>	339
LENS: FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORIES	340
<i>Perspective</i>	340
<i>Liminality and Alterity</i>	341
<i>Borderlands – Tolerance for Ambiguity</i>	342
<i>Voices</i>	342
<i>Oppression</i>	342
LENS: FAMILY THEORIES	343
<i>Family Systems Theories</i>	343
<i>Symbolic Interactionism</i>	343
HOW DO THESE STORIES INFORM THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS?	344
<i>Meanings of Race for People in Interracial Families</i>	344
Black Identity Models	345
White Identity Models	346
Biracial and Multiracial Identity	349
Root's ecological framework for racial identity	350
<i>How Family Relationships and Dynamics Influence Thinking about Race</i>	352
Individual and Collective	352
Open and Closed	353
<i>Racial Identity in Context: Community, Work, Religion</i>	353
<i>Intersections: Race, Class, Gender, Generation, Sexual Orientation, Historical Context</i>	354
CHAPTER NINE: COMPLEXITY AND RESEARCH	355
NARRATIVE/COUNTERS	355
JAM SESSION	355
COLOR LINE	357
<i>Blur, Blurry, Blurring</i>	357
<i>What Are All These Stories Doing in a Dissertation?</i>	358
WHOSE STORIES WILL WE HEAR NEXT?	359
CODA	361
ENDING/NOT ENDING THE STORY	362
MULTI/VOCAL	362
REFERENCES	363
APPENDIX A: GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	376
APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FLYER	378
APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT LETTER TO PEOPLE KNOWN TO RESEARCHER (FOR SNOWBALL)	379
APPENDIX D: COVER LETTER TO RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS	380

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT.....	381
APPENDIX F: COVER LETTER TO FAMILY MEMBERS.....	383
APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT: FAMILY.....	384
APPENDIX H: OPTIONS FOR FURTHER PROCESSING.....	386
APPENDIX I: RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPANTS	387
APPENDIX J: SANDY NESBIT TRACY BRIEF CURRICULUM VITA.....	389

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework	15
Figure 2: Scott and Jane Family Hands Photograph.....	126
Figure 3: Maggie and Samuel Hands Photograph	159
Figure 4: Francisco Hands Photograph.....	175
Figure 5: Kathi Hand Photograph (with Dog)	188
Figure 6: Ivy Hands Photograph.....	210
Figure 7: Trixie Hands Photograph.....	222
Figure 8: Julie Hands Photograph.....	232
Figure 9: Oscar Hands Photograph.....	246
Figure 10: Alexander Hands Photograph.....	267
Figure 11: Participants and Researcher Hand Collage	284

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: Participants and Their Family Relationships.....	122
Table 2: Historical Context.....	287

PRELUSION

During the spring of 2004, Katherine Skaggs, a local artist, painted a portrait of how she saw my spiritual nature. As she painted, she talked about sensing a strong presence of my clan, the ancient ones and those to come, brought together within my spirit. She said she could see that now is the time for me to speak out and share my wisdom with others – that she could see that this is my healing work. As Trinh Minh-Ha (1989) says, “The principle of healing rests on reconciliation” (p. 140).

During the final writing of my dissertation, I attended a retreat for local Women of the Year called “Restoring and Re-storying Ourselves.” What the storyteller said resonated with what I am trying to do in this writing.

The storyteller was Opalanga Pugh, who received her bachelor’s degree from a university in Colorado, but completed most of her studies in Lagos, Nigeria. This is where she got her name Opalanga, which means tall, slim, and flexible, like a tree. Opalanga said that now is a time of great sorting of stories, stories that call for a shift in our thinking, stories that call us forward. Storytelling, she explained, is one of the primary ways of growth. Story changes our understanding. She quoted Angeles Arrien as saying that greater wisdom lies in inquiry than in providing what we convey as answers. “Stand in the space of inquiry,” Opalanga said. Arrien (1993) identifies storytelling as one of the four universal healing salves (the others being singing, dancing, and silence).

Early in our doctoral studies, my partner John and I made a pilgrimage to Tahlequah, Oklahoma, to search for the link to my Cherokee (Tsalagi) ancestors.

Although I have not yet found a documented link, I have proceeded on my spiritual journey and found an increasing closeness to my ancestors and descendants, as Katherine Skaggs noted as she worked on my soul painting.

At Tahlequah, I found a Cherokee drum, which John and I play to edge deeper into the circle where we bring our gifts and to call in our ancestors to guide us. I recall the vision told by J. T. Garrett (Garrett & Garrett, 1996), from the Eastern Band of Cherokees, of a white eagle flying over the Great Smokey Mountains. He said that he took the meaning to be that now is the time for Cherokees to share Native wisdom to encourage harmony and balance. Winona LaDuke (1999) says that “many Indigenous teachings consider the present a time of change” (p. 198). Paula Gunn Allen (2003) says, “... the Native Elders remind us that ours is the period of the Seventh Generation, when reconciliation between the races is called for” (p. 8).

Although I have not had the opportunity of tribal affiliation, I believe my mother passed on wisdom she received from her mother, even if her mother did not identify it as tribal wisdom. I believe that now is the time for everyone in the circle to share and hear messages of harmony and balance. I share selected stories told by research participants interwoven with my own stories: stories of coming together, stories of facing racism and estrangement, stories of love and healing.

“... The Mothers’ power ... storytelling ... enchants. It animates, sets into motion, and rouses the forces that lie dormant in things, in beings” (Trinh, 1989, p. 129).

This dissertation, a labor of love in which past, present, and future come together, is the gift I bring to the circle. Let it be so.

Wa-doh [Thank you]

CHAPTER ONE: OPENING

We were students at a tiny liberal arts college in Missouri. Neil (a pseudonym) smiled and introduced himself to me, adding, “I am half Cherokee, half Negro¹, and half Welsh.” I had not asked him what he was, but his initial forthrightness led us into many conversations on racial identity. The year was 1963, the same year as the civil rights march on Washington – a year in which racial awareness and racial identity advanced to the forefront in the United States.

The previous year, my high school psychology teacher told the class in our small predominantly white Missouri town the story of *The Boy with Green Hair*. That day my life changed. In this story, a book, and a B movie from 1948, a war orphan’s hair turned green one day as he washed it. Other people started treating him differently because of his green hair, so his access to education and entry into everyday activities, which he had taken for granted, became limited because of judgments others made of him (Jaheil, 1999).

Checking out the fable on the Internet in 2002, I discovered that its primary purpose was to make an anti-war statement (Jaheil, 1999). What impressed me, though, was the consequence of how the boy was treated because of his physical features. In

¹ The term *Negro* was commonly used at that time.

1962, I began to see the idea of race as a social construct and an excuse for prejudicial acts, even though I did not learn the terminology until decades later.

I went home from school that day and asked my mother (who was Irish, English, and Cherokee), “What if I married a Negro¹?” She sat quietly for a moment, and then spoke slowly. “I would still accept you,” she said. “I don’t know about the rest of the family, though. I can’t speak for them. Some of them might not have anything to do with you.”

My family, especially my parents and four older siblings and their families, were of prime importance to me, but the seed had been sown that would lead to my becoming part of a new interracial family. I dated a Black man in college, and his brother disapproved of our relationship, perhaps even sabotaging it by losing a crucial letter he told Darnell he would mail to me. I later married a White man. We adopted three biracial (Black and White) children. By that time, my father had died. My mother and sisters welcomed each child into the family, but my brother stopped speaking to me when my oldest son was a baby and only resumed 10 years later at our mother’s funeral.

My father, who was Irish, German, and English, held stereotypes for each racial and ethnic group, such as “Germans are hard-working.” I remember that he said certain ethnic groups should not mix, although not which ones. Two of this research study’s participants (one African American, one Irish) told stories of their mothers being forbidden to marry Italian men. Another participant is the son of an African American

¹ The term *Negro* was commonly used at that time.

man and an Italian woman. Both race and ethnicity play a role in United States American society's approval or disapproval of relationships and intermarriage.

W. E. B. Du Bois (Gibson, 1989) is identified by some as one of the most brilliant thinkers of the 20th century. I chose Du Bois' (1903/1989) idea of the color line as part of the title of the dissertation and provide a brief introduction to him.

Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1868 of parents who had long been free, he attended integrated schools and lived in a predominantly white community where the Irish were the disparaged group (Gibson, 1989). His background was Black, French Huguenot, and Dutch. His first awareness of race came when a White classmate refused his calling card. He encountered more prejudice in high school, but not until he attended Fisk University in the South did he become aware of the depths of racism (Du Bois, 1903/1989). Du Bois says that racial identity comes from one's lived experience. Years later, he renounced his American citizenship and moved to Ghana, where he died in exile in 1963 (Gibson, 1989). More than 100 years ago, Du Bois recognized the meaning of lived experience in racial identity.

Du Bois (1903/1989), a sociologist and historian, talks about "double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body" (p. 5). He refers to the color line several times in *The Souls of Black Folk*, first published in 1903. He says "the white man, as well as the Negro, is bound and barred by the color-line." Friendship and fellowship between the two have been denied, Du Bois says, " ... because some

busybody has forced the color-question to the front and brought the tremendous force of unwritten law against the innovators” (p. 150).

Du Bois (1903/1989), who was mixed himself, mentions unwritten law. Many laws were written to forbid sexual relationships between Whites and Blacks and some others in the United States. Although people of different races had been mixing on this and other continents for hundreds of years (Gordon, 1964; Root, 2001; Spencer, 1997), many laws were enacted to prohibit interracial relationships. In 1661 (Root, 2001) or 1662 (Korgen, 1998; Scales-Trent, 1995), U. S. colonies began to enact anti-miscegenation laws which forbade sexual relationships or marriages between Africans and Whites. Later, states enacted laws prohibiting Whites and Native Americans, Whites and Africans, and some other races from marrying or having sexual relationships. It was not until 1967 that the last of these anti-miscegenation laws was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967).

That Supreme Court ruling, the civil rights movement, and changing views of life in the United States contributed to an increase in interracial marriages. Racial intermixing has become more accepted and practiced (Brown, 1998; Root, 1996b, 2001; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1990). By 1990, approximately 1.5 million marriages in the United States were interracial, including 246,000 that were Black-White unions (Daniel, 2002). Interracial marriages nearly doubled between 1980 and 1990, and increased at a high rate between 1990 and 2000 (Root, 2004). In 2000, Black-White marriages numbered 363,000 of approximately 1,468,000 non-Hispanic interracial married couples (U. S. Census, 2001a). Proportionately more interracial marriages were of races other than Black and White (Root).

Interracial families created by marriage, informal unions, adoption, and step-family relationships comprise people of different races and racial mixtures. The results of these unions are multiracial people, people of two or more races who may identify with multiple components of their complex backgrounds rather than choosing one of their racial identities (Root, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004; Waters, 2000). In the 2000 U.S. Census, the first year that multiple boxes could be checked for racial identity, 2.4 % of the population chose two or more boxes (identified with more than one race) (U.S. Census, 2001b, 2001c), including 6.8 % of people under the age of 18 (Rothenberg, 2004). This process afforded multiracial people an opportunity to acknowledge their complex identities. Of the 6.8 million people who identified more than one race, about 93 % reported two races and about 7 % reported three or more races (Rothenberg, 2004).

Neil's identification of himself as having three halves (at the beginning of this chapter) exemplifies this phenomenon, gives credence to all aspects of multiracial identity, and problematizes the ways in which American society categorizes race. Interracial families and multiracial people challenge United States American thinking that tends to categorize race in binary terms (Hodes, 1999; Root, 2001, 2003, 2004).

In response to changing needs for reporting census data and prevalent views about race, the United States Census Bureau adjusts its guidelines for collecting data on race. Between 1850 and 1920 (except 1880 and 1900), people who were Black and White were identified as *mulatto*. The criteria for mulatto varied. Sometimes the census takers made the designation based on preconceptions related to the person's physical appearance (Daniel, 1992; Spickard, 1989).

Describing race as a social construct rather than a biological reality does not take away its significance (Burroughs & Spickard, 2000). Race has been a life-or-death matter throughout the history of the United States. As definitions of race and racial categories change, legislation using those definitions has changed, so the history of race is complex and confusing (Adermann, 2000; Brown, 1998; Omi & Winant, 2004; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Root, 1992, 2000, 2001, 2004).

From colonial times, the ruling class has defined racial categories to advance its own interests (Korgen, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Omi & Winant, 2004). Racism, expressed partly through racial categories, became a part of mainstream institutions from their inception. Racism is deeply embedded within the United States American culture and legal system (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Recognizing how this culture defines racial identity and how individuals define their own racial identity is a way to begin to grasp the scope of racism.

How people construct their own racial identity is related to how society defines race and how their families identify with race (Root, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004). Interracial families and multiracial people have challenged historical racial categories (Kennedy, 2003; Root). Being part of an interracial family may influence people's racial identity since their experiences across color lines may blur the distinct categories United States society imposed (Root).

Currently, research being done in areas of racial identity includes multiracial identity and interracial relationships and families. Much of this work has been in the form of brief interviews, surveys, and correlation studies. Narratives of people in interracial families are beginning to be told. Since narrative is told within context, more narratives

need to be heard to contribute to the level of understanding of fluid and multiple racial identities. Large studies with predetermined survey questions have limitations in depth. Narratives evoke multilayered meaning in particular context and allow for ambiguity in ways that studies using brief surveys cannot. A current gap in research is addressing racial identity of people in interracial families with the intent of finding how they construct meaning through telling their stories in their own voices.

Arguably, for people in interracial families, issues of race and racial identity take on a different significance than for people in single-race families (Root, 2001). The stories of how people become members of interracial families may reflect circumstances different than those of single-race families and raise different questions or personal challenges. The unique circumstances of interracial families are likely to impact the identity development of the individual as well as the family. This study uses a narrative approach toward understanding issues of identity for people in interracial families.

Research Problem

Although in the United States, an understanding of one's racial and ethnic identity is believed to be beneficial, the process of developing a racial identity may differ depending on a person's race, racial combination, and family racial makeup (Root, 2000, 2003, 2004). People who identify as White experience racial identity development differently than do people of color (Hardiman, 2001; Tatum, 2003). Racial identity development differs for people of color, depending on the race(s) with which they identify or are assigned by societal definitions, since oppression differs according to race (Root, 2004). Additional complexities may be involved in racial identity development of multiracial people (Root, 2000). Some individuals of mixed race may identify with only

one part of their racial background, while a growing number learn to embrace multiple aspects of their identity (Anzaldúa, 1990; Funderburg, 1994; Kaeser & Gillespie, 1997; Simon & Roorda, 2000; Walker, 2001). With the increase in multiracial people, more focus has been brought to multiracial identity development. This researcher contends that listening to the stories of experiences of race and racial identity development of different members of interracial families in context will contribute to understanding meaning of the complexities and ambiguity of race and increase the possibilities of transformation.

Identity development for people of color includes a process of developing racial identity (Cross, 1991; Root, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004; Tatum, 2003). In early monoracial racial identity development models, the process of identity formation for individuals from non-dominant racial groups has two dimensions: identification with their own ethnic group and identification with the mainstream or dominant culture (Ackermann, 2000; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). The ease or difficulty in which a healthy integration of racial identity into self-identity occurs depends on interactions with prejudice, discrimination, and other barriers that hamper aspirations and hinder achievements (Phinney & Rosenthal; Root, 2000, 2003, 2004). This integration of racial identity into self-identity is an area for continued study.

Multiracial and monoracial individuals in interracial families are likely to experience the world differently than monoracial individuals in monoracial families. The purpose of this research project is to explore how people in interracial families experience race and racial identity, with a hope that in the process, the idea of race can be deconstructed. Due to the complexity and ambiguity of race and racial mixing, qualitative inquiry is particularly apropos for engaging in this study. In particular, narrative inquiry

provides an opportunity for members of interracial families to tell their stories and contribute to the literature on this topic.

Research Questions

The research problem addresses the lived experience of race and personal racial identity development of people in interracial families. This study explores how meanings derived in interracial families may blur boundaries intrinsic in the cultural hegemony. It looks at stories told by interracial family members to subvert dualisms ingrained in United States American culture. The study recognizes that race and racial identity are interconnected with gender, class, age, sexual orientation, generation, geographic location, historical context, and personal attributes (Root, 2004). The following research questions guide the study:

1. What is the meaning of race for people in interracial families?
2. How do family relationships and dynamics influence thinking about race?
3. How do community, work, religion, and other contextual factors influence racial identity?
4. How do intersections of race, class, gender, generation, family, sexual orientation, and historical context shape racial identity?

The study attempted to elicit narratives of participants in approximately two interviews each, appreciating that all narrative is inherently co-constructed. The researcher collaborated with participants by requesting their input on her interpretations of their narratives for the final paper, thus inviting their voices in more than taped interviews and reducing the power perspective of the researcher. The study also includes the perspective of the researcher as a member of an interracial family. The stories the reader brings are a significant part of how the reader co-constructs the meaning she or he makes from the stories. More details can be found in chapter 3 and the guiding interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Previous Studies

Studies on biracial and multiracial identity and interracial families include qualitative (narrative, phenomenology, ethnography [Gasser, 2000; Hatcher, 1988; Pierce, 1991; Pinderhughes, 1997; Romano, 1996; Stanton, 1999]), quantitative (correlation, exploratory, analysis of variance, T tests, descriptive statistics [Vagas, 1991; Lloyd, 1989]), and mixed designs (Jones, 2000). Study areas have included biracial or multiethnic identity (Adermann, 2000; Brown, 1998; Cooper, 1998; Field, 1992; Jones, 2000; Stanton, 1997); friendship patterns of biracial girls (Fields, 1996); interracial marriages (Romano, 1996); interracial maternal experience (Hatcher, 1988); and racial identity development in transracial adoptees (Pinderhughes, 1997).

A number of trade books add to the stories available for review. For example, in *Black, White, Other*, biracial journalist Lise Funderburg (1994) asked 65 biracial adults to talk about race and identity during 1992 and 1993 in one of the first books to explore identity in biracial people. In *Loving across the Color Line*, liberal civil rights lawyer Sharon Rush (2000) describes how her experiences as the White adoptive mother of a biracial (Black-White) daughter transformed her thinking about race. Rebecca Walker (2001), daughter of noted author and feminist Alice Walker and attorney Sol Leventhal, describes her upbringing in an interracial family and her difficulty transitioning from living with her White Jewish father and stepmother to living with her Black mother and back again in *Black White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self*. James McBride (1996) includes his White mother's story interposed with his own in *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother*.

Although qualitative studies seem particularly appropriate for dealing with the complexities and ambiguities of racial identity development, multiracial identity, and interracial families, most of the aforementioned academic studies have not gone into depth. Many qualitative scholarly studies consisted of a single interview with each of several participants, perhaps with a brief follow-up. Although many studies are conducted in person, some are conducted over the telephone. Some include written surveys with open-ended questions. Some popular narrative accounts, such as those of Rush (2000) and Walker (2001), go into greater depth.

More recently, deeper qualitative studies are being done relative to racial identity and multiracial individuals and families. Studies include approaches from diverse disciplines such as psychology, sociology, communication, literature, and education, and from interdisciplinary approaches.

Sociologist Heather Dalmage (2002) reports on her study of multiracial families in *Tripping on the Color Line*. She interviewed 47 people in Black-White multiracial families over the course of a year, beginning in 1995. Dalmage is the White wife of an African American man and mother of a biracial child, with many other races represented in her family.

Marie P. P. Root (2001, 2003, 2004), a psychologist, did a particularly important study of people in interracial families. Her study began with 4 years of research with individuals, couples and groups from interracial families and extended into the Multiracial Families Project and the Biracial Siblings Project (Root, 1998, 2001, 2004). Her study included people of many different races and racial combinations. The first part of her study included both gay and straight individuals and couples; Root identifies some

similarities between people's coming out to their parents and telling their parents they are planning to marry a person of a different race. Root's study (in which she was assisted by other researchers) involved interviews (up to 8 hours for an individual or couple) and focus groups from 1986 to 1997. Additionally, she used questionnaires and telephone interviews with some individuals, and she included people from almost all 50 states. Her concentration was on understanding family systems with a social focus on race and gender (Root, 2001).

Two other studies that went into depth are Karis (2000) in an exploration of racial identity construction of White women in heterosexual Black-White interracial relationships and Tashiro (1998) in a sociological study of history and construction of identity for older mixed race Americans. Each of these studies focuses on important components of racial identity and interracial families.

Additional studies are needed to add to the scholarly basis for making meaning of race and racial identity. This study uses both conceptual and methodological depth to explore complex and interconnected aspects of racial identity development in interracial families from an interdisciplinary approach.

Significance of the Study

With increasing numbers of people identifying themselves as biracial or multiracial and with more cultural acceptance of interracial relationships and identifying with more than one race, this study contributes to social justice by offering possibilities of deeper understanding of complexities of racial identity and interrelationships and problematizing racial categorization. Through this study, educators and human service personnel may recognize the normalcy, uniqueness, and significance of relationships

within interracial families and become more open to nuances of racial identity. This study contributes to the literature by telling the stories of people in interracial families and relating meanings of racial identity through their own voices, using visual images and experimental writing, adding to the breadth and depth of research in this area.

Capitalizing [on] Racial Categories

I use capital letters for color terms when writing about people who are Black or White, according to guidelines from the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001). Some people extend the capitalization rule to *Biracial*; however, I have not. I also did not capitalize the color names when talking about terms such as *whiteness* or a *white* community. The manual states that other color terms are not to be used to designate race; however, in reporting what others said, I capitalized the color names for parallel construction.

One can argue that capitalizing color names for racial categories reifies the categorization. Allow that thought to problematize categories used in this writing.

CHAPTER TWO: CRITICAL GROUNDING

The literature review comprises two areas: race and racial identity, and key theories used to inform the research. The examination of race and racial identity includes a brief overview of the history of race in the United States, consideration of meanings of racial identity, interracial relationships and families, and racial identity development.

Theories used in this dissertation related to racial identity of people in interracial families are complex and overlapping, similar to the complexity and fluidity of racial identity for multiracial people in Root's (2003, 2004) ecological framework for racial identity. Feminist standpoint theories, critical race theories, and racial identity development theories relate to one another and to the socio-cultural construction of race in the United States. These theories recognize that interests of the dominant power may be contrary to those outside the mainstream. Also considered are two primary family theories: family systems theory and symbolic interactionism. Although not without flaws, each set of theories provides insights for considering racial identity construction of individuals in interracial families.

Narrative inquiry as a methodology is a way to listen to voices of people who have been marginalized, by hearing stories that create meaning in complex and ambiguous circumstances, which opens possibilities for transformation (Abma, 1999). An appreciation for complexity, tolerance for ambiguity, disruption of traditional power, and

significance of liminal characters weave throughout the meaning of racial identity of people in interracial families.

It is difficult to convey complex, fluid, interactive concepts in a two-dimensional space. The following conceptual framework, which suggests overlapping and movement, attempts to illustrate interconnection among various aspects being considered.

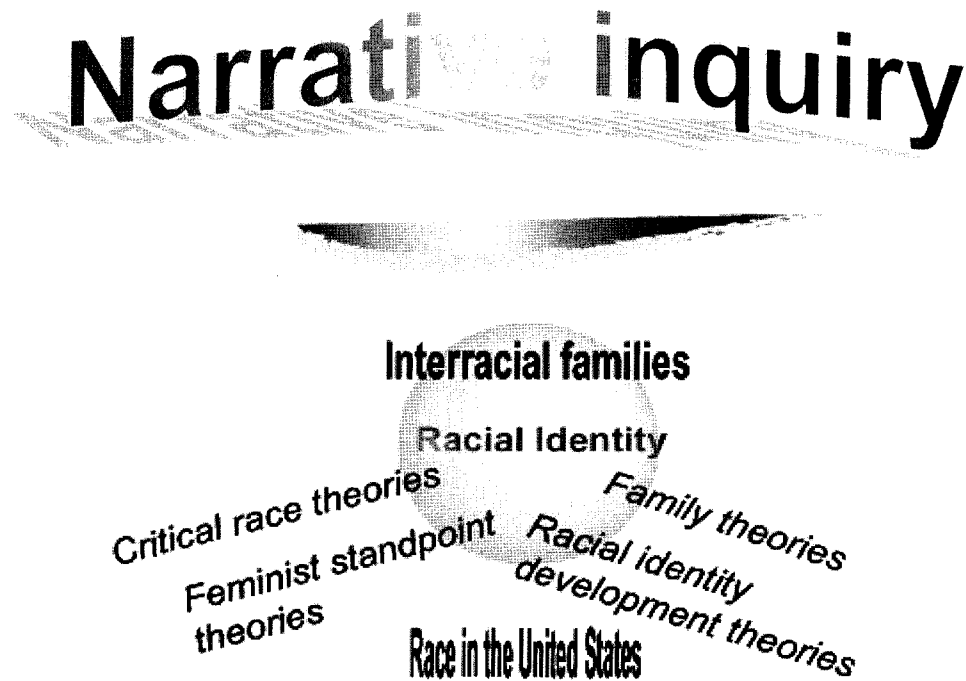


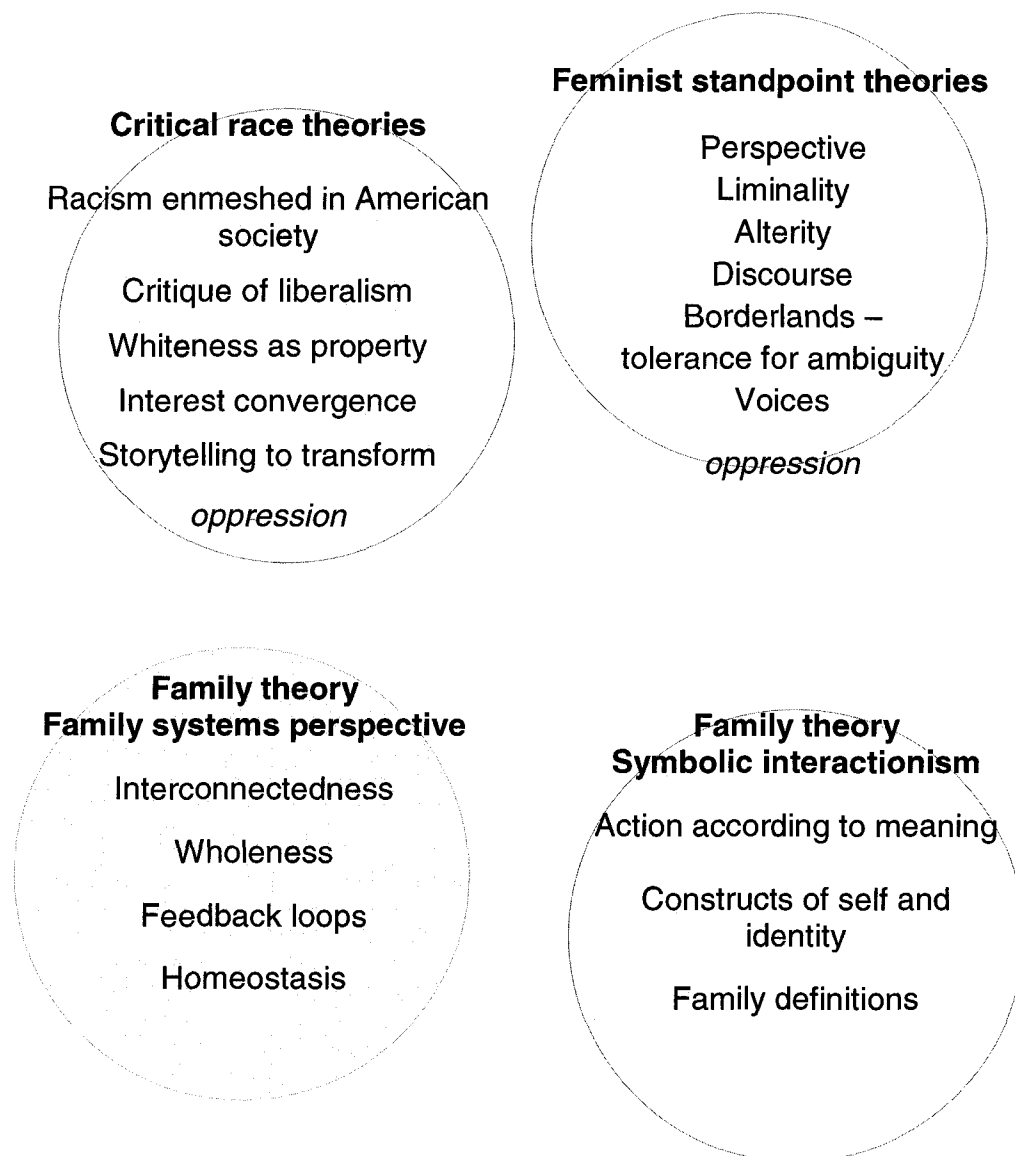
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

A brief look at race in the United States provides background on the discourse about race and racial identity. Particularly, history of racial identity, socio-cultural meanings of race, interracial relationships, multiracial people, and racial classification are considered. Numerous volumes have been written on each the topics touched lightly in this review. The issues are complex, interrelated, controversial, and encompassing.

An overview of racial identity development theories is presented. The roots of identity development theories provided a basis for racial identity development models. As

ideas about race and epistemological stances in the United States have changed, racial identity development models were created and undergo changes.

Three groups of theories provide lenses for looking at these narratives of people in interracial families: (1) critical race theories, (2) feminist standpoint theories, and (3) family theories (family systems theory and symbolic interactionism). The lenses below illustrate aspects of each of the theories used to look at the stories of race and racial identity. The theories and terms are explained in greater detail later in this chapter.



Weaving throughout these theories are ideas of the role of narrative in subverting the dominant power relationships, the reality of oppression even as society tries to keep it hidden, the need for looking at implications of race and racial identity, and the drive to transform society in social justice issues. Aspects of narrative inquiry include autoethnography, intersubjectivity of researcher, voices, authenticity, importance of story, and making meaning.

In critical race theory, one of the theories to inform this research, counternarrative is a significant way to address racism inherent in American culture (Apgar, 1996; Cornell, 2000). Stories of people in interracial families illustrate institutional and overt racism (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Voices that historically have gone unheard contribute to understanding. Counternarrative challenges the privileged discourse and contradicts the *Other-ing* process (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

Politically, this [(re)writing ... new narratives] is very important to those who feel they do not fit the images of experience the culture hails them to accept. Analyzing one's 'self,' examining one's current and past situations, and exploring new alternatives provide not only the opportunity for people to oppose the pressures of oppressive or potentially threatening hegemonic dictates individually, but also the possibility for *collectively* challenging the status quo—i.e., the dominance of certain groups, institutions, and metanarratives of the culture (Apgar, 1996, p. 12).

This chapter reviews literature on the history of racial identity in the United States, the meaning of racial identity, interracial/multiracial families, and theoretical background. After considering previous studies, the chapter summarizes the literature and considers implications for this study.

Race in the U.S.A.

Race and racial categories have been used in the United States to separate people and establish power and privilege of the dominant White class (Omi & Winant, 2004).

W. E. B. Du Bois (1903/1989) identified the problem of the color line as “the problem of the twentieth century ... the relation of the darker to the lighter races in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (p. 13). It remains an issue in the 21st century even as the lines blur (Dalmage, 2002; Root, 1996b). With increasing numbers of interracial families and multiracial individuals connecting with multiple races, educators and community professionals need to consider implications of the color line’s blurring.

More families comprise individuals of different races, more individuals are of multiple races, more people have appearances that are not readily categorized racially, and more people choose different and multiple racial categories (Root, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004). The color line is blurring in the sense that it is less distinct and the changes are happening rapidly, to use two meanings of the word *blur*.

History of Racial Identity in the United States

Concepts of race and racial identity in the United States have undergone dramatic shifts during the history of the nation. The first Africans in this land were known by their regional origins, and only later identified as a group as *Black* (Omi & Winant, 2004). By 1680, the color line was established when people in power (White male landowners) defined race (Omi & Winant). During colonial times, racial definitions provided justification to enslave Africans and dispossess indigenous peoples. White Christians were considered the norm and everyone else was labeled as “other” (Williamson, 1980).

Beginning in the 18th century, scientists attempted to establish race as a biological certainty with a scientific basis, although biological classification does not define race (Nash, 1999; Omi & Winant, 2004; Wright, 1998). Pascoe (1999) analyzes the move from scientific racism to culturalism, led by Franz Boas. Culturalists argued that

biological race was driven while at the same time arguing that race was only biology, concluding that race was indeterminate (Pascoe).

The eugenics movement (which advocated control of genetic reproduction to improve the human race) promoted the idea of biology as the essence of race, defining White people as having no trace of any other blood, with the exception of one-sixteenth or less of American Indian blood (Pascoe, 1999). Even today, some scientists or quasi-scientists still attempt to prove a scientific basis for race (Omi & Winant, 2004).

Socio-cultural Meanings of Race

Europeans on this continent created a racial strategy incorporated into laws to increase the power of whiteness (Buck, 2004). Discouraging and prohibiting relationships between Whites and Blacks or American Indians (and other cross-race relationships), along with limiting access of people of color to education, housing, and jobs became institutionalized, perpetuating racism in the United States (Buck).

Thinking of race is a social construct does not relegate it to an insignificant illusion (Kennedy, 2003). In the United States, race has been a life and death matter historically. People throughout the country's history have been enslaved, jailed, and murdered because of their perceived race(s). Slavery, the Jim Crow era with extreme violence of Whites against Blacks, forcible disruption and relocation of American Indian tribes, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and Japanese internment camps are just a few examples of atrocities committed on the basis of race (Chafe, 2004; Kennedy, 2003; Loewen, 1995; Spickard, 1989; Takaki, 1993; Wright, 2004). Identifying as White brought privilege to those so identified, even when their class, gender, or sexual orientation provided a basis for other oppression (Buck, 2004; Roediger, 1999).

The meaning of race in this country shifts and changes but the dominant White culture usually has defined race. By defining lower-class groups such as the Irish as White, the dominant culture created the privilege of whiteness and provided a reward for collusion to continue the status of the upper classes (Roediger, 1999). The idea of whiteness created and perpetuated a racist hierarchy (Alcoff, 2000). This discouraged lower-class Whites from banding together with people of color to work for social justice and transformative change (Roediger). The construction of whiteness was a way to provide landless Whites with some land or a hope of land in order for them to think of whiteness as a benefit (Buck, 2004). White males were to labor and White females were to be domestic (Buck). Peggy McIntosh (2004) describes privileges that she receives as a White person, meant to be invisible. These privileges – when unquestioned – allow her to think of the United States as a meritocracy in which people achieve strictly on the basis of merit without regard to race (McIntosh) or gender, class, sexual orientation, disability, or other variable.

Racial formation is the “process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings” (Omi & Winant, 2004). Americans tend to view race as essential (part of someone’s essence), but racial categorization has played changing roles in historical, social, political, and ideological contexts (Omi & Winant). Racism seems to be firmly entrenched within the institutions, standards, and laws of the United States (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

The United States government has defined race throughout the history of the country, with the definitions and categories changing (Kennedy, 2003). Different states

have legislated different meanings for racial categories, so that definitions and laws may differ from state to state (Korgen, 1998).

Interracial Relationships and Multiracial People

Racial Mixing in the American Colonies

Racial mixing occurred between Blacks and Whites soon after Africans were brought forcibly to the British colonies around 1619, and some Africans and Europeans already were mixed when they arrived (Korgen, 1998; Spencer, 1997; Stanton, 1999). Other African slaves may have come to an area now known as South Carolina in about 1526 with Spaniards. After a slave rebellion later that year, African survivors may have joined with nearby American Indian tribes when the Spaniards returned to Haiti (Loewen, 1995). In the colonies, the first Black and White unions took place between African slaves and White indentured servants. The children were considered Black if they had a Black parent or grandparent (Korgen, 1998).

In 1617, the first recorded interracial marriage took place in the colonies, when John Rolfe married Matoaka, later known as Lady Rebecca, commonly known as Pocahontas (Allen, 2003; Nash, 1999). Beginning in the 1600s, many interracial relationships occurred between Blacks and Whites, American Indians and Whites, African Americans and Native Americans (Banks, 2003), even while White colonists endorsed hatred between Africans and Native Americans (Nash, 1999). Often, sexual relationships between White men and Black women were overlooked (Hodes, 1999; Spickard, 1989).

Also in the 1600s and 1700s, colonial leaders enacted laws to uphold slavery. The first anti-miscegenation law in 1662 in Virginia forbade sexual relationships or marriage

between White and Black people (Korgen, 1998; Scales-Trent, 1995). The custom of identifying children by their father's race changed to identifying children by their mother's race. This meant that children of such unions usually were born into a slave status. Racially mixed children were identified as Black in order to add to the master's slave rolls (Korgen). The history of race is intertwined with the history of gender, with women often being more restricted than men (Hodes, 1999; Kennedy, 2003; Rothenberg, 2004; Spickard, 1989).

Mixed Race People and Scientific Racism in the 18th and 19th Centuries

Although many colonial and later state laws prohibited intermarriage, some intermarriage and other interracial relationships continued to occur. Particular illegal interracial relationships varied depending upon which people of color lived in a particular area (Spickard, 1989).

In the 1700s, marriages between Whites and Native Americans were encouraged (Nash, 1999) in some places, while other intermarriages were forbidden. Seven colonies had enacted anti-miscegenation laws by 1725 (Korgen, 1998). White females who engaged in interracial sexual or marital relationships were more likely to be punished, whereas White male and Black female relationships were overlooked (Hodes, 1999).

During the *antebellum stage*, between the American Revolution and the Civil War (1776-1850), more slaves were of mixed race lineage. Frequently this mixing occurred from forcible sexual relationships (rapes) of slave women by plantation owners or White men in power (Korgen, 1998).

In the 19th century, proponents of *scientific (pseudoscientific) racism* promoted a natural order based on inequality (Korgen, 1998; Spickard & Burroughs, 2000).

Scientists, on the basis of knowledge and perceptions at that time, divided people into four or five major races: Caucasian, Negro, Asian, and Indian; or Black, White, Red, Yellow, and Brown (Spickard, 1989; Spickard & Burroughs). The idea of four distinct races is perpetuated by the refrain of a Christian children's song by H. C. Woolston (n.d.):

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in his sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Scientists proposed race as the primary biological identifying feature of human beings. Racially mixed people were considered weaker physically, mentally, and morally (Korgen, 1998). Literature included stories of *tragic mulattoes* (Spickard, 1989) and a mixed race person was called a *marginal man* (Adermann, 2000; Davis, 1991). Note it is marginal MAN, with the male gender assumed as the norm.

During the Civil War (1861-1865), over half a million people died in a conflict between the North and the South that divided families (Jenkins, 2003). Slavery was among many other issues significant in the war (Zinn, 2003). Following the war, the Ku Klux Klan and other racist groups came into power and Blacks, recently emancipated from slavery, were oppressed in many unofficial ways, which were largely overlooked by institutions and the legal system (Zinn). Thousands of Blacks were murdered in Louisiana, Texas, and other southern states in the decade following the end of the war (Jenkins, 2003).

As the 19th century drew to a close, the Supreme Court supported segregation in the 1896 decision of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). At that time, the notion of “separate but equal” came into play. However, separate was unequal.

Segregation in the 20th Century

The Jim Crow era from 1910 to 1960 increased separation of Blacks and Whites, with many laws forbidding interracial interactions and relationships, not just marriage or sexual activities, but sharing space at drinking fountains, swimming pools, buses, and restaurants (Korgen, 1998). The *one-drop rule* (that anyone with any known Black ancestry was Black) came to be more strictly applied, and fewer Blacks and Whites intermixed. People were more likely to be considered either Black or White (Korgen). Jim Crow meant not just segregation, but extreme violence – often with little or no provocation – waged by Whites on Blacks, including lynchings (Kennedy, 2003; Wright, 1969/1988).

Rules and definitions for describing mixed-race people in the United States have changed over the last four centuries. A monoracial person is generally understood to be one who identifies with only one racial category, or who has no known ancestry of someone of another race. Some authors argue that race mixing has occurred since ancient times (Davis, 1991) or the beginning of recorded history (Gordon, 1964), so very few people are really monoracial. Some biracial or multiracial people identify as monoracial, and until the multiracial movement began, this was more common. Many biracial children were told to identify as Black since that was how society perceived them. This goes along with the one-drop rule (Root, 2001, 2003, 2004).

Hypodescent refers to a multiracial person being identified by the racial heritage with the least social status (Root, 2001, 2004). The one-drop rule prevalent in the United States means that as long as any known ancestor is of that race (with the lower social status), the person is identified as being of that race (Christian, 2000; Dalmage, 2002; Korgen, 1998; Williamson, 1980). This rule, considered repugnant and scientifically flawed by many (Williamson), has been used by both the dominant culture and marginal cultures. For example, in the Cherokee Nation, a person with “one drop” of Cherokee blood is considered Cherokee as long he or she has documented relationship with a direct ancestor identified as Cherokee (any degree of Indian blood) on the Dawes Final Rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes in 1900 (Sturm, 2002). Interpretation of the one-drop rule is complex because it not only was a way to internalize oppression but also a means to a common identity that led to political and social action (Spencer, 1997). Beginning in the 1920 United States Census, a person with any known Black ancestry was directed to identify as Black (Spencer, 1997), going back to the one-drop rule. As an example of changing racial categorizations, in 1785, Virginia defined a Black person as having a Black parent or grandparent; by 1930, Virginia defined a Black person as anyone having “one drop” of Black blood (Nash, 1999).

Repeal of Anti-Miscegenation Laws

The modern civil rights movement began in about 1955 with a push toward enhanced integration. The previous year, the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruled that separate was unequal, and desegregation began to occur, although neither quickly nor thoroughly and not without complications (Ladson-Billings,

2004a). Although the civil rights movement was well under way by 1960, 38 states still held anti-miscegenation laws (Korgen, 1998).

Following the Supreme Court ruling against anti-miscegenation laws in 1967 (Loving v. Virginia, 1967), many more marriages occurred across racial boundaries, and a biracial baby boom resulted (Korgen, 1998; Root, 1992, 1996b, 1999, 2001, 2003; Spickard, 1989). The civil rights movement and the integration of schools and workplaces also contributed to an expansion in interracial relationships as people got to know one another (Kennedy, 2003).

In the early 21st century, some estimate that about three-fourths of African Americans are multiracial, with as many as one third part American Indian (Nash, 1999). Nash posits that almost all Latinos and Filipinos, a majority of American Indians, and millions of Whites are multiracial as well.

Some people hold an idea of a “pure” race, such as Adolf Hitler who tried to establish a pure German race by exterminating millions of Jews, gypsies, Black Germans, and anyone else he identified as “other” or deficient in some way (Bachrach, 1994). In 21st century America, the National Alliance based in Hillsboro, West Virginia, and other white supremacy groups continue to promote the purity of “the White race.” The colonial elite created a racial strategy in which they bestowed the privilege of being White in order to discourage lower class Whites from joining with Black Americans and American Indians on common issues (Buck, 2004).

Overview of Racial Classification

During colonial times, a person’s race was defined according to the father’s race until slave owners decided to redefine the race of the child to that of a slave mother. By

identifying the child with the mother's race, slave owners could increase their slave holdings and avoid defining a child with a White father as White, which would have made the child free and eligible for more privileges (Korgen, 1998).

Hypodescent and the one-drop rule provide a basis for mixed people with Black ancestors to identify as Black. During the 1960s, the Black Power movement encouraged the acceptance of Blacks of all skin tones, hair textures, and physical features, so in a way this subverted the dominant culture's use of the one-drop rule – or confirmed it (Davis, 1991). At the same time that lighter-skinned Blacks received greater recognition within the Black community, intermingling with Whites became less accepted (Davis, 1991; Kennedy, 2003). *Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children* is a children's book (Pinkney, 2000) featuring stunningly beautiful photographs of Black-identified children with skin tones from “vanilla” to “midnight blue” and hair of many textures including straight and puffy. It affirms all the children as Black, with no mention of the possibility of being mixed.

More recently, identifying with more than one race has become more accepted. However, people who do so may run into opposition from people of any race (Kennedy, 2003; Root, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004).

For Black Americans (who may identify as African American or mixed race with one or more of the terms described above), 75 to 90 % may have some White ancestry and 25 to 30 % or more may have some Native American ancestry (Nash, 1999; Tatum, 2003). Because of the oppression associated with much of the earlier interracial mixing with Whites, many African Americans choose not to acknowledge White ancestors (Spickard, 1989; Waters, 2000).

Neil Henry (2001), an African American man, searched for and found his White relatives, basing his search on family stories, a photograph, a letter, and a news clipping that identified his White great-great grandfather, who acknowledged Henry's great grandmother as his daughter although they kept the relationship private. Often, African American slaves with White fathers were not acknowledged by the White father or other family members and the family history was lost. In some cases, family stories kept the connection alive, as in Thomas Jefferson and his slave Sally Hemings (Davis, 1991). DNA tests indicated the likelihood that descendants of one of Hemings' sons are related to males in the Jefferson family (tjheritage.org, n.d.).

Recently, an attorney for the family of the late Senator Strom Thurmond, a segregationist, acknowledged that Thurmond was the father of Bessie Mae Washington-Williams, who was born to Carrie Butler, the Thurmond family's Black housekeeper, in 1925 in South Carolina (Mattingly, 2003). Washington-Williams met Thurmond when she was 16 years old, at which time he acknowledged her as his daughter (Mattingly). Thurmond, who died in 2003 at the age of 100, eventually turned away from the segregationist views for which he was known (Mattingly). Washington-Williams is a retired school teacher whose children urged her to make the relationship public (Mattingly).

Not Just Black and White

While the emphasis in the United States of America in the race discourse tends to emphasize Black and White, it is important to recognize the multiplicity of races and mixtures in this country (Delgado, 1998; Hodes, 1999; Kennedy, 2003; Root, 1992, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004; Rothenberg, 2004; Takaki, 1993;

Waters, 2000). That is a primary reason that I chose to interview participants who identified with more than Black and White, in addition to those who identified as Black and White or a mixture of the two.

Racial Terminology

As indicated above, names for races have undergone almost continual changes throughout the history of the United States. Different groups and individuals prefer different terminology. For example, one person may consistently say “Black” while another may consistently say “African American” and another may use the terms interchangeably. In this dissertation, I try to be sensitive to the terminology used by each participant and to the times under consideration. Recognizing that the use of racial terminology can continue oppression, (Spickard & Burroughs, 2000) I write about the terminology while hoping to problematize its use.

Black, African American, Negro, person of color, mulatto. The history of terms for Black people in America, as indicated above, comprises changing terminology over a relatively short period of time. During the 1950s and early 1960s, when I was growing up and starting college, the preferred term seemed to be *Negro*, as Neil uses the term in his self-description in 1963. I remember visiting the Home for Aged Negro Baptists in Independence, Missouri during high school. In 2004, the United Negro College Fund, begun in 1944, continues use of that term.

A term that seemed somewhat derogatory in the 1950s and 1960s is *colored person*. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) maintains the term in 2004. People trying to be all-encompassing of anyone who is not

White may use the term *people of color*. The idea of designating someone as *other* is oppressive in itself (Loewen, 1995; Trinh, 1989)

By the mid-1960s, with the Black Power movement, the term *Black* began to gain dominance. Malcolm X influenced the change in terminology from Negro to Black in 1967 and the Black Pride movement enhanced the racial identity of Blacks (Kennedy, 2003; Korgen, 1998). The term *Negro* grew outdated and usually is now considered derogatory. Mixed people with Black ancestry usually identified as Black and were accepted within the Black community (Kennedy, 2003).

The phrase “Black is beautiful” worked its way into people’s consciousness during that time. When my granddaughter Yolanda, age 2, visited during the final writing phase of my dissertation, she was learning color names. She chose each crayon and held it up for me to identify. When I named the black crayon, I added, “Black is beautiful.”

African American is often used interchangeably with *Black* in the early 21st century, although some people prefer one term over the other. I try to be sensitive to the designation a participant uses. Another question is what to call more recent immigrants from Africa – should they be called African Americans or should African American be reserved for people with a common history of ancestors in slavery (Jackson, 2001)? What about Black immigrants from the West Indies (Johnson, 2000) or the Caribbean (Jackson)? If a person’s country of origin is known, she or he may prefer to be called by that designation, such as Ethiopian or Ethiopian American.

Mulatto was commonly used to describe any biracial person of Black and White ancestry in the United States until about 1970 when biracial or mixed became preferred terms. I include the term in this section because it historically has been used as a type of

Black person in United States American culture. From 1850 through 1920, except 1880 and 1910, the U.S. Census included a category for mulatto, meaning a person “in whom the mixture of black and white is visible” (Williamson, 1980, p. xii). Sometimes this category was filled in by the census worker who looked at the individual and determined whether he or she fit into that category. Mulatto has variously referred to a person who was half Black and half White or a person with any mixture of Black and White (Williamson). To some people in the United States, mulatto is considered an outdated and derogatory term, while to others and to many people in different countries, it is a commonly accepted term (Davis, 1991).

A person who read the final draft of this dissertation told me that her relative – who was Native Americana and Black – was listed as mulatto on her birth certificate. This indicates that the term is not limited solely to people who are Black and White.

At certain times, more specific terminology such as *quadroon* (a person with one Black and three White grandparents) and *octoroon* (a person with one Black and seven White great-grandparents) were used (Spickard, 1989). Even in the early 21st century, the spell-check feature on Microsoft Word recognizes these terms, indicating how deeply entrenched they are within the system even though they are no longer used in the discourse.

American Indian, Native American, indigenous, tribal names. As the story taught to me as a child goes, Christopher Columbus planned a trip to India and when he arrived on the shores of this continent, he called the people who greeted him Indians. For much of the history of this nation, the indigenous peoples of Turtle Island were called Indians – or American Indians to clarify that they were not from India. More recently, some

indigenous people in the United States have reclaimed the *Native* as in *Native American*. Many still prefer that others call them American Indian. Others prefer the term *indigenous*. When tribal names are known, as is the case for most of this study's participants, it is preferable to use the specific names (American Psychological Association, 2001).

Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano/a, Mexican American, Mexicano/a. The term *Hispanic* was created by the United States government to indicate people of diverse backgrounds, including "Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (U. S. Census, 2001b). In the 2000 Census, Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably (U. S. Census). For the purposes of this dissertation, *Mexican American* and *Mexicana* are used more in terms of race than ethnicity, even though according to the United States government, Hispanic is considered an ethnicity, not a race. The United States Census collects data on people who are Hispanic of any race (U. S. Census, 2001c). Most Hispanics or Latinos are of mixed racial backgrounds, including Black, White, and indigenous.

Considering the racism experienced by Hispanics in most areas of the United States, being Hispanic has been racialized. The two research participants who identified as biracial and part Mexican American or Mexicana tended to equate that with racial identity. Other writers treat Latinos as a race (Chideya, 1999).

White, Caucasian. White tends to be a generic term denoting people "having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa" (U. S. Census, 2001b, p. 2). In this dissertation, I use White or Caucasian if that is how a person

describes himself or herself. Often I use their listed ethnic backgrounds when they accord some importance to them or list them.

Biracial, multiracial, mixed race, multicultural, mestizo/a, hapa. People who are of mixed racial backgrounds may choose a number of terms to describe their identity (Root, 1996b, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004). The term biracial has been used to define someone who has one parent identified as being of one race and the other parent identified as being of a different race. Also, a biracial person may have one parent who identifies as biracial and another parent who identifies as monoracial (Daniel, 2002) or two biracial parents (Root).

A multiracial person or person of mixed race is one who identifies as being of at least two races and maybe more (Root). Often, biracial people identify as multiracial, or a multiracial person may identify with three or more races in her or his background. Some people prefer to identify by name with each racial aspect while some prefer to say they are multiracial without defining the races. Prominent golfer Tiger Woods identifies with four races in his background and coined the word *Cablinasian* to recognize all of them: Caucasian, Black, Indian, and Asian (Kennedy, 2003; Root, 2004). He received negative publicity from many Blacks who claimed that he was Black (hypodescent) since he was perceived as Black, and that he was trying to deny his blackness (Kennedy, 2003).

More recent terms that people of mixed race may use include *mestizo/a* (usually referring to someone of mixed Latino/a or Filipino/a ancestry), *hapa* (usually referring to someone of mixed Asian or Pacific Islander ancestry and sometimes to all racially mixed people and Asian transracial adoptees), *mélange* (usually referring to being mixed), *métis/se* (usually referring to people in Canada of mixed indigenous and French ancestry;

also anyone of mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry) (Root & Kelley, 2003). Most of these terms carry less baggage, although *mestizo/a* is a term associated with “colonial racism and preference for light skin” (Root & Kelley, 2003, p. viii) and depending on the circumstances and the person’s point of view, may carry heavy baggage.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are not the same, although people tend to equate them. Rothenberg (2004) says that ethnicity focuses on social communities and their shared and outward (e.g., cultural) experiences, whereas race was presumed to be based on biological traits and is a political construction. In 1989, Spickard described four theories of ethnicity based on interests, social networks, culture, and identity. In a later work, Spickard and Burroughs (2000) discussed the tendency for people to consider ethnic groups as subcategories of race. They say that using the term *race* means to focus on the body or political action. Ethnicity relates to shared interest, institutions, and culture (Spickard & Burroughs).

Race can be viewed as “ethnicity plus oppression” (Pierce, 2000, p. 225). Although race has little basis in biology, people who talk about race assume that is its foundation (Spickard & Burroughs, 2000). Antiracists use the terminology of pseudoscientific racism in a process known as racialization (Spickard & Burroughs), which Pierce (2000) defines as “the essentialist politicization of ethnic identity for any reason” (p. 226). This racialization increases understanding of racism and White privilege (Pierce), while it problematizes the use of racial terminology and reveals underlying oppression. While writing about race and using terms to indicate race, I hope to

problematize the use of the ideas and terms, and increase the reader's awareness of oppression on the basis of race and racial categories.

Racial Identity Development

Racial identity development has its roots in identity development theory, although some who wrote about general identity development at first – such as Erik Erikson (1997) – did not consider racial identity. The idea of identity development is a particularly United States American idea with its emphasis on individualism (Root, 2004). As ideas about race and ethnicity change and as social dynamics change, so do theories of racial identity development (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). Most prominent theorists suggest that racial identity is related to the historical and social contexts of particular races.

Identity Development

The idea of identity development comes from Erik Erikson who introduced the idea of personal identity in social, cultural, and historical context (Tatum, 2003). He suggested that a person goes through eight stages throughout his or her lifespan (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998): infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age, each with its own crisis to solve (Erikson, 1997; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito). Erik Erikson (1997) and Joan Erikson later added a ninth stage of very old age for people in their 80s and 90s.

Early ideas of identity development incorporated stages, with the presumption that people would go through stages in progression. Psychologist James Marcia conducted empirical studies with males and formulated four identity states, which he identified as foreclosure (accepts parental values without crisis), diffusion (is unable to commit and in crisis), moratorium (questions parental values – in crisis without

commitment), and identity achievement (makes commitment after crisis) (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

A person does not necessarily go through all the states or statuses identified by Marcia in the study of males (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Ruthellen Josselson studied females and elaborated on Marcia's four identity states (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito). Her labels are guardians, pathmakers, searchers, and drifters (Josselson, 1996).

Most people in America may develop identity in general related to several life issues (Erikson, 1997). More specific identity development theories have been proposed to account for how people develop ethnic or racial identities. Although the focus of this study is on how people in interracial families come to understand race and racial identity, no aspect of identity develops in isolation. Class, gender, historical context, generation, sexual orientation, and other issues are interconnected and interrelated with race in identity development (Root, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004). Early racial identity models indicated an idea of stages and linear progression, while later racial identity models emphasize more variability and fluidity (Root; Wijeyesinghe, 2001).

Racial Identity Models

Jean Phinney related ethnic identity development to Marcia's identity states (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). She relates Nigrescence models (which Cross [1991] defines as the process of becoming Black) and the development of a positive Black identity with Marcia's stages of ego identity (Root, 2004). Phinney proposes diffusion-foreclosure as being unaware of racial identity, moratorium as a time of crisis and questioning as the person searches for racial identity, and identity achievement as the

mature commitment following the crisis. As in Marcia's theory, Phinney suggested that a person may remain in an earlier stage and not fully reach identity achievement (Adermann, 2000; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito).

A brief look at racial identity theories by William E. Cross, Jr., Bailey Jackson III, Janet Helms, and Maria P. P. Root will introduce some of the ideas of racial identity theories. Although the earlier theories suggest stages, looking upon racial identity as a fixed, linear process misses the complexity of the process many people experience. Beverly Daniel Tatum (2003) calls racial identity development a lifelong journey. As she says,

Unraveling and reweaving the identity strands of our experience is a neverending task in a society where important dimensions of our lives are shaped by the simultaneous forces of subordination and domination. We continue to be works in progress for a lifetime (p. 88).

Black Identity Models

Two Black identity models are discussed. Their originators – William Cross, Jr. and Bailey Jackson III – began developing them in the 1970s and have continued to revise them since.

Cross Black Identity Model. During the time of the modern civil rights movement and greater recognition of racial identity, William E. Cross, Jr. developed a theory of racial identity for Blacks (Cross, 1991; Tatum, 2003). He delineated the process of becoming Black through his theory of Nigrescence, which he describes as a “Negro-to-Black conversion experience” (Cross, 1991, p. 189). He suggests that Black people begin with a stage of *pre-encounter*, in which they have low awareness of Blackness or are even anti-Black. During the second stage, *encounter*, they experience something that helps them start to change. It could be one event, such as the Rodney King beating, or it

could be a gradual recognition. The third stage, *immersion—emersion*, has two aspects. The first is like a conversion in which the person exemplifies what he or she feels is the true essence of Blackness, perhaps changing physical appearance or even name. Going through this stage, the person immerses into Black literature, art, political activities, and the Black community. This is often an intense emotional experience. In the second part of this stage (emersion), the person becomes less rigid and recognizes that the immersion was an important transitional stage. The person may go on to a fourth stage, Internalization, in which he or she internalizes the new identity and experiences inner peace. Cross calls the fifth stage *internalization-commitment*. Not everyone who develops a Black identity maintains a strong sense of commitment to Black issues, but some develop a lifetime commitment (Cross, 1991; Tatum, 2003). A person may develop a nationalist, Afrocentrist, bicultural, or multicultural perspective (Cross, 1991; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

Cross, writing with Peony Fhagen-Smith, discusses Thomas Parham's idea of recycling in Black identity development, in which a person may go through stages repeatedly depending on new experiences or life phases – not so much in the sense of starting over but enhancing identity and developing more complex understanding (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). They emphasize four aspects in a life span perspective: variability and diversity in Black identity, linear and nonlinear Black identity growth patterns, lack of pathology in low race salience, and multidimensionality of internalized racism (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, p. 268).

Jackson Black identity development theory. Bailey Jackson III (2001) developed his Black identity theory around the same time Cross developed his, and continued to

develop it since. He talks about stages and stage transitions, with his stages being *Naïve* (mostly in children, with little awareness of the social construct of race), *acceptance* (internalization of racism and acceptance of dominant White views), *resistance* (recognition of individual, overt, subtle, and institutional racism with hostility manifested during the transition from entering to adopting this stage), *redefinition* (self-definition without relation to White culture), and *internalization* (integration of what was learned in the earlier stages). Jackson adds that some Blacks develop a multicultural perspective. Significantly, Jackson considers oppression and the oppressor within (Freire, 1970) relative to the stages in his theory.

Jackson (2001) identifies three social phenomena that played roles in the adjustment of the Black identity development theory. These are the prominence of ethnicity (relative to and separate from race), Afrocentricity (with logic emphasizing *both/and* thinking rather than Eurocentric dualism), and the United States economy (drawing attention to the roles of socioeconomic class in identity development).

White Racial Identity Models

Two White identity models developed during the late 1970s and early 1980s also are introduced. They were developed by Janet Helms and Rita Hardiman.

Helms White racial identity model. Janet Helms developed a theory of White racial identity development (Tatum, 2003) with two phases (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Phase 1 is the process of abandonment of racism and begins with the contact status in which White people do not think about race. Since they consider whiteness the norm, they do not need to think about it (McIntosh, 2004). When White people become aware of racism and White privilege, they go through a status of

disintegration, in which they may feel guilt, shame, and anger. They may undergo pressure by White family and friends to ignore racism and continue to collude with it (Tatum, 2003). In re-integration, the person becomes attached to a White identity (Tatum, 2003).

In the second phase, a White person may go to a status of pseudo-independence or white liberalism in which her or his whiteness becomes a source of shame (Tatum, 2003). Some may seek exclusive friendships with Black people. Many White people strive to move beyond the guilt and shame and go into an *immersion/emersion* stage. They begin to gain White allies, i.e., other White people who fight racism. In the status of autonomy, a White person incorporates her or his Whiteness and confronts racism. People continue to develop and go through the statuses (Tatum, 2003).

Tatum (2003) talks about Cross's theory being more spiral than linear and introduces the possibility of recycling as suggested by Parham. In this view, racial identity is not fixed and rigid, and development continues throughout the lifespan.

Hardiman (2001) critiqued Helms' model as being based on Black identity models rather than considering that the dominant group identity process may differ from that of an oppressed group, focusing on Whites' appreciation of *other*, departing from the idea of development in flexibility, and focusing on White-Black relationships. She also said that she thought Helms has not changed the basic premises of her model over time.

Hardiman model of White identity development. Rita Hardiman (2001) also developed a model of White identity development in the 1970s. Her model includes five stages with similar names to Jackson's Black identity development theory: *naïveté*, *acceptance*, *resistance*, *redefinition*, and *internalization*.

In looking back at her identity model, Hardiman (2001) noted that this was more a model for White antiracists and what she felt Whites needed to do. Recently, numerous disciplines are producing studies on whiteness considering issues such as defining the process of whiteness as a tool of divisiveness (suggesting that Whites become “race traitors” and seek common cause with people of color) and redefining whiteness in terms of recognizing whiteness as a race and shifting toward social justice (Hardiman). She suggests further research to understand privilege and domination as well as ethnicity and culture.

Racial Identity Relating to Latino, Asian, and American Indians

Many racial identity models have been created to describe racial identity for races beyond Black and White. Some theorists talk more about issues in racial identity rather than proscribing a particular model of racial identity development.

Racial identity development and Latinos/Latinas. Bernardo Ferdman and Plácida Gallegos (2001) have written about racial identity development and Latinos. They say that Black and White identity development models are not readily translatable to Latinos and Latinas, a heterogeneous and mixed group of various racial backgrounds, cultures, and national origins – a group in which race is secondary (Ferdman & Gallegos). They talk about possible orientations toward Latino/a identity and encourage greater appreciation of complexity and diversity of different peoples commonly combined into an overarching group.

Asian identity development theory. Jean Kim (2001) proposes an Asian American identity development theory with five separate sequential stages: ethnic awareness, White identification, awakening to social political consciousness, redirection to Asian American

consciousness, and incorporation (p. 67). The titles of these stages are fairly self-explanatory. Kim notes that progression through all the stages is not automatic. This is a racial identity theory that touches on ethnic awareness, which can differ for Koreans, Chinese, Japanese and other Asian ethnic groups, and it has not developed additional aspects to address multiracial Asian American identity, which is becoming more common (Kim).

Paradigm for American Indian identity. Perry Horse (2001) considers issues relative to American Indian identity, which has less often been considered in racial identity development models. Tribal sovereignty and the variety among Indian nations problematize an effort to talk about American Indian identity. Horse considers individual and collective consciousness for Indian nations and identity as American Indians. Horse identifies five areas which he suggests influences the consciousness: grounding in native language and culture, genealogical heritage as Indian, worldview from old traditions, one's own idea of self as Indian, and official recognition by tribal government (p. 100). He speaks of the push to assimilate and the need for maintaining culture, cohesion, and spirituality as tribal people.

Biracial and Multiracial Identity

Although some people use identity models for particular racial groups for biracial people, these have limits since they emphasize identification with one racial group. In the first biracial identity models in the 1920s and 1930s, Park and Stonequist talked about the marginal man living in two worlds (Adermann, 2000; Davis, 1991). These were deficit models, meaning they emphasized deficiencies.

Biracial identity models. In the 1990s, more biracial identity models were created. Poston's model has five stages: *personal identity, choice of group categorization, enmeshment/denial, appreciation, and integration* (Adermann, 2000). Jacobs' model for biracial children has three stages: *pre-color constancy, post-color constancy, and biracial identity* (Adermann). A biracial identity model based on people of White and Japanese heritage has been posited by Kich and Collins (Adermann). The Kerwin-Ponterotto model of biracial identity integrates ideas from several different models and goes through development from preschool to adulthood (Adermann). Wijeyesinghe (2001) proposes a factor model of multiracial identity, with racial ancestry, cultural attachment, physical appearance, early experience and socialization, social and historical context, political awareness and orientation, spirituality, and other social identities as factors in the choice of racial identity. Wijeyesinghe points out that racial identity for multiracial people – as for others – is complex and evolving.

Root's ecological framework for racial identity. Maria P. P. Root (2000, 2003, 2004) suggests rethinking racial identity. She says that monoracial identity development theories, developed during the civil rights movement, put forward stages toward racial pride and tend to be somewhat linear and hierarchical. She suggests that with increased permeability of racial boundaries and more multiracial identity, other aspects of identity need to be given greater consideration. She particularly suggests that identity development is a complex process.

Root (1998) conducted research on biracial siblings, which showed variations in ways siblings developed their racial identity. Factors influencing racial identity included experiences, gender, and family. In her later versions of a racial identity model, she

emphasizes its ecological nature, considering the importance of context, gender, sexual orientation, class, and generation (Adermann, 2000; Root, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004). Root says that ecological models focus more on social process and variables than on stages (Root, 2004).

Root (2004) explains that the experience of mixed race individuals differs for people coming of age early in the 21st century. Those born before approximately 1980 were more strongly influenced by ideas of hypodescent and the one-drop rule, being pressured to hide their mixed race identity and choose only one, usually the one of lower status.

In *Root's* (2003, 2004) *ecological framework for racial identity*, she examines commonly recognized influences and invisible factors (macro lenses) that play roles in racial identity development. Invisible influences include generational history and regional history (geography), sexual orientation, gender, and class.

For example, a person's generation makes a difference in possibilities available to her or him in claiming racial identity (Root, 2003, 2004). Neil, as described in the introduction, claimed mixed racial identity in 1963, decades before such identity was socially acceptable. Blurring racial boundaries can deconstruct racism and be subversive, or it can legitimize racial categories (Root). I believe that in 1963, Neil was attempting to deconstruct racism. Neil may have gone on to a more monoracial identity as his life after college has centered in African American graduate work and life in African American communities. If this is so, it is likely related to his generational history and the southern region to which he moved after college.

Neil also told me that he discovered that when he spent the summer of 1964 in Washington DC, people who thought he was American Black treated him rudely or ignored him. He said that if he wore headgear such as a turban and spoke with an accent, so that others got the impression that he was from a country outside the United States, they treated him with respect. This is an example of fluid identity that many mixed race people experience in how they present themselves and how they are perceived (Root, 2003, 2004).

Another example of the influence of one of the macro lenses, sexual orientation, is that gay men and lesbians of all racial identities may find greater acceptance in the white community than in communities of color (Root, 2003, 2004). Also, people who identify as bisexual may find similar challenges as biracial people do, with pressure to choose one identity (Root).

Other influences on racial identity development are situated in three areas: individual (traits and aptitudes, physical attractiveness, phenotype), family (functioning, influences, and socialization), and community (attitudes and racial socialization) (Root, 2003, 2004). Siblings in the same family may come to very different racial identities related to aspects of these factors and the invisible factors discussed above (Root).

Interracial/Multiracial Families

Interracial families, sometimes called multiracial families, are generally considered families with members who identify with different races. Interracial families may be formed by marriage, informal partnerships, casual sexual relationships resulting in mixed children, step-family relationships, or adoption. Some extended families of an interracial immediate family may also consider themselves part of the interracial family

(Root, 2004). Family closeness, definitions of familial relationships, racial identity, and acceptance or rejection of interracial relationships play roles in the identification of a family as interracial (Root, 2003, 2004).

Interracial Intimacy

Miscegenation refers to interracial sexual or marital relationships (Williamson, 1995). Some colonies and states enacted anti-miscegenation laws punishing or prohibiting such relationships, beginning in 1661 in Maryland and 1662 in Virginia (Spencer, 1997). The rules varied as to what intermarriages were prohibited and what definitions were applied to determine a person's race. For example, as late as 1957 in Arkansas, marriage between a White person and a person with any [Black] blood was prohibited, and in Florida, a person who was less than one-eighth Black could marry a White person (Gordon, 1964). In other states, White-Asian or White-American Indian marriage was prohibited and in Louisiana, Black-American Indian marriages were prohibited (Spickard, 1989). Many states removed anti-miscegenation laws before the United States Supreme Court in 1967 banned remaining laws (*Loving v. Virginia*, 1967). However, as mentioned earlier, interracial sexual relationships occurred in this country from the time Whites arrived (Spickard; Root, 2001), and mixing of Blacks and American Indians occurred beginning in the 16th century (Loewen). The history of the Garrison, Colorado, area includes examples of White fur traders marrying American Indian women. During some time periods in American history, some casual interracial relationships were accepted or overlooked when the White person was male (Spickard).

Since 1967, more interracial unions have occurred. Between 1960 and 2000, the number of Black-White marriages increased six-fold, but remained less than 1 % of all

marriages in the United States (Kennedy, 2003). By 2000, there were approximately 1.5 million interracial marriages (U. S. Census, 2001a). In addition to marriages, informal unions occurred between people of different races. A biracial baby boom resulted (Korgen, 1998; Root, 1996b, 1999; Spickard, 1989). With so many more multiracial people, racial identity is changing as people challenge racial categorization (Chideya, 1999; Root, 1996a, 1996b, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004).

Transracial Adoption

Many interracial families formed through adoption, which is one type of interracial intimacy (Kennedy, 2003). Because of the complexity of transracial adoption and controversy surrounding this issue, this merits its own special section since two participants and the researcher are members of adoptive families. Transracial is a term often used to describe adoption across racial lines. (Bartholet, 1995; Dalmage, 2002; Pinderhughes, 1997; Simon & Altstein, 1987, 2000, 2002). Such adoptions are also referred to as interracial (Anderson, 1971). Transracial adoptions, usually of children of color by White parents, became popular in the late 1960s as a way of promoting integration or going along with ideals of integration, but another factor was that fewer White infants became available for adoption at that time, and adoption agencies promoted transracial adoptions for White families wanting healthy infants (Pinderhughes, 1997).

Transracial adoption peaked in 1971, and declined after coming under fire from the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) in 1972 and the enactment of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978 (Kennedy, 2003). The objections were that a Black or American Indian child adopted by a White family did not receive adequate support to maintain his or her cultural heritage. In the strongest language, transracial

adoption was referred to as cultural genocide (Kennedy, 2003). This is a complex issue with important points on both sides.

In 1972, American adoption agencies targeted middle class White families, so the NABSW had a legitimate point that not enough efforts were being made to recruit Black adoptive parents for Black children, and the rules for adoption were so oriented toward White middle class families that many Black families were eliminated from consideration or grew too frustrated with the bureaucracy involved along with the embedded institutional racism in the adoption process (Pinderhughes, 1997) After continued opposition for transracial adoption from NABSW, coupled with inadequate recruiting efforts for Black families and large numbers of Black children available for adoption, many Black and biracial children were forced to spend years in foster homes (Kennedy, 2003; Pinderhughes, 1997; Simon & Altstein, 1987, 2000, 2002). This complicated issue offers many insights on the complexity and controversy about race and racial identity in America.

Rita James Simon conducted longitudinal studies on transracial adoption which indicate that children in these adoptions are not, as a general rule, irreparably harmed (Simon & Altsein, 1987, 2000, 2002). Randall Kennedy (2003) suggests that White adoptive parents of Black and mixed children need not apologize – that no family is perfect and there is no way to know whether a particular Black family could have provided stronger parenting and identity-building skills for a particular Black or mixed child. He also indicates that some Black parents have faced problems with troubled children as well (Kennedy), as have some White parents with White adopted children and children born to them.

Those who have studied transracial adoption have found several factors that seem to help transracially adopted children form healthy identities, including close association with members of the children's other race(s), living in integrated neighborhoods, and understanding the complexities involved in transracial adoption (Simon & Altstein, 1987, 2000, 2002; Dalmage, 2002; Pinderhughes, 1997). It is helpful to consider that some White birth parents of mixed children do not maintain close association with people of their children's race or live in integrated neighborhoods and, in fact, some families of color live in neighborhoods that are otherwise white. As one biracial man with a White wife and several children said, they live in an integrated neighborhood, but if they move, it will no longer be integrated.

While transracial adoption is sometimes identified as a factor in racial identity construction, being part of an interracial family formed in any way may be a factor. Some biracial and multiracial children who grow up with their birth parents experience problems constructing a racial identity (Funderburg, 1994; Kennedy, 2003; Walker, 2001). Some multiracial people struggle all their lives feeling as if they have no place while others recognize being biracial or bicultural as a gift (Anzaldúa, 1990; Funderburg, 1994; Kaiser & Gillespie, 1997; Simon & Roorda, 2000; Walker, 2001).

Many White families who adopted children transracially also had White children, by either adoption or birth. Some Black and interracial couples have adopted children of other races. For example, one Black-White couple depicted in *Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families* adopted children including a Korean son, a Guatemalan daughter, and a Russian (White) daughter (Kaiser & Gillespie, 1997). These examples demonstrate

that not all families participating in transracial adoption are White parents with children from underrepresented minorities, although that has been the traditional expectation.

Theoretical Background

Three major types of theories are considered in the theoretical background. These are feminist standpoint theories, critical race theories, and two family theories (family systems and symbolic interactionism). Some aspects of these theories overlap.

Feminist Standpoint Theories

This study takes ideas from various views of feminist standpoint theories. Proponents of feminist standpoint theories, including Nancy Hartsock (2000), Susan Hekman (2000), Donna Haraway (2000), and Patricia Hill Collins (2000a, 2002), vary in their interpretations of its core meanings. A key idea in feminist standpoint theories is that the view of those from the margins is more complex and comprehensive than the view of those in the center.

Feminist standpoint theories were influenced by Karl Marx's idea of power relationships (Hartsock, 2000; Hekman, 2000). Hekman describes a paradigm shift in epistemology from "an absolutist, subject-centered conception of truth to a conception of truth as situated, perspectival, and discursive" (p. 25). She considers feminist standpoint theories as working to deconstruct dualism. A critical aspect of feminist standpoint theories is that they can allow for discourse to improve social relations (Hartsock). Gramsci emphasizes the nature of identity as that of individuals in relationship (Hartsock), which recognizes identity construction as more than self-identity.

Early feminist theories by mostly White middle-class women often did not address concerns of women of color and women of impoverished backgrounds (hooks,

2000). It is important to consider ideas of women such as Black feminists Patricia Hill Collins (2000a, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b) and bell hooks (1989, 2000), borderlands theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1990), and postcolonial feminists such as Trinh Minh-ha (1989).

Patricia Hill Collins (2000a) describes feminist standpoint theory as “an integrative framework dedicated to explicating how knowledge remains central to maintaining and changing unjust systems of power” (p. 43). She moves from defining Black feminist thought to discussing its distinguishing features, and talks about the need to move away from Western binary thought to work together across groups for social justice (Collins). Afrocentric feminist agenda is “a standpoint epistemology that sees the world from the point of view of oppressed persons of color” (Denzin, 2000, p. 910).

Ideas of knowledge in context, taking into consideration the social actors’ perspectives, and engaging in discourse to increase social justice inform this study. Feminist standpoint theories recognize the importance of the view from which we stand (Collins, 2000a).

Outsiders such as Blacks and women can see into the center and develop a “collective consciousness of oppression and collective communities to protest” (Chafe, 2004, p. 359). Not only women, but racialized others need to understand those in the center in order to survive (Mac an Ghaill, 1999).

View from the Borderlands

Gloria Anzaldúa (1990), explicating her position from the borderlands, writes of the shifting borders and demonstrates that fluidity in her writings, as she moves from poetry to prose and English to Spanish and back in cycles. Her idea of tolerance for

ambiguity is crucial for multiracial identity and identity of people in interracial families. Anzaldúa's work shattered barriers previously considered insurmountable, not only talking about the new *mestiza* and *double consciousness*, but illustrating fluid and changing boundaries in her work. She used the words of the dominant culture to critique the hegemony, but she refused to stop there. She used the words and actions of marginalized people to create a place from the borderlands where multiple voices could sound in cacophony (Anzaldúa, 1990). I blur boundaries intentionally in this work through different types of writing and extensive use of research participants' words.

Problematizing

Problematizing (Stone-Mediatore, 2000) describes an important goal of challenging assumptions of dominant culture. Continually questioning choices of theories and methods can deconstruct dualisms and power relationships.

Critical Race Theories

An outgrowth of critical legal theory, critical race theory attempts to uncover how race and racism operate in American laws and society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Basic precepts shared by various critical race theorists include five primary ideas: (1) racism is thoroughly enmeshed in American society so that it appears to be permanent and the norm; (2) critical race theorists critique liberalism; (3) Whites are the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation (interest convergence); (4) Whiteness is a form of property (with rights of possession, use, and disposition); and (5) the use of storytelling or counternarrative can transform (Delgado, 1995; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

Critical race theorists show that narrative storytelling can illustrate how American laws perpetuate racism (Parker & Lynn, 2002). These narratives challenge readers'

thinking so that they question hegemonic assumptions of race and work toward social justice (Parker & Lynn). The hegemonic assumptions underlie the collusion of oppressed people with the oppressors' agenda (Jay, 2003). Questioning these assumptions frees readers to move toward social justice. The ethic of the research involves engaging the readers in multiple layers, to which narrative lends itself (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). By evoking layers of meaning, narrative can engage readers to make sense of complex issues and move to action. Oppositional consciousness allows re-narration, resistance, and fighting oppression (Stone-Mediatore, 2000).

Narratives also allow the complexities of specific situations to be considered on a deeper level. Both critical race theories and feminist theories allow for non-unitary subjectivity, understanding the multilayered approach to the lived experience, and the intersections of social change and justice (Parker & Lynn, 2002). The non-unitary self is a self that holds seemingly disparate concepts at once. This ability to allow for ambiguity is crucial to subverting the dominant paradigm in its push for dichotomy and dualism. Narratives can challenge ideologies that naturalize identities (Stone-Mediatore, 2000). Storytelling is a way to construct racial identity (Cornell, 2000) without reducing race to pseudoscientific definition, so that the complexity and deeper meanings can be conveyed (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

Shari Stone-Mediatore (2000) says that consensus among feminists is that stories of experience are problematic because “they risk naturalizing ideologically conditioned categories that structure our experience of self and world” (p. 110). The stories “revisit the assumptions about identities, differences and autonomous subjects that underlie

available discourses” (Stone-Mediatore, 2000, p. 110). A tension exists between writing and experience as they mutually inform one another (Stone-Mediatore).

Family Theories

The researcher relates salient aspects of two theories (family systems theory and symbolic interactionism) that may provide insight into racial identity development of individuals in interracial families. The researcher reflects on the family in context, family dynamics in relationships, and the complex system of the family with a brief consideration of family ecology (Lamanna & Riedman, 2003).

Family Systems Theories

Family systems theories were first used primarily in family therapy and are based on the idea that considering the family as a system may contribute to better understanding (Klein & White, 1996; Lamanna & Riedman, 2003). Influences on family systems theories include general systems theory and communication theory (Klein & White).

Key assumptions of family systems theories are interconnectedness (family systems and subsystems are interrelated), wholeness (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts) (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004; Klein & White, 1996), and feedback loops (behavioral output becomes input [Klein & White, 1996] or interactive complexity [Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004]). The systems perspective is a way to understand families in relationship and not a concrete representation of objective reality (Klein & White).

An aspect of family systems theories comes from human systemic communication theory. This includes the idea of communication as being both digital and analog, both verbal and nonverbal (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004; Klein & White, 1996;

Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967) so it is important to look at different aspects of communication when analyzing data in a study such as this.

Klein and White (1996) define a system as “a unit that affects its environment and can be distinguished from its environment.” This brings up the idea of boundaries.

Family systems tend to have a degree of permeability ranging from closed to open with a continuum of boundaries from rigid to flexible (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004; Klein & White). Families also exhibit varying degrees of adaptability and flexibility (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel; Klein & White), which is an area closely related to forming interracial families with consideration of the various systems and subsystems of the extended and immediate families.

One aspect of a system is the tendency to homeostasis or maintenance of equilibrium to continue the family way of acting (Klein & White, 1996; Lamanna & Riedman, 2003). In family therapy, this is used to help a family see that the entire family must change to help a family member through a particular problem. A potential difficulty in this viewpoint is the tendency to discount a particular individual problem, even if it has an organic basis, and look at an issue only in terms of the system as both cause and effect (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004; Klein & White, 1996; Lamanna & Riedman, 2003).

Early family theorists viewed the family as a system attempting to maintain stability Sometimes families also experience change through leaps The traditional calibration model needs to be modified and placed within an evolutionary framework” (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004, p. 60).

Looking at racial identity development through the family systems theory lens provides a metaphor for family resistance and changes. Later family systems theories consider the entire ecological perspective, looking at the family system within larger systems in context (ecosystem). Interactions take precedence over individuals (Galvin,

Bylund, & Brommel, 2004). This relates to the family ecological perspective, which encourages consideration of the family within the environment, particularly the sociocultural environment (Lamanna & Riedman, 2003). Since racial identity and racism are enmeshed with the sociocultural environment, this is a needed component in looking at individuals in families in this study.

Symbolic Interactionism

This perspective examines the interaction of family members with continual assessment of meaning of the interactions and focuses on concepts of self and identity of the individual or of the family unit (Klein & White, 1996; Lamanna & Riedman, 2003; Root, 2003, 2004). It assumes that people act according to the meanings they ascribe to actions in context and that people “create meanings to help them make sense of the world” (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004, p. 68; Klein & White, 1996). Since meaning is negotiated through language (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel), it is apropos to use the symbolic interaction lens to look at the narratives around racial identity development. The researcher agrees that the family interactions vary according to race, class, gender, age, and context and that the interactions are related to the sociocultural context (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004).

Families are defined not only by biological relationships and legally defined parameters, but also through meaning ascribed to their interactions (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2004). Depending on culture, class, sexual orientation, and other contexts, individuals may join together and consider themselves as a family even if the dominant society does not necessarily recognize their familial status. Symbolic interaction provides

a viewpoint from which to consider meanings constructed within families and by others in the larger context (Klein & White, 1996).

Along with the family systems perspective and symbolic interactionism, the critical and feminist theories mentioned previously are considered when looking at narratives of the families in this study. The purpose of this research is to relate to social justice issues and a voice toward change through looking at how people in interracial families experience race and racial identity.

Narrative Inquiry

Methodology will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3. This section considers briefly the relationship of the chosen methodology and the subject matter.

Critical race theories and feminist standpoint theories encourage narrative that leads to social change (Collins, 2000a; Parker & Lynn, 2002). The meaning of the complexities and ambiguity of racial identity of people in interracial families can come to life in narratives that allow participants to tell their stories with multiple layers constructed and co-constructed by the researcher and other participants.

As Carolyn Ellis (1995) describes in her discussion on negotiating the story in *Final Negotiations*, the story's authenticity to the readers is a significant aspect of narrative texts. The narrative is contextual in terms of when it was written and how it is read. Ellis said that traditional sociological analysis seemed to fall short of the meaning. She says, "I could not get around the sense that categorizing muted the evocative power and openness of the narrative" (p. 328).

Overall, various theories used in this paper interrelate and share themes of marginalized voices disrupting the dominant power for the purpose of transforming

society. The dominant culture expects a clear, coherent self and narrative, while those in marginalized situations may present a more complex, non-unitary self and a counternarrative that embraces ambiguity (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). Interracial families challenge ideas of distinct and separate racial categories and of separation on the basis of race.

Reprise and Implications for the Present Study

With the lack of in-depth qualitative studies and studies focusing on different members of interracial families, this study will contribute to the field through narrative inquiry with people in interracial families. With the increasing number and variety of interracial families, opening the discourse to everyone involved in these families contributes to our understanding of race and racial identity. Including participants of different ages and life circumstances adds a dimension that may problematize and add to complexities of meaning.

In recent years, more scholarly studies and popular books have focused on biracial and multiracial identities. Other studies have looked at different aspects of interracial families. Closely related are the development of racial identity and ideas about race by monoracial people in interracial families. Being a member of an interracial family allows everyone – Black, White, Latino/a, American Indian, Asian, mixed – opportunities to experience race in ways that monoracial people rarely do.

I listen to stories of people in interracial families and interweave these stories with my own in an attempt to promote connections and meaning. I retell participants' stories using experimental writing, which in itself blurs boundaries.

“Life and narrative are inextricably connected. Life both anticipates telling and draws meaning from it. Narrative is both about living and part of it” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, pp. 745-746).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

“It is said that history is written by the conquerors, literature by the survivors” (Benson, 2001). Marginalized people use stories to make meaning for those left out of the dominant culture’s history books. This relates to the subversive use of narrative inquiry by historically oppressed people who refuse to conform to the dominant paradigm. Narrative tends to become important when people are questioned or oppressed (Cornell, 2000). It is critical to favor stories rather than analysis (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) if we want to hear voices of people outside the dominant culture. Narratives can bring stories of liminal perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 2000) to awareness of those in the dominant culture, thus inciting possibilities of social change (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

The dominant paradigm puts forward an “either/or” epistemology, which alterity (otherness) can transcend (Ladson-Billings, 2000). People tend to define themselves in terms of what they are not. In this view, we need someone who is “other” to help us decide what we are not, because that helps us know who we are. Liminal (marginal, barely noticeable, in-between, transitional) groups are assigned the role of alter ego to the ideal self. By looking at liminal groups as “other,” we learn to define who we want to be. Liminal groups can subvert this role. From their unique perspective outside the mainstream, they have an advantage to their perspective and can see how the “dominant perspectives distort the realities of the other in an effort to maintain power relations that

continue to disadvantage those who are locked out of the mainstream” (Ladson-Billings, p. 263). The old adage, “you can’t see the forest for the trees” helps to explain this position. People within the mainstream are part of the trees in the center of the forest and find it more difficult to conceptualize the entire forest. People on the margins can see the forest and the trees, so they bring a broader perspective to the subject matter. Conveying a liminal perspective to narratives opens possibilities for change.

Feminist standpoint theories, critical race theories and the use of narrative inform data gathering, processing, and writing. Borderlands theories also speak to these issues. These theories encourage uses of context, crossing borders, ambiguity, storytelling, and voices of participants in constructing narrative and making meaning in research. As Yvonna Lincoln and Norman Denzin (2000) emphasize, now is the moment of postmodernism and beyond, “contingent, pluralistic, ambiguous, freed (or jettisoned) from the certainties of yesterday, decentered, noisy with previously unheard voices” (p. 1060). Gloria Ladson-Billings (2004b) says that postmodern and poststructuralist studies “attempt to push past conventional and essentialized thinking about race, class, and gender.” (p.) New stories are being told, multiple voices are being heard. I approach narrative inquiry with an appreciation of difference and different perspectives; intersubjectivity; individual positioning within the social construct and meanings; and sensitivity to the ongoing intersect of temporality, context, and interaction (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

“Narrative research is a process of inquiry that embraces paradox and cannot therefore be defined in linear terms” (Josselson & Lieblich, 1999, p. xi). Patricia Ewick and Suzan Silbey contrast hegemonic and subversive narratives, or stories that continue

the dominant culture's dominance and stories that turn things upside down so people can see things differently (Cornell, 2000). Stephen Cornell suggests distinguishing between "segregating and integrating [narratives]" with multiplicity narratives being subversive as "narratives of connection" (p. 50).

In a venture to hear from people who may not have positions that allow their stories to be heard, this narrative study asks participants in ambiguous circumstances (members of interracial families in a society that has attempted to essentialize race) to tell their stories with the researcher. In an ironic twist, three participants are in positions to teach and write using their life experiences.

People use stories to figure out how to live life more meaningfully (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In a radical transformation "from description to communication," creating meaning, encouraging compassion, and promoting dialogue become the critical issues (Ellis & Bochner, p. 748). As researchers, we need to consider whose stories get told and by whom (Cornell, 2000). If people who are in positions to get their stories told (published, reviewed in academia) put their own twist on the stories of marginalized people, those stories are distorted. When the researcher is White-identified, even with an American Indian ancestor, issues of power and dominance must be considered in eliciting and framing stories from participants. Ethics of the research include careful examination of implications of power or dominance in bringing out stories of people in positions of less power.

In seeking meaning of racial identity construction of people in interracial families, I look at their autobiographical stories around racial identity and family stories that have helped shape their ideas about race. Eakin (1999) posits storytelling as a way of knowing

and Pragatwutisarn (2002) describes autobiography as a way of identity. Through people's own stories or autobiography, each of us comes to construct our identity and find meaning. The process of narrative inquiry involves intersubjectivity of the researcher and participants. I tell my own story to inform readers of my perspective.

Methods and Methodology

Before I discuss the methodology, consider differences between methods and methodology. Methodology is the theory that drives inquiry, determining what is worth researching, how to formulate research questions, how to value authenticity, and how to choose methods (Schwandt, 2001). Methods often are considered the tools for generating data, such as interviewing, observation, and document analysis (Schwandt, p. 159).

Issues in Qualitative Research

For people trained in post-positivist methods and whose worldviews include an idea of reality as something that exists in a pure state outside of an observer's view, qualitative research – particularly on-the-edge narrative inquiry – may seem like a leap into an abyss of the unknown. Ideas of control and objectivity hold precedence in traditional research.

And that's the Truth

As we know more, we doubt more (Richardson, 1997). My idea of truth is what is evocative, the stories that stay with me as I stand in the space of inquiry, question and contemplate different meanings. Stories that call to action, that transform are truth.

As Art Bochner asks, "Why should caring and empathy be secondary to controlling and knowing?" (Ellis & Bochner, p. 746). Postmodernism suggests that

“representation is always partial, lived, and situational and that our self is always present ... partially present...” (Richardson, 1997, p. 91).

Rather than triangulation, in which three different points compare with one another, a crystal may offer itself as a more adaptable metaphor for what is traditionally considered validity. Its different facets invite diverse viewpoints, appreciating that it refracts internally and reflects externally (Richardson, 1997). Just as in light theory, light is both waves and particles, this metaphor opens us up to consider both/and ideas, such as being both Black and White, deconstructing the tendency of dualistic categorization in United States culture.

Claims to truth and knowledge in the context of critical race theory and qualitative research include the following questions, according to Norman Denzin (2000, adapted from p. 910): Does the research question stereotypes? Does it give primacy to concrete lived experience? Does it use dialogue? Does it demonstrate appreciation of beauty, spirituality, and love? Is it committed to social justice? Does it emphasize community and empowerment? These areas of truth and knowledge are relevant to me.

Laurel Richardson (1997) suggests that writing is itself a method of knowing. Poststructuralism “links language, subjectivity, social organization, and power” (p. 88). As Denzin (2000) points out, words have effects on people. The evocative nature of the writing transforms thinking and leads to action (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In addition to the writing, the engagement of the researcher with the participants matters. Descriptive validity includes the accuracy of data, such as quality of recordings and transcriptions (Rogers et al., 1999, p. 84).

Value of Stories

As a feminist, I see value in ordinary lives (Eakin, 1999), including my own. “The individual is both site and subject of discursive struggles for identity” (Richardson, 1997, p. 89). When marginalized people find a place to tell their stories, that is crucial for awareness of meaning that is rich and deep (hooks, 1989; Anzaldúa, 1990). Personal stories – narratives – allow identities to be created (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992).

Narrative inquiry gives space for appreciation of different perspectives; intersubjectivity; individual positioning within the social construct and meanings; sensitivity to the ongoing intersect of temporality, context, and interaction (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); openness to multiple meanings; the idea of silence and voice; and readiness to recognize opportunities for action and transformation. With these ideas in mind, I chose narrative inquiry for this study.

Researcher’s Perspective

I am the daughter of a woman who identified herself as 1/8th Cherokee, the adoptive mother of three biracial (Black-White) children, the grandmother of their seven children (Black-White, Black-White-American Indian, Laotian-White) and three additional grandchildren, and the stepmother of four children (White with American Indian ancestors). My mother’s Cherokee connection – always a part of our family narrative – played an important part in my family story and my personal identity development. My own children’s backgrounds and the experiences I had with them further opened my eyes to issues of race and racial identity.

My Interracial Family of Origin

Although I am not tribally affiliated, my mother's Cherokee heritage, appearance, and stories provided my earliest awareness of race and color. I first noticed color differences, observing the contrasts in appearance of my mother and her 11 siblings, and my mother and father. My mother and one of her sisters had straight black hair, dark brown eyes, and soft brown skin, so their appearance suggested that they were American Indian. One of my mother's brothers had similar but lighter coloring and a wave in his hair. He worked for a carnival as a fire-eater and sword-swallower and portrayed himself as Greek. (Later I heard he was a drug dealer.) The remaining siblings had lighter complexions, hair, and eyes; several had a wave in their hair. The other half of my parentage was my mostly Irish father who was usually addressed as "Red" because of his ruddy complexion and red hair. My father, as red Irish, sometimes identified my mother as Black Irish. I remember that he sometimes called my mother by the nickname "Black," particularly in response to her calling him "Red." This was in the late 1950s. Black Irish are sometimes identified as being descended from Irish and shipwrecked Africans or Spaniards, although these theories are often identified as myth (Tunesh, 2001) so it is possible that I have one drop of African blood. Some Cherokees identified as Black Irish in the 19th century in order to stay where they lived and not be sent West in the Indian Removal Act (Seabaugh, 2000). My parents' addressing each other by color names heightened my awareness of color.

Further complicating the color names is that when I was young, four major races were identified and called by the color names red, yellow, black, and white. *Red* referred

to American Indians, but my father who had reddish skin and hair and was called “Red” was White and my mother, who was American Indian, was brown in color.

When I was young, I usually said I was Irish, English, German, and Cherokee, and maybe a little Polish, but sometimes I added that I was Heinz 57 (referring to a brand of ketchup with 57 varieties of sauces and products) or a mongrel (mixed breed), so I had the idea of being mixed. I am a heavyset woman with long graying not-quite-straight dark brown hair with a prominent white streak, medium brown eyes, a large nose, and a fair-to-medium complexion with a reddish glow and a frequent red flush. When my daughter read this section, she objected to my use of the word heavyset to describe myself but we did not determine a more appropriate word to describe me.

When I was 8 years old, my elementary school class visited a museum in Kansas City, Missouri, and I was invited to try on a deerskin dress since I “looked the most Indian” of anyone in my class. I was thrilled as I slipped on the soft brown dress and modeled it for my classmates, reveling in the subtle swish of deerskin touching my legs. My partner points out that I resemble many women in the Tahlequah, Oklahoma area, home of the Cherokee Nation, Western Band; and paintings by Dorothy Sullivan of women representing the Seven Clans of the Cherokee Nation. When I mention my American Indian background to others, often they say they recognize that in me – some immediately and others after studying me for a moment.

All that aside, I am perceived as White, mainly due to my ruddy complexion and not-totally-straight brown hair. As a result, I have been a beneficiary of white privilege throughout my life and in the process of adopting transracially. This also informs my own racial identity development, in that I have some choice as to how to identify.

When I returned to school for my master's degree at Stanford University, I felt extremely marginalized. I heard about a support group for women of color, and asked if I could participate. I was told emphatically no, since I did not have enough blood quantum and am not tribally affiliated.

Doing genealogical research as I began my doctoral work in order to try to find a link to my named American Indian ancestor Washpot Annie, I discovered that my background is Chickamauga, a breakaway Cherokee group sometimes called Cherokee-Creek. At the time I was doing that research, I discovered that my mother had told an in-law that our family was "not just Cherokee, but Cherokee and some other tribe that started with a C," confirming what I otherwise learned.

When I told this story to Gray Wolf, who was visiting Garrison in August 2004, he reminded me that for many Native peoples, the names they called themselves meant "the people." For the Cherokee, it is Tsa-la-gi, which I knew.

I know that prominent Sioux author and retired history professor Vine Deloria, Jr. (1969/1988) disparages White people's claiming a "Cherokee princess" grandmother. (He said that almost every White person – except Jews – who came into his office claimed a Cherokee grandmother, usually a princess.) My mother never claimed to have a Cherokee princess in her grandmother line; Washpot Annie is not exactly a princess's name. I believe that my mother's mother had roots with the Chickamauga.

I am still adjusting to different ideas, that my ancestors came west prior to the Trail of Tears – to Arkansas, not Oklahoma – and that my grandmother did not live in Cherokee Territory when she married a White man and severed her tribal connections to pass as White shortly before the Dawes Final Rolls were taken early in the 20th century.

Apparently, it was not uncommon for Cherokees to claim whiteness by saying they were Black Irish (Seabaugh, 2000). Even though it is more than 100 years since my grandmother passed as White, the Chickamauga background is an important part of my identity, especially from my personal perspective.

This shifting identity is part of the ambiguity of a multiracial background, whether obvious or veiled. By learning complications to my family story, I experienced identity development as ongoing, lifelong, and changing, with racial ambiguity as an integral part, along with class, gender, and other aspects in context.

I am not exactly White and not exactly American Indian. I am marginal either way. Exploring the ambiguities of my multiracial background as a “whitish” person has helped me understand more about ideas of race, blood, identity, and privilege – an exploration that led to and informs this study.

My Interracial Adoptive Family

Before I married Rodger Placer, my first husband, a White man of German-English background, we agreed that we would adopt children who were considered “hard to place” because of our concerns about the overpopulation of the world. At that time (1968), a healthy non-White infant was considered hard to place. This categorization demonstrates the lesser value assigned to non-White people by the dominant culture (Dalmage, 2002; Pinderhughes, 1997).

Rodger’s cousin had married an African American man and had a biracial daughter. The story was that when the cousin told her Placer grandparents that she was marrying her husband, the grandmother had a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized

for a short time. By the time I joined the family, everyone seemed to get along. Rodger's cousin and her husband remain married and their grown daughter is a psychologist.

We had White friends and relatives (including another one of Rodger's cousins) who adopted Black, Korean, and mixed-race children before, during, and after the time we adopted our children during the 1970s. Our awareness of and friendships with others in interracial families showed us possibilities and challenges faced by others in similar circumstances. We made an effort to associate with others who had adopted across racial lines, as well as other families with Black members. My daughter Julie said she wished that we had had Black family friends so that we could go over to each others' homes, rather than an occasional visit with a temporary resident of our community. I also wanted that.

Adoption agencies were established according to and adhered to White middle-class values (Pinderhughes, 1997). Racism was so institutionalized that agencies recruited White adoptive parents even when they attempted to be open to Black parents, and White privilege made the sometimes long and difficult adoption process more palatable to White families (Pinderhughes). Thus, as prospective White parents interested in adopting hard-to-place children, we were received eagerly by adoption agency representatives.

We requested a healthy infant of any race or racial combination and either gender. We indicated that we thought a biracial baby might find greater acceptance with our families. Between 1971 and 1978, we adopted three healthy infants, all under 6 months; all identified as biracial. Each was born to a White mother and a Black father. Personnel from three different agencies in Iowa indicated to us that they had difficulty finding

adoptive homes for two of the children because of their racial mixture. I do not know what outreach, if any, the agencies made into the Black community at that time.

During the middle to late 1970s, attitudes toward transracial adoption changed radically, coming under fire from both Blacks and Whites. The National Association of Black Social Workers made a statement against transracial adoption in 1972, the year after we adopted our first son. The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 regulated the adoption of Native American children by White families and required continued tribal connections (Benson, 2001). The practice of adoption continued to change as fewer healthy White infants became available for adoption due to increased use of birth control and greater acceptance of children born out of wedlock. Transracial adoption of American-born Black, biracial, and American Indian babies declined and trans-country adoptions increased (Simon & Altstein, 2000).

After adopting biracial children and hearing the passionate feelings on different sides of the controversy over transracial adoption, I became more aware of the complexities of the issues of interracial families, racial identity, and race in the United States. Identification with my biracial children and their children opened my eyes to issues of race and privilege often invisible to White or White-identified people.

I did not know the words *institutional racism* when I was a child or when my children were young, but I experienced it with my children numerous times. Only when I was a middle-aged adult did I recognize that my mother's appearance may have limited her job choices. When I was growing up, she worked as a bean and strawberry picker and later as a housekeeper for a well-off family. When I accompanied her to the home where she worked, she taught me to keep my place. For example, I learned that if the rich

family's son offered me food or a drink, I could accept it; however, I was never to ask for food or drink.

When my son Benjamin was in middle school, his father and I attended a parent-teacher conference to be told that he was doing really well in a particular teacher's class. My swell of pride burst when the teacher continued, "He doesn't cause any trouble."

Using the intellectual and emotional resources I had at the time to help my children's identity development and their sense of belonging and security, I sought contact with other interracial and Black families and purchased Black-oriented books, dolls, toys, games, and magazines. Now that they are grown, my children and I talk about their adoptions, racial identity, privilege, and other experiences related to our interracial family.

When I chose to research my American Indian background, I considered that my exploration might help me understand my children's racial identity issues on a deeper level. It is possible that any of them could also have Native American ancestry, since the information we were provided at the time of their adoptions in the 1970s may not have been complete. Estimates are that a quarter to a third of African Americans has American Indian ancestry (Nash, 1999; Tatum, 2003). During the 1970s, the one-drop rule of identifying African Americans with any mixture as Black was prevalent, both from the white hegemony and the Black Power movement, so it is unlikely that any mixture with Native American or White would have been noted on the adoption records.

I know that two of my daughter's children and my stepdaughter's three children all have American Indian heritage. However, it is not just the American Indian part, but

the search for roots and identity that provided additional understanding of twists and turns in racial identity.

Going beyond sources that helped me as an individual, mother, and grandmother in an interracial family, such as *Ebony* magazine; children's books such as *What Color Are You?* (Walton, 1973); an early book on interracial adoption, *Children of Special Value* (Anderson, 1971); and studies of transracial adoption by Rita James Simon (Simon & Altstein, 1987), I chose to do research in the area of experiences of race and racial identity of people in interracial families in order to bring a scholarly focus to my personal experience. I hope that my study will contribute to the body of knowledge, through narrative inquiry, on how being a part of an interracial family is one of the many factors influencing racial identity construction and ideas about race. Stories that families tell influence family members in their racial identity development and finding their place in the circle. My hope is that the sharing of such narratives will bring more awareness and meaning of racial identity for people within interracial families so that they can be recognized and treated more respectfully and so that dualisms can be challenged.

Research Questions

The focus of this study is on people in interracial families; their stories about race and identity; race as it intersects with class, gender, age, sexual orientation, generation, and historical context. It explores how meanings of race and racial identity, derived in interracial families, blur boundaries intrinsic in the cultural hegemony and how stories told by interracial family members subvert dualism. Lisa Tillmann-Healy (2003) discusses the challenges of identifying research questions and objectives that are static, that is, are not dynamic enough to accommodate the fluidity of narrative inquiry. I wrote

the research questions with suggestions from one of my committee members and referred to them periodically while trying to maintain an open mind and flexibility. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the meaning of race for people in interracial families?
2. How do family relationships and dynamics influence thinking about race?
3. How do community, work, religion, and other contextual factors influence racial identity?
4. How do intersections of race, class, gender, generation, family, sexual orientation, and historical context shape racial identity?

Because of the nature of narrative inquiry, the guiding interview questions varied slightly according to the context and the stories participants told. These guiding interview questions (listed in Appendix A) were designed to evoke narrative, while providing a structure and focus for the interviews.

Participant Selection

I chose purposive sampling due to the nature of this study and qualitative research. I sought people who were part of interracial families, targeting locations where they would likely see my recruitment flyers and using snowball sampling by asking participants to refer others, and recruitment of people known to me. I wanted to find a balance of people – gender, race and racial mixture, educational level, geographic origins, age, work experience, and sexual orientation. I did not get much variety in religious background – all participants were raised with a background in Christianity, although not all continue a relationship to Christianity. Twelve people participated.

Recruitment

In order to increase the likelihood of finding diverse participants, I identified two Colorado churches with interracial families in which to request letters of agreement to place flyers (Appendix B) for soliciting research participants. Note that by selecting

churches for recruitment, I was less likely to find participants of diverse religious backgrounds.

One was a multiracial nondenominational church to which some friends belonged and which I had visited on occasion. I called the church late in 2003 to ask about their willingness to agree to display a flyer about my research project. The administrative assistant, also the pastor's wife, agreed, so I went to the church to get the signature for a letter of agreement to submit to the human research committee. She greeted me with a big smile and said she knew some couples who may want to participate. I explained that I had to obtain approval from the human research committee first and that I would return with the flyer when I did. In January 2004, I returned to the church, and the administrative assistant greeted me. I gave her a flyer and several cards with my contact information. The following Sunday, I attended the church. The pastor mentioned my research study during the announcement time, and his wife stood in the church foyer after the service handing my contact cards to people she thought might be interested.

Two couples (Scott and Jane, Maggie and Samuel) and one individual (Cindy) from the church contacted me that month to volunteer to participate. During my second interview with Cindy, I asked if her mother or brother might want to participate and provided information for her to give them. Her mother Kathi called and volunteered to participate. Six of the twelve participants came through the nondenominational church.

The other church is a liberal mainline denomination. I contacted the head of the governing board to ask permission to hang the flyer. She signed the letter of agreement, and after receiving approval from the human research committee, I hung the research study flyer on an announcement board. To my knowledge, no one made a verbal

announcement. No one contacted me from that church; however, I later contacted a person who was a church member and had seen the flyer. That person volunteered to participate.

I also requested cooperation in finding participants from advocacy offices at Colorado State University by asking them to provide letters of agreement to post flyers and/or give copies to people who expressed interest in interracial and multiracial issues. These advocacy offices included Native American Student Services; Asian/Pacific American Student Services; Black Student Services; El Centro Student Services; and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Student Services. One advocacy office director said that ordinarily she did not allow that but since her boss was on my dissertation committee and she had talked with her about it, she was willing for me to solicit people through her office. However, no one from the advocacy offices contacted me, and I removed the flyers in early April 2004.

I used snowball sampling for four participants by asking people I know and those who contacted me for their recommendations of others who might be interested in participating (Appendix C). I provided recommended potential participants with copies of the cover letter (Appendix D) and the flyer. I prepared letters to a number of people and sent them out a couple at a time. I did not send all the letters I had prepared, since I had to allow for the possibility that other family members of my participants might choose to participate. My daughter knew about my research and asked to participate. I set an upper limit of 25 participants and if each of my twelve participants had one additional family member who wanted to participate, I would have approached that limit.

Participants

Twelve people volunteered to participate. Each is part of an immediate family (i.e., mother, father, sister, brother, son, and/or daughter by birth, marriage, partnership, or adoption) that is interracial (in which two or more races as identified by the participants are represented).

I did not limit participants to a particular race or racial mixture although I am aware that Maria P. P. Root (2001) recommends such studies. I considered interviewing only individuals who were in interracial families that included people with African American and White identities since the first several study volunteers fit those racial designations (some also with American Indian). However, I chose to seek others partly because I wanted to make the point that race is not a Black/White dichotomy (Hodes, 1999). I thought that including not only participants of African American and White ancestry but also participants of other backgrounds would help more than it detracted. I understand that each different ethnicity has encountered particular types of oppression in the United States, so I address those issues in the literature review and in descriptions of participants' historical context.

The twelve participants are from different generations, socio-economic statuses, educational levels, and types of family (e.g., same- or different-sex partners [married or not], with or without children by birth and/or adoption, adult children and/or siblings in an interracial family of origin, stepfamilies). They range in age from 23 to 67. I focused on adults since they would have more experience in their racial identity development and have the maturity to consider ambiguity in the family racial makeup. I had permission to interview children but no families had children under 18 who wished to participate.

Five participants had taken ethnic studies courses of some kind. One said she did not think about racial identity until she began taking such courses – although she lived the experience. I did not expect those who did not take such courses to be as articulate about issues in racial identity and looked more to their stories of lived experience.

More than one person from the same family participated, including two couples, a mother and adult daughter, and my own daughter. I recognized that this could complicate confidentiality issues. Both couples asked to be interviewed together, and I honored their requests. I talked with my advisor and the human research committee about interviewing couples together and they agreed that I could. I adjusted the informed consent form to allow for specific consent for a participant to be interviewed with another family member. The woman and her mother were interviewed at different times. As I thought about analysis, I realized advantages to interviewing family members together: I knew that both people heard all the comments and did not wonder whether they wanted the other person to know what they said.

I used pseudonyms for all participants, their relatives, and communities except large cities; I disguised potentially identifying information to protect confidentiality. The only people for whom I did not use pseudonyms are my advisor, Jim Banning, and my partner, John Tracy, who are not research participants but are part of my stories.

Including the Researcher's Story

Autoethnography is part of the design in narrative inquiry (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As a component of the intersubjectivity of the researcher, I include my own story as part of the data and analysis. I explore what participants say about identity construction and making meaning by including myself as a member of an interracial

family. I shared some of my stories with research participants during interviews, related to the stories they told me. We co-constructed meanings as we shared stories with one another.

Researcher's Family Contributions

My children are over 25 years old. They have expressed interest in my studies during the last few years and particularly in my dissertation topic. Because of my daughter's communicated interest, I gave her the opportunity to participate in my pilot study, which she chose to do. Later, she asked if I would interview her for my dissertation, bringing up the topic herself and articulating her desire to participate. My sons have talked with me about race and identity as well. As I was in the final editing part of writing, I called my son Benjamin to check some of the stories I told.

To exclude my adult sons and daughter if they desired to participate would be contrary to feminist ethics. It would be unfair for me to talk about my perceptions of racial identity in our interracial family without providing my grown children an opportunity to contribute their own voices. Therefore, I created a special participation letter (Appendix F) and consent form (Appendix G) for my children, which were approved by the human research committee. The committee expressed concern that my adult children's participation be voluntary. I sent letters to my daughter Julie and my son Benjamin. Julie chose to participate; Benjamin did not respond to my letter and in order to make certain I was not coercing him, I did not follow up with a telephone call. I have continued to talk with him about my study. I did not send a letter to my son Matthew because at the time I was doing initial interviews, he was in a difficult transitional period. He did not have a reliable address when he was moving out of one living situation and

shortly thereafter, from one state to another. Previously and subsequently, I talked with him about my study.

Data Collection and Processing

I used interviews, observations, and artifacts such as photographs as part of the data. I used my personal documents such as journals and baby books and would have liked to expand the study to invite others to share similar documents with me, but because of time limitations, I did not do that. Several people showed me family photographs. Documents and artifacts bring in historical context and broaden the meaning of participants' stories. The choices that a participant makes in selecting items to share with the researcher have particular meaning, which is considered in examining the data. Interviews and observations took place in participants' homes, work places, a coffee shop, and an office in the building where I worked. When interviews were held in participants' homes, they readily shared photographs to illustrate their narratives. Two other participants showed me family photographs in their offices.

Lisa Tillmann-Healy (2003) suggests using friendship as method to undermine and disrupt the power imbalance of researcher and participants. She bases her ideas on established approaches to qualitative research, including interpretivism, intersubjectivity, and liberatory research. She says, "through authentic engagement, the lines between the researcher and researched blur, permitting each to explore the complex humanity of both self and other (p. 733). Interactive interviewing, in which the researcher shares personal and social experiences, is similar to friendship as method (Tillmann-Healy). Both interactive interviewing and participatory action research require collaboration and privilege lived experience (Tillmann-Healy). Friendship as method is in the feminist

tradition and involves “the practices, the pace, the contexts, and the ethics of friendship” (Tillmann-Healy, p. 734).

I treat participants with respect, honor their stories, and use their stories for humane and just purposes as Tillmann-Healy (2003) outlines. I was unable to go into the depth that Tillman-Healey did in her study described in her book, *Between Gay and Straight* (2001), although I believe that would be valuable. I saw most participants on occasions other than their interviews – around town, in church, on campus, at the farmers’ market, and in a doctor’s office, and in all cases, they greeted me in a friendly manner. Often we shared a hug initiated by them.

Several people I knew who did qualitative studies said they got tired of the data, even if they did not transcribe the tapes themselves. For the last 11 months, my participants have been part of my life – as I interviewed them, transcribed audiotapes, viewed videotapes, read transcripts, looked at photographs, saw them around town, sent follow-up letters and materials – and I think of them often, remember their stories, see visual images of their stories in my mind. I care about them; I hold them in my heart.

I asked permission to audiotape and videotape the interviews for the purpose of capturing nuances of the responses (i.e., facial expressions, emphasis of gestures, etc.). All participants gave permission for audiotaping, and all but one participant gave permission for videotaping. I transcribed all the tapes myself. I also asked permission to take photographs, with the understanding that I would use only photographs of hands in the write-up. All but one participant gave me permission to photograph. Several participants showed me photographs of their family members. Because of the nature of this study, I keep a journal of my thoughts and experiences since “... researchers must

examine, scrutinize, and critique ourselves" (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 740). An aspect of the rigor of the research is continual reflection on methodology decisions, data collection and meaning, and ethical issues within the study (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

I did two to three interviews of about 30 to 90 minutes each with each person, except that I did only one interview with my daughter. With two interviews with most participants, I hoped to get at deeper meanings of racial identity construction of people in interracial families. I did a pilot study with a White male adoptive father of biracial children and my adult biracial daughter, who was adopted as an infant. When the first pilot participant and I completed a telephone interview and a brief follow-up, I realized that we could have gone into much greater depth had the interviews been in person and allowed more time to explore complexities of the issues involved. In transcribing the pilot interview with my daughter, I realized that I rarely used the racial identity term she chose to describe herself. (She said mixed; I said biracial, which I did not notice as we talked.) The intricacy of issues within this pilot study helped me realize the importance of face-to-face and multiple interviews in order to allow participants a level of comfort to talk about ideas and tell their stories to get at deeper levels of meaning and to construct meaning from the narratives. The pilot study also increased my awareness of the importance of paying attention to language used by participants.

I provided participants with copies of transcripts and videotapes for those who wanted them, inviting their feedback. I would have liked to arrange for follow-up interviews to talk with each person after they read the transcript and perhaps the initial writing I did about them. I worked together with participants by co-creating narrative with those who were willing by sharing their individual sections with them, listening to

their feedback, and adapting what I wrote to reflect their input. I recognized that participants could tell secrets that they choose not to include in the narrative. One participant preceded a story with, “This is not going anywhere, is it?” I explained to him again about confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms and disguising information. I provided the participant with the description I wrote for the individual participant chapter, including that story, and received permission to use it.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations include the position of the researcher relative to the position of the participant, confidentiality, beneficence, and the ethic of caring (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Other ethical considerations include the participation of my own family and handling of data.

Confidentiality, Beneficence, and Caring

Because of the nature of narrative inquiry, I negotiated and renegotiated such issues as informed consent and confidentiality as the study progressed. When more than one person from the same family participated, I was open with each individual regarding what information I would share. In a collaborative project, each person is vulnerable to the others (Tillmann-Healy, 2003), so I was particularly sensitive to this possibility, and discussed it with the participants and my advisor. I pointed out to those who knew others in the study that people who knew them well might recognize them and asked if they wanted anything changed. I emphasized to each person that participation was voluntary and made it clear to each participant that she or he could stop at any time and discontinue participation. I wrote reflective notes regarding these issues as they arose so as to keep these ethical considerations utmost in my awareness and take appropriate action to

protect participants, such as conferring with my advisor or discussing confidentiality issues directly with participants. For one participant, I disguised salient aspects of his identity in order to protect his confidentiality. I recognize that each bit of context that is fictionalized takes the stories farther away from their meaning. For example, saying “Denver” conjures an image for those who know the city (although it might not be the particular image the participant means), whereas saying “a large metro area in Colorado” is vaguer and may leave people wondering, does she mean Denver or another metro area? Is there another metro area in Colorado? (For more thoughts on this area, see the story on context in chapter 4.)

My Own Family

Where my own adult children are concerned, the primary ethical consideration is that their voices be heard in the story of our interracial family. Imposing my own story by telling our family story through my eyes only is a way to establish dominance by a person in a position of more power by racial identity and familial position. Giving them an opportunity, should they wish it, to speak for themselves is more ethical than excluding their voices. I made it clear to them that their participation was voluntary and that participating or not participating was entirely their own decision. I mentioned this consideration to my daughter, explaining that I needed to make certain that she did not feel coerced to participate. She said, “But Mom, you are not like that.” Feminist thinking honors the voices of all participants and recognizes that meaning is co-constructed. We addressed issues of confidentiality at the beginning and throughout the process of data collection and review.

Although my sons did not participate in the study, I talked with them about it and shared our common stories I planned to use. My parents, brother, and two of my three sisters are deceased, so other than checking a couple of details with my surviving sisters, I did not seek input from my family of origin.

Technological Considerations

Recording and Transcription

The quality of recordings and transcriptions are salient (Rogers et al., 1999). Many researchers pay another person to transcribe their tapes for them; one person told me she received a \$3,000 grant for her dissertation and spent it all on transcriptions. I have done transcriptions in three of my jobs, and even though I have repetitive stress injury to my right arm, I chose to transcribe my own tapes to be closer to the data and save money. I chose to transcribe my comments and “um” and “uh” and other filler words. I indicated brief and long pauses. I used fillers and pauses more in the poetic representation and briefly analyze their uses in the “hesitations” section in chapter 8. A separate article would be needed to delve more deeply into the use of hesitations, which are important in themselves.

Toward the end of the interviews, I used a new digital recording device that uses Dragon Naturally Speaking® software. When I do further research, I plan to use it, but I was unable to make it work as it is supposed to. I trained it to my voice but it did not recognize the voice of the person I was interviewing, which differed in several ways from my own.

I ran into a few technical glitches, including an audiotape breaking, an unclear recording, an unusable audiotape recording, and a videotape that did not record the

sound. In each case, I had a backup. After transcribing each tape, I viewed the videotape or listened to the audiotape with transcript in hand to make changes.

Costs of Qualitative Research: Time and Money

Doing research is a costly process. In this university, professors persuade students to write dissertations that are short and sweet – preferably quantitative, go through the hoops and graduate. Most students are working, some at full-time jobs. I worked as a graduate assistant on a fellowship for over 3 years and as a co-evaluator on a grant-funded project for over 2 years (concurrently with the fellowship). The professors' advice, I believe, may come from consideration for students' financial situations and time limitations.

Doing a qualitative study is expensive. I purchased a transcription machine, an audio recorder, the memory stick recording device, and many tapes for the audio and video recorders. I was able to use a digital video camcorder through my fellowship. I also used my own older analog video camcorder. I took photographs with a film camera and had the film developed. I drove to several participants' homes. John drove the 9 hours each way to my daughter's town, where we stayed in a motel. Alexander mentioned that when he did his research, his brother provided a car for him to use and the gasoline. I provided copies of transcripts, videotapes or DVDs, photographs, and what I wrote about individual participants to them. This involved copy costs and mailing or driving costs. Making reading copies of a longer dissertation, buying final copy paper, and getting copies bound costs more.

I spent hundreds of hours transcribing tapes, viewing videotapes, taking trips to purchase more tapes, going through over 1,000 pages of transcript data, sorting stories,

composing poetic representations, going back and forth from the literature to analysis, writing, editing, listening to participants' feedback, re-writing, and editing yet again. Talking to a classmate, I discovered that she did not check her transcripts by re-listening to the tapes or read the transcripts more than once, but I felt that I needed the additional checks for accuracy. Some people discouraged me from doing a member check, but I felt that ethically I could not proceed without providing an opportunity for participants to read what I wrote about them and tell me what they thought if they chose.

I told a fellow doctoral student that one participant said things that were not congruent with the message I hoped to convey, and my colleague said, "Well, then, he's an outlier – just toss him out." What an interesting concept to get rid of marginalized people who are too far on the margins! Bochner and Ellis (1996) point out that even though what researchers write may be partial and selective, that does not mean it is acceptable to leave out stories that do not fit what we want to say.

I chose this type of study not because I do not like numbers or am afraid of statistical analysis, but because it is more congruent with my worldview and epistemology. One participant was telling me something that she said that statistics show, and then concluded, "But I don't believe in statistics anyway." I think statistics have a place, but qualitative research is more appropriate for my study.

Voice and Power

Participants include two Black-White interracial couples: Scott and Jane, Samuel and Maggie; Kathi, a White mother; Cindy, Kathi's multicultural daughter; Trixie, an African American woman; Francisco, a biracial (African American and Italian American) man; Alexander, a biracial (Japanese American and Mexican American) man; Ivy, a

mixed (Mesqualero-Apache, Yaqui and Mexicana) woman; Julie, my daughter, a mixed (African American, Italian, German) woman; and Oscar, the White father of transracially adopted Black children. I include a chart of the participants as Table 1.

When I envisioned this study, I thought about the opportunity for people who are marginalized due to their race or interracial relationships to express their voices. I did not think that I might have participants with doctoral degrees, but I did. Conversations with Alexander and Ivy, both university professors, led me to consider ironic implications of voice and power. Alexander conjectured that some people in academia might be more likely to read what a person with a Ph.D. said. Ivy talked about her mother and grandmother (who had minimal formal education) having strong voices. When I was transcribing Ivy's second interview, I wrote these observer notes:

As I was transcribing this I thought of an irony. Voices not being heard are in fact often not heard by the "average" person in this society. How many academics' writings are read by other than academics? I need to think more about this. Maybe academics think of themselves as elite and think that it matters only that other academic elites read their works and they don't care about "average" people. Who are the popular writers, writers who get read by thousands or millions of people? Neither marginalized people nor academics, most likely.

To some participants, I – as a White-appearing researcher – may have had a power position; to others, probably not. My education level was higher than some and lower than others, which I think made a difference to some people.

As an older female, I realize that some participants probably had notions about females' power or lack thereof and that age could have played a role. Of the five male participants, Francisco and Alexander, both biracial, were in more of a power-over position in terms of maleness and breadth and depth of knowledge in areas related to this study. Alexander, with his emphasis on negotiation and shared discourse, seemed more

intent on co-constructing the narrative. At some times, I felt as though I were Francisco's student. Oscar is older than I am and from a patriarchal background. However, he seemed to respect my position as a researcher so I felt that the power differential was not great. Scott is younger than my own children and I think my age, racial appearance, and education may have contributed to my being in more of a power position. At one point he said, "We're writing a book here" and Jane said they weren't really writing it, and I replied, "You are helping write it." I referred to that when I sent their section to them for review. They did not reply to what I sent. I do not know whether that means they were so busy with their jobs and children that they didn't have time to respond, they did not want to add anything, they liked it, or they didn't like it.

When I asked the first interview question of Maggie and Samuel, she said that she would answer first because she is outspoken, then gave Samuel permission to answer first. This indicated that she, a White female, had more power in the relationship with Samuel, an African American man. I think that may have played a role in my seeming to have more power in the research relationship, along with my educational level.

Maggie, Kathi, and Ivy shared gender-related stories in which women held lesser positions than men in the story. Maggie particularly talked of giving in to her ex-husband in their divorce in ways that she feels she would not today, being a stronger woman. She added that she does not go around singing, "I am woman; treat me right." Ivy shared stories of her mother's and grandmother's strength in addition to her mother's deference to her father. Jane implied some gender related issues in some of her stories. Trixie, Cindy, and Julie told stories related to race and gender.

As a person from a lower socioeconomic class background (with tapes of “always defer” still running in my head) and a first generation college graduate, I felt inadequacy on my own part, which may have made me somewhat less inclined to exhibit power in the research relationships. I feel that this background also helped me connect with others who grew up in some economic deprivation, particularly Maggie, Kathi, Ivy, and Samuel, and to some extent, Alexander.

That said, I, as the researcher, chose which of the participants’ many stories would grace the dissertation, worked participants’ words into poetic representations, photographed participants and reproduced photographs of their hands (except for Cindy, who did not want to be photographed), wrote and presented workshops on the material participants shared with me, and gained a terminal degree in my field through my work with them. To lessen the power differential, I asked whether they wished to be audiotaped, videotaped, and photographed; I shared transcripts and tapes as they desired; and I shared what I wrote in their individual sections, inviting their feedback. Four participants called and said either that what I wrote was “wonderful” or “good” or they liked it but wanted to suggest some changes. In each case, I incorporated suggested changes. I did not disagree with participants’ feedback and wanted to honor their voices. Had I disagreed, I could have included what they said along with my own thoughts.

Also, I told each person she or he could stop at any time. At the end of Kathi’s second interview, she said she was finished, so we stopped. Participants chose whether to continue and whether to respond to transcripts, tapes, and written individual sections.

As far as my daughter Julie is concerned, even though I am her mother, I think we diminished the power differential in several ways. She approached me to ask to

participate; I had not planned to ask her. We negotiated times for her interview and feedback. She objected to some terminology I used and I changed it. In one case, I included what I originally said and what she said about it. We also talked about what I should say about our family and I listened to what she had to say.

Data Analysis

Bringing in theoretical perspectives from the conceptual framework delineated in chapter 2, I coded the data by hand, even while resisting the idea of coding as reductionist. I considered using QSR NVivo software, for which I had received training, but in the end I decided that would place another additional level between me and the data. I feel that the narratives themselves held more importance than anything I can say about them. I examined the data from perspectives of racial identity development theories, critical race theories, feminist standpoint theories, and family systems and symbolic interactionism theories to determine links and relationships. The process of iteration was continual as I delved more deeply into theories and related them to the data, and connected the data to the theories.

I looked at the narrative in terms of language used, structure, spaces in the discourse, and what is not said (areas emphasized in the literature left unaddressed by a participant) (Rogers et al., 1999). Narrative implies openness to multiple meanings; the idea of silence and voice; and readiness to recognize opportunities for action and transformation (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). A careful examination of narrative can reveal layers of meaning in metaphors used, implications of patriarchal and liberatory language used, and levels of compliance with and rejection of cultural rules and expectations. Further analysis can delve more deeply into how these relate to racial identity of

individuals in interracial families. I could have written two additional different dissertations with the current data, each one focusing one of these aspects.

I wrote reflective memos and journal entries relative to the process of data collection, methodological challenges, and ethical considerations. These memos and journal entries added to the authenticity of the analysis, providing grounding and increasing the rigor of the study (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As a participant observer, I continually examined my biases and looked for meaning in my own narratives, considering how those related to the narratives of the other participants.

The construction of narrative identities includes the selection, plotting, and interpretation. Inviting participant input increases the opportunities for the voices of participants to be heard (Cornell, 2000). I provided each participant with a copy of their individual sections, inviting their feedback. By inviting participant input on their narratives, I widened the ways their voices might be heard.

The process of becoming close to the narrative and reflecting on its meaning is an ongoing cyclical journey. The intersections of race, class, gender, generation, and sexual orientation are complex and dynamic (Collins, 2000b), so I maintained an awareness of the intersecting influences on each aspect through the use of reflective memos and journaling. I considered issues of narrative and the balance of power (Pragatwutisarn, 2002) – who gets to narrate whom and whose version is told (Cornell, 2000), bringing in these ethical and social justice considerations throughout the analysis and interpretation.

Compendium

In summary, the methodology of this study allows the bringing together of personal and academic discourse (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). The purpose of this study is to

listen to people in interracial families tell their experiences stories of race and identity. Personal stories – narratives – allow identities to be created (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992) and narrative lies at the heart of many ethnic identities (Cornell, 2000; Spickard & Burroughs, 2000). “The power of narrative as a source or representation of identity comes from its sense-making properties” (Cornell, p. 44). Through narrative, one can delve deeply into scholarly theories and ideas, using language that is understandable to people outside of academia (hooks, 1989).

As I was writing, I came across a dissertation (not in my topic area) by Judy Erskine Lawton (1997), which integrates experimental writing and poetic representations within more traditional analytic expectations. I emailed her and she recommended that I read *Fields of Play* by Laurel Richardson (1997). Using ideas from Lawton and Richardson, I integrated experimental writing and writing as inquiry into this dissertation. Our school provides a particular format for doctoral students to use. I adhered to the format in some ways and deviated in others. The intentional shifts from academic prose to narrative to description to poetry question the foundations of the educational system as it stands today in this state. Richardson suggests that this experimentation might best be left to tenured professors since they have already established themselves within the academy.

I experienced a continual tension between institutional expectations and feminist leanings – how far can I go from the center without being so marginalized that I do not pass? Can I challenge the institution that would grant my degree and still receive a degree?

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE ON NARRATIVE

Story/telling

Western adults tend to judge a good story by its conformity to “prefabricated schemata” with a clear beginning, middle, and end (Trinh, 1989, p. 142). I resist that constrictive in the ways that I organize the dissertation, present the stories, and circle around to other stories.

Stephen Cornell (2000) talks about three aspects of the narrative process: selection, plotting, and interpretation. Participants selected the stories they told me and I selected the stories I included in the dissertation. Participants plotted their stories and I sometimes linked their stories to those of other interracial families or multiracial people. Participants often interpreted their own narratives and I added my interpretive layer.

I attempted multivocality in my research presentation (Pink, 2001) through the use of participants’ narratives; poetic representations I created using words from participants’ transcripts and sent to them for feedback; my stories; photographs of participants’ hands; my analysis, examining participant stories through several lenses described in chapter 3; and a more traditional background in the literature review. Although I strive to highlight participants’ stories, I recognize a dilemma that because this is my dissertation, my voice carries more weight in terms of recognition in the academic community and a reward (a doctor of philosophy degree) based on what I do

with others' word and pictures. Am I using participants' words to my own ends (Pink, 2001)?

I chose which stories to include and how to include them, although I provided transcripts, videotapes, photographs, and written copies of individual sections to each participant. I was ready to listen to what participants said relative to the material I gave them; however, I think that most participants seemed to expect that I would interview them and they would give me their words to use in my research. Only four participants called to give me feedback on their individual sections. Explaining more upfront about collaboration and negotiation may have encouraged participants to participate more fully in the creation of their representations. My time and money limitations may have constricted my ability to negotiate a more collaborative research project.

Is democratic representation possible in an academic dissertation (Pink, 2001)? I ask the reader to consider these issues as you read.

In addition to telling about how I use narrative, I use narrative to reveal the use of narrative. This style follows Ellis & Bochner's (2000) demonstration of using narrative when contributing a chapter about narrative to the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

"... Truth does not make sense. It exceeds measure: the woman storyteller sees her vouching for it as a defiance of a whole system of the white man's lies" (Trinh, 1989, p. 150).

Marginalized Voices

Scene: A small office converted from the second bedroom of a modest third-floor apartment in a university town. Two computer carts face the east wall, separated by a cart with printer and scanner. Aging beige monitors sit on each computer cart. Kenyan, Egyptian, Hmong, and ancient Burmese art hang on the east and north walls along with

a multicultural calendar. Diplomas from Iowa State University, Truman State University, and Stanford University hang on the west wall, along with John's clinical social work license. A baby crib piled high with toys, high chair, and tricycle faces the west window. Stacks of papers, photographs, and books fill shelves on the north and south sides of the room. Four file cabinets sit in the southwest corner with boxes of papers nearby.

It is October 2004. John and I feel the pressure of finishing our dissertations before the semester is over. Earlier in the day, his computer crashed. I remembered that I had a laptop loaner from school, and he set it up. We sat back down to work, and he started talking.

"I realized that Johnny [the child] was continually marginalized by the rich people – those in power. Even in kindergarten, he was sent to the back of the room when he didn't want to count the faded, dirty rods."

Suddenly I remembered what happened to me in first grade.

"My teacher taped my mouth shut."

"She what?"

"My first grade teacher taped my mouth shut when I was talking out of turn. I guess you could call that silencing, huh? What's interesting is that when we went down to Arkansas to pick beans and strawberries, and we lived in the labor camp, I was too young to go to school – they didn't offer kindergarten – so I would wait at the labor camp entrance for the big kids to get home from school and I would tell stories. A lot of kids would stay around and listen to me. But when I got into school, I was silenced."

"I can't believe your teacher taped your mouth shut."

“Well, remember when Yolanda [age 2 ½] was visiting a few weeks ago? I took her over to the School of Education in the stroller, and all the way over she was chattering about this and that. When we got into the building, she wouldn’t say a word. She stood at the doorway of one professor’s office and he asked her a question and she didn’t say anything. I told him that she had talked all the way over to school, but when she got into Education, she was silent. The professor said, ‘That’s the way we like them. She would be good in education.’ And I thought, I think he is trying to make a point about you and me being outspoken and challenging the dominant paradigm.”

“I think you are right. The people in power don’t really want to hear the people from the margins.”

Context

Scene: Bedroom in the southeast corner of the apartment described above. John and I sleep in the double bed beside a desk with shelves of photographs sitting on it. A large cabinet in one corner of the room holds thousands more photographs in boxes, some sorted into categories, others not. Two chests of drawers sit under photograph collages – one of flowers and the other of our grandchildren. An assortment of flutes and rhythm instruments lie on the top of a small bookshelf next to one of the chests. It is August 2004.

A hot flash awakened me. I turned onto my back and threw off the covers. The cat meowed and moved away from me. John continued to breathe deeply, and I was relieved that I hadn’t awakened him. My thoughts turned to my dissertation. Will I use my cat’s real name in the dissertation? I wondered. She was not a research participant and I did not anticipate any situation that could be construed as violating her confidentiality. Besides,

she came to us at the age of 5 with her name – Sheena. It did not have particular meaning to John or me but when she heard her name, she pricked her ears and sometimes even turned to look at us.

It's different with my research participants, I thought. For many of them, their names hold a great deal of significance, even more than Sheena's name holds for Sheena. I visited one participant who wore a commercial sweatshirt with the name the person shared with a famous character. I could not include that in the person's narrative because of concerns about protecting confidentiality, even though when we started our first interview, this person said, "You can use my real name. I have nothing to hide."

Three participants used their real names as significant to their narratives. I knew that I could not use their real names and could only tell about their use of their real names as I shared their narratives. However, removing their real names – while protecting the participants – decontextualizes their stories.

John stirred beside me.

"You're awake early."

"Hot flash led to a flash of insight."

I pulled the covers back over me and turned toward him.

"I was thinking about the ethics of confidentiality and the ethics of providing context in narrative. Like for example, the cat – if I take her out of context, how much meaning am I taking away?"

"You mean like if you call the cat a dog?"

"Exactly. A lot of her meaning derives from her being a cat. If, to protect her confidentiality, I call her a dog, I would be taking her out of context."

I smiled and put my arm across his chest as I continued talking.

“Seriously, though, one of my participants has a name from an African language – I don’t even know if I should say which African language. Her name plays a significant role in her narrative, particularly in one story. Of course I will talk around it when I relate the story since that is my agreement with the human research committee and I understand the need for confidentiality. Even so, doing that removes the story from some of its context. A strong value of narrative is that it is within context.” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The radio came on to the NPR station. Sheena jumped off the bed and walked out of the room.

“I see what you mean. A lot of complex interrelated issues are involved in narrative. It’s not as straightforward as ANOVA [a statistical measurement].”

As I brushed my teeth, I thought back to when I told my first advisor, a quantitative researcher, about my intent to do a study on people in interracial families. I told him that I appreciate that not everyone fits into a neat little box.

“I WANT people to fit into neat little boxes,” he told me. “It makes running the statistics so much easier.” We agreed that it was time for me to find a different advisor.

Weeks later, when I was deep into the writing process, I discovered Laurel Richardson’s book, *Fields of Play* (1997). The day after I received the book, I sat at breakfast with John, eating Cheerios with bananas, fresh blueberries, and fresh peaches.

“Do you remember how I was talking about the ethical problems of context and confidentiality?”

“Yes.”

“Well, Laurel Richardson (1997) – in that book I just got – said that if you use pseudonyms, that is a kind of fiction. So in order to meet the academic requirements of protection of human subjects, we necessarily fictionalize our accounts.”

“That’s interesting, especially when the professors keep talking about truth and reliability and validity.”

“Yes, I think it’s ironic. And what is truth? You can use facts to disguise or obscure the truth. We talked about that a lot in our journalism classes at Stanford. Actually, the standards for format, content, and methodology required in many academic settings – including ours – in their assumptions of objectivity and truth dismiss the deeper truths that we can tell in more experimental ways, such as poetry, stories, and images. Laurel Richardson (1997) discusses the ethical implications of that in her book, also.”

“Highlight those parts. I want to read them, too.”

The cat meowed and John set his nearly empty cereal bowl on the floor for her. I turned back to *Fields of Play*.

Power of Story

Paula Gunn Allen (2003) says that “in the wisdom of the Laguna Pueblo tradition, we are the stories” (p. 22). Stories establish identity (Burroughs & Spickard, 2001; Richardson, 1997).

Shari Stone-Mediatore (2000) identifies Chandra Mohanty’s insights. She says, “this arduous and creative process of remembering, reprocessing, and reinterpreting lived experience in a collective context—and not the mere ‘substitution of one interpretation for another’—transforms experience, enabling one to claim subjecthood and to identify with oppositional struggles.”

Counternarrative contests the hegemony since the hegemony depends upon those who are oppressed to collude with it. When marginalized people follow rigid guidelines for entry into and advancement through the academy, the hegemony continues. If lived experience, stories, auto-narrative writing, and creative expression of unspoken truth are discounted within the academy and no one speaks out, where is our path to non-dualistic, non-objective, and non-objectifying thinking?

Feminist theorists Sandra Harding, Rosemary Hennessy, and Dorothy Smith “value marginal experience narratives ... because experience-oriented writing brings into public discussion questions and concerns excluded in dominant ideologies, ideologies which sustain and are sustained by political and economic hierarchies” (Stone-Mediatore, p. 120).

Storytelling acknowledges that the past and the future are part of the present (Ortega, 2001; Trinh, 1989). Shari Stone-Mediatore (2000) suggests that rewriting identity “challenge[s] discursive colonization and suggest[s] cross-border, cross-cultural solidarities”(p. 122). This drive for connection queries the pressure for dichotomies and separations (Burroughs & Spickard, 2000). In this way, the past is restoried within the present, opening possibilities for the future (Stone-Mediatore).

“The experience that facilitates oppositional discourses consists of tensions between experience and language ... endured subjectively as contradictions within experience—contradictions between ideologically constituted perceptions of the world and reactions to these images endured on multiple psychological and bodily levels” (Stone-Mediatore, p. 122).

In hearing and reading stories, listeners and readers bring their own stories and co-construct meaning. They “... hear the text’s call to rethink the stories we tell of our own worlds” (Stone-Mediatore, p. 123).

Blurring the color line crosses borders ruled as uncrossable – even though people had been crossing them for thousands of years. “A considerable amount of feminist thinking today works across borders in ways that unsettle familiar philosophical and political frameworks” (Narayan & Harding, 2000, p. vii). Norman Denzin (2000) writes about the use of language to bring people together.

Poetic Representation

I chose to use poetic representation as part of the narratives introducing the research participants, using works by Laurel Richardson (1997) and Judith Lawton (1997) to inform the process. When I first heard about this as a possibility, I thought this was a wonderful creative expression and started writing a poem about one participant. Then I read about it and learned that ethically, the poetic representations use the participants’ words from the transcripts (Richardson, Lawton). As suggested, I used spacing to indicate pauses, emphases, and changes in focus. The poetic representations are narrative poems, using participants’ words with spacing, repetition, and changed word order to represent what they were saying. Participants who responded to my requests for input said they liked the poetic representations. One said the poems were not what she expects in poetry but she liked them anyway.

I have written poetry for many years and have a few poems published in regional anthologies. Although I had not written many poems after starting the doctoral program, I thought of how I was able to present multiple layers of truth through poetry in a way that

prose narrative did not convey. In his interviews, Alexander told me about his mother telling him he had beautiful hands “that turn pages of library books/not raisin trays/hands not scarred by the earth” when I started to photograph his hands. That poetic excerpt gripped my emotions and I found myself thinking of it often throughout the rest of my research and writing. I decided to write poems to convey some of the participants’ stories, using words from the transcripts of their interviews (Richardson, 1997).

Story/Time

A story told is a story bound to circulate (Trinh, 1989, p. 134).

In addition to the poetic representation, I include stories told by participants during the course of the interviews. I listened to their stories while I sat with them and asked questions and told related stories. I listened to their stories on the audiotape as I transcribed them. I listened to most of their stories as I watched them on videotape. I read the stories in the transcripts.

So many stories waited to be told and retold. I created poetic representations with some of them; I included some in the intercalary space; I repeated some with minor editing in the story section for each participant; I recounted others in examples throughout the dissertation; I included some as prose narrative and poetic representations in chapters 7 and 8.

The past, present, and future come together as stories are told and circulated. Each retelling may vary from other tellings; many of the stories shared with me were family stories that had passed through generations and became part of the family identity. Stories included references to the future as the person sat in the present to bring the story to life

again, and sometimes again in a subsequent interview. “Each gesture, every word involves our past, present, and future” (Trinh, 1989, p. 122).

CHAPTER FIVE: VISUAL IMAGES

Just as the use of experimental writing encourages different perceptual interpretations by the researcher and the reader (Richardson, 1997), so visual images in their ambiguity open possibilities for additional layers of meaning (Pink, 2001).

Experimental writing holds reduced status in academia; so, too, most social sciences tend to marginalize visual information – or at least, visual representation (Emmison & Smith, 2000), particularly when they try to incorporate visual images as a supplement to scientific writing (Pink).

Setting the Stage

Use of Visual Images in Research

Current use of visual images in research is often interdisciplinary (Pink, 2001) as is this narrative study. Anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and media studies are primary disciplines that use visual images (Emmison & Smith, 2000; Pink). Historically, both anthropology and sociology tended to look at the use of visual images from a perspective of representation of reality (Pink), with anthropology more inclined to use visual images, particularly of the “other” (Emmison & Smith). Sociology has tended to place more credence on written words (Emmison & Smith). Collier and Collier’s work in anthropology has this orientation of objective social science (Pink). Clifford, in the 1980s, said that ethnographies tell only part of a story and are “inherently partial”

(Clifford, 1986, as cited in Pink, p. 8). Pink encourages rethinking the use of visual research using postmodern critique.

Visual images are becoming more acceptable as part of research (Pink, 2001). Factors include changes in theories of research, epistemologies, improved technology, greater familiarity of people with visual imagery, and increased expectations for visual representations (Pink).

Transformative Potential of Visual Research

The ambiguity of visual images opens viewers to consideration of multiple meanings (Pink, 2001). When facing different ways of looking at research, viewers and readers may come to deeper levels of insight. Visual research can provide an opportunity for transformation (Pink).

Emmison and Smith (2000) talk about images being seen as “subversive, dangerous, and visceral” (p. 14). The use of images in counternarrative can be transformative (Trinh, 1989). A caution is the need to take care to avoid exploitation and invasiveness (Emmison & Smith).

Visual Research as More than Photographs

Emmison and Smith (2000) make the point that people tend to equate visual research with visual images, particularly photographs. They describe studies in which visual descriptions are used, with or without photographs, and explain that often photographs are used merely as illustrations. They emphasize that an image differs from what the observer sees and that the significance of visual research is that the visual is considered, not whether an image is included (Emmison & Smith).

When analyzing photographs and other visual data, it is important to consider the content, the referent, and the context, including the context of how the photograph is used (Emmison & Smith, 2000). As an example, the content of the photograph in Figure 5 is a woman's hand on a hairy dog. The referent is the research participant Kathi Morgan and her little dog Tiko. The context is that when I entered her home, she identified her dog as her "problem child" and when I went to take her hand photograph after the interview, she placed her hand on the dog, indicating closeness and connection to the dog. I sent her the photographs I took, so the context became broader, but as she did not tell me what she thought of the photographs, tape, or transcript, some of the context is out of my hands.

Why I Chose Visual Representation

Pink (2001) writes about visual ethnography. Although this study is narrative rather than ethnography, overlap occurs and auto-ethnography is part of narrative. I chose to incorporate visual representation – as more than illustration – into this study, based on my personal history and orientation and current cultural issues. Visual representation plays an important role in identity in culture (Pink, 2001).

Family and Photography Background

When I was in elementary school, my family lived in a small rented house with a cistern and an outhouse in a rural Missouri area near orchards and farms. My father hauled water for drinking and cooking since the cistern water was unsafe. Just before my next older sister graduated from high school, he called me over and handed me a box. He told me it was for my sister's graduation. I wondered why he was giving me a gift when it was my sister's special time. I opened the box and there was my first camera, small and pale aqua. It took square photos with black and white film. Even as I write about this,

tears come to my eyes. Maybe he gave it to me so I would take pictures of my sister's graduation. Maybe he wanted to acknowledge my penchant for visual representation.

I started photographing our cats. The cats were discarded by people who drove down our winding country road and dumped them out of their cars: a paper bag full of kittens or an unwanted adult cat. The cats made their way to our home, where they found table scraps and water set outside, plenty of birds and mice to hunt nearby, other cats for mates, and an 11-year-old girl who welcomed them, named them, and photographed them. Before long, I began photographing family members.

When I graduated from eighth grade, my father gave me a Brownie Bulls Eye camera, which I used until it wore out. I keep it as a memento. Throughout high school and college, I did not save to buy a car – I spent most of my money on film and developing. I became the family photographer and historian. One of my nephews, now a man with teenaged sons, said that when he was little, he thought I had three eyes – the two human eyes and the camera eye. I continued to take thousands of photographs in the ensuing years, and remember each camera, including two others that I wore out.

Visual Focus

I have created family books with visual images and narratives, children's story books for my grandchildren using family photographs, card games with photographs and family information, family calendars, and personal greeting cards. For my fellowship, I developed a brochure about the local National Science Foundation GK12 project, built and maintained the web site, and took photographs and videos of field activities. I used the school's Sony digital camera and camcorder in addition to my own photographic and video equipment.

The idea of interviewing people without creating and considering visual images seemed so incomplete, so lacking in who I am as a person and a researcher, I requested and received permission from the human research committee to videotape and photograph participants who assented. The dearth of visual images in research seems akin to the removal of the human body as an analytical category (Emmison & Smith, 2000). I talked to people embodied in the flesh, people who experience life within their bodies, whose social interactions and personal identity are interrelated with their physical appearances and attributes. I wanted to consider the visual image of participants within their lived contexts, both in my descriptions and in visual depictions.

I created visual images (still, moving, or both) of every participant. The visual images helped open my eyes to deeper meanings, particularly since I am extremely visually oriented. In addition, I used notes of visual contexts and held images in my visual memory of those contexts and stories participants told.

Creating and Using Visual Images

When participants read the informed consent forms, I indicated that if they assented to being videotaped or photographed, they needed to initial those statements. Cindy chose not to be photographed and Ivy chose not to be videotaped.

Negotiating and Sharing Photographs

For participants who assented, I set up a camcorder on a tripod to tape interviews. In a sense, the camcorder was set up to record visual notes, but I recognize that it recorded representations, not visual facts (Pink, 2001). I created a DVD or VHS tape for every participant who wanted one (Scott and Jane, Maggie and Samuel, Kathi, Francisco, Alexander, Trixie).

I took photographs of willing participants – casual posed amateur photographs, similar to photographs I take of my family members. For the most part, people stayed where they were sitting for the photographs. I asked Maggie and Samuel to move closer together, as they were sitting on different sofas. Some people asked me where or how I would like them to pose; others posed where they were. Jane brought their babies into the photographic space. Most people smiled for the photographs when I aimed the camera.

Thinking it might be less distracting and time-consuming, I used a simple point-and-shoot camera. In the future, if I were giving greater weight to photographic images, I would allow more time to use an SLR camera on a tripod and take more photographs, working toward artistry.

I photographed participants' hands separately, with an agreement that I would use photographs of only their hands in any publication or sharing with others. I gave copies of all photographs to participants I photographed. Participants chose where to place their hands. If they asked how I wanted them to pose their hands, I suggested placing their hands together. If they did not ask, I photographed them as they posed. Kathi placed her hand on her dog; Trixie and Alexander both placed their hands on bright solid-color material for backgrounds; Jane placed the children's hand on hers and Scott's.

As Pink (2001) says, the visual images may be used in different ways by the researcher and the participants. Kathi indicated that she wanted a copy of the interview tapes to show her children. At a chance encounter in town, Maggie told me that she noticed in the video that she used her hands a lot when talking and had determined to keep her hands still. I encouraged her to continue to use her hands, saying that was a part of who she is and added that many people use their hands during conversations.

Alexander related his intent to use a portion of the video of one interview in classes he taught. When I saw Trixie after the completion of the interviews, she commented that she had watched her video and found it interesting.

Participants who received tapes and photographs may view them, share them with others or display them, and talk about them with family members and others. No participant asked me for extra copies of visual images I provided, although they could obtain extra copies through other means (e.g., copying, scanning). Visual images are open to multiple layers of meaning, which may differ among viewers and change across time and according to viewers' experiences (Pink, 2001).

I created a collage of the hand photographs, which I showed to my family members and academic colleagues. I used visual images of participants' hands in overheads at a conference presentation, in print format in this dissertation, and in a PowerPoint presentation, which I showed in a talk at my university and for my oral defense.

Several participants indicated that they liked the photographs and some indicated that they liked the videotapes. In most cases, I sent the videotape or DVD after all the interviews, but gave participants photographs at the second interview, so they were more likely to comment on the photographs. One participant commented on her hand photograph when she gave me feedback on her individual section.

Stories about Visual Images

The people I interviewed in their homes – Scott and Jane, Maggie and Samuel, Kathi, Alexander, and Oscar – shared photographs of family members. Maggie and Kathi told stories related to the photographs they showed me, while the others told me who the

people were or told about them. Francisco, in his office, pointed out photographs of his wife and children. A photograph of Trixie's sons hung on her office bulletin board, and I noticed it when she talked about one son's wearing an Afro hair style as a sense of racial pride.

I showed photographs of my family to most participants, having received permission from my family members to share their photographs. The use of photographs to share visual information about family members emphasized the intersubjectivity of the research. Some participants noted similarities between their families and mine. I told stories about my photographs; participants told stories about their photographs. This sharing of stories and photographs provided additional layers of meaning for this narrative study (Pink, 2001).

Photography and Power

As a female, I am not a participant in the "male gaze" (Pink, 2001) but I represent a male-dominated institution, higher education. My taking photographs and videotapes as an academic researcher may give me a position of power over the participants. By talking about my reasons for wanting visual images and the uses I planned to make of them, and negotiating with participants about whether I could photograph and videotape them and where and how I would take the visual images, I may have lessened the power position (Pink, 2001). By giving participants copies for their personal use, I shared with them as I do with my friends (Tillman-Healy, 2001).

Using Visual Images in Analysis

Although I may have gone into the research with a mindset that I would be collecting data through the visual images, my awareness of images as representations of

partial truth and a place for negotiation of meaning among participants and researcher (Pink, 2001) increased as the research progressed and I participated in a visual research class, reading books and articles and sharing in class discussions. I grew to understand visual research as visual observations not photographs (Emmison & Smith, 2000) – although it can make use of photographs – and included my observations in descriptions of participants within their contexts during the interviews and at other times.

In some ways, I used the visual images as data with recognition that they are more than data. Emmison and Smith (2000) discuss whether or how photographs can be considered data.

I watched the interview tapes before interviewing participants a second or third time; I watched the tapes with transcripts in hand, making notes of looks and gestures, and words I missed or misconstrued in transcribing; and I watched the tapes again as I was writing participants' poetic representations and interview summaries. I re-listened to the audiotape of the person I did not videotape. I took the photographs with a film camera and scanned the images of hands. I created a collage of the participants' hands. I kept the hand collage and individual photographs near my work space and often looked at them. I wrote physical descriptions of participants, using my memory, field notes, videotapes, and photographs.

When contemplating interviews and participants, I considered the connections between the spatial images of the settings and the participants (Emmison & Smith, 2000). The lived visual spaces – participants' homes, offices, and other meeting places – and participants' location in those spaces relative to my location provided visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and olfactory cues full of meaning beyond visual and auditory representations. I

reflected on the meaning of the choices participants made for interview locations and on implications for our power relationships (Pink, 2001).

Phenotype and Visual Images

One aspect of racial identity is a person's phenotype, or physical features including skin color, hair type and color, eye shape and color, body shape, facial features such as nose size and shape, and facial structure (Root, 2003, 2004). Although Root says that phenotype does not necessarily relate directly to an individual's racial identity (e.g., a person who has light skin, blonde hair, blue eyes, and a narrow nose may identify strongly with her or his Black heritage), it often is significant in how others relate to that individual. People without a readily identifiable racial category associated with their phenotypes may frequently encounter strangers who question them about what they are or where they are from (Chideya, 1999; Gaskins, 1999; Root, 2003, 2004), as in Cindy's and Julie's stories.

Physical Descriptions

I find it ironic that many academic works relating to racial identity neither include nor describe visual images of research participants. Some works by scholars include photographs on the book cover, sometimes apparently for illustrative purposes (Richardson, 1997; Root, 1996, 2001). Books from a journalistic stance (Funderburg, 1994) or for popular consumption (Root & Kelley, 2003) or from the "margins" (Trinh, 1989) were more likely to include photographs. *Portraits of Multiracial Families* (Kaesler & Gillespie, 1997) is a book based on a photographic exhibit of people in interracial families and includes photographs of each family, along with excerpts from interviews

with family members. This opens options for readers and viewers to bring their own interpretations to the meanings they read about and see in the book.

I present a physical description of each participant from my viewpoint based on observing participants and viewing videotapes and photographs. I included the description in the individual sections I provided to each participant and invited feedback. One person discussed her physical description with me and we negotiated the particular words I used in the description.

Due to confidentiality issues, I did not ask to reproduce photographs of research participants, except for photographs of their hands. I think it would strengthen work about interracial families to include photographs of people that shows their faces, bodies, clothing, and environments. This needs to be weighed with the importance of confidentiality, so some studies could include more identifiable photographs with less potential harm, whereas it might be preferable to include written descriptions and non-identifying photographs in other stories.

Photographs and videotapes can be experienced as invasive and as an effort to control (Emmison & Smith, 2000). Photographs vary in purposes, interpretations, and uses (e.g., a mug shot, an artistically framed wedding portrait, an emailed digital photo). When John and I visited the Toledo State Juvenile Home, where he was incarcerated at age 11, we visited a cottage and noticed – to our shock – surveillance cameras in each bedroom. This is an example of recording visual images to control people's potential activities and also an invasion of privacy (Emmison & Smith). Particularly in research involving people of positions coded “lower” in society, researchers need to exercise

consideration and compassion so as not to abuse the privacy of participants or further code them as “other” (Emmison & Smith, 2000).

Skin Color Variations

In the process of writing physical descriptions, I realized that in the predominantly white area where I live, commonly accepted words to denote skin color were not readily available. Skin tones vary considerably among people of different races and individuals within races. I struggled with finding words to signify skin colors clearly. This reminds me of the social worker’s description of my oldest son Matthew’s birth parents. His German American mother and African American father both were described as having “dark” complexions. I doubt that their skin coloring was the same, although it could have been. For Matthew’s father, I wondered if the social worker meant dark to a White person or dark to a Black person. Dark is a relative term.

Photographic images of people may represent their skin tone (and other physical features) differently depending on the natural lighting available, whether or not a flash is used, a person’s proximity to the light source, shadows, where the focus is, and other people in the photograph. Film developing, photograph scanning, and image software may result in sharply different skin coloration for a single photograph.

I took photographs of my grandchildren’s hands while I was immersed in the hand photograph process, for my elucidation rather than to use in the official research. Our grandson Derrick, who is Laotian, German, and Polish, held his hands out on a low table and I took the photograph. Although I see no obvious lighting differences (such as sunshine and shadow), his two hands appear to be of different colors, maybe eight tones

different. This reminds me that photographs are not records of objective reality (Pink, 2001).

I also recognize that many people's skin color changes, particularly people who are of mixed race. I noticed this with my son Matthew, who as a young infant had what is usually called a light olive complexion. My mother's skin, in contrast to his, was much browner. When spring came and I took Matthew outside for stroller rides, it seemed that he returned two shades darker and I returned one shade lighter. His skin took on beautiful rich, cocoa tones. My tan paled in comparison to his deepening color. While writing my dissertation, I discovered an old photograph of my mother with my two sons as young children and noticed that by then, my mother's and sons' skin colors were very close in tone. My sons' skin continued to darken as they grew to adulthood and my mother's skin lightened as she aged.

People with more melanin in their skin tan more readily than lighter-skinned people. Samuel, who has dark brown skin, described trying to get a suntan when he was a child and how his mother told him he could not get a tan. My sons, daughter, and mixed-race grandchildren started with fairly light complexions and grew darker as they tanned in the summers and as they grew older. My daughter Julie mentioned that her skin was dark when she was a child, since she spent most of her time outside. Now that she is an adult and spends most of her time indoors, her skin is lighter. At a family gathering, my son Benjamin's son Jeremiah, age 6, was playing outside without a shirt. Benjamin's father Rodger said, "Jeremiah has a nice tan." Benjamin replied, "It's his natural color."

Alexander talked about his variation in skin color – how his skin was dark when in a sunny climate and lightened when he spent a year in a cloudy, rainy climate. He said

it is important to him to be in the sun enough for his skin to darken, to complicate his identity so that he looks more Mexican and people realize he is more than Asian.

Imagine the Possibilities

While I was writing my dissertation, I took a course in the use of visual images in qualitative research, taught by my advisor Jim Banning. Had I taken the course before starting the research, I would have modified the research design. I learned more about what I had already done and how I could incorporate visual research and deepen the analysis.

What I Might Have Done

I would have included giving each participant a recyclable camera and asking them to take photograph people and things that are important to them relative to racial identity and their families. It would be a way of inviting more collaboration and assigning less power to the researcher's gaze (Pink, 2001). I would have written more detail about visual observations (Emmison & Smith, 2000) before, during, and after the interviews, including more about the physical environments.

I would have reflected more on the intersubjectivity as I showed their photographs to participants and listened for their interpretations (Pink, 2001), making notes of their comments. (I mailed some of the photographs along with copies of transcripts; however, I showed some participants their photographs.) I would have made a greater effort to include myself as researcher in the videotapes of the interviews – I see the participants' facial expressions and gestures, but get only a rare glimpse of my own. Although I am not sharing the videos with anyone other than participants (their own interview videos), my

occasionally appearing at the edge of the video implies an all-seeing or objective observer (Emmison & Smith, 2000; Pink, 1997) and subjects rather than participants.

I believe that videotapes of participants' activities and additional photographs, including photographs of hands doing things that participants liked to do, could evoke additional layers of meaning and provide more opportunities for metaphors and implications. I would have liked to photograph Alexander's hands turning the pages of a book, as he related his mother's comments on his beautiful hands. I photographed Kathi's hand on her dog's back. I would have liked to photograph other participants' dogs as they lay beside their caretakers. I photographed some people's homes and videotaped Francisco's office; I would have liked to photograph more inside and outside people's homes. I could have asked participants about artifacts that held importance to them in their families and asked permission to photograph the artifacts (or asked them to photograph artifacts that were significant to them). Whether or not I photographed or videotaped artifacts, homes, and pets, I could have taken more thorough notes and included richer visual descriptions (Emmison & Smith, 2000).

Visual Images in the Media

Cindy, Kathi, and Julie all talked about visual images in magazines, on television, and in other media. These visual images provide a litmus test for perceptions of beauty and acceptable appearances in this society. I have noticed many more mixed-appearing people, particularly children, in advertising and more models who appear to be mixed – Asian, Hispanic, and African American – in photographs in magazines, but very few models who appear to have features strongly identified with American Indian. Kathi

talked about seeing models with darker skin and more African features, in contrast to primarily White or very light-skinned Black models in previous years.

Other areas of significance for visual images relative to racial and gender identity are visual representation in textbooks, on Web sites, and in children's books. The textbooks I remember from elementary school pictured almost all White people with clearly defined gender roles. This is one more area to question and problematize.

This is not the focus of this study; I mention it since participants mentioned it and one way that people tend to feel marginalized or accepted is whether they see other people in the media (and positions of power) who look like them. Cultural studies often analyze media representations of people according to race, gender, body type, and class. This is a vital area for further study and needs to be considered at least briefly in studies relating to racial identity.

Visioning

Visual images are a way of valuing multiple ways of knowing. Including visual images of participants' hands in this dissertation is meant to be more than illustration. Hands carry meaning (see *Politics of Hands*) – they may suggest a person's age, occupation, race, health, gender, and grooming through their appearance. The position of the hands, whether they are with someone else's hands, what they are doing, and what they touch or do not touch open the images for more interpretations. Visible jewelry, such as rings and watches, may indicate marital status (commonly portrayed in United States American culture by the wearing of a ring on the "ring finger" of the left hand), values, and wealth. I include stories about the rings I wear.

When John and I were considering marriage, he kidded that he would like to get married if we could find rings with his name on them. (At that time I carried the name of my ex-husband and had no investment in keeping it.) We found similar rings created by Navajo artist Ray Tracey (same last name, different spelling). Years later, we were in a jewelry store and showed our wedding rings to the proprietor. She said, “Those are not wedding rings.” She went on to say that a wedding ring had to be of gold for endurance and the materials used in our Navajo rings meant that they were for casual wear, not suitable to signify marriage. What she said regarding physical manifestations of visual images conveyed multiple layers of meaning.

I also wear a mother’s ring with birthstones of my three children, a gift to me from them on my 50th birthday. My daughter said she thought I might appreciate that more than something to remind me of my age. Previously, I wore my own mother’s ring with the birthstones of her five children. My sisters decided at my mother’s death to give me that ring, which I keep but rarely wear now that I have the ring with my children’s birthstones.

Alexander told stories about the rings he wore as I photographed his hands. Probably each participant could have told stories about their hands or hand jewelry as I photographed their hands. Rings are symbols of stories with roots in past, present, and future.

The more researchers envision relationships between visual images and narratives, the more possibilities open. Attentiveness to the visual, awareness of symbols of identity and their embodiment, and alertness to ways that visual images subvert or collude with the dominant paradigm may augment transformative research.

CHAPTER SIX: PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

For those who like to see a list of all participants at a glance, the following chart includes participants' pseudonyms, racial and ethnic identity – not what they identify as in their daily lives or what boxes they check, but the entirety of what they told me, relationships in immediate interracial families, and age at the time of the first interview.

Table 1: Participants and Their Family Relationships

P_Name	Ethnicity	Relationships: Family racial identity	Age
Scott	African American, Blackfoot or Cherokee	Jane's partner; father of 2 biracial children	23
Jane	Norwegian, German	Scott's partner; mother of 2 biracial children	23
Cindy	African American, Irish, German, Blackfoot	Kathi's daughter; daughter of White woman and African American-American Indian man; sister to biracial man; stepsister to 2 White men; step-daughter of White man; wife of White man	24
Julie	African American, Italian, German	Researcher's daughter; born to African American man and White woman; transracially adopted by White man and mostly White woman; mother of 2 children with African American-American Indian father and 1 child with Sudanese father; sister to two African American-German men	26
Trixie	African American, French Canuck, Cherokee, German	Wife of White man; mother of 2 mixed children	36
Alexander	Japanese American, Mexican American	Son of Japanese American man and Mexican American woman; partner of Argentinean-White man	36
Kathi	Irish, German	Cindy's mom; mother of 2 multicultural children; former wife of African American man	44
Francisco	African American, Italian	Son of African American man and Italian woman; husband of White woman; father of 4 mixed children	45
Ivy	Mesqualero-Apache, Yaqui, Mexicana	Daughter of Mesqualero-Apache-Yaqui woman and Mexicano-Yaqui man; wife of White man; mother of 1 mixed child	48
Samuel	African American	Maggie's husband; father of 3 with former wife (Filipina); grandfather to many	50
Maggie	White (mostly Irish)	Samuel's wife; mother of 6 with former husband (White); grandmother to many	56
Oscar	[European]	Transracial adoptive father of 2 African American-White daughters and bio father of 2 White daughters with ex-wife (White)	67

The story depends upon every one of us to come into being (Trinh, 1989, p. 119).

This chapter provides space for the stories of each participant, starting with brief introductions that include visual images of their hands (except for Cindy, who chose not to be photographed). These introductions are meant to be intercalary space (Lawton, 1997). This is a literary device I use to provide an introduction to each participant and establish a theme for each individual section.

In the poetic representations that follow their introductions, I used participants' own words from the transcripts for the words of the poems, following ethical guidelines advocated by Laurel Richardson (1997). I changed the word order and added repetition. I used poetic devices to show pauses and hesitations. For one of the couples that were interviewed together, I juxtaposed what each person said to show areas of agreement and contrast in what they said. I hope that the use of poetic representation will help readers get a feel for the people and the interaction in the interviews. I titled the poems to denote an idea of their themes.

Following the poetic representations, I include a few stories. In most cases, I did light editing, removing "um" and "uh" (which some transcriptionists do), some repetitions, and some indications of pauses so that they would flow more smoothly for the reader. I also removed most of my responses, which included frequent "mm hmm" and "okay" or "right." I recognize that each time I responded, even if it is just with an assenting sound, I influenced the participant's voice.

I follow with descriptions that include the types of information that people in academia in the United States expect to see from interviews, such as age, ethnic background, education and career (for those who provided that information), and

geographic background. I did not give participants a demographic survey; however, I obtained most of the basic demographic information during the course of the interviews. In some cases, people did not provide specific information. I believe that meant they felt it was not relevant or they did not wish to divulge it (Richardson, 1997). For example, I talked with both Maggie and Oscar about their schooling, and at the end of our interviews, I realized that I had not ascertained the exact educational level they attained. Did they graduate from high school? Did they do advanced study in college or technical school? I do not know. I recognize that this bit of information may be important to some readers, and I challenge you to ask why this is important (Richardson). Do academics judge people by the level of their educational attainment? Are readers more likely to pay attention to words quoted from a participant with a Ph.D. than a participant with a high school diploma or unknown educational level? Alexander and I talked about this issue, which is addressed in the ethical considerations section.

Finally, for each participant or couple, I include information about the interview process. This provides an audit trail (Janesick, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and shows the process of the qualitative research. I mention whether that person provided input and if so, whether I changed anything.

I wavered between using past and present tense when telling about interviews and describing participants. When I read Sarah Pink (2001), I decided to switch from present tense, which I started with because it seemed more active, to past tense to recognize that the interviews took place within a particular context at a particular time. Pink (2001) says that “... writing in the present tense has abstracted and objectified the subjects of

research” (p. 123). When I repeat what a writer said in a book or article, I use the present tense since the material is published and has a different sense of time.

My initial interviews with participants took place between January and March, 2004. Their second interviews followed usually within a few weeks, although for three participants, they took place a few months later, primarily due to scheduling difficulties.

Since I sometimes told subsequent participants what others had said on topics they were discussing, I chose to introduce the participants in the order in which I interviewed them the first time. I thought the logic of the order seemed appropriate.

I included my daughter Julie along with the other participants. I considered whether to include her stories only as part of my story, separate from others. However, I asked her the same questions as I asked others and, after discussing this with my advisor, chose to include her as one of twelve participants rather than someone separate from eleven participants. I engaged in ongoing conversation with Julie throughout the research process and asked her to read what I had written about our interracial family. We also discussed what information I should tell about family members.

I intersperse my stories throughout and include some of the stories I shared with participants. This contributes to a blurring of the line between researcher and participant, which is abhorrent in some types of research but an important aspect of what I am trying to do with counternarrative and unexpected creative ways of presenting narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 1997).

Scott and Jane Driver



Figure 2: Scott and Jane Family Hands Photograph

When I met Scott and Jane at the beginning of the year, both were 23 years old. Their babies, Adrian, almost 2, and infant Lindsay slept in other rooms as Scott, an African American, and Jane, a Swedish German American, sat on a comfortable sofa in their living room and told me about how they got together and started their family.

Our second interview was a few months later, and the children were awake. Baby Lindsay crawled across the room and pulled up to stand at her mother's knees, flashing a big smile. Two-year-old Adrian sat beside his mother and interjected a few words of his own. Scott said he thought the children will be very outspoken and stand their ground. Moments later, Adrian got down on the floor with Lindsay. They talked loudly to each other and laughed.

"They are having their say, too, right?" I said. When I got ready to photograph their hands, Jane lifted the baby onto her lap and told Adrian to put his hand on her own. Scott leaned over and kissed Lindsay's cheek.

Scott and Jane: Poetic Representations

Minority

Scott

I'm very comfortable with myself
you know being an African American male
I just wish other people would accept me
when they haven't seen too many African American people

Jane

When people see him
they just stop and stare

Scott

I'm African American
and Blackfoot or Cherokee

Back home it's way diverse
There's a lot of every race
In my junior high and elementary
there was a lot of mixture

Jane

I'm German and Swedish

When I moved out to Wisconsin
it was definitely an experience for me
living out there
I felt as though I was a minority
which was an interesting time

Scott

I'm not NOT comfortable
with being out here
I would just say
I would like to be around more African Americans
but they're hard to find out here
They're either
going to school or they're hiding
or they're in Denver

Jane

When people see him
they just stop and stare

My friend was biracial
in junior high school
She was really struggling with that
People called her Oreo
They were pretty mean to her
just CERTAIN individuals

She was extremely accepted as well

Scott

When I moved out here
There isn't too many minorities so to speak
African Americans
but there are a lot of Hispanics

Now that we've been out here 4 years
I'm ready to move again

Anywhere but Colorado

I want to move to Denver
to see how it is there
then after the kids get older

Move back to a little smaller town
and raise our family

Getting Together

Jane

I moved out to his hometown in Wisconsin

Scott

Her mother was buying a house out there

Jane

Yeah, I was going to help her fix it up

She moved back when we moved back
She couldn't NOT be around her grandbabies

Scott

We met at a friend's house
We started hangin' out
Things got a little bit
better between us
We became really good friends
We just decided we wanted to be together

[Scott and Jane look at each other.]

Jane

I made him move right back here.

Scott

After we decided to be together
We planned on moving out here

We drove out here
We started a family

And that's been going good so far
Now we have two
We have a little boy and a little girl
It's pretty nice

We moved
and started a family of our own

Jane

When I became pregnant with my son
My best friend who was biracial
was kind of
somewhat supporting
as long as I didn't raise him here

Scott

I went on my own journey
and I met with Jane

Now we moved
and started a family of our own

In the Neighborhood

[Sandy: So has it been mostly white neighborhoods or mixed neighborhoods?]

Scott:

In GARRISON?

Jane:

I'd say mostly white
in Garrison

Scott:

[my neighborhood in Wisconsin]
Whatever you could think of was there

Jane:

It was mostly African American though

Scott

No ... where I grew up at?

Jane

I experienced that it was mostly African American

Scott

Before I met her
I guess that's all the people
That's all her friend knew
That's all her friend associated with

Biracial Families and People

Scott

My whole family's biracial
You know the integrated

Jane

I have a couple
on my distant family
like my cousins

I am concerned about
our kids though because
they're pretty light
so where are they going to fit?
I mean like they're going to have to
find their own group, I guess

How could they identify with each side?
You know what I mean?
They have two sides to identify with

I refuse to put my kids under "other"
Definitely I will not put my kids under "other"
It says check one and I'll check three

A lot of people seem to be concerned about them
I've gotten the impression that they
They're concerned about them
because they're biracial
like it's a downfall

As parents, we're gonna
you know strive for them to be who they are
and it doesn't have anything to do
with them being biracial

Scott

Our kids are gonna be
very outspoken
They're gonna stand their ground
regardless if they're right or wrong

They're both smart already
We're just gonna
keep going
just try to raise 'em to be as good a people as we can
but they are gonna be very opinionated

Jane

We do need to prepare 'em for a lot of things
We're going into a new time
where there's more biracial people

I guess society is kind of
slowly starting to get used to 'em
It depends on the part of the country
but I think it's gonna be easier for us
than for some people in the past

Strangers' Looks

Jane

When people see him
they just stop and stare

Scott

Strangers
I really don't pay no mind to 'em
I mean they give
 looks
Then what's a look?
I always give 'em an even nastier look

Jane

They do look at our kids though
My mom hears that more than I have
Somebody was staring at our son's hair
 and my mom wanted to slap 'em
but I don't really notice it either

People just comment on how beautiful they are
everywhere we go

Family Acceptance

Scott

As far as family
my family is fine with it
I come from a real diverse place

so there's NOTHING wrong
with dating out of your race
so it's not a problem

Jane

I was more concerned
about being accepted
having my relationship being accepted
by my family
and being accepted into his family
more than anybody else
I don't think I really cared about
what others think

I have thought about
There are going to be more
biracial kids when our kids grow up

Scott

I just say
Go for it
If you want to be
in a biracial relationship
If you wanna journey outside of your race
then try different things

It's like if you never had sushi before
or if you never ate
soul food like black-eyed peas
You know
Try it
You might like it

Scott and Jane: Stories

Jane and Scott described her mother as loving and supportive. Jane described her relationship with her late father's family as estranged. She said that her sister did not approve of her having a child at her relatively young age. "My sister didn't think I should have a baby at all and ... I haven't talked to her since [spoken quickly]. So [laughs] we didn't really have a relationship to begin with so we're not really missing out on anything," she said.

Scott and Jane attend a multicultural non-denominational church in Garrison. They each were brought up in denominational churches, Scott in an African Methodist Episcopal church in Wisconsin, where his mother continues to attend, and Jane in a Lutheran church, which she said is "just taken off of Catholic You have to kneel and pray."

Scott said, "... my church home back in Wisconsin, it was ... an African American church ... there were a few Caucasian people that attended and um ... Korean people that attended ... and everybody welcomed them so our church was like a real welcoming church. It doesn't matter what kind of race you are but the majority was African Americans."

They decided together to attend the church in Garrison, although they both pointed out differences from the churches they had attended previously. Scott said, "That church just blows my mind and it's a lot different ... but it's a real good church."

Jane: Defending

When I asked Jane how her ideas about race have changed since she has been part of an interracial family, she said it is more personal. She defended her beliefs before

because she felt that was right. “I think I’ve learned a little bit ... since I have had the kids and it’s part of my everyday life. I take it as certainly personal ... and I will defend it to the fullest.”

Jane added, “Some Hispanic schoolmates of mine were um putting down African Americans ... ”

Scott cleared his throat.

Jane continued, “ ... while I was standing there and so I jumped in and mentioned that I was in an interracial (laughs) relationship and that my kids are um biracial and she changed her tune really quick.”

Scott: Hang Out with Your Own Kind

Scott told about when he was in high school and got into trouble along with his Caucasian friends. Previously, he associated with a more mixed group of friends and did not get into trouble. This is how Scott told the story, including some of my exchanges with him:

Scott: So when I was growing up ... well actually when I got in high school I do remember ... I got in trouble you know with Caucasian people and when I was in junior high and I was hanging out with you know like a little bit of everybody? I wasn’t getting in that much trouble but because I did go to a majority ...

Caucasian school and there was like only about ... say about a hundred African Americans there ... [out of about 2,000 students] so it was a pretty big school.

When I started to get in trouble [my mom] would tell to me to hang out with my own kind ‘cuz I wasn’t getting in that much trouble when I was hanging out with the African Americans and Hispanics and the Puerto Ricans, you know,

because they weren't partying as much – you know the drinking and getting away with things – because [the Caucasian kids'] parents worked ... well my parents worked all the time but their parents were NEVER at home and they always had nice houses ... and you know they were able to throw parties and their parents were always on vacation and stuff like that you know That's about the only thing that she said to me ... you know like after I started getting into trouble and stuff like that ... you know ... just to chill out and maybe I should think about who my friends are ... stuff like that, but

Sandy: when you were with Caucasian kids, you said you got into trouble – did everybody get into trouble equally?

Scott: Oh yeah, yeah.

Sandy: So they didn't single you out?

Scott: No ... no, EVERYBODY (laughing). They just didn't ... they just didn't care you know like, "Oh, my mom and dad, they'll get me out of this." That's how they thought and

Sandy: ... And your mom said, "I don't wanna have to get you out of this"? (laughs)

Scott: (laughs) Yeah ... sothat's how that went. But I had a pretty good time growing up ... it was pretty fun.

Scott and Jane: Descriptions

Scott and Jane were both 23 years old at the time of the first interview in January. Scott is a muscular man of average height, with skin of a rich chocolate color, dark brown eyes, a broad nose, and a wide, easy smile that brightens his entire face. He identified

himself as African American. During the second interview, I asked if he had American Indian background as well, mentioning that other African American participants had mentioned American Indian in their backgrounds. He said he did, that it was either Blackfoot or Cherokee.

Jane is a tall, large-boned, blonde, light pink-peach-skinned woman with blue-hazel eyes. During the interview, when I asked her background, she said, “What?” so I asked her ethnic background, rather than asking her racial background, I think because I felt it was obvious that she considered herself White. I wish I would have probed more about her White identity. She identified her ethnic background as Swedish and German. Her father’s family came from Sweden, but she was not raised with a tradition of Swedish customs.

Scott graduated from high school in a racially diverse city of about 90,000 in Wisconsin. He was the youngest of his mother’s three sons. His father died when Scott was in the fifth grade. He described his family as close and supportive. They live in Wisconsin and visit occasionally. Scott and Jane expressed an interest in having regular family reunions with Scott’s family. Scott worked in carpet cleaning and the insurance business.

Jane spent her early years in rural Michigan, moving to Garrison with her mother after her father died. She is the youngest of eight children, all several years older. She graduated from a large high school in Garrison. Between our first and second interviews, Jane completed a medical assistant certificate and started a job as a medical assistant. Previously she worked in non-profit domestic violence shelters, but decided that when

she became a mother, she needed to earn more money than is typical pay scale in a non-profit, so she changed careers.

Scott and Jane: Interviews

Jane and Scott received my information card from the administrative assistant at the nondenominational church they attend, and Jane called a few days later to say that they would like to volunteer for the research study. Scott and Jane were the first people I interviewed, in January 2004. I interviewed them a second time in June, much later than most others due to a technical glitch and scheduling complications.

Even though I had hoped to interview more than one person from a family, I had not thought about whether a couple might want to be interviewed together. Scott and Jane made it clear they would like to be interviewed together. I went ahead, and then talked with my advisor about ethical considerations, since I had another couple wanting to be interviewed together. At my advisor's suggestion, I contacted the human research committee. They suggested that I revise the informed consent form to allow for explicit permission for people to be interviewed with another family member, which I did. They said I did not need to ask Scott and Jane to sign the revised informed consent form.

Later, when I interviewed a second family member in a different family, I realized there were some advantages in interviewing family members together. They each know what the other is saying and get an opportunity to co-construct their narratives. A fellow student suggested that if I also interviewed each person individually in addition to the family group, they might say things they would feel uncomfortable saying with the other person present. I agree that is probably true, although I did not ask for individual interviews in addition to the family interviews. However, if I did separate interviews and

I as the researcher shared parts of a participant's story that she or he felt uncomfortable about sharing in front of the other family member, that would pose a dilemma if the participants took the opportunity to review what I write.

For Scott and Jane's first interview, I drove to their townhouse in central Garrison on a Sunday afternoon. Jane greeted me at the door and shook my hand. Scott indicated that he was applying lotion to his hands and did not shake my hand. Their two young children were sleeping and awakened just as we finished an extended interview. Scott and Jane sat on a large, dark blue sofa and I sat in a chair across from them in the living room next to the kitchen.

Scott and Jane chose their own pseudonyms. During the interview they sometimes referred to each other by their pseudonyms and then laughed.

During the first interview, Scott said, "We're writing a book here." Jane said they weren't really writing it, and I said they were helping me write it.

Both Scott and Jane assented to audiotaping, videotaping, and photographing. At the first interview, I had forgotten an essential part for my tripod for the camcorder, and they brought out a tripod for me to use. Although previously I had recorded many interviews for other purposes, I positioned the audiotape recorder in a place that did not record our voices well and I struggled for weeks with doing the transcription. It took much longer than any subsequent transcriptions, delayed the entire transcription process, and added to my frustration with the process.

When I offered to provide Scott and Jane with a VHS tape or a DVD recording, they said they preferred a DVD. Due to technical glitches, I was unable to record the DVD until a few months later. I had already mailed them their transcript, but I felt so bad

about not being able to burn a DVD for them, I did not ask for their second interview until I knew I would be able to burn a DVD.

I drove to their home for the second interview twice before we connected on the third try. The first time, Jane had left a message for me to postpone the interview, but I did not get the message. When I drove up, she came out into the yard and explained that Adrian had an ear infection and they had taken him to urgent care and just returned. They still wanted to do the second interview, so we rescheduled for the following week. On that day, I was greeted at the door by a woman who physically resembled Jane and identified herself as her mother. She said that Scott and Jane had been invited to a last-minute barbecue and had just left. When I asked if Adrian were feeling better, he ran out from the kitchen and peeked at me from behind his grandmother's legs. Jane's mother said that Adrian was her delight and they looked at each other and smiled warmly.

I called Jane and rescheduled for the following week. When I arrived, Scott and Jane busily put away toys as the baby slept and Adrian ran about and played. With Jane's new job, they had forgotten our appointment. I offered to reschedule but they wanted to go ahead. Baby Lindsay awakened and crawled over to her parents and pulled up to stand beside them, as Adrian sat next to his mother and played an electronic game. The children's laughter and chatter punctuated the interview. We kept it brief, and when I asked Scott and Jane if they had anything else to say at the end, Jane said, "It was easier when the kids were asleep."

Cindy Link

I met Cindy in a room in the university building where I worked and she attended classes. She worked full time for a year after graduating from the university on a full scholarship, and had about a year to go to complete her master's degree.

Cindy said that after her parents divorced when she was about 7, she and her younger brother were raised by a single mom until Cindy was 13, when her mother remarried a White man with two sons. She talked about her "dual lives":

I can always remember growing up I had like dual lives. When I was younger, like 10 and under, I had all my Black family. That's what we called it – my White family and my Black family – just for other people. [laughs]

And my Black family had all my cousins and my grandpa and my grandma and aunts and uncles – everybody was Black 'cuz all my aunts and uncles married Black people and so my mom was the only White person in the whole family of 30 or however many there were. We were very close with our aunts and uncles and grandma and grandpa.

And then I had this split where I had the other side where now when I grew up it was all White family.

When I was younger, not only did I have my Black family but I had my Hispanic family because my godparents are Hispanic and all of their extended family were my extended family and I was over there EVERY weekend making tortillas and enchiladas. I had the ability ... just to be comfortable wherever I am – it doesn't matter.

Cindy: Poetic Representations

Both Sides of the Coin

My mother is White and my father is Black
I'm their first child
They were married for 2 years before they had me
then 3 ½ years later they had my brother
and then they got divorced

I have a little bit more and then I'll back up

So then my mother raised us
Let's see, then I was 8 to 13
They divorced when I was like 7
When I was 13
my mother remarried a WHITE male
and he had two White boys

So then basically
from my adolescence 'til present day
is with my younger brother and I being mixed
living in a family with White people

We've had both sides of the
coin, I guess

My Parents

Well actually it started
they met in high school
They lived in a town that was
pretty mixed racially
They had a lot of Hispanics
a lot of Koreans
probably the third minority
was Blacks

They met in high school
They were just friends
It wasn't until college
– he's a year older
It wasn't until college that
they started dating
They dated for 5 years.

Workin' on the Railroad

It's kinda funny
I think they had been dating
for about 3 or 4 years

when my father applied for a job
as an engineer at the railroad company

He didn't ...
he didn't get the job
for whatever reason

 I don't know the history of it
He was convinced
that it was because of his color

My mom applied for the same job
trying to kind of trap the company

She got the job
with much less credentials
than my dad had

So they you know
took that to them
didn't have to go to court
brought it to their attention

They hired my dad also
so my dad worked on the railroad
 he started out part time
 then he was a part time sheriff
 then he went full time as an engineer
 at the railroad
He's been there since then

Although my mom
she only worked there
 for about a year
 and then she quit
she said
 Okay, I made my point

Indian Baby

My dad's they're Blackfoot tribe
which is you know from
it's kind of like Montana area
basically Canada from all the way to Montana
the Idaho-Montana border
then down

He's only
let's see my grandma was a half
so he was a quarter
so I'm just an eighth

What's interesting is in
all my really, really
like infant baby pictures,
I look like an Indian baby

That's what my mom always used to say
My eyes were just a little bit higher
I had the really high cheekbones
just as a little kid
I had a full head of hair
I've grown out of those features I guess
I don't look so much as that
although
I can get anything

She's with Me

People weren't able to like
see us to like put us together
connect the two
we'd be at a grocery
or department store
something like that
I'd be standing at the counter
next to her
and they'd be like
Where's your mommy, honey?

And my mom would go
She's with me

In fact
that is such an impression
in my mind of memory
of just my mom saying
She's with me

Because she said it SO much
She's with me
She's with me
She's with me, babe

and I'm standing right there
They couldn't make that connection.
That happened a lot to my brother and I
Now I get a kick out of it
Now I love to do it
like when we go shopping
she'll be across the store
I'm like, "MOM!"

You know
have her turn
and people look [make a face]

I LOVE to mess with people now
I watch their reaction
I can see
who looks

She's with me

Matchmaking

I didn't date any Black
anybody that wasn't White

I remember when
I was a sophomore in high school
Everybody was like, Cindy
have you met this guy?
Have you met this guy?
This one particular guy
And I'm like, no
but I've heard about 'im

Everybody keeps asking me about him
Finally we met
He was Black

Everybody was saying
and he was saying
Everybody said I should meet you

I was SO mad,
I was FUMING
like oh, I was just like
how racist that you think

just 'cause we're Black
that we'd like each other

And he turned out to be a great friend
I purposely always never dated him.
He asked me out many times
I purposely never dated him
It was almost I think in hindsight to
look back and say ... or
at that point say, ha ha!
I don't have to date him just 'cuz he's Black.
I can date whoever I want
Even though he's a nice guy

He was the only one in my grade
He was the only other one

Wanting to Date

I DO remember
I think it's like probably late junior high
when everybody's friends
starts to date their little boyfriends
I never had one

I was always crying to my mom
I don't have a boyfriend
Why doesn't anybody like me?

I had TONS of friends

I went through high school the same way
She'd say, oh
you just wait 'til high school
Oh, well, you just wait 'til college

I'm like
I want 'em now
I want 'em NOW

Invisible Wall

Come to find out SO MANY people
did not want to date me because I was Black

I was VERY good friends with

this with this boy
I asked him to the dance
Sadie Hawkins
where the girls ask the boys
just as friends, there was nothing else

I mean you're in high school
that's what makes the story
so funny, I think

It was like a week later
He still hadn't answered me
I was getting all these weird vibes from people
hushed conversation as I walked up to them

So finally I asked one of my girlfriends
who was very close friends with my guy friend
I mean I didn't even THINK race
I was going like, what did I do?
And she said
Well, he has been fighting
with his parents all this week
because he wants to go with you
but his parents won't let him

I didn't still
I said why?
I don't even know his parents

She was like well
I don't want to say it, you know
so finally she like kind of said it
and I'm just like

I felt like somebody had ripped my heart out

I'd never felt that
I'd never ever had anybody tell me that
or feel that way around me
as far as I could tell

That was definitely
my first encounter with racism

I actually approached him and said
Look, I know what's going on

I don't want there to be an issue
between you and your parents

He's like, nope, I don't even care
I'm just, we're gonna sneak out
I'm gonna tell 'em I'm going with somebody else
I'm gonna go with you
I'm like, no, I don't wanna
I can't even go there

I think we both handled it well
because we were both
I kind of understood
I understood stuff
more deeply I guess
how people had struggled in the past

It was not of our doing
We were just caught in middle.
We ended up going with separate people
continued to be friends through high school

There was that line
you know there was that invisible wall

I never
we never tried to go through that wall

It always stuck in my head
that people would actually
you know think that way

Show Them You're White

I remember that night going home
crying to my mother
I was just so hurt and
I just remember telling her

I just want you to go over there and tell them
show them that you're White
and I'm oka-ay

She said honey
they won't like me any better
They'll probably think I'm worse

Men are Men

I'm married to a White man

Once I got to college
that's when I decided
I'm going to purposely
date other cultures to see
you know what's going on

And THEY'RE NO different
Men are men!

There is absolutely no difference
The way I cut it
I'm gonna tell my kids
the way I break it my head is
in the community that I live
this is what
you choose from

It just so happened
that the man I fell in love with was White
It didn't have anything to do
our love didn't have anything to do
with me being Black
or him being White you know
That just was second to the love

Cindy: Stories

Hairy Experiences

Cindy recounts several experiences with her hair. She said, "I'm in ... right in the middle ... you know, of normal White hair, I guess, and normal Black hair, whatever those are? Right in the middle." She said that her hair "still dries out and still needs you know, moisturizing products which I never thought about before. And now I'm very good at it and I love my hair now." Her current hairdresser told her that she loves her hair, too. "And I walk out of there like, YEAH!"

My mom had to come get me. The first story reproduced here took place when Cindy was a very young child. My responses are not included.

Cindy: So for me it was never an issue but when I was ... little, I remember my ... oh ... this is a good hair story ... because my cousins had ... that really hard texture hairand so you know they would have it in braids with all the barrettes and my mom was just not ... never into all the barrettes ... five thousand barrettes in the hair, just wasn't her forte so I never had that ... and I always remember I used to ask my mom, why do they have all the barrettes in their hair, you know. I just ... I never got it.

I had a day care lady ... we ... I would go to her house and she was Black and all the kids there were Black and she ... like had an older daughter ... I don't know how old, maybe like between 8 and 13 (laughs) and they would do all the little girls' hair ... I wanna say Vaseline ... and they would you know, put it in the hairand I remember, she put it in my hair?

I started screaming and I threw the biggest tantrumI hid in the corner; my mom had to come get me. I don't even know if she remembers. It just like hit me.

I remember, I remember sitting in the car, saying, "They put grease in my hair, Vaseline in my hair," like ... I was just like, what are they doing? I had nowe just didn't do that, you know? I was weirded out 100 %. I didn't know. I don't know that I thought it was bad, I just ... I was just, what the heck are they doing, putting you know? (laughs)

I just remember going crazy thinking, oh my gosh, my hair's gonna fall out if they put grease in itbut I remember my mom explaining to me also that, not all people have hair like yours, some people need more and blah blah blah.

Corn rolled, cut, cute. The next story occurred during Cindy's senior year in high school, right after spring break. She describes what happened with her hair and how she and several other people reacted. I shortened the sequence and did not include my responses.

Cindy: This is a side story? I got my hair corn ... corn rolled? I say corn rolled ... and my husband just finally like 2 days ago, was like, "Why do you always say corn rolled? It's corn rowed." I don't know, that's what ... I thought it was called corn rolled.

So anyways I had it corn rolled (laughs) and when I took it out – you know it was really, really tiny so it was just like ... everywhere and so ... I did not know what to do with it; I had no conception of hair products at that time 'cuz I had just always had my hair the same way.

It was tangled and messy and I was like, I'm cutting this off. Like I didn't even wanna unbraid the braids, I just wanted to cut it off and start over.

So I went to this lady in the mall that my friend always goes to, and you know she cut it or whatever. She did NOT know how to cut hair in general, I think but definitely not Black hair at all ... because ... my hair, I mean, it's got ... it's curly you know, and so it was like ... literally like patchy because then she didn't straighten it before she cut or anything so it was like you know if you just cut itIt's gonna be different lengths.

So it was like, I remember feeling the back of my head and it was like really close to my scalp but then it was like long over here ... [demonstrates with her hands near her head] and it was just not shaped and it had no ... I was just like totally devastated. I cried.

So yeah, I cut it and then (pause) then anyways I realized you know my hair was a disaster area. I went to school like one day ... and everybody FREAKED out ... everybody was just like *Cindy cut her hair* ... like wildfire.

And then I went to a – I don't know who gave me the number because they found a BLACK lady in town that was doing hair at the time – so I went to her and she was just like, “Oh! Baby, get in my chair, ohmigod, I gotta save you.” Like, she was just so like, “I just wanna help you,” you know and so she did a really good job, and she straightened it even though it was really ... short.

I had like a really slick look and I liked it a lot but I was just still like devastated that I had no hair 'cuz I had no intention of like ... it was like Jada Pinkett you know it was like ... to my head, there was nothing ... there was nothing, and so my boyfriend at the time kept saying, “You look like a boy. You look like a boy [deep voice].”

And of course that was kinda devastating to me so ... I broke up with him (laughter). In any case ... but then it turned out ... cute.

White Barbies and Black Raggedy Ann

Cindy went through a stage of wanting to play with only White Barbie dolls. She said her mother gave her Black dolls, toys, games, and books but at that time Cindy only wanted to play with the White Barbie dolls. This is her story.

Cindy: My mom was pretty good about that. I think it was because of where I was raised, I don't ... I mean obviously my mom had a huge effect on my life – how I was raised, but ... (pause) society and just like Garrison kind of over ... had more of a piecebecause I remember her trying to get me into like Black Barbie dolls and Black dolls, and I would have nothin' of it ... I wanted the blonde Barbie with the blonde Ken doll. I mean, I hadShe would buy me the dolls and I would just ... that's pretty but I want the blonde, blue eyes. You know? So even though she tried to infuse that, I think just um ... society was telling me no, blonde, blue eyes is what's pretty. That's what you wanna play with, you know.

Although my brother'cuz my mom was very ... she's not like "boys play with trucks and girls play with dolls" ... you know, so he played with my Barbies and he played with Cabbage Patch kids and he had everythinghe had everything, and so he had Black Cabbage Patch kids and he loved 'em. He didn't ... didn't know ... or didn't care I should say.

Let me think what else did she ... I had a ... Raggedy Ann doll that was Black. I still have it and she was at my ... I think it was my aunt that made it for meShe made toy stuff for like all my cousins. Yeah, it's a giant, giant Black Raggedy Ann and it has a little heart tattoo on its stomach that says, I love you (laughs). It's so cute, yeah. So I still have that. That's not going anywhere. I remember always taking a lot of pride in thatbut I think it was more because it came from my family than that she was Black (laughs).

I notice that stuff a lot now like when we're watching commercials or when I go to the toy store'cuz I buy toys for my little cousins all the time and

I'm very conscious of you know sending a good amount of everything ... because I just um ... even if ... I was acculturated. They can ... they'll play ... they like everything. You know, they don't have the bias, I guess, that I had, unknowingly.

When I Grow Up

Cindy remembers talking with her friend about racial identity and whom they would marry when they grew up. They each had specific ideas when they were about 9 years old.

Cindy: I can remember (laughs), this is just a silly memory. I was in fourth grade riding in the back of a pickup truck because that was still okay to do then ... with one of my friends and she is half Black, half Mexican ... but very light ... no ... lighter, no darker than you at all, same skin tone. And she (pause) passed for White I guess you would say pass ... and she was always telling, "Okay now, don't tell anybody." She moved to Garrison before I did by 6 months so she'd always say, "Don't tell any of our friends that I'm Black, you know, they all think I'm White." And I had no idea what this meant of course; I was like "You can CHOOSE?" You know? So that was HUGE.

I also remember us talking ... we were riding in the truck and we were talking about like our future and what does our husband look like, you know?

And she said, "I want a really, really dark African man" and I was like, "I want a blonde haired, tall, blue-eyed guy." I think about that a lot. It was funny. She ended up with a Mexican guy that is ... looks White totally. Well, he's half White, half Mexican. And then ... I ended up with a White guy (laughing) so ... it's weird how things work out. But he's not blonde haired, blue-eyed.

Love at First Touch

When Cindy met her husband, she shared a house with several roommates. She took a full load of classes and volunteered for many activities. She said that she was rarely at home, but one time when she rushed into the house, she saw her future husband. This story is slightly edited, with my responses and a few of Cindy's words deleted.

Cindy: I'd be at school 9 to 9:30 in meetings and then I'd come back home and just go do homework and go to sleep and everybody'd be like in the living room or kitchen, you know, and I'd just be like, Hi, bye, okay, I'm out.

So finally one day I walked in the house and ... when I pulled up I saw that none of my roommates were home, none of their cars were there. So when I walked in the house imagine my surprise to find this guy sitting at my kitchen table with two girls I didn't know (laughter). I hadn't technically met ... this guy but I knew he'd been around plenty of times, I mean you know it wasn't like a stranger I guess ... I was like looking around like, what the heck?

And he's like, so-and-so said we could just wait here until they ... you know they ran to gas station.

I was like, oh, okay and I walked up to him and I stuck out my hand and said, "I'm Cindy, nice to meet you" and he said, and he ... shook my hand and he said you know, I don't know what he said, but something like, "I'm Brett" or whatever he said. And I immediately ... like immediately I felt a spark ... like him touching me? I was ... it caught me off guard like I was like, whoa, and I looked around at the girls, and I was like, "I have to go now" and I went downstairs.

I remember being, I was so jealous of those two girls. I had ... before I hadn't even noticed the guy. I was like, who is that? I don't ... I didn't even care.

I still remember, I remember the shirt he had on. He gave me the shirt so I have it hanging in my closet.

At the time I was dating somebody so I was just like, I have to break up with this other guy and I have to see what is going on ... 'cuz I'm ... I feel like I'm really intuitive and I felt like I've never felt that feeling ever and I thought it was really weird and so (laughs) and then we started dating and that was all there was. We've been together ever since.

Made for Each Other

I feel like he's ... he was made for me. I guess that's all that matters is that him and I think we were made for each other (laughing). Just me and him.

Although we did ... but my biological dad, when I told him I was getting married, he'd actually never met Brett – he's not that big a part of my life – and he asked me if he was Black or White and I said he was White and he was not happy with that. So that was a little ... rough around the edges to take 'cuz I didn't understand that, but ... I understand it ... you know ... I understood it on a deeper level. I understand, I understood what my father was trying to say, the point he was trying to make ... but that stuff was not ... never important to me.

I'm ... more big on, well, does he have the same beliefs I do and values ... rather than whether we're the same color or not. I don't care about that as much.

Brett and I, we would like to adopt, you know, kids of different colors ... whether, whatever ethnicity we don't care. Anyway so my husband and I you

know are definitely looking at adopting ... different cultures of kids. To me they don't have to be Black. I just wanna have a whole family of all nationalities (laughing) pretty much ... and plus our own.

Where Are You From?

Cindy's most frequent question from strangers is "Where are you from?" She has several stories about being mistaken for being Hispanic or from another country, such as India or Ethiopia. Two of her stories follow, with my responses deleted.

Cindy: We were at – actually we were in the airport parking lot – and this guy started talking this language to me, I still don't what it wasHe was from Ethiopia, he was just, yayayayaya. And what? I was just looking at my husband, I was looking at him, and the guy goes, "Oh, are you not from you know such and such town in Ethiopia?" And I said no, so he was like, "Oh, you look just like everyone there, you know." That happens a lot.

I was at Wendy's the other day and ... and the lady had a really strong accent and she was talking to this other lady that was working thereand they were looking at me and they'd look at each other and talk in whatever language and they'd look at me and talk and I'd be like, what is going ON? And finally one of the ladies said, "Are you from India?" And I said no and she's like, "Oh, we thought you were from our home country." I get that a lot. Mostly it's ... I guess it's a lot from immigrants that come in and also people that their families are from somewhere else but they've you know been raised here or born here.

Cindy: Description

Cindy is a 24-year-old graduate student at a large state university. At the time of our interviews, she had about one more year to complete her degree. A self-described perfectionist, she was an outstanding student in high school and college, participating in numerous activities and receiving scholarships and awards. Cindy was born to a White mother and an African American father with Blackfoot Indian background. She is fairly tall and slender, with long straightened dark brown hair, brown eyes, and light cocoa skin. She has a younger brother, who she said looks a lot like her, and two younger step-brothers who are White. She did not provide a physical description for them. Her three brothers attend college. Cindy works in a public school, is taking a master's level program of study, and is married to a White man.

Cindy: Interviews

Cindy lived in Newhart, a community near Garrison, and since she took classes in the building where I worked, she chose to be interviewed there. I shared my office with another person, so I arranged to meet her in an empty office that was larger. Our first interview was on January 28th. At the end of the interview, I asked her for suggestions of places in Denver, which my daughter might like to see when she visited. She wrote down several places that she and her husband frequent that sounded like Julie would like, too.

Our second interview was scheduled for 7 p.m. on February 6th. I decided to go into the room one hour early to set up the recording equipment. As I set up the tripod, Cindy appeared at the door. She finished her class early and wondered if I could interview her early. The weather outside was bad, and I was glad that I was available so that she and I could finish the interview and get home before road conditions worsen.

Maggie and Samuel Rule



Figure 3: Maggie and Samuel Hands Photograph

Maggie: “Now remember ... I’m this little White girl from a white community, went to an all-white high school ... and my father’s the way he is so I said, ‘Lord, the only way I’m gonna know if this person’s for me if he’s Black.’ And I went [gasp] – what have I prayed for?”

A friend introduced them and told Samuel that Maggie wanted him to call her and told Maggie that Samuel wanted her to call him. Samuel: “I call her ... and we talk for a minute and we just ... talked and talked and ... [pause] got married.”

Maggie: “I was 46 years old ... I called my dad to tell him that I was in a very serious relationship ... and I said, ‘There’s something else I need to tell you.’ He said, ‘I don’t care what it is as long as you don’t tell me he’s Black.’ I just said, ‘Bingo!’”

Samuel: “I never had no problems with the man. He was always respectful to me. When I was at his house, I showed him the same respect and courtesy We weren’t hangout buddies, you know.”

Maggie: “He always treated Samuel with respect.”

Maggie and Samuel: Poetic Representations

Samuel: Getting a Suntan

Growin' up in New York,
where I grew up at
we grew up in the Projects
we were a
middle class Project
down the street a little bit
was another Project
they were lower
lower middle class
predominantly Black
Ravenswood where I grew up
was mixed
across the street from us was
Queensville

which was predominantly White
another middle class
on the other side down the street
a little bit farther was
another lower middle class
predominantly Black neighborhood.
That was the Story Project
down here was Queensville Projects
and then we had
Ravenswood where I grew up
and then we had Queensview
they called 'em co-ops back then
they're now condos, you know

So ... and all my friends
which I had all my friends
when I was in grade school
lived in Queensview
'cuz we went to ... school
they were the majority
of my classmates
lived over there

I would go over and hang out with 'em,
play with 'em and whatnot
and they ... even as a kid
the kids in my building
that I used to play with
were predominantly White

One day I was
in the summer
we lived up on 4th floor
I was laying by the window
with the window wide open and
sun's comin' in

I'm layin' on the
on the floor
and my mother came
She says, boy, what are you doin'?

I said, I'm gettin' a suntan.

She said, Get up from there.

I said, What?

She said, you can't get a suntan

I said, Why? So-and-so's getting a suntan

And so she ... she laid it all down on me

I said, okay, well I ... can't do that

Maggie: But he CAN get a suntan.
He can get a sunBURN

Couple of summers ago
he didn't this summer
but a couple of summers ago
he got sunburned
He just glowed

Samuel: A Place I Can Live

My ex-wife is from the Philippines
she moved to her sister
One of the sisters lived here in Newhart

She came out here to
to be with her
that was in ... in '89
I was due to retire in '91

I came out and
I messed up
I had an affair and
that's what drove her
sent her out here
We split up

When I came out here
to visit my sons
and her to see
how she was doing and everything

the thing that got me
about this area
was that my
sister-in-law at the time
went out to start her car

They lived in an apartment
She went out to start her car
 she started the car
and she came back in the house

Comin' from California,
growin' up in New York,
you know it's like
if I'm driving in New York
I'd be nervous just drivin'
with all the doors locked, you know

but to to go out
and start the car and then
not be in it?

I mean I said
You know, I gotta I gotta
this is someplace
I could actually live here you know

I went back home and
this young lady that I was with
who happened to be White
 and still is but
I had no real ... feelings for
 her at all
It was one of these
gettin' ready to get out of the Navy
 after 20 years

not really knowing who I was
 what I was
you know an emotional thing
one of those mid-life crisis type actions

Maggie: My Dad Was Okay

I believe my father was you know
he was not happy initially
that ... Samuel ... and I were together
I said, Dad
I'm 46 years old
I'm not doin' this out of defiance
This is about my life

who I want to be with

I said, YOU are with somebody
you wanna be with, correct?
He says yeah – why shouldn't I?

It was never brought up again
You know, he never brought it up again
I said, this is not about defiance
I was done with that years ago
LONG ... many years ago

I think his attitude got much better
I think he was at least open
that I was in love with Samuel

He never said anything
My father was the kind of a man that
Once it's done, it's done
Now we move on
 I'm kinda like that too

My dad didn't have ... a problem
when we'd go to a couple of family reunions
introducing Samuel as my husband

I think if anybody
would've said anything to him,
he probably would've knocked 'em cold

Once my father made a decision,
 it was the right decision
You don't mess with it

I had a cousin or an uncle
at one family reunion that
he was thoroughly, thoroughly disgusted
He never said anything to me or to Samuel
 and I just let him alone
It was no skin off my nose

And my father would talk to Samuel
make conversation with Samuel
This is my son-in-law
He'd look at somebody like
I dare you to say something to me

Maggie and Samuel: Stories

Samuel: Dropping Out, Signing Up

Samuel described how he came to sign up for service in the United States Navy. In this story, I moved two sentences to the beginning to set the stage, and otherwise shortened it slightly and removed my responses.

Samuel: Well, my father passed away in February or March, excuse me, March ... of '71. I hadn't been goin' to school for a while.

I might as well have been livin' in Queensbridge, you know. It was like everything was ... there again, it was all ... all physical [fighting] and you know so goin' to school back during that time was like ... ah, no, I don't wanna do this. I don't wanna be in this ... environment and ... and so I ... I just quit. You know, I'd hang out and ... do my thing ... and just so I wouldn't have to be subjected to, you know, some of them knuckleheads BUT ... but it all worked out.

[When my father passed away] I hadn't been goin' to school for a while ... and my mother ... told me – she said, you know, all you gotta do is go to school, you know. You can just about get anything, we'll get ... we'll give you anything you want. All you gotta do is go to school and

He passed away in March and I hadn't been goin' to school for ... however long and ... I came home one day ... and my mother was layin' up on the couch ... in the house ... and she was cryin' – this was like in May – and she was ... no, April, excuse me, April – and she was cryin'.

I said, "Mom, what's wrong?"

She said, "School called me, told me everything, you're not even in school anymore."

See, what I had done is I had my sister ... sign the ... sign me outta school and ... so I didn't ... I didn't say anything, I just turned around and walked out the house, walked up – it was about ... it was close to ... the recruiter's office ... and I went in the Navy recruiter's office, got all the info, said okay, cool, cool, cool, took it home, said, "Mom, this what I want ... this is what I'm gonna do, I'm joining the Navy ... uh ... need you to sign this."

We talked about it a few minutes, she signed it, then ... June I was gone.

Which is the best thing I ever did (laughs). Best thing I ever did.

Samuel served 20 years in the navy. He was stationed in San Francisco, Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines, Okinawa, San Diego, San Francisco, New Jersey, Japan, San Francisco, before moving to Newhart when he retired.

Samuel said, "Now my oldest son is in the navy, and when he came home on leave ... he came over here and this is right before Father's Day – he said ... "I'm gonna do 20." He's the type ... this ... the military suits him."

Maggie: Discrimination Lawsuit

Samuel talked about how he thinks affirmative action has served its purpose and is no longer needed, using an example of a person coming in late to work and continuing to be tardy after warnings, then claiming discrimination when he is fired. When Samuel finished speaking, Maggie told a story about what happened several years ago when her employee threatened to file a discrimination lawsuit against her.

Maggie: I had a fellow – this was many years ago – tried to file a discrimination lawsuit against me ... and I just laughed ... laughed at ‘im. I said that’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard in my life. And I was ... still married at the time.

My husband and I at the time had our own business and I hired this Hispanic fellow and he was an electronic technician – very good – but he had to do house calls, and I got several complaints ... that when he went into [a customer’s] house, he talked like a drunken Marine. But ... he had a filthy mouth on ‘im and he was a TV repairman.

I called ‘im ... into my office and I said, “You know, what you do back in the shop, the door is closed, it’s your business but when you go to somebody’s home, you have to be respectful.”

This was a grown man and I couldn’t believe I was tellin’ him this.

And he said, “You know, you’re right. I will ... clean up my act.”

Well, after we talked, I got another complaint, and I called him in my office again ... and he was at the time the best TV repairman and electronic technician that we ever had and I called him in again and I said, “Look, this is the second time – you have just GOT to quit talkin’ you know swearing ... and talking ... you know trash when you’re in a customer’s home. They don’t like it.”

He said, “Oh, I’m ... I’m sorry, I don’t ... it won’t ever happen again.”

Well, he went on some more service calls for us and ... before he ever got back to the shop, I got a call and my husband at the time was out of town and I called him out and I said, “Here’s a check. I can’t ... do this. We’re losin’ business. We’re here ... we’re in this business to make money. You’re working

for us so that you can make money so we can make money, and ... every time I get a phone call because of your mouth ... that's a customer we've lost."

And he filed a discrimination lawsuit at me. It didn't go anywhere at all ... anywhere at all. I said, you know, I didn't hire 'im because he was Mexican and I didn't fire 'im because he was Mexican. I hired 'im because he was a qualified technician; I fired 'im because he was ... really ... not acting appropriately in a customer's home. It never went anywhere ... anywhere, but ... I couldn't believe he did that.

Samuel: That Was a Day

Samuel told a story about his youngest son Daniel. Just as he concluded, Maggie got up and brought a photograph to show me. She told her own story. Daniel's summer 2004 wedding was mentioned in all three interviews, before and after the fact.

Samuel: Back in ... back in '94, '95 ... Daniel had a ... girlfriend. We was just ... startin' to look for a house just before we got married, we was just startin' to look for a house. We went down to Beaumont to look for a house and looked at this one house and that one didn't pan out and ... came home.

I had to cut the grass – it was my favorite thing to do so I'm out there cuttin' the grass so ... Maggie comes out there, she says – one of my ex-wife's sisters called ... says, Ellie's in the hospital ... so I said, okay, well ... well there was nothin' I could really do, so let me finish cuttin' the grass; then I'll go to the hospital and find out what's goin' on, so I finished cuttin' the grass and went up to O'Brien Hospital.

She was in Simpson so I went back and said, I gotta go to Simpson, so I went to Simpson and they ... you know found that she was in Simpson and she had ... a brain aneurysm and ... she was layin' up and she was all bandaged up in bed and so I couldn't go in there.

So I went in the waiting room and ... and sittin' in the waiting room is ... Daniel and Tiffany, along with Daniel's two aunts, Casey and Shawnie ... so we're sittin' in there talkin'; I'm you know walkin' back and forth and the ... the two like sister-in-laws, they ... you know we kid each other and whatnot, you know and so on. Shawnie says to me, "So how're you doin', Grandpa?"

So and I'm thinkin' like she's gettin' on me about age and whatnot, you know ... Who're you callin' Grandpa and whatnot ... so ... Tiffany's sittin' there who is Daniel's 15-year-old girlfriend ... yeah, with ... with my 17-year-old son ... at the time I believe he was 16, whatever he was – she was young, anyway.

I look over at Daniel and they're both lookin' at me. I said, "What's goin' on?"

So he said, "She's ... you know ... she is pregnant."

What?! So okay, so fine, let's take this and let's think about this a minute. Ex-wife in the hospital with a brain aneurysm, 16-year-old son with his 15-year-old girlfriend visiting and now ... she's pregnant, gettin' ready to have a baby, and so I said, okay, I said okay. This has turned out to be a day.

Well I'm talkin' to 'em and I'm sayin', "Now Tiffany, now ... from what I ... just ... just knowin' you know what I know, girls are supposed to be the smart ones. How ... how are you going to ... " and then you know, and I'm thinkin', I

said, “Now, and how are you going to tell your ... your parents? How do your parents feel about this? And ... wait a minute ... first of all, where are you livin’ at?” So, they’re, “Okay ... and I’m livin’ with Daniel.”

“You’re doin’ what? (laughs) You’re not livin’ at home? You’re livin’ with him?”

Maggie: Her parents threw her out.

Samuel: So it’s none of my business, so I go home and tell ... tell Maggie how it was ... it was a good visit ... you know?

Maggie: You’re My Favorite

Maggie: And I just gotta show you ... [brings out a family photograph with a young man and woman, two boys, and a baby girl] this boy [points to the older boy in the photograph] is the light of my life.

Samuel: Now ... he got some interracial things goin’ on.

Maggie: Oh, yeah. I’m gonna tell you what I’ve always told ‘im. He’s – in actuality – he’s a quarter Black, a quarter Filipino, quarter Spaniard, and quarter ...

Samuel: Swiss

Maggie: Swiss. Okay? Now he is the melt ... he is our melting pot. He is the light of my life. And so I told him from the time I can remember, I’d say, “Desmond ... now remember this, you’re quarter Black, quarter Swiss, quarter Spaniard, and quarter Filipino ... and all Irish.”

Sandy: Is that what you are – Irish?

Maggie: Mostly. So that's what he tells everybody. He's ... he just turned ... gonna be 8 ... but I've always told 'im from the time I can remember, too, that ... "We have a secret. (whispers) You know, you're my favorite. You ... Grandma loves you more than anybody." He says, "More than Papa?" I just go, "Ssh! Don't tell 'im, don't tell 'im." And he'd say, "More than God?" "You know God has to come first, but ... after God ... after God, you're it." And so he'd come over, he'd go ... and he'd look at Papa, and he'd whisper to me, "You still love me most?" I'd go, "I love you most." And ... and Papa would go, "What're you talkin' about?" I'd go, "Oh, nothin', nothin', Papa" (laughs). He and his mother lived with us for ... about a year?

Samuel: Yeah.

Maggie: We bonded, we bonded ... just incredibly. And ... he is still the light of my life, the light of my life ... and I just ... oh ... we used to get him every other weekend – his father was out on his luck for a little while – we got 'im ... just like visitation. And we prayed and prayed that Daniel would ... get his head on straight and ... take responsibility to do the right thing, and he did. Be careful what you pray for. Because when that happened, we didn't get him every other weekend anymore. And I went through Desmond withdrawal for a long time. Yeah, so he is ... he's still ... he was with us a few weeks ago ... and we had such a good time. We ... we spoil 'im. He's got his own room, TV ... you know.

Maggie (pointing to the photograph): This is ... soon to be his new stepbrother Ernest; this is his ... new sister and this is Daniel's – this is Daniel right here and then this is ... his wife-to-be, Nina.

Maggie: That's My Grandma

Maggie and Samuel each have several grown children from previous relationships. Maggie says that it's "his kids, my kids – but our grandkids." She told a story about her grandson Desmond's future stepbrother Ernest.

Maggie: This one back here (points to a child in the photograph) started callin' me

Grandma quite awhile ago and we went ... we took my ... all of our grandkids – it's not my grandkids and his grandkids – they're our grandkids – to an amusement park ... was it last summer, honey?

Samuel: Mm hmm

Maggie: I got the two ... youngest boys and he got the three oldest kids and ... I put 'em on the kiddie roller coaster and I ... was kiddin' with 'em and saying, gotta hold on, gotta do this, gotta do that, and [Ernest] said, he turned around and he said to this kid, "That's my grandma ... she's really worried about me."

Maggie and Samuel: Description

Maggie and Samuel both said I can use their real names – "We have nothing to hide." I consulted with my advisor about whether I can use the real name of any participants and he said I cannot since that is the way I set up my study.

Maggie wore a character sweatshirt with the famous character of her real name and red pants. She is of medium build with short blonde hair and brown eyes. Her skin is a very light peach. She has a short, straight nose, arched eyebrows, and thin lips. She

wore glasses on a cord around her neck. Her ears are somewhat small and close to her head.

During the second interview, Maggie said she has lost 46 pounds toward her goal of 50 pounds. She is 56 years old and explained that her and Samuel's age difference (5 ½ years) is more difficult for her than the racial difference. She described herself as mostly Irish.

They chose Samuel's pseudonym because he resembles Samuel L. Jackson. He is of average height and wore jeans and a black sweater with an abstract design. His hair is black or nearly black and short in a natural style. He wears a close-cropped mustache and beard. His eyes are dark brown and somewhat round and his eyebrows are high. His nose is short and straight with wide nostrils. His lips are fairly full. His ears are somewhat small and close to his head.

Trying to think of a color word for Samuel's skin other than the generic "dark brown," I took out a box of 64 Crayola crayons. The one called *sepia* looked like a perfect match, but then I thought about sepia-toned photographs, and decided that would be misleading since that sepia is much lighter. I settled for saying his skin is rich dark brown with dark sepia tones.

Maggie and Samuel: Interviews

Maggie left a message on my office phone on a Sunday afternoon after receiving my information card at the multicultural nondenominational church that morning. After several calls back and forth, she and Samuel called together on their speaker phone to set up our appointment. We had our first interview on January 31st. By that time, I had

revised the informed consent form to make it clear that they intended to be interviewed together.

Maggie and Samuel live in a split-level ranch style home in Newhart, south of Garrison. The day of our first interview, snow came down heavily, and my partner drove there, dropped me off and went to a coffee shop, returning a little over an hour later.

Samuel and his large, old dog greeted me at the door in a friendly manner. The dog appeared a little uneasy, so I talked to the dog first to reassure him. After sniffing me for a few minutes, the dog walked away and soon settled down near the couch where Maggie would sit. I shook hands with both Samuel and Maggie. They greeted me enthusiastically and offered seating in the dining room, living room, or family room. The family room looked most inviting, so we seated ourselves there. They each sat on a different couch and read through the informed consent forms and signed them while I set up my recording equipment.

At the end of the first interview, when I was ready to photograph Maggie and Samuel, I suggested that he sit near the light source. He asked if that were a racist comment. I explained that my sister was a professional photographer and that I had asked for her advice when I was preparing to photograph people of different skin colors. She told me that if the darker-skinned people were closer to the light source and the lighter-skinned people farther away from the light source, the photograph would reveal more detail in the darker-skinned people without washing out the lighter-skinned people. Maggie said she would remember that. Samuel continued to look somewhat uncomfortable, which shows up in the photographs. During the interview he spoke freely

and congenially but he appears to be cautious and suspicious in the photographs. Maggie, beside him on the same couch, smiles in every photograph.

At the beginning of the second interview, Maggie apologized for the house being messy. Even though it is slightly less immaculate than at the first interview, it did not seem messy to me. This time they decided to put the dog in another room so it wouldn't bother us, although it had slept through the last interview. The interview was longer than I planned – the audiotape broke and didn't stop at 45 minutes, which to me was my cue for winding down the interview. Fortunately, I had the videotape as a backup.

Once I finished all transcriptions and made tapes for those who wanted them, I contacted Maggie and Samuel to ask if they would rather I mail theirs or deliver them. They invited me to deliver them so I took along the audiotape recorder in case they wanted to talk a little more, which they do. After the second interview, Maggie was diagnosed with cancer of an unknown source and underwent chemotherapy. She talked about her treatments and the support she received from her coworkers, family, friends, and church members, although I did not transcribe that part of the tape.

Maggie and Samuel talked about Daniel's wedding and how much they enjoyed the presence of their families for this significant occasion. They described how they provided space for their guests from the East. Maggie recounted a meeting with Samuel's ex-wife and described how Ellie did not recognize her without hair.

They went on to talk about how many people from previous relationships attended the wedding and got along. Some of this is included in the section "For the Record" since they provided this response to my question in that section.

Francisco Strong



Figure 4: Francisco Hands Photograph

The bookshelves in Francisco's office on the university campus where he works as an administrative professional and an African American history instructor overflow with history books, teaching awards, contemporary books, mementos of special events, gifts from students, a ceramic pot from his Irish American wife, music books, photographs of his four children, and more books. His door displays dozens of postcards from all over the world, sent by former students. Dozens of name tags from various conferences at which he has presented hang from a hook.

Francisco and his brother attended a Catholic elementary school (all White except for them) and came home to his parents' house next to the Booker T. Washington Community Center, where many civil rights activities took place. He described the neighborhood where he grew up, where his parents – an African American man and an Italian woman – still live, in a small city in New York.

We lived on a street that was actually divided – there was a hill in the middle of the street. If you went downwards on one side, it was all Black. If you went downwards on the other side, it was all White. I guess people would call that an integrated neighborhood but it really wasn't. It was segregated by the hill.

Francisco: Poetic Representations

Black and White

Some of my earliest memories are school and community
During the day I was in a school of all Whites
In the evening I was in a community of all Blacks

It was really
kind of nice when we were growing up
because where my parents' house is
right next door is Booker T. Washington Community Center
Right across the street is the local playground
THE playground because
so many African Americans came down to that playground

We were raised in a community
kind of odd
New York during the period
didn't have segregated schools
New York State very early on
1900 actually
desegregated all their school systems

My parents actually had an option
of where they would send me
All the schools in our hometown
were integrated
elementary schools, middle schools, high schools
they were all integrated

Of course some of 'em were more
racially divided than others
just based on residential patterns

We went across town
to go to school.
I really was educated in a Catholic school
being the only Black kid
in any class I ever took
kindergarten to 8th grade

I did that during the day
then in the evening
as soon as you went over the peak of that hill
you knew you were going to get into the Black community

Right next door to my parents' house
was Booker T. Washington Community Center
like the Black YMCA
Most of the Black people in my hometown
went to Booker T. Washington for activities
 basketball – we had a league
 there was a shop there
 we used to skate there
so the time that I had AFTER school
was with predominantly African Americans

Booker T. Washington Community Center
also happened to be
the place where the local NAACP met
It was very active in the community
This would have been throughout the '60s

Booker T. Washington Community Center
that's where the Blacks hung out
that's where their population would be

Harriet Tubman's home
 is a mile and a half from my parents' home
William Seward's home
 is a mile and a half the other way
When you do a tour of William Seward's house to this day
 they take you down into the basement
 where it was actually part of the Underground Railroad
About two blocks down from William Seward's home
 is where Frederick Douglass
 published his first autobiography

Certain sections of the town
were predominantly Black or minority
 really predominantly Black
There weren't any other minorities
 There was no you know Latino-Hispanic population
 There's no Asian population to this day
 They had like kind of a museum Indian village
 I don't remember any Native people being there
It's Black and White

My Advisor, My Wife

I met my wife in 1982

I'm married to a woman
who is Irish, French, and English
mostly Irish

I went to school at North Carolina State
I dropped out of school for about 6 years
When I went back to school
I was about 25
I went to the State University of New York

That's when I met my wife

She went to the same school I did at Rockport
She has many Black people that she associated with
you know went out
had fun and danced
all that kind of stuff

She's always been open to everyone
That's just part of her personality
She didn't get that from her parents
She never got it from her mother or father
She didn't get it from any of her sisters
She never got it from anybody else
It's just
something she picked up on her own

My wife had just graduated
She was working as a
residence hall director

When I first went back
I didn't know anybody
so I stayed in a residence hall
for a semester
My wife was my director

So that's how I met my wife
when I went back to school
She was my resident assistant
She actually checked me into the dorm
We started dating shortly after that

She was real hesitant
'cuz she didn't want her parents to know
Her parents were extremely prejudiced

My Wife's Father Stopped Talking to Her

By that time her father had died
after my daughter was born
her father died of cancer
I never met her father
never

Pictures of 'im and stories but
I never actually met 'im – never

When her father was dying
he had cancer
he was getting pretty bad
she actually flew back there
from here
She knew that he only had
a couple months left

He hadn't talked to her in years
They ended up having
like a brief conversation

She was by his side
then they went up
when they spread the ashes
on the farm

She had always been really
she was always really close to her father
never really close to her mother
while she was growing up
so that was real hard on her
when her father

stopped talking to her

Her mother had always been
pretty cold to her
so she wasn't really that concerned
about what her mother's attitude was

Her father's attitude changed.
She knew what was gonna happen.
She fully understood
how he was gonna react

so she wasn't surprised by it
That doesn't mean it didn't hurt
People make choices
They gotta live with their choices
They ended up having
 like a brief conversation
It's amazing what
what the oncoming death
 will do to people's attitudes
All of a sudden
 they begin to see the light
It takes that to make them see the light
It's just phenomenal

Welcoming Family

My wife and my mother were real close
There was no problem whatsoever
between my wife and my mother and father
They had no problem with it whatsoever
When we lived in Buffalo
 either we went there
 once a month
 or they came to Buffalo and stayed with us
We took vacations together
 went to Canada
They were perfectly ...
 especially since they understood
 that my wife lost her parents
 in the process
they were really open and
welcoming her into the family
My wife talks to her mother
 occasionally

We're Not Going There!

I met her when I went back to school
We ended up moving to Buffalo together
She went back to get her second degree

After she graduated from Buffalo
we were looking for a place to move
 we didn't wanna raise kids in Buffalo
 we didn't wanna to be in Buffalo
 it was too cold, it was too dreary
 sun doesn't come out
She asked me where I'd lived in the country
 where and what I liked

I had lived in North Carolina
I went to school there for 2 years
I had also lived in Colorado

I described North Carolina to her
 I really love North Carolina
I described what Colorado was like
 to help her to make a decision
 which one she would rather live in

It just so happened
when we were making a decision
 this was back in '86, '87
there was a murder spree
in North Carolina
where somebody was going around shooting
interracial people

That's all my wife had to read

She said, we're not going to Carolina,
 I don't care how nice it is
 I don't care how much you like it
We're going to Colorado.

As soon as she heard that,
she wouldn't even discuss North Carolina anymore
 didn't matter what I said
 how I framed it
It was Colorado
so we ended up moving here

We were debating, debating
then she heard about that
and it was like, woops!

We're not going there!

Yeah, guess we're heading west

Is This Two Different Families?

We were driving back to New York
for my 20th reunion
We had all the kids with us

We got to a restaurant
two of my kids look very Italian
two of my kids look very White
so I was sitting on one side
with the darker kids
my wife was sitting on the other side
with the lighter kids

The waitress came up to us and said
Do you mind if I ask you a question?
We said no go ahead
She goes
Is this two different families?

We just cracked up
The kids couldn't understand what was going on
Why'd she ask that question?

We're all together

Francisco: Stories

Playing in the Back Yard

I asked Francisco about family acceptance of his parents' marriage. He described problems on his mother's side of the family. Only many years later did he conclude that his grandmother never overcame her prejudice.

Francisco: [My parents] had problems for interracial marriages ... problems on my ... mother's side ... that they didn't fully accept my father for the longest time and I'm not quite sure if they ever did fully accept him. They had problems ... but still we'd go over to their house in Rochester. We'd go over for holidays but ... my grandmother ... still was never comfortable with it ... I didn't know it at the time ... until I look back and I've talked to my brothers and I've talked to ... my mother. We always had to play in the back yard. We couldn't play in the front yard ... and I thought it was because the front yard – there was a street there and she didn't want us running out, getting hit and hurt. It was because she didn't want the neighbors seeing us playing at her house. I always you know just assumed it was for our safety and afterwards after some conversations, we went, "I don't think that was a safety issue." So she's had problems with it.

High Schools Coming Together

Francisco described what happened before and after the high schools in his hometown combined. In addition to the schools in this excerpt, the Catholic high school closed and those students also became part of the single town high school.

Francisco: I remember when I was growing up that there were fights between Black high school students and White high school students, when I was actually not in high school at the time. It was you know like '66, '67, '68 and I was actually in middle school ... but I remember ... people that were talking about it – people that were getting in fights, especially some of the ... more visible athletes that were in our community, people that were playing for – at the time – West

High School, which was predominantly Black athletes, against East High School, which was predominantly White athletes – them having confrontations.

That was interesting, too, because once the high schools actually combined ... many of those same athletes or their siblings were on the same team (laughs) so they didn't have an option at that time. They didn't wanna play together but ... they had to play together. And they ended up actually being Number 1 in the state in football the second year that they combined. You had two very good schools that combined that just ... they just walked through ... their games ... I mean just walked through 'em. They ended up being Number 1 in the state the second year the high school was in existence. They just ... they just dominated so eventually they ... they did get along (laughs). They had Black stars and they had White stars – they had both of 'em.

My Kids Know Who They Are

Francisco provided physical descriptions of his four children and showed me their photographs. He said he usually checks the “other” box on school registration or other forms and lists all aspects of their identity.

Francisco: Two of my kids are ... are twins except one of 'em's real Italian looking when you take a look at 'em, Colby is a real Italian looking kid and Ryan – doesn't show here but he's really, really light-skinned, like white, he's not even ... colored at all. He's got really curly blonde hair. Colby has really straight black hair, Ryan's got really curly you know dirty blonde hair, Mary's hair is straight and black, and Rachel's hair is curly and blonde.

My kids ... they identify themselves with everything that they are. Interesting – they don't say they're Black, they don't say they're White ... and if somebody says they're Black, they'll say, "Well I'm White, too." Well ... what are you? And they'll tell 'em – "I'm Black, I'm Irish, I'm Italian, I'm English, I'm ... " – you know – just run it right down so it's real interesting.

My daughter actually said to me the other day – she was talking to one of her friends on ... the phone and she said to her friend she was Black and she was Italian and she was Irish and then she said, "Hold on a second," and she yells out, "Mom, what else am I?" (Laughs) And my wife started running it down and she's telling her friend on the phone, she goes, "I'm all those things" (laughs).

So they know. They fully understand, too. We've told 'em from Day One exactly what ethnic makeup they are so they understand that and it is important for all of them.

My older daughter um who's in high school now – and even when she was in middle school – her name is Mary – so her teachers used to call her Maria ... and she used to always correct 'em because they thought that she was Mexican. So she's supposed to speak Spanish and supposed to be Maria.

And she said, I'm not Mexican – there's nothing wrong with being Mexican – but my name is Mary and this is what I am (laughs). So now she's taking Spanish (laughs).

Francisco: Description

Francisco is a biracial man, born to an Italian mother and African American father. He works as an administrative professional in a college dean's office and teaches

African American history and ethnic studies classes. He has a master's degree and completed several credits in a doctoral program, but chose not to complete doctoral studies. He is married to a White woman, Molly, of mostly Irish ethnicity, and they have four children, Mary, Rachel, Colby, and Ryan. They live in Newhart, south of Garrison.

Francisco has medium light brown skin, a little lighter than my sons, who are African American and German, and a little darker than my daughter, who is African American, German, and Italian. His graying black hair is short and slightly wavy, and his short, graying beard and black mustache are wiry. His hairline is beginning to recede slightly. He has a broad nose, full lips, and noticeable Adam's apple. His eyes are dark brown and his black eyebrows are prominent above his small-framed glasses. His small ears are set close to his head. His general appearance reminds me of my brother, even though my brother – as far as I know – did not have African American ancestry and his skin was much lighter.

Francisco: Interviews

Our first interview took place on February 18th. We met in Francisco's campus office, which has bookshelves filled to overflowing with books, mementos, photographs, and awards. He sat by his computer and talked about how much he loves his work as I set up the recording equipment. I gave him materials for his wife to see if she might want to participate. She did not contact me.

Francisco assented to videotape, audiotape, and photographs and indicated that he would like copies of the transcripts, videotape, and photographs. His manner is friendly and open. During the second interview on March 10th, he noticed students outside his

glass door and excused himself to go return their papers. Many of the awards adorning his office are from students.

Twice I saw Francisco do a performance in which he enacted the life of a slave and interacted with the audience to help them realize aspects of what it might have been like to have been a slave. During the performances, he related history and customs of the times. I have seen him at other diversity activities on campus.



Figure 5: Kathi Hand Photograph (with Dog)

When Kathi welcomed me into her large suburban home in a new Garrison subdivision, her little black and white dog Tiko jumped up excitedly. Kathi had warned me about Tiko, and when Tiko brought a squeaky toy over to me, Kathi told me not to encourage him. “This is my real problem child,” Kathi said.

Kathi, who is of Irish and German ethnicity, has two children with her first husband, who is African American and Blackfoot – Cindy, a master’s student, and Terrell, a college student. A few years after Kathi’s divorce, she married a White man with two White sons, now both in college. Kathi talked about her experiences:

What I learned about ... being in a multicultural relationship was that I saw a lot of things that maybe a lot of Caucasians don’t see. I learned so much about real race relations in our society. I guess the interactions that happened just with us a couple and then after the children came ... a different experience on MY part because when I divorced, and then I had my children by myself It’s amazing how many people ... thought I had adopted them or that I was babysitting I was constantly ... asked if they were my children ... they were constantly asked if I was their mother.

Kathi: Poetic Representation

Two Girls Came to Town

I remember just before we left Smallville
a Black couple came to town
 with two girls
They were about the same age as I was
They were started at the junior high

I can remember the big uproar
 there WAS a big uproar
It was more of a curiosity

I didn't know about all the other
things that were going on
 later I found out
 what they had to go through
but as far as what I thought
it was just a curiosity

Kids were asking
questions about these girls
 Where do you think they live?
 Why are they are here?
 What were they doing in Smallville?
 Why would they choose to come here?

I remember going home
 talking to my mother
That was never
it was just never part of our
repertoire about talking about the races

My mom
just believed that
everybody was the same

I never had an issue with race

When I went to ask her about that
I did say you know
Everybody's having a little hard time
 trying to figure out
 why they're here
some kids are making fun of 'em

I don't think there's any difference, Mom
She just looked at me

She was raised in the South
she said there isn't –
she went on to tell ME stories
about when she was growing up
how they had to cross
she would walk down the street
they had to cross the
other side of the street
before they got to her

that sort of thing
her and her grandmother
would walk down
they had to cross over

They couldn't be
on the same side of the street
She couldn't drink
from the same faucet

That was my first introduction about race relations

You'd see it on TV
but it was never anything that was
really close to you
And then when I found that out that
my mother had actually been close to it,
then it just never you know, okay
That was my first introduction to any of that

I just never ever remember
my mother ever saying anything
bad about anybody
I think that set my tone
for how I would be anyway
that just never was an issue

I was also raised Catholic
That was a part of the Catholic
you just didn't have those biases
That just wasn't a bias
Prejudice wasn't there
It wasn't supposed to be anyway
Of course it is

So when we went to Junction
it just all kinda meshed
I thought it was great actually myself
I liked and always felt
comfortable with a multi-ethnic setting
with lots of different people
I happen to like change

I like people
DIFFERENT people
I think that makes

for a much more enjoyable life

Smallville is a very small town
Everybody talks
You'd hear stories
They were two girls
They were confronted in the hallway
One boy had confronted them

They were walking down the hallway
He was coming this way
He just thought that
He was being very mean
 he was gonna trip 'em
physical things like that

He was gonna trip 'em
He was gonna, you know
how funny *ha ha ha*
They happened to move around
so that he didn't get his chance
 to do what he wanted to do

Then there was just
all of the talk about

them in general being there
 what they were like
 they looked like
this all was almost like

an alien had come to our town

We were trying to
 figure out about
 these people

When I was talking to my mother
 why in the world
 you would even say something like this
except for
 we had never seen Black people

It was like me saying
I don't understand why
everybody seems to think that
there IS a problem
why they're different

they seem like they're just like us
they walk like us
they talk
they seemed a little scared
they would walk
hand in hand together

Looking back on that
how that day
them walking through school
what courage that took
what courage

EVERY-body turned their head
I turned my head
We'd never seen

You could tell the apprehension
on their face
The fact that I had to go home
just address that to my mother
There could have been other White kids
come to school that day
new kids come to school
it wasn't like that

I don't understand
They're just like us

There were some people that
even that day who were like
You heard the word *nigger*
You heard, you know
Well, what are they doing here?

What are the colored girls
why are they
You knew right away
that it was different
Something was

It was different

And why should it have been?

Defining Point

It was funny that when
I was first approached by
someone in school
a Black male
who actually wanted to date me
I actually was very surprised

at my reaction to myself
My reaction was
Omigosh, no I can't do that

I just never thought
that I would have that
it was very interesting

I went home and
talked to my mom

My mom of course
was just the opposite
she was like

You can do whatever you want
You make yourself happy
That's what it's all about

She went on to tell me
how when she was younger
even Italians in her day
was a thing that you
stayed away from

She happened to
fall in love with an Italian
Her family didn't like him
Never couldn't hook up
for whatever many reasons
That was one of 'em
Where she lived was
because of the prejudice
that was there
She was Irish
Irish and German actually

I don't know
what that was all about
but that's what she said
That was the only one
man that she ever really loved
She didn't do it
because her family said no
She said, don't ever let that be
part of what you don't want to happen
Anyhow, that's what she had said

Don't let ethnic-icity
the color of somebody's skin
anything else be part of
what you will make your decision on
You make it on their heart
with how they treat you
if they respect you,
you know all those things
That's one thing my mom
good on her part

So that's basically when he did
I actually went out on a date with him
I can still remember how people
 this was about 30 years ago
people were just a little bit different
 when you walked into a restaurant
 with a Black man
how it was even in Junction
 during the '70s
 things were just starting
 to get where you could kind of do those things
 and be open and free about it
 but it still wasn't there
so you'd get all the looks
of course
you felt
how can I put it
 devalued
 devalued

So that was my
 first experience with that
I didn't end up dating

The person that I did
 end up marrying
I did know in high school

Exception

We found that a lot in our
in our friends later
that we realized
they liked us for US
 Isn't that what it's all about anyway?
They couldn't extend that
to a bigger picture – race

We kept ourselves safe
but even the ones that maybe didn't
like the idea or not
which could accept us
because they liked us

yeah, sort of like the
exception to the rule

I didn't follow the stereotypes
I wasn't one that slept around
I wasn't quote ugly
I wasn't ... you know all of the things
they say a White woman would be
with a Black man

The same thing for him
he was not ignorant in any way
he was very personable
very outgoing
very likeable person
came from a very good family
had morals and values
all of those things that
somehow Black men don't have

So he was the exception
I was the exception
We were acceptable then

Baking and Bonding

Her grandmother
who was part Blackfoot Indian
by the way
taught her to bake

In the community that they were in
that's what the women did
They would come in on Saturdays
bake bread, bake cakes, bake cookies
like have a community bake
at somebody's home

They would all go over
assemble in on a Saturday
They would come over and
they would bake
that's how that community
even in their little microcosm
that's how they got together

They would talk
they would have a good time
they would ... socialize

It was about the baking
they would split up the baking

What a great thing to do
They were talking about not only stories
but about gossiping (laughs)
 you know telling about what
 somebody was doing down the street
That was their socialize time

There was a lot of stories told
I didn't get to know a lot of those stories
Her ... daughter though who still lives in Junction
 We still ... have contact
 that would be my kids' aunt
She still has, she has a lot of those stories though
my kids will still have access to that
because they have a good relationship with her

I tell you what
I am not a baker
but I would love to go over to her house
While she was baking
 she would teach me
I would try to look like I was learning

I'm just not a baker
I would have so much fun
It was like she was ... doing what she was doing
 we would tell
 we would talk
 she would tell
 ask me about how things were going

I mean we were just
we were bonding
It was a bonding thing

That's how we did it
I know that's
how she said the community
 that's her friends
that's what they would do.

Now isn't funny that my daughter
 loves to bake?

Multicultural Not Multiracial

I don't like the term multiracial ... or biracial.
I've always believed that we are of one race

I know that is controversial
I know that a lot of people don't buy into that
I happen to believe that you bleed the same
you eat the same
you have to survive the same
you have the same basic instincts and needs
We all sit on a hierarchy that we
at the start we're all down here
we all have to work our way through it

Culturally, I like to say multicultural
I really believe that we are ethnic
a different ethnic view
but race – I don't like that term at all
so I never try to use that with my kids

When they would say
you have a biracial child
I say bicultural or mixed ethnic-icity
but I didn't like the term race.

I always related that to
when the Vietnam War was going on
Black men, Brown men, every kind of color –
men were – was going to Vietnam or
being called to Vietnam – White, too

You bleed the same
They had to be in the
same kind of environment in war
That's what I attribute that to
it's sort of like you can't
say that you are a different race
if it all bleeds the same in the dirt

I don't like the term
I go back to the culture
That's what I always
told my children too
You're of a different culture
or you're mixed culture

Kathi: Stories

Black Bar and Beauty

Kathi talked about her experience in the 1970s in the Black bar owned by her father-in-law. She went on to discuss media depictions of beauty during those years through today. This excerpt is edited, with most of my responses and a few of Kathi's words deleted.

Kathi: His father, when they moved ... out here and he bought a bar. And that's how they made their livelihood – it was the only Black bar in ... Junction.

Yeah, it was ... and that was also an experience because when I did marry my ex and then started to ... I would go over there and I would ... it was a whole different thing during the late '70s being in a Black bar – and you're the only White person in a Black bar, it's (laughs) different. It's a different experience.

You have the same kinda thing – you have those that are very accepting and those that weren't accepting and some of those that were very, very ... angry ... angry at you for ... especially the um ... Black women: being very upset that they felt that I was taking away their ... major breadwinner – this you know – you're taking the son of the person that is successful in this city and he marries a White woman ... you know.

I can understand ... that of course now, I can definitely understand that now. That ... that was only a trend that was happening throughout the nation ... unfortunately ... and that's how they felt about that. Because they felt like they could not go the other way – that they could not enjoy that same fruit from a

White man. Of course that's not necessarily true anymore. But there was anger there, so you had a mixture. You had a mixture.

But most of the ... of course most of the Black men were very accepting ... but it was usually the women that were ... and it's very understandable because ... you're taking – you are taking the economic and you're also kind of shoving it in their face.

Sandy: And even light-skinned Black women are sometimes – get something similar

Kathi: Exactly That's the other thing in the '70s – that was the big thing ... is that whenever you saw – even the *Ebony* magazine would do it. They would have light-skinned women ... always in the magazine. You'd never see dark-skinned women – always very light-skinned women ... light brown, the cocoa brown with ... men ... now the men could be dark but you did not put a woman of real color in there – she had to have the light skin ... and I think that changed probably in the mid-'80s but boy, it was ... I can remember looking at that and I even pointed that out to my husband one time, it's like, look at all the women ... have such ... fair complexions. It's sort of like every ... because that was you know quote the “essence” [making quote marks with hands] of beauty – the light skin, the good hair – you know all of that.

What My Brother Said

Kathi described her family with her single mother and three brothers, one several years older, one several years younger, and one close in age. She depicted the

estrangement with her brother closest in age. She later said that the oldest and youngest brothers attended her daughter's wedding.

Kathi: My other brother, the one that is ... was closest to me, had the same father, we don't even speak anymore, which is unfortunate, but that's part I think of his decision, too, and part of that decision, by the way, is because I was ... I did marry a Black man and I have Black children. It is interesting that my full brother will have nothing to do with and he's never had ... he's never been in their lives.

This is a good story and I'm glad that we've brought this up because my brother actually was probably a prejudiced person from the very get-go. My mom as I say, was not and she never taught that to us at all but in high school I saw it started to happen to him when we moved to Junction. I embraced ... the differences; he rejected them; he feared them. He was a male. I think there's a big difference there. He was on the basketball team. I'm not sure exactly why but he just took a disliking ... it just never seemed to mesh with him and I can remember him coming home and saying things about the Black kids in school and you know I'd say, "Well, why ... why? What ... what's wrong?" I mean one ... I mean like this one person Jamal, and I was like, "Jamal's really a nice guy, why don't you like him?" I think Jamal was very popular and my brother wasn't. I think there was a lot of that. To this day, I still think that's part of ... because my brother's always ... always has had a self-esteem issue and I think that carried over.

And to me that's what I've always felt about racism in its entirety is that the self-esteem issue with some people, they can't get past their own inadequacies and so they blame other people. It's easy to pick out someone and go, well,

society doesn't like 'em so I'm gonna really rip on that because you can't look inside yourself and see what your own inadequacies are or what your own fears are or what you need to change about yourself, so it's much easier to focus on some ... someone else or something else ... less than you, that makes you more somehow and I think that's exactly where my brother has always been at.

But yes when I was (pause) I actually ... had just had my daughter and my mother hadn't ... she had moved to Alaska and so she hadn't seen Cindy so we went up there and ... that's when he told me ... that he did never ... he didn't like what I had done, he thought it was ... wrong. How could I marry a nigger and have nigger children? Of course that's all I needed to hear.

"Thank you, well, that's okay then because I have chosen that and to me there isn't anything wrong with it and ... it's only enhanced my life and those children are gonna be wonderful kids and you're gonna miss out." And that's pretty much where we left it. And he's never called me and I've never called him. And my daughter's 24.

But on the other hand, this ... this same brother has not talked to my older brother, and my younger brother has pretty much taken away from him too. He ... he lives in the town and he won't even go visit him now. So he's annihilated [alienated] everyone so he had that type of personality anyway and that's very unfortunate.

What My Grandmother Said

Kathi told a story about what her grandmother said when Kathi brought her infant daughter to visit her mother in Alaska. Kathi's mother and grandmother lived together.

She precedes the story with an explanation of differences in outlook between her mother and grandmother. I deleted my responses and edited the excerpt.

Kathi: My family was pretty much always accepting except for my um brother and my ... grandmother, I don't think my grandmother really ... liked it either. She was one that verbally would ... there was no other name but *nigger* for her. So I grew up with that name and my mother would always tell me, "Don't ever say that. Your grandmother doesn't know any better."

My mother was more open minded because she was raised actually by HER grandmother – so it was my grandmother's mother that raised my mother. My grandmother, I learned later, my mom had told me that she was kind of like the rebel of the family ... and she was more with her dad than her mother and she never really did what her mother said, so her mother and her really didn't get along and so I can see where that parallel ... it's sort of like the grandmother took over and she was – my mom was her favorite and it kinda worked that way – she kinda took on her personality instead of my grandmother's personality, of which I'm really proud.

My grandmother and I, we didn't like each other much. She wasn't a very nice person.

I can remember sitting in ... that's when I went to visit my mother, the one time after Cindy was born – my daughter – my daughter was about 6 ½ months old. My grandmother was living with her at the time ... in Alaska ... and here I am – we're sitting in the living room, I have my ... daughter who happens to BE ... part Black ... sitting in my arms and my mom is over here and we're watching

The Price is Right. My grandmother who was sitting right here, you know how *The Price is Right* is – they get on and all the people come down after their name is called, you know.

Well, there was this um one lady who happened to be Black who was very voluptuous and just excited about being called. She runs down and my grandmother proceeded to say, “Oh, look at that nigger coming down, look at that nigger go.”

I have my daughter in my arms! [Holds hands out like holding a baby]. I turn to her and I just went, “WHAT?”

And she looked at me ... like, “Wha-at? What’s wrong?” (pause)

She had no clue ... what she had just said and what she had just done. So that was true ... living it. That was true living the racist ... philosophy. She really, that was part OF her and I didn’t even realize until that moment how bad that was, how much she really was ... a racist (laughs).

I was just like, I just said you won’t, nothing you say will make any difference. The only thing I did say is, “Please don’t say that again in front of me or my daughter.”

And she just turned her head. Interesting.

I went back to Colorado and it was probably a couple of years later that she died so I didn’t have much of an opportunity to be around her anymore.

It's Just Hair, Honey

I asked Kathi about skin and hair care, mentioning that this was an issue for some White parents of Black or mixed children. She told about how she dealt with hair. The excerpt below has most of my responses deleted.

Kathi: That was a necessity for me ... just because I have a daughter and um ... and she had the hair (laughs). I mean she had ... it was a mixture but still she had ... the uh coarser hair but it was fine like mine but yet it was very curly so that even complicated the issue more so I HAD to learn how to take care of that. So, yeah, and I did ... and it ... yes.

Sandy: And how did you learn how to do that?

Kathi: The ... her grandmother ... through um Dick's mom. We just went over and said, "Okay, now what do I do? What is this ... what can you do for their hair? What do you keep ... how do you keep it?" And she would ... proceed to tell me that you know ... as she said, "It's just hair, honey, it's just hair. It's just coarser but it's just hair" (laughs). And it is! It is – it's just hair. You just have to uh treat it maybe just a little bit differently but it's still just hair. It's ... and because it's coarser hair you just have to work with it differently. And that's what we did.

When she was little, I used to just keep in of course braids. That's why braids are the big thing in the African American culture because that's how you can contain the hair. And it works better too for when they're ... when they're growing up, too 'cuz it ... you know they talk about you break your ends, you have good hair or bad hair and they have all the reasons why – but braids is so um

... part of their culture and it's just ... (Pause) It was a bad thing ... to I think ... our society as White society but it ... and even ... it kinda went over to the Black society as a bad thing – the braids – and now it's ... it's great when you see somebody in braids or dreadlocks or any of that because that is a real um ... (pause) verbalization of them saying – this is what I am about – this is how I have to do this for me and ... it's a proud thing, not a bad thing. Just like in the '70s when they wore their hair in the Afros and this is ... what this hair does. You know and it's great, isn't it?

Sandy: Yes.

Kathi: Yeah ... it's not a bad thing. It's not the ... standard White ... but that's what makes me, me and you, you. That was all part of that so ... yeah ... I learned that mostly from ... my mother-in-law.

Am I Adopted?

Kathi described what happened when people persisted in assuming that her children were adopted. People would ask her publicly, and children at her daughter's school repeatedly told her that she must be adopted. She also touched on the importance of her children's knowing both sides. I removed my responses.

Kathi: I was single for 8 years, lived with them and I raised them for 8 years by myself, and it's amazing how many people um ... well, not totally amazing but still, it kinda hurt because they didn't believe that they were your children. They ... thought I had adopted them or that they ... I was babysitting or ... I was constantly, constantly asked um if they were my children ...

They were constantly asked if I was their mother ... and since, unfortunately, their dad was not really involved in their lives ... by his choice, not any of ours ... they didn't have that basis you know, to be with the person of color ... and so they were always in doubt, too.

I even had my daughter at one point ask me when she was younger – she was probably about 7 – and she came out and asked me if she was adopted because so many ... were putting doubt in her that you know ... so, no, that wasn't it. So I had to go back and show her ALL the pictures of me being pregnant with her and her birth. And I'm sure glad I took pictures! And we had, you know, I have pictures and all, so it was ... that was positive, that was good

Personally though, we ... we have never really experienced ...you had bits and pieces of racism come at you ... and I think that ... maybe it was probably on my part, I ... tried to shelter my kids a lot ... from that. I didn't want 'em not to know about it but I didn't want 'em to be IN it. I definitely wanted them to have the skills in order when that would happen when they would grow up I wanted them have an identity of what they ... they are, a strong identity ... so that they would feel that they could be proud of that and work with it: I also wanted them to have a part of ME, because I AM Caucasian and that doesn't mean that ... that isn't a bad thing and neither is being a person of color is not a bad thing.

Matter of fact sometimes when the two come together they mesh very well and it works out very nicely and that's what I try to do for my kids. They ... got all of the ... good parts from ... the people of color ... and ... that richness that comes with it ... and because I think there is a certain amount of richness that

comes with that and then they got the good part on MY side but they also got to know how to live in the White side, which is a little bit different for some people that are just always either Black or White ... and they don't have the mixture.

I think that both my kids have done very well with assimilating both cultures and they ... they have no qualms and no problems in the White culture at all. They can move around it freely because that's where they've always been ... but they can also go into the Black culture because that's what ... they've had a piece of that also ... so I think there's a nice balance there that you can ... make that happen and I think that that's one of the things that I'm proudest about is that I think that happened for us.

Like when my daughter came to me that one time from school – it was ... that was because the children – I'm ... assuming it was the children – I'm not assuming it was anybody else, it was the children that were saying, "No, she can't be [your mother] ... because she's White – how can that be? I think she's not telling you the truth." You know ... so she had to come ask me ... because she wasn't ... I wasn't there to defend ... them at that time so I think that's why she ...

But after that one time after my daughter came home and we sat down and explained, I got out old pictures ... and ... she had no doubts after that. It never came up again.

Kathi: Description

Kathi is a White woman of Irish and German ethnicity. She has straight, medium dark brown hair, falling just past her shoulders, and bangs. Her eyes are hazel, her nose is

straight, her lips are thin, and her chin is strong. Her skin is a light pinkish peach. She is of average height and slender build. Her medium-sized ears neither protrude nor lay closely against her head. Kathi's voice and mannerisms remind me of her daughter Cindy. Their builds and features are similar.

She is a master's student at a large university and a hospital nurse. She chose nursing a number of years ago as a single mother, saying that she knew she could get a reasonably fair wage and find a job anywhere.

Kathi: Interviews

Cindy gave Kathi, her mother, information about the research study and Kathi contacted me. Our first interview was February 20th at her spacious home in a new subdivision in the prosperous area of Garrison.

Kathi's little dog Tiko is gray and white with black ears and markings on his head and back. His tail is fluffy and darker gray. I sat in a comfortable recliner without realizing that it was Tiko's customary place to sit in the evenings with Kathi's husband. Tiko soon adjusted to the stranger in his master's chair. However, he periodically chose a toy to squeak to try to get my attention. Kathi told me not to give him attention.

She prepared a cup of jasmine tea for me and served it in a large ceramic mug. She got her own cup of tea and sat in a comfortable recliner with a small table between us, where I placed my cup.

At the end of the second interview, Kathi pointed out some photographs on display on the shelves facing us. She told a story about one photograph of her son Terrell, his stepbrothers, and step-grandparents. The grandparents took the three boys on a trip to Mexico. When they started home, they were stopped at the border and accused of trying

to kidnap Terrell. The border authorities assumed that he was Mexican because of his appearance, and the others in his party were White (in identity and appearance). The grandparents were able to straighten out the situation, but it took them about an hour to convince the authorities that Terrell was their grandchild.

At the end, Kathi said that she was finished, that she did not want another interview. I realized I did not ask her the final question about what she would like to say to teachers and community professionals, so I included the question in the letter accompanying her transcript and videotape. She did not respond to it, so I assumed that she had said what she felt was most important to her.

Ivy Washington



Figure 6: Ivy Hands Photograph

Ivy described her interracial family. “My mother is Native Mescalero-Apache and Yaqui and my father’s Hispanic and Yaqui as well ... but my father considers himself Mexicano and my mother considers herself indigenous.” Ivy’s husband is Anglo and their daughter identifies as Native. Ivy directs the ethnic studies program at a university.

I’ve been working on Native issues since I was 13, following in the steps of my mother. My mother has always been an activist so she’s always felt that it was important that we work together in making a better world; she’s into unity of people and ideas and perspectives. She always mainly fought for Native issues but she could not turn down anyone that didn’t have a voice. She was pretty vocal.

At the last reunion we were at, on my father’s side, all of my siblings, we were outside looking at our children and we had noticed something to us which was really alarming, because we were all ... very dark with black, jet black hair that really looked blue-black, it was so black, and we looked out at all our children and nobody had black hair – they all had brown – it was really bizarre and I thought, oh my gosh, look at our children! Nobody has black hair. You wouldn’t even know that they were Garcias.

Ivy: Poetic Representations

Watermelon

One of the stories that I can remember
my mother always saying
when they were very poor

Her brother my uncle
would go out and sell watermelons
 He had a watermelon stand
Several of the family members
 were selling watermelons
A a rich Texan
 cowboy came up
 to buy watermelon

He asked how much it was
My uncle said *a dollar fifty*
He said
 That's too much
My uncle said
 So what? It's a dollar fifty

The guy took out a gun
 and shot him

So those are some of the issues

Dad's School

Those kinds of stories

My father does not read or write
My father's story was

He was in Texas
My grandfather – his father
went to go pick him up
 after school

He noticed
that my father
was sitting outside
 under a tree along
 with a bunch of other kids

My grandfather asked
Why is my son outside?

And they said, *Oh he's*
 He's dark
He can't be IN the school
He has to learn
 outside the school

It was probably maybe in the
 '20s.

My grandfather took him out
 and never went back
Those kinds of issues

Strong Women's Voices

She was very strong
My mother was
My grandmother was very strong as well

My grandmother
had a voice
 a very strong voice

I would clearly say
I was raised in more of
a matrilineal family

Looking in
 my father ran the household
Everyone knew my mother ran the household
Everybody knew that

My mother was very outspoken
but she was she was
 a contradiction
a walking contradiction in some ways

She was very strong.
My mother was
my grandmother was very strong as well
 they were really strong women
 they could chop wood
 they could ride horses
 they could gut animals
 they certainly spoke loudly

I can remember my mother
 standing up in front of city hall
 arguing some political issue

A woman that really didn't read or write
but she had a very strong sense of justice
 social justice
Would not call it feminism
People would call it a feminist stance
She really stood her ground as a woman

At the same time
when I say she's a walking contradiction

she was a woman that would
 when my father came home from work
 would have his water drawn
 and the bed turned down
 before he went to bed, you know
She would feed the entire family and eat last

So she was you know contradictory
You know that may have been
the times of the old
 you know, olden – old ways

She was not an individualist per se
even though she had a sense of social justice
I don't know how she learned community building
but it was usually a community statement
 where people
 were all in an uproar

Now let me use a political action that
we could find in the Denver newspaper
 probably in the 1970s

There was a tent city started
It was for the homeless
 The homeless didn't have any place to stay
A group of activists decided
 they were gonna go and pitch tents
 right in city hall – outside of city hall –
My mother was one of the activists

There's been pictures of her in
in the newspaper in the '70s
of doing that and being outspoken
about the issue of homelessness

So she was very active
She knew a lot of people
in the American Indian Movement
She knew people in the Black Panthers in the '60s as well
so it was a communal sense of
 of justice

It was not something that she was
you know ... a wild firecracker out there
you know just blowin' her horn

It usually had you know
providing voices for the community

When people were gathered and
nobody wanted to speak
my mother would step to the podium
on everyone's behalf
 including herself
she was pretty good about
providing voices for the community
 where she lived

It was great, actually

So my mother –
grandmother had a strong voice
I have a very strong voice
My sister has a strong
My daughter has a strong voice
I'm sure she will raise her daughter
 to have a strong voice

It came down from my grandmother
which I'm sure came down
from her mother and
 all the way in the past

Ivy: Stories

Dad's Driver's License

Ivy told a story about an incident with her father's driver's license when they
lived in Arkansas. The story is reproduced below with a few words deleted.

I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas because my father was picking cotton
and those days were pretty hectic as well.

A story of my mother looking at my father's license and noticing it saying
"Black" and her going to the DMV, the Department of Motor Vehicles, in
Arkansas and saying,

“You know, you have my husband down here as Black, you know, he’s not Black.”

The woman ... you know – the story is it’s a big ... woman, a White woman chewing gum ... really loudly, pregnant – saying, “Well, his hand looked black to me so I put Black.”

And my mother argued with her, saying, “He’s not Black, he’s Native American, he’s indigenous and I want you to change it and I want you to change it immediately.”

They end up changing it.

I’ve asked my mother, “Why did it matter?”

She said, “Because they’ll pull ‘im out (it was ‘50s), *mi ha* (my daughter). They’d just pull him out of the car and shoot him if they wanted. So I wanted to make it clear that he was NOT Black because it was not good times.”

Picking Crops: Ivy and Researcher Exchange

When Ivy was very young, the family moved to California because they feared for their safety in Arkansas. My family lived in Arkansas for 2 years at approximately the same time Ivy lived there, having gone there to pick beans and strawberries. Ivy and I discovered that our families had somewhat similar experiences in Arkansas, as related in the following exchange.

Ivy: [My family was] in ... well, in Mississippi for awhile ‘cuz my father was doing some migrant ... working. He was picking cotton and so I have another brother born in Arkansas, and then I have two old ... my two oldest brothers were born in Texas.

Sandy: Well, when I was 4, my family heard that you could make a lot of money in
Arkansas picking ...

Ivy: Huh!

Sandy: ... picking beans and strawberries is what they went down to do and ...

Ivy: It was a lie!

Sandy: Guess what! Yeah (laughs)

Ivy: It was a lie.

Sandy: You couldn't (laughs). But anyway ...

Ivy: Somebody was promoting it, though.

Sandy: Yes, but people apparently were telling people that you could ...

Ivy: ... that you could make money

Sandy: ... make a lot of money

Sandy and Ivy: yeah

Ivy: That's exactly what was going on.

White Man Bashing

Ivy's husband is White. At the time of Ivy's interviews, their daughter Waneta was a high school senior taking college courses. Ivy talked about the complexities of her daughter's growing awareness of ethnic issues. I include one of my responses.

My daughter ... is taking ethnic studies classes and she's starting to think about ... her identity: her communities, where she fits in, where she doesn't fit in ... and she is like most kids that first go off to college and they learn all this new information and then they ... think now that they have the answers to the world and when they're here long enough, they'll realize all this ... all this education –

where it got me is that I know less than when I started, but ... she's at the very beginning and she thinks she knows a lot or she's working a lot with information and I would say she ... has not found a way to ... talk about race, ethnic identity in a way that is inclusive. I think people who first move into the field tend to bash the White and so she tends to sometimes talk about the issues of colonization where the information is good and the information is correct but her delivery is not – as a 17 year old, so I think she tends to ... make her father feel as if you know ... his culture is not worthy, which I ... I don't think that that's where she wants to go but I think that's how she comes across and so ... I'm stuck in the middle of saying, "Well, but honey, she's right historically with the facts but her presentation isn't ... you know ... there's a way to present ... those kinds of issues or information that is more ... that is not divisive and but she's ... does it divisively ... unintentionally though."

I'm trying to right now – I'm really trying to – open her eyes to appreciate ... although her father is Anglo, what he has to bring to the table and to her life and one of the movies we just saw recently was *Master and Commander* – I absolutely loved it, and part of the reason I loved it ... is that it really reflects the history of my husband in a sense of he comes from the line of Admiral ____ and that is the lineage of my husband and so I was telling Waneta the other day, "You really need to see *Master and Commander* 'cuz you'll have a new appreciation of the hardship of ... you know ship life."

My husband is well entrenched in the ocean and his father, and I said, "You'll get a new perspective of how difficult for ... for example, Admiral ____"

you know ... and appreciate a little bit more his ... his life and you know, and who he was, and the hardships.” We all have hard hardships even though he was an admiral and one can say, well, you know he was a shipman granted, but the life of a shipman is not very easy.

I’m trying to awaken her eyes also to ... other issues that are positive on her father’s side because right now when she’s entrenched in ethnic studies she’s like you know, bashing the White man to a certain degree but also she’s not stupid. I mean she does say, “I know I’m White, Dad,” and she is obviously (laughs) so ... but she’s trying to find herself and a place for herself and what kind of community she fits into and stuff like that.

Sandy: Yeah. Which is sometimes a lifelong exploration.

Ivy: Oh, absolutely and it will probably will be ... you know, it still is for me.

Choosing a House at Stanford

Ivy described her daughter’s preparation for starting school at Stanford. I recreated the conversation Ivy described with her daughter. Ivy’s parenthetical comments are in italics. The exchange revealed her daughter’s thinking about race and ethnicity at that time.

Ivy: I’ll tell you an interesting story. Waneta’s going to Stanford this September and she has choices ... and part of being Native is to engage a lot in ceremony and I don’t do that for whatever reason, so ... the choices for housing is ... you can be housed in the Native American house

Waneta: Well, where do you think I should stay, Mom?

Ivy: Well, you know, why don't you do ... just the regular dorm, you know, it's so much more interracial.

Waneta: You know ... the only thing ...

Ivy: She's a really – she's the only child – and she really likes to study. She's very quiet, you know. She was raised being quiet when she wants to be alone.

Waneta: Well, maybe I'll check out the Native American house

Ivy: Okay

Ivy: We were down there for parent weekend, for about 3 days and it was lovely. As well, it was just great being at Stanford, and loved it, and we ... checked out the African American house and the Chicano house ... at the end, I said ...

Ivy: Well what do you wanna do?

Waneta: Well ... I think I'm gonna do ... the Native American house.

Ivy: But she was telling me that ... that some of the tribal people, as they always do, you know, cop attitudes.

Ivy: Well, are you sure you wanna do that because, you know, you're also ...

Waneta: Well, I'm gonna start there ... the next year I'm gonna go to the Chicano one because I'm also ... Hispanic – Mexicana – and then I'm gonna do the African American house.

Ivy: And I thought, that's just a wonderful idea.

Waneta: ... But I have to start at the Native American house

Ivy: Well, why do you feel like you need to start there?

Waneta: Well, Mom, they copped attitudes...and I wanna make my identity very clear to them ... that this is where ... how I identify culturally because I don't ... I

don't wanna be an outsider after staying at the different houses and then going to the Native American. I want to ... I wanna make sure that people know how I claim my identity.

Ivy: I thought that was a really ... interesting comment on her part. So I was very excited about that. I think she's made the right choice ... and she may stay there the entire time; she may not, but she's very clear about ... what she wants in her life and ... and how she perceives race ... and how she looks at beauty.

Ivy went on to describe how Waneta appreciates beauty in people of different appearances. She has told her mother she would like to marry an African American man.

Ivy said that Waneta experienced several racist incidents in her local middle school, including being called "Injun" and being taunted by other students. When her grades began to drop, her mother transferred her to a different school.

Ivy: Description

Ivy has light brown skin, dark brown eyes, and long, straight hair that is light gray – almost white – on the top and black on the ends. She is of medium height and slight build. She wears small-framed glasses and readily smiles a large smile with the corners of her mouth upturned. Her nose is short and a little wide at the tip.

She moved quickly and spoke with what I would call a strong voice in its tone and presence – even before she talked about her and her mother's and grandmother's having strong voices. Her voice conveyed intensity and passion about her work and beliefs.

Before I interviewed Ivy, I admired her hair. Most of the women I knew in academia wore their hair in short coifs. Because my long hair – several inches shorter

than Ivy's – is important to my identity and I want to keep it long, I felt reassured when I saw her hair, thinking, *I CAN keep my hair long*.

Ivy: Interviews

I told Ivy about my research and she asked to participate. I had not planned to recruit her for my study. She said she was interested in participating because of my own interracial family. She has a doctorate in ethnic studies, directs an ethnic studies program at a large university, and teaches ethnic studies.

My first interview with Ivy was March 4th in her office in the ethnic studies department. The outside of her door was adorned with *thank you* printed in different colors in many tribal languages. Her office has a small brown table close to the door, ready for meeting with students and others. A desk, bookshelves, and file cabinets sit between the table and the window that allows the Colorado sunlight to stream in.

Ivy chose not to be videotaped. When I photographed her at the end of her second interview on June 2nd, she moved her long hair forward and strands of it tumbled down to her waist. She smiled and I snapped the photograph.

The day after I gave Ivy a copy of her section, she called and told me she thought it is a good representation of her. She said she especially liked the poetic representations and the photograph of her hands.

Trixie Joiner



Figure 7: Trixie Hands Photograph

“My husband and I only have two sons ... together and that’s our whole family, our whole little ... unit,” Trixie told me as we sat in her office where she works in a technical position at a large university. She told about returning in 1995 to the predominantly White city in New Jersey where she and Tim grew up.

We went to a wedding. My oldest girlfriend’s wedding and she happened to be one of my Black friends who was in my class with me She had a bunch of her own family there – her Black family – and then a lot of White guests – and anyway, my husband and I went together and I of course was in the wedding and Tim was not, and so ... you wouldn’t know we were there as a couple because we sat apart. So we were leaving the party at the end of the night and were standing by my best friend’s cousin and ... she’s like, “I was saying, damn, who’s that White guy all up on that sister?” Because she could not believe like he had just walked up to me and taken me in his arms like he did (laughs). I thought that was funny.

Trixie: Poetic Representations

French Fries

We had come so far with civil rights
I'm fortunate enough to be
of a generation that it really wasn't

It didn't affect me and I did have
you know what I mean
where we had come so far with civil rights
that I didn't face it

My father you know
in our hometown in New Jersey
I mean just things I didn't know
One day he told me that like
Oh, well, my girlfriend Vivian and I
were going to Charlotte's
to grab some French fries

Casually
very off the cuff it seemed like
my father said
Well I remember
when I couldn't go in there
I had no clue

He said *oh yeah*
I had to buy my
they could take our money
We had to go buy our French fries and
leave with them
because we could not eat there

I ... I was so blown away by that

Dad's (Not) Dance

He's quite a bit older than my mom
my dad is
He was born in 1930
in New Jersey
in this little town that
he was born in the town hospital
where I grew up

he was born there actually
I wanna say he had my kindergarten teacher
like you know he's a staple
the whole family's a staple in the town

but he told me that he
they once had to cancel the dance
the school dance
because he wanted to attend

He actually had	
there were years with	or my grandmother's brother
pockets of Black people	they were very close
He was actually in a year	and close in age
where I think	you know they both
it might've been	they were gonna go to the dance together
his own cousin	
or his uncle	and they cancelled the school dance

He also told me
and I think this is common
he dated some White girl
when he was younger
They would have to like meet
sneak down to the park and meet
you know what I mean?
Omigod if they'd have gotten caught
Yeah, yeah ... if they'd have gotten caught

Getting Together

I met this guy and
began a relationship with him
and he just happened to be

Caucasian

We met in high school actually
actually we had a class together
yeah, yeah, we did
so yeah
we became really close friends

then we just kinda went our separate ways
he joined the military
I went off to college

then we both wound up back home
reunited somehow

We have been together for a long time now
It's 18 years now
Yeah, it's been that long

Colorado Surprises

I was getting my hair cut one day
The girl who was cutting my hair
 said she went to high school
 with only seven people
 in one of these little Podunk towns
 here in Colorado and she had
said literally she had
 never SEEN a Black person
 until she came to Garrison

That to me, Sandy
is just something out of the 1950s
It's just so

I've heard of people like that
 but I didn't really
 think they existed
like I just didn't think
 that was possible

I just didn't know that to be possible

Of course I didn't know that
tumbleweeds really existed either
until I came to Colorado
 and a tree
rolled down the street past me
 yeah

Trixie: Stories

Polish Salute

Trixie said that her mother seemed to be uncomfortable when she and her sister
ran to play with White children in the park. "The things I remember most her saying you

know to ... almost kind of a cautionary, you know, 'be leery of White people'." She then recounted a story that took place "probably ... before the 8th grade" that she said she remembers distinctly. I include some of my responses in this sequence since they provide continuance for the story.

Trixie: We had gone to a school play at night and some kids were doing a Polish salute – some White boys were do ... you know the Polish salute to the flag [demonstrates a Polish salute] outside in the lobby – my mother saying something like, very loudly for their benefit you know – "If they'll do that to them, they'll do it to you" ... and it woke them up and you know what I mean. It was pretty ...

Sandy: That was courageous for her to say that.

Trixie: ... and pretty powerful – yeah, yeah.

Sandy: Yes, especially when you said that she had seemed to be apprehensive.

Trixie: Yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah, I mean it was just was one of those ... it drove home the point that she had always ... you know the feeling I had always gotten from her. It drove it home: "*If they'll do that to them, they'll do it to you.*" I guess I still carry that with me. I still remember that.

Sandy: That is ... that's powerful.

Racism in the 20th Century

Trixie and I shared experiences learning about racism in housing. Hers was in New Jersey; mine was in Missouri. I include our exchange with just a few words deleted.

Trixie: I also worked for the county clerk in New Jersey in the registry division – land registry – so I got all the deeds and we you know we filed deeds and mortgages and ... I happened to be working on an old deed one day – and it was ... from my

lifetime, Sandy, or about ... you know, about when I was born, you know, maybe a year or two older than me ... but it was ... it was you know the tenets for a housing community type of thing and so it said in black and white for me to read something to the effect of – I just remember the words – “of White blood.”

Sandy: Omigod.

Trixie: You know.

Sandy: Oh, you know that reminds me the year you were born was the year that the Supreme Court ... knocked down the mis ... anti-miscegenation laws, 1967 ...

Trixie: Wow, I didn't realize that, yeah.

Sandy: And gosh I can't remember what year it was. It was about 1966 or '67, I was working for ... I lived in a mostly white town in Missouri and ... I was working for a guy who was starting a new subdivision? I didn't work for 'im very long actually for two reasons.

Trixie: (quiet laugh)

Sandy: One is ... that he was explaining how ... he had it all figured out so that ... no Black person could ever move into the subdivision, you know he had it figured out so ... you know like, neighbors had to approve of the new person or ... I can't remember but I said, “Well, what if somebody just called on the phone and said, ‘Well I wanna buy’ and you didn't KNOW?” Oh, well, you know, and he was explaining that he had this all figured out and this was something important to HIM.

Trixie: Yeah.

Sandy: And then ... like the very next day he was making a ... sexual pass at me.

Trixie: Naturally.

Sandy: Right and so I just ... I quit. Because those two things, I mean I just couldn't stand to be ... but I mean he had a ... you know this was an important part of his plan for his subdivision to make sure that it was all White.

Trixie: Isn't that great, Sandy, and then you can't prove that, right? And so therefore a Black man get angry that the man is tryin' to keep him down – what are you talkin' about? Prove it. You know, but ...

Sandy: Right: "Oh, no, no ... that's not what we were doing."

Trixie: ... and all these laws and all that civil rights you people get, you know? And oh, no, we're being discriminated against ... but that's amazing.

Carrying Boxes

I asked Trixie if she had any stories about race related to work experiences. She had one, which is recounted below in a slightly shortened version.

Trixie: The story that I think of that comes to my race in this job is ... there's a ... really just the one and that is I started this job as the courier ... I started here ... as courier and I'm just carrying boxes back and forth so you know, obviously an entry-level position – it gets yourself in the door.

Actually I had both my babies after I moved here and then so after ... so I didn't work for 3 years and then yeah, so that was my way to get back into the workforce.

Anyhow, yeah, a job carrying boxes here. Well, my competition for the job was – among other people – a lawyer, a White guy who ... had taken on a second career as a full-time student maybe but he was a ... former attorney. He

was an older White guy and he was into biking and healthy and workin' out and all that kinda stuff, so ... but he also applied for the courier job and did not get it.

And it is my understanding – course all this would've happened before I really was in the building – but ... he like threatened a lawsuit because they gave the job to a Black woman ... and they had to justify why they didn't wanna hire this attorney to carry the boxes for 'em ... and so yeah ... yeah. So again that was all before I moved into the building ... but ... I remember that ... yeah.

It just really struck me how ... like I said ... how ... White men ... up to this day ... you know, with knowledge of the benefits they have for just being White ... you know, they acknowledge it to this day, but my god, they feel ... when it comes to affirmative ... you know when they see a ... [puts her hands up with palms out as in a stopping motion] fraction of what, then it's mercy, mercy – reverse discrimination – I mean it's “uncle.” It's “uncle” (laughs).

Racism in the 21st Century

Trixie related a story that happened fairly recently that demonstrates present-day overt racism. I include one of my responses.

Trixie: Some kid was calling my son – my youngest son, Fred – *nigger* and he ... I was mortified by that, you know, and ... I remember ... and I remember ... I was ready to go and curse the kid out and my kid like had to talk me out of it, like you know I mean? He had to, you know.

Sandy: He said, I'll handle it ... or?

Trixie: I'll handle it, first of all, and ... and it's not that big a deal and then, you know, literally the week or two later, the kid [wanted to] spend the night ... you know

how kids are? And I just ... I wouldn't let him spend the night ... I don't care if you're friends ... you know what I mean? You know I can't, I'm not gonna tell you not to be friends with him but I don't (pause) you know the way he's being raised in a certain way and I don't want him ... no, he's not invited here ... and I know ... this probably just sounds inappropriate when I say it but ... this kid happened ... his mother happened to have been killed not that long before in a car accident and ... I said to [Fred], "Like you would never tease him about ... his mother dying" and my kid's giving me this face like – no, why would you even ask? I'm like, "Exactly, do you see? I mean there are just certain things that are just inappropriate and you just can't ... and there's something wrong if someone's calling you that, like ... there's something wrong and I won't have that person in my house," you know what I mean? Anyhow ... yeah, so I've had that happen.

Trixie: Description

Trixie is African American with French Canuck, Cherokee, and German in her background. At the time of our interviews, she had short, straightened dark brown hair and dark brown eyes. Her nose is straight and slightly wider at the base. Her eyebrows are arched. Her lips are medium full and her ears are medium small and close to her head. Her skin color is between raw sienna and burnt sienna. She is of petite build. She smiled and laughed readily, using humor in her stories and responses. She works in a technical area at a large university. Her husband is White and they have two sons.

Trixie: Interviews

I contacted Trixie to see if she would be interested in participating in the study because I knew she was an African American woman with a White partner and biracial

children. The other two couples were African American men with White partners. I sent a letter about the study to Trixie's partner but he did not respond, and she was the only one in her family to participate. I wondered if Trixie might suggest that I invite her sons to participate, particularly since she talked about how interesting it would be to include children in the study. However, she did not. I think they were both over 10 years old so they would have been at a good age for such participation.

Our first interview was March 9th in her office on a university campus, and our second interview, one month later, also took place in her office, where she has a computer table and a work table, a file cabinet, and a window. She referred to a photograph of her sons and a small poster that illustrated her story about religion.

Julie Placer



Figure 8: Julie Hands Photograph

Julie is my daughter, 26 years old. She asked to participate in this study. Rodger and I adopted her when she was not quite 6 months old. Her birth parents were African American and German-Italian. Her daughters LaShawna and Zora are “Black, White, and a little bit of American Indian”; Yolanda is “Sudanese, White, and Black American.”

Julie: I grew up in a small Iowa town where the majority of people were White and where I live now, it’s still the majority White. There is some diversity but I’m next to Omaha, which has a lot of diversity. I feel more comfortable in that type of area – anywhere where it has diversity. It doesn’t even have to be Black people or Hispanics, just ... everything. As long as it’s not one race. The diversity just is better.

Everybody always asks what color I am, what I am, you know, they always ask me about my hair People stare at me a lot ... ‘cuz they’re trying to figure out what I am because I’m so light ... They always think I’m Hispanic. They think that I’m everything but what I really am. I’ve been ... asked if I was Asian, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Native American, Indian from India – you know, everything – Middle Eastern.

Julie: Poetic Representation

Getting Made Fun Of

Growing up
I used to always get made fun of
I had an Afro
I was darker
People would call me names
 It was the boys that did it, though
 it wasn't the girls
 Usually the girls were usually pretty nice
 or they just you know
 had their own little group of people
 they hung out with
and I did, too

I think in middle school
I had a boy say something to me
I can't remember exactly what he said
but it had to do with me being dark
I beat him up and he stopped

My daughter
the oldest one has similar problems
'cuz she's
I also got made fun of for being
 chubby

She has similar problems 'cuz she's
chubby
 dark
 doesn't really know
 what to do with her hair
so she
gets made fun of in similar ways

How to Do My Hair

When I got into high school
I graduated with a girl
who was Black from Kansas

She taught me how to do my hair
took me to Wichita
I met her family

It influenced me a lot when she would
you know when she taught me
 how to do my hair
‘cuz that was a big thing

I met her just in the school
I was a junior I think

I think when any
person who is Black
or is half Black or whatever
they always have issue with their hair

because it’s a LOT different than what you see on TV
 unless it’s a Black person on TV
and magazines and all that stuff

I mean you have to put so much work into it
just to make it just to make it move
 like this took about 2 hours

You know a White person going into a salon
 getting their hair cut
it usually takes probably a half an hour
 for ‘em to wash it
 blow dry it and cut it

It was just always
 always a problem
until I first had my first relaxer

I still didn’t know what to do with it
I didn’t know that you could straighten it
 make it straight like this
I thought it always was frizzy
When I would see people on the relaxer box
with very, very straight hair
I didn’t understand how they got it that way?

Then when I met
the girl that taught me how to do my hair
 she never did it but she told me
 how to make it straight
then when I moved out and I lived in Omaha
I had some girls you know

tell what to buy
like a flat iron
to use this type of grease instead of this type

Even recently I found out
I shouldn't be using grease on my hair
I should be using wax

So I'm still learning about it

I Know What I Am

I've always either said that I'm Black
just to make people not ask any more questions
or I tell them that I'm half Black and half White
It depends on who I'm talking to

If I fill out an application or something
usually they say only pick one
so I pick Black
because if I picked White
they'd be looking at me like
Well, we know you're not fully White
so what are you, you know?

I've always just known what I was
I never really had a problem with it
If anybody else did
I really didn't care

I've never really actually
had a problem with
my racial identity

I already
I know what I am

I don't have to associate with
other Black people to think that I'm Black
or other White people to think that I'm White
or other mixed people to think that I'm mixed

I just never really ... it didn't really matter

I know what I am

Teach Everybody How To Dance

Sometimes Black people even think
that I'm Hispanic
especially if my hair is curly

If it's straight like this
they might think that I'm mixed
I don't really even know

One time I went to a wedding reception
in New Jersey
with one of my exes
and his sister asked me
at the wedding reception
they started playing
some salsa music or whatever
She came up to me and she said
Are you gonna teach everybody how to dance?
And I said, why would I?
Well, aren't you Puerto Rican?
And I was like, no
Are you Mexican?
And I said, no

So she didn't even know what I was

You Can Be Whoever You Want

Everybody asks me if I was confused
I think the only thing that I was
confused about was my hair
That's the only thing
I was never confused what color I was
I didn't ever think that I was White

A lot of people just think that
just because you were raised
in a white community
even if your parents are the same color as you
and you're different from the majority
then they think that you're confused and
trying to be like the majority

when really
you're being raised the way you're being raised

and it doesn't really matter

you can be whoever you want
being raised by whoever
I think it's up to you to make that decision
Just people need to help you along the way

Julie: Stories

Adoption Story

During the interview, I asked Julie how she became part of an interracial family. She replied simply, "I was adopted." I asked her if she wanted to tell a story about it, and she demurred. With her permission and after her review, I used an excerpt from the interview for the pilot study.

Sandy: "What do you remember of the story of your adoption?"

Julie: "That I was adopted when I was about 6 months old and ... I was in a foster home until then because they couldn't find a home and they called you and asked if you wanted a girl and you said yes and you came and picked me up."

I provided a more detailed explanation, which I rewrote and embellished for this telling. Julie read this and provided feedback to co-construct the meaning.

Sandy: That's pretty close to it. Actually another different adoption agency handled the relinquishment part and they hadn't yet done ... at that time the law required people to do court relinquishment for adoption. For your brothers, all the birth parents had to do was to sign a paper but the laws had changed and by the time you came along the biological parents had to have a court hearing in which they did relinquishment.

Different agencies dealt with your birth parents and your adoptive parents in your case. The agency that worked with you and your birth parents called the one that we had gone through, and said basically that they didn't have people on their list who wanted a mixed race or biracial child and so they were just trying to find out what agency might.

Also because of the statement by the National Association of Black Social Workers against transracial adoption of Black and mixed children by White parents, the agencies were more cautious in placing children across racial lines. They did not consider ours a White family since we had two African-American-mixed sons.

We had applied to adopt another child and then, after deep soul-searching, asked for our names to be withdrawn because we did not think we could afford another child. Over a year later, they called us out of the blue and we were so happy because I had never given up the idea of having another child.

When the agency called us they didn't tell us that you were a girl or how old you were or what race you were – they just said, "Would you be interested in another child?" and we said yes. They didn't tell us that you were a girl except when we went for a pre-adoption meeting, the lady whispered in Matthew's ear, "How would you like to have a little sister?"

Then a couple of days later they called and said, "We have a little girl for you" so we didn't know that you would be a girl until ... a couple of days after we'd gone to this meeting and then I think we had the weekend to get everything ready and get all the baby stuff out and everything.

Your foster mother – who had cared for you since days after your birth – asked if she could buy your going-home outfit. She chose that frilly dress with the little flowers and lace – the same dress I’ve taken pictures of all your daughters wearing. The foster parents sent a box of toys, a pillow case embroidered with your birth date – that became your lovey – some pictures, and messages from your foster brothers and sisters. Your older foster sister wrote a poem about the baby with “almond eyes.”

We gave you names that meant “God is gracious” and “God is my teacher” and your first name was in honor of both of your grandmothers. I was so thrilled to have you as my daughter!

On the way home, Matthew said, “Now the Blacks in our family outnumber the Whites.”

What Are You?

During the pilot study, we talked about people asking her what she is. Julie told about an incident the previous night.

“[People ask me] all the time! They ask me what I am. Their favorite question is, ‘What are you?’ and everybody thinks I’m Hispanic. I just got asked that last night, if I was Hispanic,” Julie said.

Sandy: Last night, here in Garrison?

Julie said, “Mm hmm” and adds more details, comparing it to other experiences: But it doesn’t matter where I go. On the East Coast, people thought I was Puerto Rican, here they think I’m Mexican and in the Midwest, and on the West Coast they probably think I’m Mexican, too – nobody ever asked me. But most mixed

people don't ask me. They just ask me what I'm mixed with. They know the Black part; they just don't know what else. And I kind of found that interesting because people asked me last night who were Black and most people – mixed people – just know and some Black people know but I guess if they're not around, you know, other mixed people, then they probably don't know. But I guess if you're mixed you just kind of know like the way your hair is or the way your facial features are and it just makes sense.

Researcher's story: What the neighbor girls asked. After typing this, I remembered that when we first adopted Julie, the neighbor girls, 7 and 3 years old and Hispanic, insisted that Julie was really Brown – their words – not Black.

“Are you sure she isn't Brown?” the older one asked me several times. “I think she is really Brown.”

Researcher's story: What the elderly neighbor asked. A variation of the question “What are you?” is “Where are you [is he or she] from?”

A few years earlier, Rodger and I adopted Benjamin at the age of 4 months. Benjamin as a young baby had very fair skin, brown eyes, and light-to-medium brown hair in a little curl on top of his head. I took him for a stroller ride in the neighborhood. An elderly neighbor outside in her yard looked at him and said, “What country is he from?” I told her he was born in our state.

Researcher's story: Are they adopted? During my doctoral studies, I received photographs of Julie's three daughters. I was showing them to my friends when a White friend asked, “Are they aDOPTed?” A Black friend looked at me and rolled her eyes.

Researcher's story: Am I adopted? Rodger, my ex-husband, recounted a story about one of our granddaughters. Rodger was preparing supper when LaShawna said, "Papa, are you Black?"

Rodger, in telling the story, laughed and said, "Me – Black?" (He is of German-English background with light peach skin, a thin nose and lips, straight blonde hair dyed medium brown to cover the gray, and blue eyes.)

He then said, "I told her that I am White."

LaShawna said, "But Mommy is Black and I am Black – how could that be?"

Rodger said, "Grandma Tracy and I adopted your mommy when she was a baby."

LaShawna burst into tears and asked, "Am I adopted?"

He told me that he then stopped what he was doing, came into the room and sat down with LaShawna, and explained how we adopted her mommy and loved and cared for her, and she (LaShawna) was born to her mommy.

Dolls That Look Like Me

I asked Julie about the dolls she liked to play with as a child, adding that one research participant – a young woman who is African American, White, and Blackfoot – said she went through a stage where she wanted to play with only White Barbies [Barbie dolls]. Julie gave a detailed response:

I went through a stage where um I didn't want white Barbies ... or dolls because I knew that that's not what I was and when I was a child, I was really dark 'cuz I was always outside. So I always thought, well these dolls don't even look like me so why have 'em? But ... but you guys always gave me a mix of dolls and I know

when I was a child they didn't have a lot of Black dolls but you did your best and especially in [our small town].

I don't know, I just ... didn't wanna play with White dolls I guess ... even though all my friends were White and it didn't matter ... to me what color you were, you know, it never matters but it's just ... I would rather play with a doll that looked like me instead of one that doesn't – with you know, Sally with her blonde hair, blue eyes. How can I? You know, it's just ... she doesn't look like me.

And I was mean to my Barbies 'cuz I didn't like 'em because I was a tomboy and if I was a tomboy I didn't really need Barbies that much. I liked the Cabbage Patch dolls for some reason.

At another time, I asked Julie, “When you were little, when you colored a picture of yourself, a lot of times you used black and brown crayons, remember?” Julie nodded.

Researcher's doll story: Children. Julie received her first Cabbage Patch Kid in 1984. This was just a year after the first mad rush for the dolls when people lined up and fought to buy them. Like many 7-year-olds, Julie requested one for Christmas. I placed an order in the Sears catalogue for a Black Cabbage Patch Kid. One night in early December, my sister Bertie called to tell me she had finished her Christmas shopping by buying an outfit for Julie's hoped-for Christmas doll. The next morning Bertie had a massive heart attack and died later that day. (Even as I write this – and later read it – I cry.)

Julie's Cabbage Patch Kid, Karlotta Carol, arrived in time for Christmas and took the place of honor as Baby Jesus in the Christmas pageant at church. One of the ideas

behind Cabbage Patch Kids is that people paid an adoption fee to adopt them, rather than purchasing the dolls as an object to possess. I am not sure what message that gave to adopted children.

Bertie and her husband were Julie's godparents. For her first birthday, they gave her a Black Madame Alexander doll with black hair and brown eyes. The first doll I bought for my oldest son Matthew was a Black vinyl doll with painted hair, with the Swahili name of Zuri, meaning "beautiful."

Julie's Madame Alexander doll, her first Cabbage Patch Kid, and my son Matthew's first doll were dark brown in color. When my children were young, dolls on the mass market tended to be either White or – occasionally – Black with dark skin, except for souvenir dolls, such as ones they received after their paternal grandparents visited Hawai'i.

Researcher's doll story: Grandchildren. For my grandchildren, I have been able to purchase dolls with a wide range of skin and eye colors, hair styles and colors, and sometimes even different facial features. I found dolls that look like them as much as possible and bought dolls for the boys and the girls. I noticed that the six granddaughters – both mixed and White – frequently receive White dolls as gifts from others.

Hair Supplementary

When Julie read this section, I asked her if she had any more hair stories. She said, "Do you remember when Dad went to Omaha to buy Afro-sheen? When he asked the clerk where it was, the person told him and then said, 'But sir, that product won't work on your hair.'"

Julie has some of the most beautiful hair of anyone I have known, I told her, but she said that did not make a difference to her. We kept her hair long – in braids or ringlets or ponytails – until she was in first grade, when we had it cut short. One of her friends, a White girl with straight hair, asked her mom for a permanent so her hair would look more like Julie's. Julie said that did not make a difference to her. Sometimes I would sit in church and marvel at how some of the elderly White ladies had permanents that made their hair look almost like Julie's, except that theirs was white or gray. Once I got a permanent so my hair would look more like hers. She wanted to be around other children with hair like hers.

Julie: Description

I include information I gathered during Julie's interview and at other times. My daughter Julie is of African American, German, and Italian descent. Rodger and I were given information about her father that he is African American, and we do not know if he also had American Indian, Asian, White, or other ancestry. Her birth mother was Italian and German.

At the time of the first interview, Julie had long, dark brown hair. Over the course of my studies, she wore her hair in a variety of styles, lengths, and colors. She has arched eyebrows, and extremely dark brown eyes, which remind me of my mother's eyes. She has a straight, pert nose and medium full lips. Her ears are medium sized and fairly close to her head. She is full-figured.

Her skin is not much darker than mine, but hers has a more yellowish cast and mine has a rosier cast. Some would call her *high yellow*. She once told me that her daughters usually choose a yellow crayon when they color pictures of her. As she said,

her skin was dark when she was a child since she spent most of her time playing outside and swimming. She participated on swim team during the summers when she was 6 to 15. One summer she wore her navy and white striped swimsuit most of the time. Partway through the summer, her tan reflected the stripes of her swimsuit. Her contemporaneous work and living situation keep her indoors most of the time and her skin is lighter.

Julie: Interview

Our interview for this study was on March 19th. We talked about the research study after the interview but did not have another formal interview. Earlier Julie participated in a pilot study, and gave more elaborate answers to some similar questions. She told me twice that I could use information from the pilot study. I had provided her that transcript and saw her read it.

We met in the motel room John and I had rented for our visit to Julie, my son Benjamin, and our grandchildren. John took Julie's 2-year-old daughter out for a walk and returned to the room and bathed her while Julie and I talked. As we were drawing the interview to a close, Yolanda came into the room and announced, "Wanna write."

Julie assented to videotaping and audiotaping. She did not want me to photograph her hands that day – she asked me to wait until another time when she had her nails done, which I did. She wanted a copy of the transcript but not the tape.

After I sent her what I had written in this section, she called me and made a few suggestions. We talked for a few minutes about how best to word one aspect of the description and mutually came together on terminology that both of us liked, so we co-constructed the meaning.

Oscar Henderson



Figure 9: Oscar Hands Photograph

Oscar, 67, has four grown daughters: Meghan and Gina were born to him and Linda, his previous wife (both White), and Donna and Angel were adopted. The adopted daughters are African American and White. He talked at length about the time during the 1970s when the children were young and his family attended a racially mixed church in Denver, using the word *happy* ten times. After Oscar and Linda divorced in 1980, they had joint custody and Linda had physical care of Meghan, 12, and Angel, 4; Oscar took Gina and Donna, both 8 years old but 4 months apart.

All four daughters lived in Colorado. Both Meghan and Gina graduated from college, owned their own homes, and had successful careers. Neither had a child. Donna did time in prison as a young adult. She lived in subsidized housing with her fifth child. Angel did not graduate from high school. She worked at Wendy's and rented a condominium owned by Linda and her partner. Oscar said he saw Gina and Angel regularly, Meghan occasionally, and Donna rarely.

Oscar: Poetic Representation

Family Man

We immigrated in 1948
We've always been – since we're [European]
[People of our ethnicity] are not bigots
Race just never was much of an issue
so I've always been aware of race
in the sense that we've lived around it
but I've never encountered discrimination
My ex-wife's family is Polish
and there was no problems at all

My ex-wife and I
had two biological children
The doctor recommended no more children

Environmentally two children was plenty
but we came from the East so we were
more liberal than most people
so we wanted to enlarge our family

I think that Linda, my ex
saw a story or read a story about how many
Native American – of course that's changed since that time –
but at that time – this was in the '60s, early '70s –
Native American children
who were really deprived and were not being adopted
and since that time
it's not that easy because they want the Native culture

So it's Black children were the only ones that were available
so we adopted one
Linda always wanted four kids
so that's how the other one came along

All my identity was as a family then

Adoptions

There was one social worker who
handled our case, and
the first child we got
was a little boy

We just had pictures – photographs
never met the child
but he was very dark

We felt that that child would have more difficulty
than one who was a little lighter
so we said
No, we don't think that'll work
Then she said – the social worker said
we have this other little girl

Her mother has been on drugs
the grandfather I think was Black
the grandmother was White
the mother probably had
a relationship with a Black man
So Donna was, they said, three-fourths Black

We were so idealistic
of course it'll work out
and we took her in and

They have a 1-year period where you
have an opportunity to
to return a child before
you go to court and it becomes final
We decided to go through with it

She was 2 when she was relinquished
by the mother
my one daughter was 2, but 4 months older
and then Meghan, my oldest, was 4

I was young
My wife was young
We had a beautiful house
We had a nice circle of friends
We thought that'd be no problem, you know

White children were unavailable
especially if you have two of your own

I don't ever recall
a Black family that adopted Black children
I never saw any of those

That was in 1972
and 4 years later
we called the same social worker
and said we are interested in another child

She said *I just happen to have
a baby who will be available in about a month
and she's half Black and half Scandinavian*

The social worker said
*I hadn't even planned to place this child in this county
'cuz there's no demand whatsoever
for a half Black child and
I was planning to refer to the child to Social Services in Denver*

So we said, *Well, we'll save you a step*
She already knew us and
she did the investigation of finances
the size of the house and all that sort of thing

Four weeks after that – by that time
my daughter we adopted was 6 weeks old –
just a tiny little baby (makes motion with his hands)

We just happened to be
wanting another child

The timing was just right
and she was born of a
White mother and a Black father
neither of whom wanted a child

Timing is everything
We were wanting a child and
that was my last year under 40
so I thought I'd better do it now
40 is the cut-off for adoption

So we adopted her and
she was a beautiful baby
very sweet, no trouble at all
just as easy a child as you could ever have

Just as difficult as the other one had been
that's how easy Angel was and beautiful
curly hair and magnificent skin and she was lovely

I took her for a walk every night in my jerry pack
with the dog
When I came home she'd be asleep you know

She was very, very precious

By the time Angel was 4
Linda decided that she wanted to check out
I think that I missed Angel
more than I missed Linda

I mean she was just, you know
that tiny little hand in my hand
She was such a precious child

It was very difficult if your wife –
that affects your self-esteem
but your heart

She and I have a very nice relationship
She's always very, very sweet
I mean Angel is never going to be
wealthy or all that
She's a good person

My other daughter
is not that easy to classify
She has a good heart but she's
just that close to being a criminal
She's been to prison

Adoption, I don't really know
it's a mixed bag
Some kids can handle it and others can't

It seems because they ARE different
in appearance, they can't blend in
like a White kid can
you know?

The Only Incident

I don't think that we went into situations where
that would become a problem
like we never traveled in the South
We lived in Denver the whole time
and if you have to live in anyplace in Colorado
Denver is much more open than anyplace else

As a matter of fact, I did have one case

I'll always remember

Linda and I went to an American Baptist church in Denver
and of all the Baptist persuasions
they are the most liberal, right?
American Baptist was Martin Luther King's church

The church was very open
and affirmative
The minister was very open also

We went to an American Baptist church
and never had a problem except once

One lady who always was
who really liked us
I can still remember
she came up to us and she said,

I'm so sorry you had to spoil your little family.

That's the ONLY incident
the only incident

Anyway, we never had any problem
in the church
except that one time

But we felt that
this may be a good time
to look for a more inner-city type church
This was in 1973 now
so we didn't have Angel yet
We just had the one baby

For 3 or 4 months we didn't go anywhere –
we just wanted to settle down

A Happy Place

I said to Linda, I wanna try Renaissance Church
We went and visited
I was just absolutely flabbergasted by all of these –
first of all, it was a mixed congregation –
a lot of Black people, and a lot of
Black and mixed couples

I said to Linda, I want to go here

And the music was wonderful
and I said, I wanna go there
and we did and

We were VERY happy

Three years later we adopted another child
We had all four children baptized
in August of that same year

I remember it well because it was
such a wonderful happy day
The church was packed
We had so many wonderful friends

It was really very, very nice
the neighborhood and then the music
then Pastor Litzer was
into the civil rights movement

He marched with Martin Luther King
and in Selma

They were all so involved with civil rights that
naturally the Blacks would feel very, very happy there
The neighborhood was right
The cause was right

I just blossomed in that environment
I just felt so happy
Before that I was very conservative and staid

Pastor Litzer was very, very charismatic
Sandy: was he Black?
No but he was wonderful

We joined Renaissance Church
which was the most liberal church in Denver
I mean that was where all the people there
were involved in affirmative action

Renaissance Church was such a happy church
Their music was wonderful and the dancing

I mean people were just so happy
We, you know, sang loud
and it was a real wonderful –

I always called it Camelot because it was
the experience of a lifetime

When we went there, there were a lot of
Black people there
and not only were they Black people
but they were PROFESSIONAL Black people
I'd never seen that before

Like the judge who awarded custody of Donna to us
One of the original Tuskegee Airmen The head of the school board
The district attorney who ran for mayor A Black columnist
A television announcer Movers and shakers
Pastor Litzer was on the board of the public schools so
it was just a vibrant wonderful activity center (smiles)

A lot of White people adopted Black children
us included
We already had Donna but we got Angel
while we were there

It was a happy place

Black and White
I don't think I've ever been anywhere else
where it was as genuine as there
Renaissance Church was a very loving place

The kids had a lot of friends you know
and they were very like-minded
By people who were like-minded
I mean a lot of teachers and
physicians and our pediatrician was a member

There they were surrounded by
people who were not only Black
but who were accomplished Black
and families –
White families that had adopted Black children
so they had all the advantages
but it didn't seem to have made much difference

Now the emphasis is gay
and straight together
At Renaissance Church it was
Black and White together

It was a happy place

Oscar: Stories

Oscar is a White man who immigrated to the United States from a European country as a child. To help preserve his confidentiality, I did not name the country, although he identifies with that ethnicity/nationality. He and his first wife Linda, who is White of Polish ethnicity, adopted two African American and White mixed children, Donna and Angel, after giving birth to two children, Meghan and Gina.

Rather than telling specific stories, Oscar tended to tell about experiences. Most of his stories are included in the narrative poems in his poetic representation. I chose to highlight themes of colonialism, adoption, puberty changes, and sexual orientation in this section since they are relevant to racial identity development of people in interracial families and reflect the intersection of race, class, gender, historical context, sexual orientation, and geography. In most cases, I did not include what I said or “um” or “uh” spoken by either of us. In some cases I deleted indications of pauses or repeated words so as to make the text more readable as is expected in edited writing. However, I maintained some ellipses, indicating a short pause, and the word *pause*, indicating a longer pause to convey an idea of hesitations in Oscar’s speech.

Colonialism

Oscar was the oldest participant by several years and was born in Europe, immigrating to the United States in 1948 when he was 11 years old. This is the same year his home country granted freedom to one of its colonies. Oscar describes his father’s

relationships with people of non-Caucasian races and his interpretation of the colonial attitudes of his home country:

My father (pause) was always very fair but he also tended to be a little ... paternalistic – you know – *White man's burden* type thing because he was in charge of ... food service on a small ship – a ship that he would be on might have ... 20 or 25 people ... so he was on a ship under 10,000 tons – and he worked ... since [our country] had colonies – [names colonies] – these were their colonies and they had ... a lot of Black people there (probably they imported them as slaves in the 1600s – and you know, just like Haiti ... is a Black country because ... of all the slaves that were imported by the French).

[My country] in those days ... they were colonial bastards just like the [other European countries that had colonies] – they were all ... scum. You know they treated people terribly ... but in the ... 1900s, these people were now beginning to take over their countries and ... and demanding autonomy so that ... the [country's] ships would still go there to ... trade, to bring goods and all that ... but they would have crews that had largely ... natives and in many cases, these tended to be Black and my father would have these people working for him so he would ... take care of them and make sure that they were ... they got square deals and all that but ... it was more ... paternalistic (spoken softly).

Nowadays we have ... people would say oh, maybe it's time you start standing on your feet and – looks like they're trying to get rid of affirmative action. In those days there was still a lot of affirmative action, only it didn't have that name, and my father ... was ... always very kind but ... not necessarily and

I'm ... I'm just ... thinking about it that it ... it might have even been that they felt that they were not ... the same ... mentally as White people so they would always tend to put them in as servants and ... you know just like a typical attitude in the South. He would have ... people who would cook for him and who would ... serve the food and who would ... do the cleaning and all that and ... it would of course always be ... natives and then you know supervisors were always White ... and that was just the way things were in the '40s.

Oscar related his understanding that his father's attitudes and actions were paternalistic, mentioning that his father probably felt that the Black people who worked on his ship had less mental capability than White people. Oscar indicated that the relationship was colonial and hierarchical, with Whites on top looking after the interests of the Blacks. He did not mention his mother except later in relation to the adoptions of his daughters.

Oscar described one interracial relationship within his family of origin, which was related to colonialism. "A lot of ... fairly well-to-do Southeast Asians [former colony] have immigrated to [my country], including ... my mother's sister was married to a ... [a man from that country] and ... he – I would say that his ... face ... his features and his stature and the way he ... he looked was almost like an aborigine ... from Australia so I've always been aware of ... race in the sense that we've lived around it."

Adoption

As Oscar's poetic representation depicts, the adoptions of his two younger daughters were major happenings in his life. At the time, he said, Black children were the only ones available to a couple who already had children. Oscar knew about the Indian

Child Welfare Act, which encouraged adoption of Native American children by Native families and continued connection to the children's tribes, but was unaware of the statement against transracial adoption of Black children by White parents made by the National Association of Black Social Workers in 1972, the year Oscar and Linda adopted their first daughter. Their adoption social worker was Caucasian, he said, and perhaps Jewish. He said that her specialty was minority children.

Oscar and Linda rejected the first child presented to them as a potential adoptive child through photographs, on the basis that his skin was very dark and they thought it would be difficult for him. Donna, a 2-year-old who was three-fourths Black, was the next child the social worker presented. Oscar pointed out that they could have returned her within the first year before the adoption became final but chose to go through with it.

Oscar and Linda moved after adopting Donna. "We chose the neighborhood very carefully because it was integrated," he said. After a racist incident in the church they attended, they became active in Renaissance Church, as described in the narrative poem "A Happy Place." They cultivated friendships with other mixed families in the church, both adoptive families and interracial couples. He did not mention (and I did not specifically ask) whether they provided Black dolls and stories about African Americans to the children. He also did not mention hair except to describe Angel's "curly hair" and Gina's "reddish hair" like her grandmother's. He had physical custody of two daughters, beginning at age 8, so he probably had daily interactions related to hair. When Oscar read this and called me, he did not add anything about hair care of his Black daughters. I regret that I did not ask him about hair specifically.

Oscar said that neither his nor Linda's family objected to their adopting Black children. "There was no problems at all," he said. He thought for a moment and modified his answer.

My mother ... wasn't too keen the second time around ... for the second ... adopted child ... but that's because she ... felt that four children was too much ... and also that we were kind of setting ourselves up for ... difficulties ... but they never ever – they always treated the children equally ... always until (clears throat) after the divorce.

[My mother-in-law] was upset with ... my Black daughter because she was ... bigger than her sister – who was very close in age – and she used to beat her up ... and ... that particular daughter ... was my mother-in-law's favorite. I have two 8-year-olds, now, okay? And although my ... biological daughter was 4 months older, the Black girl was bigger and ... she was hyperactive [ADHD] and ... the girls would fight and ... my biological daughter would ... wind up on the short end of the stick and run away to Grandmother's house and she'd say "My sister beat me again" and ... her grandmother – my mother-in-law – would be angry because ... not only was this child coming to her and claiming to have been beaten up – and probably was, I don't know – 'cuz Donna was that kind of a child – but [Gina] was also her favorite child 'cuz she had the red hair like Nellie did and ... her color ... the features were like her so she was the favorite child.

Oscar talked of serious problems with Donna, many of which he attributes to her age at adoption, her mother's prenatal drug use, and ADHD. (The ADHD diagnosis came much later.)

“Donna ... my first [adopted daughter] ... if I could turn the clock back to ... before the adoption, I would never adopt her ... because she was [ADHD] and she was born to a mother who was ... addicted to heroin,” Oscar said. He and Carol, his second wife, surmised that Donna may have had brain damage. He added, “She was just ... always angry, always ... fighting ... not totally honest, you know she was ... she was just very difficult.” Oscar describes seeking help with Donna for several years, but receiving none from Linda or anyone else.

I mean there were times when I was ... when I had Donna and I could get no help anywhere ... because my ex said, “Don’t bring her here, I don’t wanna see her” – this is when she was maybe 12 or 13 and (pause) you could get no help anywhere ... and I’m stuck with her ... by myself ... as a single father. I was in the throes of depression because of this. Yeah, and then she ... treated my oth ... my biological daughter – they’d fight all the time – it was just a nightmare.

Oscar said, “I would not recommend interracial adoption. I do not think that ... it – unless you have a perfect family – it’s ... extremely difficult to make it work.” He told me about several other White couples who had adopted Black children, talking about divorces and problems that some of the children had. During the course of the two interviews, he mentioned other families (both White families and Black families) with problems as well.

He did not attribute all the problems to transracial adoption and agreed that there were so many variables that it was difficult to point to one factor. The variables include Donna’s age at adoption, the *tapes* she brought with her, possible abuse and/or neglect prior to her adoption, her birth mother’s drug use, hyperactivity, the adoptive parents’

divorce, relinquishment by the birth parents, rejection by her adoptive mother after the divorce, family favoritism toward the younger biologically related child, and lack of assistance available when he sought help as single father. However, Oscar said, “because of the ... way things worked out it, it made everything else look so much worse.”

Changes at Puberty

Oscar identified the onset of puberty of his adopted daughters as the time he began experiencing serious problems with them, which he relates to racial identity issues. By that time, the daughters no longer attended Renaissance Church. Pastor Litzer had retired and the church lost a huge portion of its members after a new pastor arrived.

Oscar did not mention anything related to his birth daughters and problems at puberty. Our focus was on racial identity so he may have thought he did not need to talk as much about his White daughters or perhaps he did not encounter a change in them at the time of puberty. Oscar describes his experiences:

This has been my experience with both of my racially mixed kids – when they reach puberty, they are attracted to their own race. Now you might say, well why would they not be attracted to the White side? I don’t know why. They always were attracted to the Black side.

You know ... when Donna went through puberty ... it’s almost ... that’s when everything changed because at that point ... she ... didn’t wanna hang around with White people anymore – other than me, of course, because ... I represented you know, the sugar daddy, I mean, every possible ... her clothing and her ... place to live and school and books and all that sorta thing, but ... when

she ... went through puberty, then she started to hang around with ... BLACK teenagers ... and ... it was not a good thing. It was not a good thing.

That's when she started – I'm sure she does alcohol, I'm sure she does drugs, I'm sure she does all of that stuff ... but I told her, you know – that was when she was 16 – is when I told 'er – if you don't obey the rules of this house, you can't stay here ... so she moved in with her boyfriend and ... and then 2 years later, she was in jail, so ... you know, after that I really never had much of a relationship with her.

Then to ... bring that portion ... into conclusion, when she got outta prison ... it was about coincided exactly with the time that Carol and I got married – so Carol said, maybe we ought to try ... one more time. We had the big house in [our integrated Denver neighborhood]. Carol had ... two teenage boys and ... Donna's sister was still living at home, so we had ... three teenagers with us.

Donna got out of jail. She went to jail when she was about 18 ... 18 because I remember ... saying to her, when she got caught, "You're not a minor anymore. This time it's serious. You're not gonna get off." So she went to jail when she was 18 and she got out when she was 21.

Oscar went on to describe Donna's involvement with drugs and his and Carol's decision that she could no longer live with them. He later told brief stories of each of the five children to whom Donna gave birth, the youngest of whom lives with her.

At the next interview, Oscar said that beginning about a year after the divorce, Angel, the youngest daughter, spent every other weekend with him and the two middle daughters. "It was fun," he said. "We always did special things. Until she was about 11 or

12 – that was a very good situation. She'd come over at the big house. She had her own room ... and it was very nice. (pause) Angel ... when she ... went through puberty ... ”
Next, he talked about both adopted girls' wanting to associate exclusively with Black people during puberty.

My older ... adopted daughter hung around with the sleaziest characters, you know, almost like she'd deliberately pick least unsavory [sic] ones and ... and Angel also did that and when she ... started to be 12 or 13, she became very difficult. And by the time she was 16, she was stealing from her mother and ... one time she brought my ex's gun to school and only by this time Linda was a lawyer – and ... was able to ... talk the school out of prosecuting. All they did was throw her out ...

And for Angel – although she's still a sweet girl – it was downhill from then on. She never finished school; she ... gained an enormous amount of weight, which you know is ... a lot of that is grounded in depression – the lack of self-esteem. With her excessive weight she may develop ... diabetes or something, which is such a very dangerous when you're that heavy.

Although she and I have a very nice relationship – she's always ... very, very sweet – I don't think Angel will ever ... succeed in what society considers success. I see Angel ... probably monthly. She has for about 4 years, 5 years worked at Wendy's for a little bit of ... minimum wage, maybe ... 7, 8 dollars an hour and she's tried ... but she's probably addicted to alcohol; I don't know. Maybe does drugs; I don't know. I don't want to know.

Lesbian Wife and Daughter

Oscar described the time in the 1970s when the children were young and the family attended Renaissance Church as a “happy time” and as “the experience of a lifetime.” That came to an end in about 1980. Oscar hesitated before telling me what happened:

[Linda] ... had decided after 15 years of marriage, that she ... was lesbian ... so then I mean, what can you do? So ... we were divorced and ... I stayed there ... she stayed there for awhile but I was very bitter ... I was a single father, but it was so hard. You know as ... as all my identity was as a family then.

Oscar and Linda went to a mediation specialist rather than court for the divorce. Oscar maintained a relationship with Linda’s mother, who lived nearby and paid for the four girls to attend Catholic school for the year following the divorce “while the busing situation in Denver was being worked out.” Oscar said that Linda’s first partner after the divorce punished the two girls who lived with them by not allowing them to see their father. After about a year, the family went to a counselor and worked it out so Oscar had Angel on alternate weekends. Meghan, 12, chose to live with her mother and did not visit her father often.

Oscar described Meghan’s education, career, and “beautiful nice house.” He said, “So she’s doing all right ... she’s always been like this (fingers held close together) with her mother even to the ... lifestyle.”

I asked Oscar if he thought that was an influence on her. “No ... I’d like to say yes, but we know that that isn’t the way it works – it’s all genetics,” he said.

I said, “At least she knew that [being lesbian] was acceptable in the family [Oscar nods in agreement] ... so she wasn’t afraid.”

“Oh, yeah,” Oscar said. “I’m not jumping for joy – I would have loved to have grandchildren, but that is just not gonna be. It’s all right; there’s plenty of people in the world. We don’t need more, you know.”

“The [partner] she currently has, we like very much – Carol and I both do. She’s very successful. She’s a little older than my daughter,” Oscar said.

Oscar said he does not see Meghan often due to conflicting schedules. However, during one of our interviews, Meghan was on her way to Oscar’s country of birth, and Oscar said she planned to schedule a visit with him after her return.

At the time of the interviews, Oscar participated in an organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals and their friends and families. I also participated in that organization.

I frequently saw Oscar and Carol in a large social gathering or the local farmers’ market. One day I met Gina and Angel when they are visiting Oscar and talked to them casually for a few moments. Gina is of average height and slender build with light peachy-pink skin and shoulder-length reddish-brown hair. Angel is of average height, heavy build, a short dark Afro, and café au lait skin. She greeted me politely. Gina said they were getting ready to go on a bicycle ride with their dad.

Another day I saw Oscar when my granddaughter Yolanda, who is African American, Sudanese, German, and Italian, was visiting. He held her for a few moments. Later I saw him at the local farmers’ market and he commented on seeing Yolanda and added, “Those mixed babies have such beautiful skin.”

Oscar: Description

Oscar has graying hair, blue eyes, light peach skin, average height, and medium build. He wore jeans and a T-shirt at the first interview, and shorts and a T-shirt at the second interview. Oscar said he did not want copies of the transcript or videotape but expressed an interest in seeing what I wrote about him.

Oscar: Interviews

I recruited Oscar because I knew he was a participant in transracial adoption and I had no other participants who were involved in transracial adoption, other than my daughter and me as the participant researcher. I know many other people involved in transracial adoptions, but they live in other states and I did not have a large enough budget to accommodate travel, other than travel to visit my children.

Our first interview was March 25th at the co-housing home Oscar shares with his wife Carol. He had been working in the garden, and welcomed me into their home. We walked through the kitchen/dining area to a living area and seated ourselves in comfortable chairs. His old dog sniffed me at first, then settled down near Oscar and slept during the first interview.

I started by asking Oscar to turn off music because I thought I might have difficulty transcribing with it in the background. “That piece is so glorious,” Oscar said.

“I know, it’s a wonderful piece ... I hate to ask you to turn it off,” I said.

“When the orchestra played it the first time, the composer-director – they gave him a standing ovation – that is not usual. Rimsky Korsakov – I think he died in the 1880s.” Even though Oscar is enjoying the piece, he turns it down very low.

Our second interview was on April 1. On that day, Oscar wore a T-shirt with a saying about conservatives and stupidity. Classical music played quietly in the background. It sounded familiar but I did not think of the name.

Following both interviews, I gave Oscar a copy of what I had written about him, as he requested (including parts I have since moved to a later chapter). A few days later, he called and told me he had read it. “It’s wonderful!” he said. “I couldn’t have said it better myself.” He agreed that the ways that I disguised details related to his identity worked for him.

Oscar went on to say that he attended a statewide denominational church meeting a few days earlier and saw people from Renaissance Church. He asked them how the church is doing, and they told him it is being rejuvenated and stronger with more Blacks and Whites worshipping together. He said that brought back memories.

Alexander Guerroki



Figure 10: Alexander Hands Photograph

Alexander lived in an art studio apartment near the large public university where he taught as a tenured associate professor. His vivid, bold paintings adorned the studio walls. After his first interview, I prepared to photograph his hands.

“Let me put my rings back on,” he said. “They are significant to me.” The turquoise ring had a rectangular stone with square designs and the green ring was oval with a freeform design of nebulous circular shapes. Alexander explained that it is important to have both types of rings. He said that he and his partner David have matching rings; each chose one style. Alexander’s last name Guerroki means blue or green or blue-green, so that adds to the significance of the rings.

When my advisor looked at Alexander’s hand photograph, he said, “Oh, he has one ring that is turquoise from his Mexican American heritage and one that is jade from his Japanese American heritage.”

Alexander: Poetic Representations

Coming Together, Playing Out

My mom and my dad
 my father being Japanese American and
 my mother being Mexican American
met at the Rainbow Ballroom in Fresno, California
It was a dance hall
for people to have a good time
 on the weekend
The ballroom itself is pretty diverse

They met there, they hit it off
They also knew at that time that
there was going to be problems
on both sides of the family
They knew that they had to
keep the dating life secret
There's stories of my mom
sneaking out of the window

My Mexican grandfather would have a
just a big fit about my mother
dating someone who was not Mexican
 he was sort of the old school
 you just don't do that
But my Mexican grandmother was
good with the relationship

so that was the trouble that we had
in that part of the family early on

On the other side of the family
 my Japanese American side
my Japanese grandfather
 (passed away when I was one years old)
was the more sort of accepting
gentle soul early on
 of interracial relationships

My Japanese grandmother
was not so fine with it

And the same kind of split
happened with all the siblings

first child born, oldest brother born
those barriers start to come down
more and more aunts and uncles
started coming around to participate in family

I love all my aunts and uncles dearly
on both sides of the family
They've been nothing but supportive
post that time of adjusting to the difference, right?

but it is still weird
off-centering
as even an adult now to know that
my own family had the background
play-out of non-acceptance
before acceptance

That's something to allow me to think
if it happens within my own family
then when it happens
in a broader context
I have to leave room for that

Sometimes it just takes people time
to come around to the diversity variable

I hope I'm less quick
to jump on people for
not being supportive early on
until they learn the identity
or hear more of the personal story
how someone's come to be

I say that all the time
if you are any minority identity
sexual orientation race
gender social class
any of those diversity variables
you have to learn multiple codes to survive

You not only need to understand
what it means to be an ethnic minority
you not only need to know how to live out
the rituals and values of being
Japanese American and Mexican American
how those two blend or intersect or don't together

you also need to know how to negotiate that
in dominant culture as well, too
dominant white culture as well
in order to survive.

There's many layers of negotiation going on

Strong memories and strong feelings
when we go over to Mom's house
Mexican American side of the family
a lot of touching and kissing
immediacy of relating interpersonally
That's how expression of love is done

When I go over to my
Japanese American side of the family
love is shown in a very different way
a different play-out
with that side of the family

both sides of the family over for get-togethers
you're doing multiple different play-outs
with different people to communicate

when I would go over to my friends
who are White American
more like this sometimes and
sometimes more like this

Constant negotiation
how you behave differently in different contexts

Yeah, so that has always been a part of
my way of thinking about
how different we as kids played out
with each side of the family
sometimes even differently with society at large
multiple negotiations, yeah

Internment and Assimilation

My father
many of his siblings
his parents
were in the internment camp

during the war
Japanese internment camp
during World War II
somewhere in Arkansas

They had many grocery stores
at that time
as well as some property that was
you know of course all taken

There is sort of
the silence about it
in Japanese Americans' lives
not wanting to talk about it

I don't remember being
explicitly talked to at great lengths
about how horrible this event was
I do remember at one time
being told that
there wasn't a whole lot of support
for speaking Japanese

It was that very variable
that oftentimes determined
to what degree
were you completely on board
with being a U.S. American
on board with
U.S. American values

through my grandparents' influence
a lot of the grandkids
did not learn to speak Japanese
Were brought up
much more mainstream
assimilated U.S. American

The other thing
that internment time
in internment camp brings up

There were Christian values
being instilled in those camps
so a lot of the family
learned Christianity

On my dad's side
of the family
he has a huge family
Grandma and Grandpa
same parents – 16 children
8 boys, 8 girls

you can see sort of
the generational divide

those influenced by Christianity
those who maintained
their Buddhist influence

even within the family
you see that
negotiation and breakup
due to ... negotiation
with dominant culture

The white culture
U.S. American white culture
Christian culture

Assimilated U.S. American

Ebb and Flow

Oftentimes just being raised in
both Catholic church and Buddhist temple
there's always a sort of
interesting ebb and flow
going back and forth between the two spaces

They got married in a Catholic Church
my mom's side and perspective
At the time it was of course mandated that
any children in the future
would also be born and raised Catholic
All four of us kids were baptized

We did go to temple with Dad
for special occasions, holidays
just so that we could
know his culture as well

Just one little example of
my mom and dad coming together and
putting forth the interracial cultural relationship
having to do some early-on negotiating
with regard to family and ritualistic issues

I have left the Catholic Church behind
I can't remember the last time I walked into the church
but it was for my mom that I did it

I'm probably the furthest out of the loop
Of all the four children
the one more Buddhist in his practices
That of course was after my dad's life – his influences

Particularly as a gay man that was more
amenable to my life
overall in terms of finding
a center for peace and health

[The Catholic Church] is definitely less accepting of gay identity

My mom went to the temple
My dad went to church
for special occasions
I don't know if I can even say

that one went to the other side
more than the other

There's a sort of
interesting ebb and flow

Politics of Hands

I have this one line in a poem
my mom tells me I have beautiful hands
hands that have not turned cotton
Beautiful hands
not scarred by the earth
hands that have turned pages in library books
instead of the cotton out in the fields

She grew up picking cotton
She quit high school
to help the family make ends meet

What amazing sacrifices
my parents have always given me
everything for education's sake
whatever was necessary to keep me going
All ... all four of us have college degrees

Coming Out

My sister and I who were both middle children
we have an older brother and
younger brother on the ends
the two of us in the middle
in the center

She was actually one of the people
being my best friend/sister
I was most terrified to tell
I didn't wanna get rejected
by someone I cared about so much

That made it really difficult
It's amazing what that factor
does to your psychology
thinking through acceptance or rejection

So it was my friendship networks of people who knew first

Sandy: so how ... how was your sister with you?

Immediately shocked

sort of need some time to process

I'd given her too many years of being
a brother in a certain way

It took her awhile to process that

When she did she's fine now

I wanted immediate acceptance

Immediate acceptance doesn't come with
diversity variables

particularly when they're stigmatized
in society at large

Hers of course

like my parents, too

all about worry and concern

Will you be safe?

How will people treat you?

Will you be able to do the things in life that you deserve to do?

Or will there be roadblocks for you?

All those safety and care things

Once I was out with my folks

they were both really good about it

They still struggle with

visions of what they thought my life would be

no longer going to be fulfilled, right?

the realities of what my life is

That has nothing to do with

their love and acceptance of me

There's that joke that I always sort of tell

There is an assumption there

My mom once told me

I don't want you to

marry a Mexican American or a Latina woman

She was at that point where she was

even going through

race negotiations for herself

what this meant for her kids

fitting in to mainstream society

The joke back is

Well, how's a Mexican American FELLOW

sound to you?

Visible and Invisible Intersections

Race
somehow got taken down a notch
on the priority list

simply because of the
sexual orientation issues
that negotiation was
still consumes
a lot of my time and energy
to continue to negotiate

It's not that you can ever
separate the two, right?

When I came out
the difference between visible
diversity of race and ethnicity
and INvisible
identity issues with sexual orientation

I had a lifetime of skills
being able to negotiate race
visible, right?
I had a whole lifetime of practice

With the invisibility issue of
identity with sexual orientation
I had no skills
very little skills to know how to publicly
negotiate that

That's such a still
such a heavy stigmatized issue
it's the one that
I respond to most vehemently about
having to do diversity negotiations

So that's how race has changed in my life
It's basically sexual orientation intersecting
into my identity and negotiation with people
put race in a very different place
How do the two work together?

Alexander: Stories

Text in Motion

Alexander said that an American Indian friend gave him the name *Text in Motion* because of his flexibility to adapt to changing situations. Alexander talked about Kenneth Burke's descriptions of the noble self, who remains consistent in any situation, and the rhetorically sensitive self, who changes according to changing situations. His father, he said, was a noble self – he would be just the same at an awards banquet, in his grocery store, at the Buddhist temple, or at home. Alexander said he sees himself as the rhetorically sensitive self, adaptable to whatever situation he is in.

Coding Differences: Color, Class, and Power

Alexander was 5 years old when he began noticing differences in people, based on their skin color, work, and property ownership. He observed that Whites were more likely to own property and Mexican Americans were more likely to work in the fields.

I remember being in kindergarten and already ... 5 years old and already coding the differences between who had money, who didn't have money, who worked the fields, who didn't work the fields – what those meant and wondering what they meant for like who I was ... in terms of my background because you know I knew I was like the farm workers in identity and yet I knew I had some of the different privileges because my parents had a grocery store and owned property like the White American farmers ... so I knew I was somewhere in between that (laughs) and tried to figure that out.

Negotiations

In his parents' grocery store, Alexander learned early on the value of negotiation. Both of his parents spoke Spanish fluently and sometimes mediated disputes between Whites and Mexican Americans, as well as provided assistance with paperwork and other advocacy. Alexander learned Spanish to communicate with primarily Mexican field workers and also his grandparents, who lived nearby.

Alexander said that at the grocery store it was "in many ways ... a microcosm of culture ... of negotiation of conflicts between groups that my parents oftentimes facilitated and negotiated They would be the cultural mediators between the non-English speaking Mexican crews and the U.S. American White farmers."

The Brave Little Tailor

When Alexander was in first grade, his teacher chose him to play the lead role in the class play. Alexander remembers thinking about race related to this choice.

I do remember ... looking back on education and issues of race. My first grade teacher ... cast me as the Brave Little Tailor in the school play, and I remember thinking ... and that was another racial moment ... I remember thinking, huh, I didn't think I would be cast as the ... top person in the play because already those codes were already instilled.

I was not supposed to be, I had already had that figured ... I remember making the difference between White Americans in higher positions, Mexicans not, Asians sort of complicated because sometimes they are, sometimes they're not, right? And so already in first grade, I have strong memories of thinking, ah, I got cast as the top person in the play ... and that was very like ... eye-opening to

me because I didn't think that ... someone who was of my background or look would be cast in that ... a key role.

[I had] like a progressive teacher already in the first grade already casting ethnically someone different ... 'cuz I didn't match the pictures – I knew that. I remember a couple of the pictures going around; I didn't look like the pictures ... of what the Brave Little Tailor was supposed to look like.

So I remember that – being really proud of that. Oddly enough, the teacher still has that on ... on film – and me in a gunny sack and green tights is not something that I want out there (laughs) for posterity but very ... that was a very cute play.

I was a good reader. I had strong reading skills so for plays, you need good oral skills.

When Alexander related his story, I related to him that my daughter Julie was cast as the lead in her school's kindergarten play – the Little Lost Christmas Doll. She told me that her classmate was cast in that role first, but that child had difficulty remembering the lines. Julie already had memorized all the lines, and the teacher asked her to play the lead. I still remember her singing the songs loudly as she showered before the play.

Passing as Asian; Embracing Mexican American Heritage

Alexander talked about struggling to accept the Mexican American aspect of his identity. He related what he told his mother when he was in the seventh grade, leading up to it by explaining his perceptions:

I had a point with my mom – I told you I had a lot of negative associations with ... Mexican identity because of ... I knew there were power differentials. I grew

up knowing people treated Mexicans differently, I knew the stereotypes for Mexicans were ... as damaging as the stereotypes on the Asian side, but the Asian side were attributed to positive things like intelligence whereas on the Mexican side – laziness ... and so forth. And so ... I remember saying once to my mom, “I don’t want to be a Mexican like you.” And to say a more hurtful piece of discourse to your own mother. I know that that damaged her for ... for that whole year, and I know she still remembers it to this day and age, too. And that’s why it wasn’t until university life that I fully ... started to embrace ... the Mexican part of my heritage.

Alexander identified his older brother as the one in his family who most strongly identified with both sides, the Mexican American and the Japanese American. His brother provided a reality check, as described below in an excerpt shortened from both interview transcripts.

Alexander: I think I passed as primarily Asian for most of my ... early college years in the denial of the Mexican side and then when I ... got into a few classes ... on diversity and race I began to formulate, like, what am I doing – by denying this facet of who I am?

My older brother picked up on it right away. He ... he used to get really frustrated and angry with me because he always embraced both sides more fully. He used to even ... sort of give me little barbs and jabs about ... about the fact that um you think you’re too good to be ... you think you’re better than the rest of your family, don’t you? You know ... and it was always about – quit denying your Mexican side ... and so he’s the one the one that speaks Spanish most ...

most fluently. He's the one that has been integrating Spanish ... uh Hispanic ... community uh Mexican community more fully and I've only started that mission in the latter parts of my life. He ... he was always involved in both sides of the family. He's been ... chair of the Hispanic Business Council and in another breath ... chair of the Japanese American Civil Liberties League so I mean both positions there.

I think he got really upset with me. This is the first time I think he got really upset with me on an ethnicity issue and that is ... I was struggling to hold onto the ... Mexican American part of my identity simply because I KNEW how that identity got read socially ... we kind of talked about it – more negative stereotypes of Mexican American than Japanese American, right? And so ... he always was my voice of ... reality check (small laugh) and so he would always say, "You're not so proud of that Mexican American part of who you are, you're kinda forgetting that kind of ... that part of who you are."

And I'd get so mad at him and I'd be just like, "Leave me alone. I'm trying to go to school, I'm trying to focus, I'm trying to you know...get through this ... mainstreaming ah culture so that I could fit in so that I can hopefully get to where I wanna get."

I had in the back of my mind that ... I knew ... I was losing pieces of my cultural heritage. I wasn't speaking Spanish. He's the one in the family that consistently has spoken Spanish throughout his whole life and I gave up speaking Spanish because I was ticked off about it for awhile and he would always say, "You're so ashamed of ...of being Mexican" and we'd fight about that and so it

wasn't until I got into those later years of college ... that it finally sunk in, and I was like, he's right, you know? I'm ... in total denial about a facet of who I am ... because I'm ashamed to get read in a certain way that might, in fact, from the top down ... look like I don't fit in so well. And you know trying to fit in in academia and trying to prove yourself and trying to ... do all these kinds of things when ... you know in earlier days ... not that diversity wasn't on the table but it's not as ... it wasn't as prevalently talked about as like ... in its early stages ... being an academic growth, right?

I knew I had ... my oldest brother would do a reality check for me but ... he's the one that we ... in terms of politically activist? Being a political activist, he's the one that has always been active in both Hispanic/Latino/Mexican and Japanese/Asian organizations, charity work, volunteer work. It took me awhile to find that balance ... I didn't make peace with that balance until later in my life.

[My oldest brother] ... I would say was always proud of both and didn't go through the level of negotiation of like shame and fear and all those things that I went through. We're very different in that regard. He just said, he basically, was a stronger person and said, pardon the language, but "Screw society if they don't accept both. I AM both."

My acceptance of both came later ... I made peace with that later whereas my oldest brother has always consistently been, "You're gonna have to accept both, and I'll show that both can be good" so that's really ... maybe not what I learned immediately from him but ... had the wake-up call.

Alexander: Description

I recruited Alexander after I heard him talk about his interracial family in a campus activity. I knew he was gay and that he was biracial, Japanese American and Mexican American. In his mid-30s, Alexander was a university associate professor with tenure. I chose to round out my research participants with him because of his unique characteristics and his articulate presentation. He was interested in participating, and we soon discovered that he lived about one block away from me. During the rest of my studies, I saw him fairly often walking in the neighborhood.

Alexander has black hair, prominent eyebrows, dark brown eyes, medium height and build, and skin color that changes. His skin was light tan before spring break and darker with a browner tone when I saw him at the end of summer at the local farmers' market. He spent several weeks with his partner in South America, with a large amount of time outside, and returned with a deep suntan.

Alexander talked about his skin color in our first interview. The excerpt below is presented with pauses and my interjections deleted.

Alexander: I – particularly in California – I get tanned and I start looking more and more Mexican. I moved up to the Northwest to go do the Ph.D. and I came back after the first year of being gone – and I've never lived in a context where there was so little sunlight – and so for 20-something odd years of life I always had lots of California sun. I was always dark-skinned Alexander. I move up for a year. I think I kept my more natural tone because you know just my natural hue outside of pigmentation from sun and I got really pale, I mean really but I can't even show you what color I was because it doesn't show again. I'm in sun

country [now] but I came back after that first year ... my mom looked at me and said, "Who are you? [laughter] I don't even recognize you." I was too pale-skinned and I was more of the Asian tones then in terms of no sunlight. So it's amazing all the little things that are so racially, ethnically coded in things that you talk about.

Alexander: Interviews

Our first interview was March 30th in his art studio, which also was his home. Alexander's large, bold paintings covered the studio walls. I placed my recording equipment on his bed, covered with a red comforter, and set up the recorders. I sat beside him on the sofa and began the interview.

Alexander was my final participant, and I tested a new recording device, a small Sony digital recorder with a memory stick. Although the voice translation software did not work as I expected, I was grateful that I had this additional recording since the videotape did not record the sound and the standard, reliable audiotape recorder recorded an inaudible tape.

For our second interview on April 27th, Alexander chose a nearby coffee shop where he often works and meets with people. We ordered smoothies and sat outside in the sunshine, since the noise of the cappuccino machine made it difficult to hear. A loud truck drove by two or three times, the train rumbled and whistled through town a block away, and a few people spoke to Alexander during the interview, but it was not too distracting. The way passersby greeted Alexander during our conversation affirmed what he said was his status in the community, as someone known and respected. He later asked for a copy of the videotape to use in his class.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CHORUS OF CACOPHONOUS VOICES

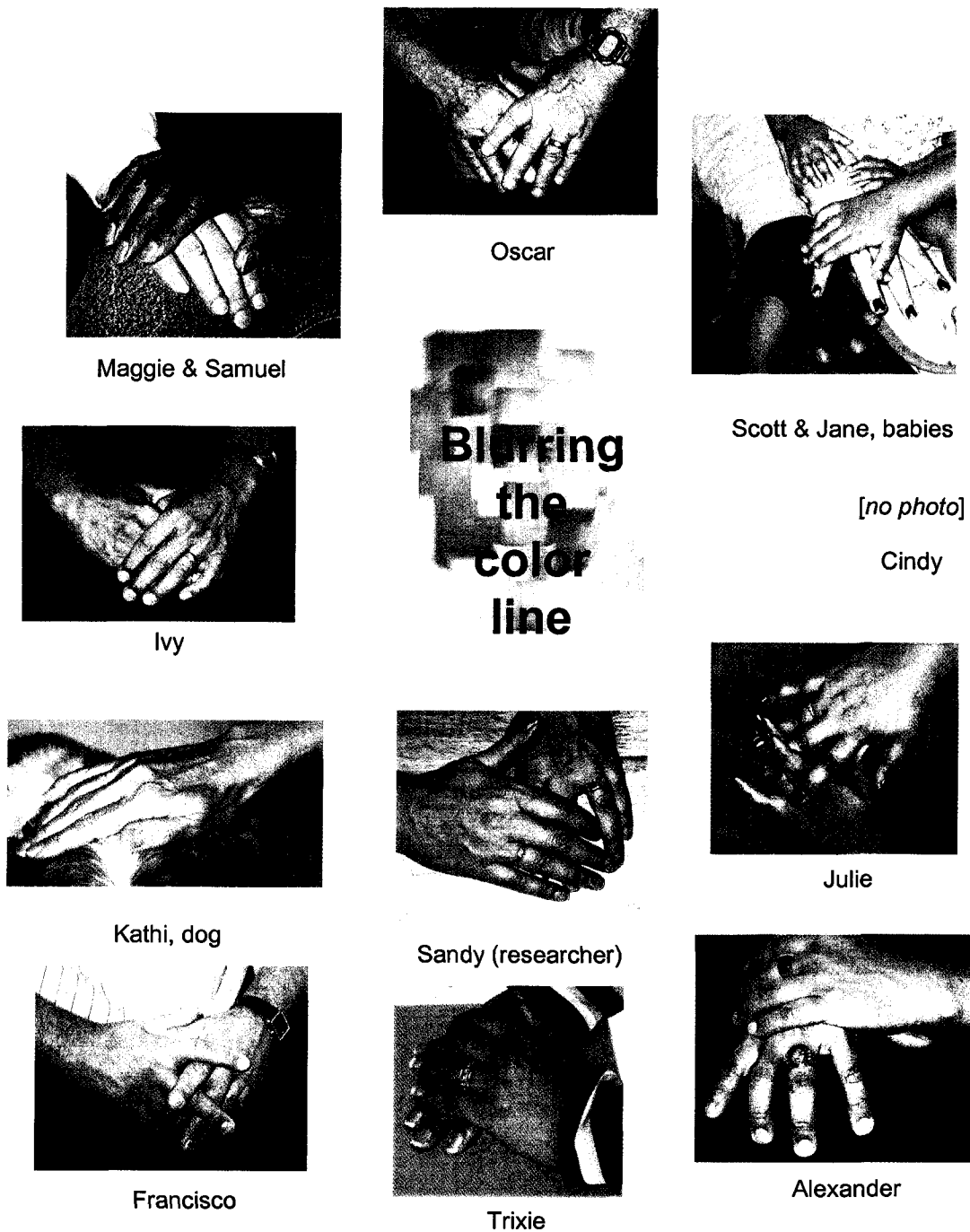


Figure 11: Participants and Researcher Hand Collage

Each story is at once a fragment and a whole; a whole written in a whole.
(Trinh, 1989, p. 123).

When I was in high school, a musician friend said to me, “Sandy, some people sing on the white notes; some people sing on the black notes; and some people [he looked at me intently] sing in the cracks.” Then I saw it as one more in a long line of criticisms of my attempts at singing. Now I see it as a metaphor for people not singing in harmony with the dominant paradigm – people who put Black and White together and those who talk about other colors and mixtures. Now is the time to hear the nuances of the cacophonous voices and to listen.

Do I hear any harmony and balance among the dissonance? Does my perception of harmony need to change?

Blue note

Years ago, a church member gave Rodger and me a cookie cutter in the shape of a quarter note. (Rodger is a musician. He took years of piano lessons starting at age 7, followed by organ lessons. His paid work through high school and college was as an organist in a liturgical church. I am sure the person gave us the musical note to honor his musicianship.)

I got excited and quickly made a batch of sugar cookie dough, which I tinted blue, and proceeded to make a batch of blue notes. I proudly showed Rodger the cookies. He said, “Oh, why did you decide to make the cookies blue?” I said, “Well, they are blue notes – you know, like in jazz.” He said he had never heard of a blue note. To me that is a metaphor for White men who are well versed in classical ideology and do not recognize the existence of marginalized notes, stories, people.

I remember hearing a story on the radio some time ago, which as I recall said that music that supports the dominant paradigm has a certain type of beat, whereas music from marginalized people has a rhythm with an off-beat. I searched unsuccessfully for articles on this topic, so this is just what I have kept in my memory.

Random Notes

The stories voiced in this chapter form a chorus of themes around research areas, some explicitly elicited through the guiding interview questions and others articulated by participants. Areas include historical context, family influences, race and identity, community, work, religion, school, and intersections. I do further analysis of these areas in the following chapter. This chapter ends with quotes from several participants on what they want educators and community professionals to know about interracial families.

Those Were the Days

Historical context and generation make big differences in most people's paths to racial identity. In a study of older mixed-race people, Tashiro (1998) describes generational influences as significant in racialized experiences, racial identity, and choosing racial terminology. Maria P. P. Root (2004) identifies particular generational differences in mixed race people.

I specifically asked participants to think of events in the larger community that related to their thinking about race. Most people thought of historical events right away. Several people also mentioned historical events in the course of their conversations. On the following page, a chart contextualizes the historic context across all the participants. I included historical events not mentioned by any participant to provide a broader historical context.

Table 2: Historical Context

YEAR	PARTICIPANT	WHERE	PUBLIC EVENTS (mentioned by)
1936	Oscar born	Europe	
1945	Sandy born	Missouri	Civil rights movement 1945-1970 (Jane, Oscar)
1948	Oscar immigrated	New York	Women's rights movement beginning
1948	Maggie born	Colorado	
1953	Kathi born	Colorado	
1953	Samuel born	New York	
1954			Brown v. Board of Education (desegregation)
1955	Ivy born	Arkansas	Emmett Till murdered 8/27
1957	Francisco born	New York	Little Rock 9 integrated high school 9/03 (Ivy)
1963			MLK March on Washington 8/28
1963			Birmingham church bombing—4 girls killed 9/15
1963			JFK assassinated 11/22 (Oscar)
1964			American troops to Vietnam (10/1979) (Kathi)
1964+			Race riots; Civil Rights Act of 1964 s7/01
1964			Affirmative action (Samuel, Oscar)
1966			Black Power (Ivy)
1967	Trixie born	New Jersey	Loving v. Virginia (Francisco)
1968	Alexander born	S. California	Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated 4/04 (O,F)
1968			American Indian Movement; Black Panthers (I)
1968			Robert Kennedy assassinated 6/05 (O)
1969			Red Power (Ivy); Stonewall riots 6/27 – Gay Power
1970			Kent State riots (Vietnam War protest); murders of students by National Guard
1971	Sandy adopted Matthew	Iowa	
1972	Oscar adopted Donna, 2y	Colorado	NABSW statement against transracial adoption
1974	Sandy adopted Benjamin	Iowa	Busing to integrate schools began in Denver
1976	Oscar adopted Angel	Colorado	
1977	Julie born	Iowa	Busing in Denver (O)
1977	Kathi & Dick	Colorado	
1978	Sandy adopted Julie	Iowa	Indian Child Welfare Act (O)
1980	Scott born	Wisconsin	Hostage crisis in Iran (A)
1980	Cindy born	Colorado	
1981	Jane born	Rural Michigan	Anwar Saddat assassinated (O)
1986	Trixie & Tim; move to CO	New Jersey	
1986	Francisco & Molly	New York	Murders of interracial people in N. Carolina (F)
1987	Francisco & Molly move	Colorado	
1988			Dukakis presidential campaign (C)
1991			Rodney King beating (C)
1992			Riots after police who beat RK freed 4/29 (C)
1996	Maggie & Samuel	Colorado	Unabomber arrested (C)
1997			Betty Shabazz burning/killing 6/97 (Julie)
1998			Matthew Shepard beating/killing 10/98 (C)
2000	Scott & Jane; move to CO	Wisconsin	
2002	Scott & Jane's son born	Colorado	
2003	S & J's daughter born	Colorado	

We Are Family

Power of Parental Stories

Stories that families tell and stories that people remember become a part of their identity (Root, 2001, 2003). Several participants told stories of their parents or grandparents, stories present in their own racial identity construction.

Coming Together

Each person told the story of how she or he became part of an interracial family. Some told detailed stories and others provided a simple statement. For example, Julie simply said, “I was adopted.” Others told stories of how their parents got together or how they met their partner. The coming together stories of participants and/or their parents are included in their individual sections. Ivy told about challenges her parents faced – not so much how they got together. She talked about getting together with her husband.

Open Families

Several participants talked about their families (or some members of their families) being open or open-minded. From a family systems perspective, family functioning and socialization contribute to their members’ racial identity. (Root, 2001, 2003, 2004), Kathi described her mother, Jane described her mother, and Francisco described his parents, my daughter Julie described her parents using the word *open*.

Resistance

Almost all the participants encountered some level of resistance from family members and friends. Maggie and Samuel were introduced by a mutual friend, who then became upset about their relationship. Scott and Jane were introduced by a friend who is no longer close to them. Alexander told stories of members of his family on both sides

resisting his parents' union. Cindy's father told her he was disappointed that her fiancée was not Black. Maggie's father resisted her close relationship with a Black man until he got to know him.

Estrangement

Kathi, Trixie, and Francisco told stories of estrangement from family members. Kathi remains estranged from one of her three brothers, on the basis of her marrying a Black man and having Black children. She ascribed his racism to a lack of self-esteem. Racism might be part of creating a positive self image for some Whites (Alcoff, 2000). Kathi became somewhat estranged from her grandmother due to her grandmother's racism. Francisco's wife's father stopped speaking to her when they were married, and neither of Molly's parents attended their wedding. Francisco never met his father-in-law. When her father was dying of cancer, Molly went to see him and Francisco said that they had "a brief conversation" before he died.

My brother stopped speaking to me a few months after Rodger and I adopted Matthew. I had no contact with him until 10 years later at our mother's funeral.

Divorce

Most of the people who were involved in divorce talked about it, sometimes at length. Kathi, Oscar, Samuel, and Maggie all divorced their first spouses. Kathi, who is White, reflected on her marriage to and divorce from her African American husband.

It ended up that the person that I married had nothing to do at all with the color of the skin. He was ... at the time I thought the right person for me ... ended up that he wasn't the right person for me, but ... I think (pause) that's what people always try to say, that you have ... you will not have a marriage ... if it's a biracial

marriage it won't last long because of ... the differences in the culture or the color or the barriers and that was never part of the problem. It was always a man-woman problem.

Cindy talked of her parents' divorce. Trixie's parents separated when she was a child, which cut down on trips to visit her mother's relatives in the South. Ivy's parents separated when she was a child. Although her father had physical custody, her mother continued to play a prominent role in her life.

My ex-husband Rodger and I divorced when our daughter Julie was about 12. Our sons were a few years older. Julie did not mention it in her interview. The divorce was a major disruption for all of our lives. When I called my son Benjamin to get his input on a story I included elsewhere, he mentioned the divorce and said that things fell apart at that time. Due to issues that I believe had to do with class and gender, Rodger got physical care of the children. Although Julie had told me she wanted to live with me, Rodger used his power and privilege to gain physical care, even though technically we had joint custody. Maggie said that something similar happened with her divorce from her first husband.

Single Parents

Several participants experienced a time when they were single parents or were raised by single parents. Three participants mentioned that their fathers died while the participants were children. Scott and Jane were raised by single mothers after the deaths of their fathers. Samuel's father died when Samuel was a senior in high school.

Most participants who were divorced or the children of divorce talked about the divorce fairly extensively. Cindy talked about being raised by a single mother for the

significant years of 7 to 13 between her mother's divorce from her father and remarriage to her stepfather, whom she now considers her father. Her mother Kathi reflected on being a single White mother to multicultural children after the divorce. Oscar described challenges he faced as a single father with physical custody of two of his children while his ex-wife had physical custody of the other two. All of Oscar's children – and Oscar – became depressed after the divorce. They attended family counseling together and resolved a visitation issue so that his youngest child could spend regular time with him. One of the children in Oscar's custody developed serious problems, which he said he had to deal with alone because he could find no help anywhere, including from his ex-wife.

Race

In and Out of Boxes

Participants dealt with boxes asking for their racial identity in different ways. Francisco said he always chooses *other* and writes in his background and his children's backgrounds. Jane is emphatic that she does not want to choose *other* for her children. Except for Francisco, all other participants who are African American, mixed or not, or have children who are African American mixed (Trixie, Samuel, Scott, Jane, Julie, Cindy), said they generally choose the *African American* box. Jane said she sometimes chooses three. Julie said she checks Black. Once she told me that she sometimes checks every box.

My son Benjamin told me that he writes in "mixed" for his children since they look White and are so many mixtures: Jeremiah, who is German and African American; Derrick, who is Laotian, German, and Polish; and Hannah and Neva, who are German, African American, and Polish. He said that he used to check "Black" for himself but

sometimes he leaves that part of a job application blank because at this point, he does not see a reason to divulge his race. He identifies as Black and mixed, however. When I was doing final edits, my son Matthew called me. I asked what he does about the boxes. He said that for job applications, he leaves them blank; otherwise he checks Black or mixed.

I include a poetic representation from Alexander's words:

Alexander: Boxes

I'm probably the one
the one member of my family
who most resists being categorized in any single box
I'm a postmodern kind of identity –
it's like I like to be everything

I get really peeved sometimes
still as a faculty member
I keep getting coded
as Asian American and not Mexican American

I consistently write letters and ...
put *other* and fill in the whole thing and say,
you need to respect both ends here
of my identity because it's not like I can give up one
still I write letters but I
still get coded on that box with Asian American

You Must Choose One

While I was in the latter stages of writing this dissertation, I read a newspaper article about a controversy involving filling in boxes (Nick, 2004). The family of a 12-year-old biracial girl was told that she could check only one box. Her father, Blane Harding, who is also biracial, checked both Black and Caucasian boxes when he registered her for school in August 2004. Harding is quoted as saying, "The 2000 census allows people to check 64 boxes (denoting ethnicity and race), so why doesn't the Department of Education have a box for biracial students in 2004?" (p. B3). He said that

he was told that the Colorado Department of Education does not have a biracial box and that if a student does not choose one race, the school district will choose for the student, using the student's name or photograph to choose the category. Plans are being made for changes in the system of recording race by around 2010. Harding said, "To them (Department of Education) it's just filling out a box and moving on, but to my daughter it's her identity" (p. B3). Waters (2000) and Root (1996a, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004) talk of the importance of multiracial people's having the choice to identify as they choose.

Looking/Not Looking Like Family

Most participants talked about people in interracial families looking or not looking like others in their family. Trixie recounted a story about her older sister, whose skin was much darker than others in the family, talking about feeling like she didn't belong. That sister ran away from home as a teenager. Scott said that his oldest brother is biracial, African American and Italian, but that all three brothers look just alike, with just a slight difference in skin color, and are close to one another.

Both Cindy and Kathi recounted stories (included in their individual sections) about people questioning whether they belonged together and suggesting that Cindy was adopted. Cindy said she thinks she physically resembles her mother except for skin color, but that other people seemed unable to recognize the resemblance. Francisco told the story of a waitress assuming that he, his wife, and their four children comprised two different families. Oscar told about his birth daughter, who physically resembled her grandmother, being the favorite. Trixie said that her second son looked White and her husband said he could pick him up at day care without question.

Alexander talked about an experience of dissonance when he looked at his sister, who is Japanese American and Mexican American, holding her new daughter, whose father is White and who appeared White. Alexander and his sister went out with her two daughters (the older one showing more of a mix) and received curious glances and questions when people noticed the baby's appearance. This poetic representation is of Alexander's thoughts about the baby's appearance.

Beautiful and Disorienting

Even to see my sister holding the BABY
there's a little disorientation there
like is this your daughter?
Just because of the physical set

Of course I know it's your daughter
it's just like
the two kids couldn't
look more different at this point

Just another reminder
a sense of blended family in our life

It's important that people know
interracial, intercultural families exist

the children are gonna look
just different
yet at the same time
you've always gotta keep in mind
even you go through that process of orienting
to the look in terms of cultural

We knew that there was some
color coding confusion
ethnic identification confusion

I think a lot of people are more savvy these days
adoption's a possibility
multicultural families are a possibility
I still think it throws us off

To see my sister hold this baby
is beautiful and disorienting
 all at the same time
in terms of the aesthetic, right?

Yeah, and yet she's holding her biological daughter

Are You My Mother?

When my son Matthew was young, I subscribed to the Dr. Seuss book club for beginning readers. One of the books we received was *Are You My Mother?* by P. D. Eastman (1988). In this story, a little bird hatches and goes around to various creatures and machines trying to find his mother, but none of them look like him. Finally he finds the mother bird. Similarly, *Sesame Street* has a song in which children are asked to choose which one doesn't belong. These strong messages in children's media encourage children to match or not match people by physical resemblance. I understand that the ability to make distinctions helps children learn letters and learn to read – the way this is taught may leave something to be desired. Cindy recounted stories of people in public places asking where her mother was. People have asked Cindy, Kathi, Julie, and me whether the children were adopted.

On the other hand, some people have pointed out physical resemblance of my children and grandchildren to me. My son Benjamin's godmother said she thought it was so nice that my daughter resembled my mother's side of the family. In the last year, people looking at photographs of my grandchildren Jeremiah and Zora pointed out physical similarities of their features to mine. I just smiled and said thank you.

Interracial Families More Familiar

A note in popular culture is that interracial families are being depicted more as normal and ordinary. The recent remake of *Cinderella* has the main characters of a

multiplicity of races in the same family. (I heard someone joke about how, on that basis, people would now expect the child of Black and White parents to be Filipino/a.) The well-known Michael Moore documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* highlights a family who lost their son in the Iraq war. The mother is White and the father is Black, and no big deal is made of the interracial relationship. A keynote speaker at the 2004 Democratic Convention was Barack Obama (2004), now a United States senator, who told the story of the marriage of his Kenyan father and White mother. President George W. Bush has a nephew who has a White father and Hispanic mother. Popular figures in sports and the media, including Tiger Woods, Halle Berry, Beyonce, and others talk about being mixed (Kennedy, 2003).

Adoption

Several people mentioned adoption, even those who are not currently participants in adoption. Both Alexander and Cindy spoke of the possibility of adopting children later on. Her mother Kathi told about Cindy's coming home in tears asking if she were adopted. She said she reassured her by showing her photographs of the pregnancy and birth, and said it never came up again. When Cindy talked about people asking if she were adopted, I noticed an emotional aspect to her speech. Oscar, the adoptive father of two children, told many stories about adoption.

When Rodger and I applied to adopt a child, we said any race or combination worked for us, but we thought if the child were Black, a mixed race child might be more accepted in our families. Later I learned that mixed race children were assigned more value in the adoption process. It comforted me in certain ways to know that each of my children was born to a White mother. I could have given birth to a mixed child also. If my

children had been raised by their single White mothers, they may have grown up in white – possibly even whiter – environments than they did. While I can see some reasoning behind the NABSW statement against transracial adoption, I wondered if the Black social workers considered such factors. I also thought that rather than just making rigid statements against it, they could have fostered greater interconnection among Blacks and Whites and promoted border-crossing environments for developing healthier Black identity in the children.

Hair Here and There

I asked some participants whether they had anything to say about hair, and some brought it up themselves. When I asked Francisco, he said it was not an issue in either his family of origin or his children. Ivy mentioned that she and her siblings were at a family gathering when they realized that none of their children had black hair, when that was a significant aspect of their generation's identity. I did not ask Oscar about hair. He mentioned Angel's curly hair and Gina's reddish hair. I wish I would have asked him about hair care for his Black daughter who lived with him. Trixie talked about one son's full Afro and her other son's wavy hair. Cindy and Julie, both biracial (African American and White) women with White mothers, talked in detail about hair, which is included in their individual stories. Kathi, Cindy's mother, told the story of going to her mother-in-law for help with Cindy's hair. Jane mentioned a stranger's staring at her son's hair. Alexander, Maggie, Samuel, and Scott did not mention hair.

Hair Was Not an Issue

Francisco said that hair was not an issue. His hair is fairly straight; he said that two of his children have curly hair and two have straight hair. Kathi told a story of her African American mother-in-law telling her that Cindy's hair was "just hair."

Hair Was an Issue

My hair was slow to come in but by the time I was in second grade, it was fairly long. I wore it in two primary ways: braids and banana curls. Braids were good for hot, humid Missouri summers. My mother worked hard to get my hair into the banana curls – she would carefully wrap it around rags before I went to bed, and in the morning, she would brush it into the curls. Most of my school pictures are taken with me in curls. For my fifth grade picture, I told her I wanted it taken with me in braids. She didn't really approve but allowed my wish. It is my favorite K-12 school picture.

When I started sixth grade, my mother insisted that I get my hair cut short and she gave me a home perm. All through high school, I wore my hair short and permed. I did not like it. When I went to college, I had my hair cut to get the last of the last perm out and let my hair grow long. After college, I had it cut about shoulder-length.

For the next two decades, gradually I got it cut shorter and shorter. I remember Rodger's telling me that when my hair grew long (not really long, just needing a cut to maintain the short style), it was a sign I was depressed. After our divorce, I started letting my hair grow long. When I learned about the clans of the Cherokee nation, I remember thinking, "What if I am from the Clan of Long Hair?" I notice that very few women in academia wear their hair long. Those who wear their hair long are role models.

When my son Matthew was not quite 2, another biracial child visited us. He gently touched her hair and said, “Like Matthew have it.” I noticed Scott and Jane’s son Adrian gently touching his baby sister’s hair in a similar way.

Trixie said that her older son has a basketball-style Afro and that is a strong source for his identity. She said, “Of course it takes more care.” Jane told about a stranger staring at her biracial son’s hair and how her mother felt like hitting that person.

Julie talked about the pain of not knowing how to do her hair. Cindy told several stories about her hair being an issue. Cindy told about her mother fixing her hair in little ringlets. I said I had done the same to my daughter Julie’s hair, and that it was very easy to do with her hair (unlike when my mother had to work to get my hair into looser but similar banana curls). I told her that when we had visited Julie the last time, she was fixing Yolanda’s hair in the same type of ringlets, and said, “Look! This is how you used to fix my hair.”

Human Race

Some participants talked about race more as human race or said we are all the same. Kathi’s detailed explanation begins with a disclaimer that she knows that some people disagree. (She took classes in African American studies in the 1970s.) She explained that her mother told her that everyone was the same.

Affirmative Action

Several participants mentioned affirmative action and four had stories about it. Samuel is an African American man who had been unemployed for about a year. In two interviews, he talked at length about how he felt that affirmative action has served its purpose and is no longer needed. His wife Maggie told a story about an employee’s

threatening a discrimination lawsuit, Cindy told a story of her parents' successfully challenging a company's perceived discrimination, and Trixie told a story of a White man challenging her being hired for an entry-level position. These stories are recounted in their individual sections.

Community

Community is an important aspect of how people formulate their identity. Acceptance or rejection within the community; closeness to others within the community; and centering or marginalization merit consideration in identity constructions.

Where We're Coming From

All participants now live or have lived in either Garrison or Newhart in northern Colorado. Four were born in Colorado. Kathi grew up in Smallville, a small White Colorado community, and moved to a Junction, multicultural town in southern Colorado when she started high school. Cindy grew up in Colorado except for one year in Kansas. Her early years were spent in Junction, and she moved to Garrison with her mother and younger brother when she was about 8. Jane's early childhood was spent in rural Michigan, then she moved to Garrison with her mother after the death of her father. Maggie grew up in a mostly white town in northern Colorado.

Four people grew up on the East coast. Oscar immigrated to the United States from Europe at the age of 11 and spent the rest of his childhood in Brooklyn, where most of his teachers and fellow students were Jewish. Samuel grew up in a middle class project in New York City. He said his neighborhood was racially mixed and he had many White friends. Francisco's parents still live in the mid-size New York community where he grew up. He attended a Catholic school that was all White except for him and his brother,

lived in a mostly Black community, and felt comfortable in both environments. Trixie grew up in a predominantly White city in New Jersey, where her father was born. Her father was excluded from certain activities on the basis of his race in the 1940s. Although her mother, who grew up in the South, expressed fear for her children in the white community, Trixie and her siblings navigated the white community in relative comfort. Some of her relatives lived in Black ghettos and she said many of them had no one-on-one contact with White people. The stories Kathi's mother told her of her experiences in the South influenced her thinking about race.

Scott grew up in a racially diverse mid-sized city in Wisconsin and learned to be comfortable with everybody, he said. Alexander grew up in a rural California area near Fresno, where many Mexican Americans and Whites frequented the grocery store that his Japanese American father and Mexican American mother owned. Both of his parents spoke Spanish and English fluently. They often mediated disagreements between their customers of different backgrounds and helped customers negotiate forms and other bureaucratic details. Ivy was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1955 and her family moved soon after her birth to escape the rampant racism. She grew up in California near Santa Barbara in a mostly white area and was targeted because of her dark skin.

My daughter Julie grew up in a small Iowa town that was predominantly white. She moved to Garrison as a young woman, joining her partner Lawrence and 1-year-old daughter who moved ahead of her. She now lives in a predominantly white city near a more mixed city, and said she feels more comfortable in diverse communities.

Julie persuaded John and me to move to Garrison when she was pregnant with her second daughter by calling and saying, "I found a job (listed in the newspaper) that John

might like.” He got the job and we moved to Garrison that summer, 6 months before Zora was born. Julie returned to Iowa with her two daughters after she separated from Lawrence. Although I was inclined to move back to Iowa when Julie and the girls did, we stayed.

For each participant, the geographic location of where they were brought up – and for some, where their parents were brought up – made a difference in their exposure to people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and to family stories that shaped family identity. All the African American and mixed participants grew up in areas where they had significant contacts with White people. Most of the White participants grew up in mostly White areas. Since all the participants currently live in predominantly white areas, I am not surprised that they grew up in predominantly white areas or areas in which they had considerable contact with White people.

Diversity and Isolation

When my daughter Julie first moved to Garrison, I still lived in Iowa. One day I read that Garrison was listed as one of the best places in the United States to raise children. I called her to tell her what I had read. “Well, maybe if you’re White,” she said.

Most participants talked about Garrison and Newhart being predominantly White. Jane said that her best friend, who is biracial, told her she should not stay in Garrison to raise her biracial children. Scott talked of his feelings of isolation.

Ivy said she found that Garrison “dreadfully lonely” with a small Native community. “I look forward to moving out into a more multicultural community. That’s why I have also, my husband and I have chosen Los Cruces” to move to later on.

White Adoptive Parents in Diverse Areas

Oscar talked of specifically choosing an integrated neighborhood in Denver to raise his mixed Black children. He also described blockbusting, which he said is a practice of real estate agents' moving a Black family into a neighborhood and later buying the homes, whose values fall after the neighborhood is integrated. He also said that redlining (difficulty obtaining loans for property) occurred in that neighborhood. Living in integrated neighborhoods is one of the primary recommendations for White people who adopt across racial lines (Simon & Roorda, 2000)

White Adoptive Parents in White Area

When Rodger and I were planning to adopt across racial lines, we planned that we would move to a racially integrated area by the time our oldest son started school. The following exchange between John and me reveals some of my feelings.

The night after my dissertation proposal was approved by the human research committee, I said to John, "I just read through all the poems I wrote in the 1980s to see if there is anything I can use for my dissertation, but there wasn't much."

"Well, you were focused otherwise at that time. You weren't thinking so much about biracial and color like you are now. Except that you were concerned for your children and the reactions they were getting in the community. You were concerned about that."

"Yes, one thing Rodger and I had agreed on is that we would move to an interracial community before the kids started school. Only we didn't do that."

"Oh! You were going to do that."

“Yes, but it was more complicated than we thought. He applied for other jobs in places that we thought might be more mixed, but they really weren’t. They were really as white as the town where we lived, or seemed to be.”

“You mean in the Episcopal church, the pastor can’t just move to a town and look for a nearby church to serve?”

“No, it’s a whole process, and the church calls the person. So you need to have a job to move, so it was much more complicated. We knew of one town in Iowa – Waterloo – with a fairly high Black population ...”

“Davenport did, too.”

“Well, Davenport was where the cathedral was, and maybe Rodger didn’t want to be an associate staff of the cathedral, maybe he would rather be the priest in charge of wherever he was. Or maybe he didn’t know that there was more of a Black population.”

“Yeah, on the west end of Davenport, there were quite a few Blacks. Several of the schools were integrated, Monroe Elementary School and Jefferson Elementary School and Lincoln Elementary School, and the high school, the high school was integrated. A lot of Black families lived in the bluffs area, the gold coast area. That’s where river boat captains built mansions alongside the bluff. That area had become more inner city. And some of the neighborhoods were more mixed. My sister lived in an integrated area. So you could have lived in a more white neighborhood in the west end and your kids could have gone to integrated schools.”

“The thing about Waterloo is, I think Rodger talked to some other priests and they said that whenever anything bad happened, the Black kids were blamed. We thought, which is worse, where our kids are some of the very few – less than 1 % – of the

Blacks in town, but they might be judged more for themselves – ‘by the content of their character, not the color of the skins’ – rather than lumped together and blamed for everything. So, I don’t know. Whenever other Black people lived in town, we always made contact with them. We reached out – there just weren’t many to reach out to. One odd thing happened – a Black saleswoman came to my door and she said she had seen my children playing in the neighborhood so she asked a neighbor, ‘Where is the Black family?’ and the neighbor said, ‘There ARE no Black families in our neighborhood’.”

“Davenport and Des Moines had more Black people.”

“You and I have lived in more integrated areas since we’ve been together, except for that one suburb we lived in at first.”

“Here?”

“Well, just look down the hall – on our floor now we have an Ethiopian family and a Hispanic family and students from India.”

“But not the city, though. This city isn’t very integrated.”

“At least the city has some Black people and others of color. More than 1 %!”

Kathi talked about her priority of living in good neighborhoods where her children would have good educational opportunities, after her divorce. She said that Garrison had mainly good neighborhoods.

Work

I asked a general question about work. For some, it was not a focus. Some participants did not reveal their type of work, and I did not press them. Oscar is retired and did not talk about the type of work he did, except for a job he held as a young man in the East. Some people talked quite a bit about their work.

Race at Work

Three participants – Ivy, Alexander, and Francisco – worked in ethnic studies at a university. Cindy chose a position in a K-12 school in which she could provide a role model for children of color. Maggie talked about supervising several people from a variety of different countries, how well she gets along with them, and how much she appreciates the diversity. A fundamentalist Christian, she expressed appreciation for people of other religious beliefs. Kathi decried her company's shallow efforts in the name of diversity training. Julie talked of coworkers and mentioned that she did not think she was judged at work on the basis of her race or skin color.

Navy

Samuel found community in the United States Navy and served 20 years. He explained that race did not matter when he was doing his job. His oldest son is now in the navy and told Samuel that he would like to serve 20 years also.

My oldest son Matthew also served in the navy. When I talked to my daughter Julie about what details I include mention about Matthew, since he was unavailable to tell me himself at the time I did the main writing, she said to be sure to mention his service in the navy because “that does have something to do with race.”

Religion

I asked a direct question about religion and most people talked about it at some length. Oscar, Alexander, Ivy, Scott, Jane, Maggie, Samuel, Francisco, Kathi, and Cindy talked about religion freely. Trixie and my daughter Julie talked about it somewhat reluctantly, but both knew that my ex-husband (Julie's father) is a priest.

Christianity

All twelve participants had association with Christianity during their childhoods. Several mentioned that they had been baptized. By soliciting participants through churches, I set up a bias toward Christians.

I solicited participants through other means as well, but did not find any participants who were Jewish, Muslim, or any other religion, who did not also have experience with Christianity during their childhoods. Three (Alexander, Ivy, and Trixie) participants no longer identified with Christianity. Alexander noted that his Japanese American relatives were exposed to Christianity in internment camps during the Second World War, and that, while his father maintained his Buddhist ties, his father's younger siblings converted to Christianity.

Catholicism

Francisco, Kathi, Cindy, Maggie, and Alexander all talked of being raised in the Catholic Church. Trixie attended a Catholic summer camp for two summers. Alexander, Maggie, Kathi, and Cindy talked of having moved away from the Catholic Church. Maggie talked about being alienated because of the church's legalism. Alexander's parents agreed to raise their children Catholic. He said that now he would go to church only for his mother's sake. Cindy said that she and Kathi sometimes attend Spanish masses at Catholic churches when they are traveling together.

Kathi said she received messages against bias from the Catholic Church. Alexander noticed a disparity between how people of different classes and races got together in church and how they did not associate with one another outside of the church.

Other Christian Religions

Trixie and Ivy said they were raised Baptist; neither associates with a Christian church today. Ivy's father was Southern Baptist. Her mother attended the Baptist church with the family at times, but her father never attended the Native American Peyote Church with her mother. Oscar was raised Baptist and switched to a liberal church after a racist incident he experienced with his family at the Baptist church. Jane was raised Lutheran, which she identified as close to Catholic. Scott grew up in an African American Episcopal church. My daughter Julie attended a small, mostly white Episcopal church where her father was priest throughout her childhood. Samuel served as an usher boy and his mother sang in the choir of a nondenominational Christian church.

My parents did not attend church when I was young, but I became a fervent member of a Southern Baptist church when I was a teenager. I left that church in college after a racist incident. I attended a tiny liberal arts college in a tiny town in northwestern Missouri. The college only began admitting Black students about the time I enrolled. Three Black students and I attended the Southern Baptist church in town. One day I received an invitation to a church dinner, so I talked to my friends about going together. They said, "What dinner?" I said, "You mean you didn't get an invitation?" So we decided to go to the church to address the situation. The church officials said they had purposely withheld the invitation from the Black students because they would feel better eating "with their own kind" – ostensibly meaning that is what Black students would like, but actually meaning that is what the White church members wanted. I did not return to the Baptist Church. I joined the Presbyterian Church and later the Episcopal Church. I occasionally attend a multicultural nondenominational church in Garrison, and

belong to an Episcopal church with some interracial families and openly gay and lesbian members. I attend church for the rhythm and cycles of the year, the music, communion, and social gatherings. My spiritual journey is outside the mainstream church, however.

Multicultural Churches

Cindy, Maggie and Samuel, Scott and Jane all learned about this research project through a nondenominational multicultural church they attend in Garrison. They all talked about the church's multiculturalism and welcoming nature, with Cindy identifying it as a "mini-utopia." Oscar talked at length about a multicultural church of a liberal denomination, which he and his family attended in Denver during the 1970s. Scott mentioned that his home church in Wisconsin, which was primarily African American, welcomed people of all races. My daughter Julie said that she has attended multicultural churches but did not think they made a difference in her thinking about race.

Crimes

Trixie and Ivy talked seriously about major crimes committed by the members of the Christian faith. Neither associates with Christianity now.

Trixie was raised in a Baptist church and attended Catholic summer camp for 2 years. Her tone became somber when she told why she is estranged from the church.

Did I grow up going to church and Sunday school? Yes, with some of the biggest sinners in town ... number 1 (more serious tone) and I mean that literally (laughs). I mean that literally ... and pedophiles, too – a lot them ... hide in the church ... so there's issues there.

Trixie added that she likes to study religion but not practice it. She showed me a sign in her office that says “God is the universal psychic pattern.” She relaxed more as she talked about her interest in studying religion as opposed to participating in it.

I asked Ivy if there were anything related to race and religion that is significant for her. She said there is nothing related to her mother’s (American Peyote) church, but there is related to her father’s church.

Ivy: It would be the contradictions found in Christianity, which is my father’s Southern Baptist identity. You know, I just really have great issues with Christianity. I just really find it to be ... oppressive and ... discriminatory and I don’t find Christianity to be a very positive ... religious way, so I ... I do wrap that into ... White race and whether or not it’s ... it’s obviously not true, but how I vision it and that was part of oppression and suppression of people of color and ... and destruction of their cultural way. That’s how I view that ... so there is a race that I have attached to it.

Buddhism

Alexander mentioned that when his Catholic mother and Buddhist father were married, they had to promise to raise the children Catholic. He said that he and his brothers and sisters are baptized Catholic, but he is the most Buddhist of the four siblings in his practices today – partly because of Buddhism’s greater acceptance of gays.

Spirituality

Some participants emphasized spirituality more than religion. Ivy’s mother, who was active in the Native American Peyote Church, conveyed a tolerant attitude toward spirituality and religions. Ivy said that helped her in teaching ethnic studies courses now.

Ivy is not active in any church but is inclined to her own spirituality. Cindy mentioned that Kathi is more interested in spirituality than religion, especially after her divorce. Trixie said she likes to study religion but not participate in it.

Religion and spirituality play significant roles for many Native Americans. Some may engage in practices from different religious and spiritual traditions, such as Christianity and indigenous religions, which may seem contradictory to others.

School Days

Teachers of Color

Cindy, Francisco, Ivy, Julie, Kathi, Maggie, and Oscar had all White teachers during K-12. So did I. Oscar mentions that most of his teachers were Jewish. Scott said that in his Wisconsin high school, the dean of students and detention teacher were African American. Trixie had a regular substitute who was a woman of Middle Eastern descent in high school in New Jersey. Jane had an African American English teacher in middle school in Colorado. Alexander had a third-grade teacher who was Chinese American and a ninth grade Spanish teacher in California. He had another teacher who strongly identified as Armenian. Samuel had two African American teachers – one in third or fourth grade; one a junior high gym teacher. He thought he maybe had one in high school in New York.

In college, Francisco had one Black woman psychology professor in North Carolina; Julie had two African American teachers in business school in Omaha; Cindy had two Black and a couple of Hispanic professors in Colorado; Kathi had at least one African American man teaching African American Studies in Colorado. Ivy had no teachers of color until she went to Berkeley as a college junior to study Native American

and ethnic studies. Then she had many Native American, Korean and other Asian, and other teachers of color.

Alexander pointed out that all of his diplomas have been signed by White males. He notes that is a strong message of power and who gives permission for people to advance in the educational system in the United States of America.

What Happened in School

Catholic School

Francisco, Maggie, and Kathi attended Catholic schools. Oscar's four daughters attended Catholic school for two years. My daughter Julie attended Catholic school for two years. Francisco noted that in the Catholic school he attended from kindergarten through eighth grade, race was not an issue – it was never considered and history of African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans was omitted.

Outstanding Students

Alexander related a story about one of the teachers at his elementary school saying to him “wasn't it fortunate that I was a Japanese? Not even Japanese American but Japanese because ... it helped me so much in doing well in school.” Alexander adds:

And I remember being puzzled ... I remember being puzzled by that comment – like, what does the fact that I'm Japanese mean that I'm gonna ... that I'd do well in school? Because in my mind ... I had it already formulated that I came home from school, went to the grocery store to work – even as kids we worked – cut up boxes, get rid of ... helped bag groceries, take out groceries for people, and then after a certain amount of work in the grocery store to help out the family, I'd go home – we'd all go home – as kids we'd go home, and study at very young ages

even ... study between like 8 and midnight ... and we were allowed to stay up late but we were usually studying.

I remember being puzzled by ... why wasn't it the fact that I worked from 8 ... do homework from 8 to midnight and also later on in elementary school, high school ... get tutored on the weekends for curriculum in school – why isn't it that I am putting so much effort into ... the work – that this is why I am smart rather than why ... rather than because of Asian that I'm smart?

Cindy related a story about seeing high scores for a standardized test being posted in her middle school. She said, "The highest scores they wrote down by ethnicity and they said like a hundred percent like African American you know and I was like, I'm the only one here ... so I remember thinking about that." She received a full scholarship for her undergraduate studies. She considered going to law school and in fact, had a scholarship to study at the University of Wyoming, but chose to go to a different university for a different field of study.

Getting into Trouble

Scott told of getting into trouble with Caucasian friends, and Oscar told of his two Black daughters getting into trouble with Black friends. Samuel described the deteriorating ethos in his school, with fights going on constantly, saying that he did not wish to participate in the fights.

Dropping Out

Oscar's older adopted daughter dropped out of high school and his younger adopted daughter was expelled for bringing a gun to school. Both Samuel and Sandy's son Matthew dropped out of high school and joined the United States Navy. Both

experienced boredom in school. Samuel said that he was questioned because he would finish work early and then get up and look out the window. An escalation in physical fighting at his high school led to his dropping out.

Intersections

Class

Kathi talked about class and being raised by a single mother who struggled financially. She made financial success a priority for herself and her children. Alexander noticed class differentials related to race from the time he was a young child. Although Oscar didn't talk about class as such, he talked about financial success and the types of housing people owned and lived in, relative to race. Maggie and Samuel both referred to class in terms of their childhood experiences.

Gender

When I said something about White male power, Maggie said she thought it was all males – not just White. Samuel disagreed. He said that his mother held the power in his family. Kathi talked about gender being more of an issue than race or culture in her divorce. Ivy talked about her mother's strength in her matrilineal family and the contradiction of her relating her father in a subservient way. My family was more matrifocal, but I grew up with strong societal messages of women's inferiority and women's place, which had major influences on my life decisions, including dropping out of theological seminary to get married. Conservative Christianity reinforced the ideas of a woman serving her husband.

Sexual Orientation

Alexander's thoughts about the intersections of race and sexual orientation are included in his individual section. He contrasted the difficulties he encountered with a visible diversity variable (color) and an invisible one (sexual orientation). In his first interview, he talked about ways in which knowing the problems his parents faced regarding their interracial marriage helped him in coming out, and in the second interview, he talked about differences in the situations, concluding that he faced more challenges with the invisible.

Alexander talked about the possibility of adopting children with his partner later on. We talked about financial and other obligations of having children. He said, "I can see the vision if I am going to be a father, my child will be on my backpack as we are walking through uh the desert of India. I just know that's gonna be the case.

I responded, "Right, right, that would be cool. Yeah."

Alexander said, "Yeah, yeah. That's kind of, that's the kind of socialization I would wanna provide ... as a father."

Ever since then, sometimes an image of Alexander's walking through the desert of India with a toddler peeking out of his backpack appears in my mind. It seems to be a fitting connection.

Oscar talked about his ex-wife's and his oldest daughter's being lesbian. He appeared to experience more discomfort talking about Linda's coming out than he did talking about difficult experiences with his adopted daughters, including drug abuse and prison time. I gave him what I wrote about this and he approved my using it.

The difficulties Oscar described that he had in adjusting to Linda's coming out and the breakup of the marriage is common for spouses of outed gays and lesbians (Buxton, 1994). He said that at that time, Linda's revelation shattered his identity as a family man. Buxton identifies destruction of self-concept and possible family break-up as two of seven common responses of straight spouses. Some couples remain married (Buxton) but Linda asked for a divorce. Depression is common in the straight spouse after the coming out, and recovery and transformation commonly take 3 or more years (Buxton).

As I was leaving their Maggie and Samuel's home, she showed me a photograph, identifying the people in it as her daughter and her partner and their children. The partner appeared female. Maggie did not make a big deal of it and I did not probe further. I believe that is normalizing a lesbian relationship.

Cindy considered attended school in Laramie, Wyoming. However, that was around the time Matthew Shepard was beaten near there in a gay hate crime and died a few days later. She decided that would not be a good place for a mixed race person to be.

Fluid and Multiple Identities

The mixed race participants – Alexander, Cindy, Julie, Francisco, and Ivy – talked more of shifting identities or awareness of race. Alexander particularly delved into how his identity shifted throughout childhood and early adulthood, based on class differentials he observed with Mexican Americans' being designated lower class. He also talked of how differences in his skin color lead to differences in identification by others. Cindy and Julie talked about strangers asking them about their identity. Cindy remembered a period in which she wanted to be White and how she immersed herself more in Black identity at

college. Francisco talked about fluidity and choices in identity for himself and his children, whose mother is White. Ivy talked of experiencing racism on the basis of being dark, and how she did not intellectualize about racial identity until she took ethnic studies classes.

I noticed what I would identify as a certain privilege that biracial participants seemed to have – not as strong as White privilege, but it appeared that the biracial people seemed less likely to experience overt racism in some ways. Beyer (2004) refers to “half-white” privilege. Most of the mixed participants experienced confusion and questioning from strangers regarding their racial identity, however.

White participants hinted at more complex identities related to African American spouses and mixed children. They became more aware of white privilege and indicated an intimacy with the African American community.

When Race Takes a Back Seat

Most participants talked about times in their lives when race meant less to them than some other identity or situation. Alexander’s musings on race and sexual orientation are included in his individual section. Trixie, Kathi, Cindy, Maggie, and Samuel talked of love overriding race in their choice of partners. Kathi said that at a certain time financial security took priority over race.

For the Record

I asked Trixie if she as an African American woman and mother of biracial children would have any advice for a White mother of biracial children. Trixie introduced what she said as what she wanted to “put on the record.”

I couldn't begin to ... I don't know what to say to a White mother or ... a White parent period because ... my feeling is, Sandy, that ... people who are prone to be that ignorant ... aren't gonna approach someone who's obviously – I don't get that kinda stuff regardless 'cuz people are gonna ... hide that from me. I think people ... are far more open to show their ignorance to someone they don't ... know so I think that I think it's probably hugely different for 'em because I would think What kinda reaction do you think ... I mean are you gonna get these stares?

I think that she probably ... she's going to be exposed to a lot of reaction that I would not be exposed to ... period. Yeah ... people know to not say nigger ... when I'm in the room. I mean Eddie Murphy has the best joke ever on that. He goes, well, he goes, "So White people really don't say nigger anymore ... especially when there's a nigger in the room so I guess I wouldn't know." I couldn't almost even offer her ... you know what I mean? It IS a different situation.

What They Want You to Know

The last question I asked most participants was what they wanted to say for the record. "What would you like teachers, counselors, school administrators, and your community to know about multiracial families?" I did not ask some participants this question during the final interview, although I gave them an opportunity to respond later when I provided their transcript. I chose to excerpt what the participants said in answer to this question without my comments or interpretations since I asked them what they wanted to say.

Three participants – Oscar, Kathi, and Cindy – did not specifically answer this question. However, they spoke to this during their interviews. Kathi talked about she felt it was important to focus on culture rather than race. Oscar said he did not recommend transracial adoption after having difficulties in his own experience, although he acknowledged that other factors may have been salient. Cindy talked about the importance of accepting members of interracial families as belonging together even when they do not look alike. She discussed plans she and her husband have to adopt children of different cultures.

Let Us Choose Our Own Identity – Francisco

Francisco was particularly interested in racial identity and allowing each person to choose her or his own racial identify. He described choice as the most important thing:

Know that they don't have to ... feel the need to identify or classify those students, know that they should give those students and families the opportunity to classify themselves, know that it doesn't mean the same for everybody – for some people, it ... it means a lot, for other people, it doesn't mean anything, and you shouldn't put any type of loaded language or interpretation on people that are emphasizing or not emphasizing that particular aspect of themselves. To me the key is choice. Let people choose what they wanna do and how they wanna do it – it's their lives and don't interfere.

So ... to me that's the best thing, 'cuz some counselors will pick kids and say, you know you're this ... well, you know – that's not your job (laughs). Your job isn't to tell them that they need to identify in this one particular way or not. Or your job isn't to tell them that they shouldn't identify, that we're all people and

that we're colorblind ... you know ... that's up to the individuals, up to their families to decide ... what's best for them and how they wanna actually approach those issues ... so ... choice is the most important thing.

Use All the Diversity Variables – Alexander

Alexander emphasized including more variables in the diversity discourse. He talked about how institutions look at diversity and the importance of considering the true meaning of diversity.

Yeah, I would say this in the same way that I would – the same platform I would use for sexual orientation and that is ... when you put forth the diversity discourse as an administrator – because you know how powerful that diversity discourse is in higher education, in organizational life – when you put forth that ... diversity discourse, what variables do you throw into the mix for people to hear?

It's really easy for someone as an administrator to come off as ... diversity friendly, right? "I'm pro-diversity, I'm working toward diversity" and to say ... "We need to work on things with regard to ethnicity and race and ... gender." And then you stop there: and I would just ask administrators and people in my position to say, when you stop there and use those two variables as the definitive variables for what diversity is about, what does that prevent people from thinking about as being included or not ... into that matrix of variables, you see?

So I would say, what happens when you throw into that mix, more ... be more out of routine because you keep including, what happens when you say, our university will in fact be promoting diversity with regard to ... ethnicity and race and gender and sexual orientation, which has not been oftentimes not used

together in the same breath – gender and sexual orientation and the issues with regard to interracial families for the future? What happens when people begin to hear that more from people in power positions – those are the kinds of things being coded into ... what ... how diversity can be framed ... and not just through the conventional traditional things of ethnicity and race where you can sidestep ... well, do I really wanna talk about sexual orientation or interracial blended families and mixed families? You know, is that included or not?

You may say, well, I leave it for the possibility of being included but that's a very different move to leave it up to the audience to decide whether that's included or not rather than saying as a power-central person in administration, I'm clearly saying, sexual orientation. Interracial families are a part of this issue. Disability issues oftentimes are not included there as well, right?

What happens when you throw out disabilities and interracial and into your ... you know, it takes 4 more seconds to include you know 17 more varieties – religion, religious diversity, those kinds of things into the mix. So ... why stop at just ... the easy ones of race and gender? Why not keep going? That's all I would say.

Interracial Families Are Normal – Julie

Julie talked about the normality of interracial families. She said she wanted people to know “that there is nothing wrong with it.” She added:

and for those people who think that ... a person needs to be ... with their own race, I think that's ridiculous because ... we're all the same except for our skin color's different. So I don't think it matters if a White child is raised with a Black

family or an Asian child is raised with a White family, I don't think it really matters.

Family is Family – Samuel and Maggie

Maggie said, "They're a family. To me it doesn't make any difference. Family's family – you know, period."

She asked Samuel, "What do you think, honey?"

Before Samuel started speaking, Maggie added, "It doesn't matter whether you're married to somebody of a different race or not – family's the most important thing and when you treat each other with respect and love, then you can overcome anything. I believe that. What about you?"

Samuel concurred. "Yeah ... family's the ... family's the ... most important to me." He told a story to illustrate an expanded meaning of family.

And now ... our younger son Daniel just got married 2 weeks ago. Now, that ... the family idea to me seems to have changed because ... at the wedding was ... his son – his oldest son Desmond. At the wedding was ... Desmond's mother – his ex-girlfriend – but at the wedding was also her husband and they get along great. And I was thinkin' that, you know ... you know, 20 years ... well even today, some people just because you know they split up or whatever, you make a child together you know ... there's animosity flyin' back and forth and whatnot, you know, so ... and I was pretty ... impressed that you know they get along and they talk and he's, you know, okay.

Maggie: "Nowadays it's especially important for the kids."

Samuel: "It's VERY nice ... and if everybody could ... act like that."

Maggie: “Get along.”

Maggie then recounted stories about her relationship with Samuel’s ex-wife Ellie, who is Filipina. Although Ellie was resistant at first, they learned to get along for the sake of Samuel and the children. She then talks about the importance of family members cooperating in spite of differences.

When I saw her at the wedding ... I mean we’re not ... we’ll never be ... best friends you know, but ... I don’t see any reason ... when I saw her at the wedding, she didn’t recognize me ‘cuz I didn’t have any hair and I said, “Ellie, it’s Maggie” and she just hugged me and said, “Oh, hi,” so ... to me ... to have that kind of animosity and hold grudges, it just ... it’s unhealthy, you know? And it does nothing but hurt you. The other person doesn’t really care ... you know. Between ... Samuel and I – we’ve got several children and LOTS of grandchildren and even though our children are adults ... why put them in the middle of something like that? What’s the point?

Interracial Families Are Not Different – Scott and Jane

Scott and Jane emphasized the ordinariness of interracial families. They also expressed the hope that their biracial children will be treated with respect.

Jane said, “Well, that they’re not really any different from any other ... family.” She turned to Scott, “Honey, are you thinking?”

She added, “Then I would want my kids to be at the same amount of ... of ... attention and respect and everything else as all the other kids ... would get.”

Scott asked Jane if she is done, then said, “I just feel that ... in the way that I am ... our kids are gonna be very outspoken and they’re gonna stand their ground ... regardless if they’re right or wrong.”

Jane: “That’s the way I am, too.”

Scott: “So ... it’s ... it’s just you know ... just the way that they’re gonna be raised ... they’re gonna be you know what I’m sayin’ ... very ... they’re both smart already so ... you know, we’re just gonna ... keep going, you know, with that and just try to raise ‘em to be as good as people as we can.”

We Belong Together Even If We Don’t Look Alike – Trixie

Trixie did not have an answer when I first asked her. However, she went on to recount stories of when people did not recognize that she or her husband were related to their children, as recounted in the “Are You My Mother?” section. This implied to me that she would like for people to recognize that family members do not have to look alike to belong together.

Trixie: That’s a kinda funny ... I know I’ve often ... sometimes I know I’ve shown up at school and ... a lot of my kids’ ... now my kids’ friends all know me – because they’ve really all gone to school together for a long time ... but I used to wonder sometimes like when I would ... I walked up to school one day and I just walked up to the nearest boy and asked him where you know Fred was – and it’s like, yeah, I’m his mom, you can tell ... you know what I mean, I kinda felt the need to almost say that.

Interracial Families Are Wonderful – Ivy

Ivy said, “I think that they’re wonderful!” (laughs) She added:

I think they're important. I think that it ... it indicates ... a breaking of old ways of thinking ... about people and who they are ... and what it means to be a person of color or not ... and I just think that it's ... I think it's the way of the future. I think it could possibly even be the way of ... of healing the world ... in many ways as we are so divided on racial lines, which is really ridiculous. Is it for everybody? Eh, I don't care. I don't know, you know, but I think that ... I think that that's where we're headed, you know ... and in reality, I mean, if you even think about any culture, you know, we're all really racially mixed anyway ... anyway, we have been for ... millions and thousands of years.

Concord among Polyphonic Reverberation

The stories I recount and allude to in this chapter comprise several common areas and reveal both discord and concord among participants. Harmony, blue notes, and dissonance all play parts in the symphonies and improvisations of multiracial families. Individually and collectively, they challenge the hegemony and drown out the monotone.

CHAPTER EIGHT: VOICE/OVER

Unlike in the prescribed dissertation format, I chose to add additional chapters and provide space for the voices of the twelve research participants intertwined with my own voice. Some researchers expect that the dissertation writer will provide a voiceover in the sense of a hidden narrator telling the story from an invisible position. I have resisted that, although I expect that a careful reader will notice instances in which I have succumbed to those proscriptions. I chose a different way of writing *voice/over* in the title to make a point of not complying with expectations of being a hidden narrator.

Another meaning of voiceover (in a traditional spelling) is for a character (as in a movie) to express her thoughts. In a sense, that is what this chapter – also known as the analysis chapter – does by providing space for my thoughts about participants' stories from the perspectives of my research questions and the lenses I chose to view the narratives. The reader also experiences his or her own voiceovers during the reading of the narratives and other parts of this dissertation, based on prior knowledge and experience.

Overall

The overall organization of this dissertation reflects the lenses of feminist standpoint theories and critical race theories by privileging the stories of lived experiences of people in interracial families, people who have traditionally been marginalized in United States American culture, while considering issues of racism,

whiteness, interest convergence, and a critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). The lenses are prismatic in that they symbolize different views for making meaning. "... Feminist work is increasingly attentive to factors such as class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion that configure the lives of different groups of women and men in multiple ways ..." (Narayan & Harding, 2000, p. vii).

Just the Facts

When I asked participants for what is frequently considered factual data, such as the year their parents were married or when they met their partner or how old a family member was, often they hesitated, stumbled, spent a few minutes associating that date or number with a special event, or apologized for not being good with numbers. Also, a participant sometimes said one number in one interview and a different number (for the same situation) in another interview. Sometimes participants gave self-contradictory data (e.g., when I was 7 or 8 years old in fifth grade – possible but unlikely in United States school systems where fifth graders are likely to be 9 or 10 years old). That helped affirm the questionability of what researchers often call facts. If a participant is filling out a questionnaire, she or he might encounter a similar difficulty in remembering dates or numbers, but the researcher might never know that.

Hesitations and Silences

Different ways of looking at language – at what is said and unsaid – help reveal multiplicities of meaning (Rogers et al., 1999). Silence can be a presence in interviews (Rogers et al.) and opportunities for feedback following the interviews. Trinh Minh-ha (1989) says that what a storyteller does not include allows the reader to read between the lines, and the gaps may reveal as much as the story that is told.

Rogers et al. (1999) discuss four types of languages of the unsayable (p. 88). The language of negation introduces multiplicity through the use of not, un-, and similar negations (Rogers, et al). For example, when Scott said he is not NOT comfortable being in a predominantly white community, he uses a double negative, opening up possibilities of various meanings. The language of revision includes self-corrections, contradictions, and denials, as illustrated in the previous section. This demonstrates the processes by which people remember, select parts of their stories, and construct meaning. The language of smokescreen includes hesitations, vagueness, and brevity. For example, when Trixie mentions pedophiles in the church, she speaks cryptically and does not follow through. The language of silence may be a simple omission or may hint at something that is unsayable. “We acknowledge the presence of complex and irreducible images, as well as concepts, in data (Rogers, et al., 1999, p, 82).

As I viewed videotapes and transcribed audiotapes, I noticed several hesitations. Commonly, people paused for a moment or said “uh” before naming the racial identity of a person in the story they were telling. It could be that since people in the United States have heard several different directives on appropriate names to call people of different races, participants hesitated a moment to sort through the names and choose the one they felt most suitable to the situation. It could be a form of resistance to racial words and racial designations. It could be a feeling of discomfort talking about race or talking about race in the particular situation, with a White-appearing researcher.

Sometimes people looked away as they told a story. It could be that looking in a certain direction helped them remember, as perhaps they visualized the story in their minds. Perhaps they did not want to look at me if they felt uncomfortable with what they

were telling related to the content. Some people crossed their arms as they told a story. Some people left out stories that the literature and most other participants included.

I thought about including a more detailed analysis of each person's hesitations and body language, but the scope of this dissertation is already so broad and the tome so heavy, I decided to leave that for another time. However, that is a consideration for examination in the future. I mentioned some of the silences to problematize the analysis.

Lens: Critical Race Theories

One of the lenses used in this study is critical race theory. Primary tenets of critical race theories are the prevalence of racism in the United States, a critique of liberalism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and counternarrative (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Racism in the United States

One of the themes of critical race theories is that racism is enmeshed in United States American society (Delgado, 1995). Alexander said that he taped a local newspaper article about a racist incident to his office door at the university where he works. Some of his White students said, "Oh, but do you really think it's that bad now?" Overt racism, subtle racism and institutional racism continue, but people who do not encounter it personally may not recognize it and may minimize it.

Racist Slurs

Once in awhile I wear my hair in braids. I do it because I like braids and they are comfortable in hot weather, not because of my background. My understanding is that Chickamauga and Cherokee women did not wear braids. However, some White people associate braids with Native Americans. When I wore braids to work on a university

campus in the 21st century, two different people called me *Injun*. I felt a warm rush of shame followed by and intertwined with pride. I recognized that their ignorance and prejudice led them to say the pejorative and I was proud in a way that they recognized me as American Indian, even though they based their judgment on a misconception.

Ivy told of her daughter being called *Injun* in middle school and being otherwise harassed at that time. When my son Benjamin (who is African American and German) was in first grade, he came home and told me that someone had called him *Chink*. His class included a Vietnamese boy and a boy who was American Indian and White, among otherwise White classmates.

Trixie told a story (included in her section) about her son's classmate calling him *nigger* and her reaction to it. Kathi told stories of her brother and grandmother using that word (included in her section), and how upsetting and estranging that was.

Randall Kennedy (2002) tells stories of his personal experiences with the word *nigger*, along with stories of ordinary and prominent Black people's experiences of racism with this word and of White people's experiences of censure and punishment after using the word, including a communication professor's leading a class discussion on taboo words, which included this word. Kennedy talks about how incendiary its use can be. I hesitated – as a mostly White person – to recount the stories about its use. I finally decided to proceed with the stories and using the actual word rather than a euphemism. I believe it is a singularly oppressive word and ignoring it or euphemizing it gives it more malicious power.

Kennedy (2002) also discusses the use of the word in different ways – including as a term of endearment or belonging – by Black people. This is extremely controversial with strong feelings on all sides (Kennedy).

Trixie also said she hates the word *mulatto*. She said, “One thing I know with my kids, I make sure that they – I hate the word mulatto – I think it’s a slave term or something ... so I insist they call themselves biracial. Yeah ... I hate that word” (whispered). She said that she has seen it written down in a clinical sense, and I have, too.

Subtle and Overt Racism

Almost everyone who participated in the research told stories of encountering racism, ranging from life-or-death situations to mild discomfort. Some White participants mentioned understanding the prevalence of racism on a deeper level when they became intimately involved with African American or multiracial family members.

My son Benjamin participated in an outstanding 4X400 relay team on the high school track team in a small, predominantly white Iowa town. When it appeared that this team would compete in the state track meet, others began to target him. He found the word *nigger* and other racist insults and threats on his locker. He complained to the vice principal. The school did nothing. I complained to the vice principal. The school did nothing. The hostilities and racist slurs and threats increased and Benjamin reacted. Finally, he received an in-school suspension. I went in to talk to the vice principal about why Benjamin received such a severe punishment and the other students received no reprimand. The vice principal made an excuse (to me) about school rules. I was aware that the vice principal, who lived a block away from us, had a teenaged girl and I sensed a fear in him that he did not want Benjamin too close to his daughter (they were casual

friends). I also was aware of grumbling about town regarding some racists' not wanting a Black student representing the town at the state track meet. Had I been more legally savvy, I would have hired an attorney to challenge the school's decision. I believe this incident is an example of overt racism and institutional racism working together to uphold the dominant White beliefs. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) describe a similar experience in disparity of punishment around racist incidents at an exclusive, predominantly White school.

When I recalled this story, I could not remember what Benjamin did (or was alleged to have done) before receiving the in-school suspension, so I called to check with him. He remembered the general situation but not what he did in response to the racist insults from the other students. He recalled that in that circumstance and others, if he and White friends got into trouble together, he consistently received much more severe punishment from authorities. Benjamin said that years ago, when his older brother Matthew ascribed certain troubles to racism, he was less inclined to agree, but as an adult in his 30s, he sees that much more clearly now. He said that the previous night he was talking with a Black friend from work about how if there is one Black person in a group and any trouble occurs, the Black person is the one to receive blame.

Kathi described openly racist incidents, and added that she has encountered more subtle racism in recent decades. "So much of it is undercurrent now," Kathi said. She added:

It used to be okay in the '60s and early '70s to show your feeling about how you felt about race. You either were for it or you were against it and there wasn't too much gray in there. Now you may not say how you really feel about it because

you keep it hidden. I think I much prefer to know how somebody feels about something instead of all this undercurrent because I think it's a real tragedy for our society because you can't fight something that you can't openly see and you don't know who really is [racist].

Cindy, Kathi's multicultural daughter, described her encounter with overt racism in high school in the 1990s when her friend's parents did not allow him to attend a school dance with her. They questioned their son about her racial identity when they heard her real name (from an African language) and then said he could not go on a date with her. She met them at other times and said they treated her with civility – they just did not want their son dating a person of her racial background (African American, Blackfoot, White).

Ku Klux Klan and Racism

In the summer of 2003, John and I attended a family gathering in Missouri. While I was inside, John got acquainted with the new friend of a family member. Darryl was a retired White man from southern Missouri. When John and I were driving back through Kansas, he recounted the conversation with Darryl.

Daryl: "Now that I'm retired, I like to visit a lot of chat rooms. The other day I was chattin' with this Mexican woman from someplace out in California. She said she does tech service. She was asking what Missouri is like. I told her it's real pretty – lots of trees and lakes – where I live. She said, 'Oh, I'd like to come and visit sometime.' I told her, 'I don't think that's a good idea – there are men in white sheets in my county.'"

John: "Well, that sounds pretty racist."

Daryl: "Oh, well, I'm not one of them – there are just a lot of them around where I live."

This not-so-veiled reference to the Ku Klux Klan has weighed on my mind since. Would I want to visit relatives in southern Missouri? John and I decided that one criterion for our first faculty jobs is that they be in a place where our grandchildren are safe to play in the front yard.

Ivy talked about racism in the Garrison area. She said, "It's not yet that welcoming and it's not yet that diverse." She added:

I mean is the town like Jasper where you would find somebody dragging a Black man on in the back of a vehicle? No. Is it insidious and hidden and underneath? Yes. It has a horrible history with the treatment of Hispanic and if they can treat Hispanics that way, in the back of my head, I know that there's many in this town that are still very much entrenched in sort of discrimination and racial ... concerns ... and then if you look at North Garrison itself as a place, you know, I mean you know you've got the churches that are just really kind of Ku Klux Klanish. So you know ... but it's ... I think ... the majority of the people in Garrison are good hearted people who just don't have a lot of information ... so there you go – Garrison!

Oscar also mentioned the Ku Klux Klan when talking about the history of his Denver neighborhood. First he talked about blockbusting (described in his individual section) then he added:

The whole neighborhood was redlined so the banks wouldn't loan money so it was just a big conspiracy ... and the roots of that, of course, were ... in the '20s and early '30s when the Ku Klux Klan was very, very powerful in Denver – these

are all facts that most people don't know. Denver is ... is a special place. It has had highs and lows, and that was ... a low. It was terrible.

Kathi also mentioned the Klan in relation to racism's being expressed more overtly in the 1970s and 1980s. Information I receive from the Southern Poverty Law Center demonstrates that the Klan and other white supremacist groups maintain an active presence in some areas. The allusions made by participants to the Ku Klux Klan revealed continuing awareness of historical reverberations and current threats.

Critique of Liberalism

Three areas of liberalism open to critique are "colorblindness, the neutrality of the law, and incremental change" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Maggie's response to her stepson Daniel's troubles with the law indicates her acceptance of the law as colorblind and neutral. When Samuel started to defend his son by telling Maggie, "You've never been a young Black male," Maggie said she became livid and said, "I've never been a young White male either, but right is right and wrong is wrong."

Liberalism as Way of Life

Of all the participants, Oscar was the one to talk the most about liberalism. He described people of his European ethnicity as liberal. When his family immigrated to the United States, they lived in Brooklyn. "All of my teachers and most of the students were Jews," he said. "I find Jews tend to be extremely open." He later identified people from the East as liberal. (He and Linda, his first wife, were from the East.)

Oscar identified the American Baptist church as the "most liberal" of the Baptist denominations, even though his family left the church after a racist incident. Oscar

described Renaissance Church, which his family attended next, as “the most liberal church in Denver.” He described his Denver neighborhood as a “liberal bastion.”

Oscar referred to liberal views of sexual orientation as opposed to religious conservative views, although he continued to struggle with implications of his wife’s and daughter’s being lesbian. He talked about his own depression after his wife came out and about “not jumping for joy” about his daughter’s sexual orientation since he would have liked to have grandchildren, although one of his adopted daughters had several children.

He said, “I think that I am ... very liberal on ... rights of minorities and ... (pause) feel they’re every bit as equal as we are.” The emphasis on equality rather than equity underscores an aspect of liberalism critiqued by critical race theories (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Incremental change through emphasis on equality does not challenge those in power, while attempts to level the playing field and transform institutions for social justice (DeCuir & Dixson) calls for second-order change (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974), which is radical rather than liberal.

In talking about tribulations with his adopted daughters, Oscar said, “We ... our group ... we were liberal enough, you know ... never ... never treated the adopted children any different. We ... did everything pretty much according to the book and yet ... it was ... very difficult.” He faced the realization that liberalism was not a solution to racism in society.

Colorblindness

In 2003, I attended a women’s leadership conference at the University of Denver, mostly because Black feminist bell hooks was the keynote speaker. After her talk, we went into breakout sessions. A White man said to the African American woman leading

our session, “I don’t see your color. I just see that you are an intelligent woman.” One could almost hear a collective sigh. I do not think the man would have said to a White woman, “I don’t see your color.” He saw and commented on the leader’s gender and intelligence.

Kathi said that she is not colorblind even though she minimizes race in some ways. Colorblindness “pretends ignorance about one’s own white identity and refuses responsibility” (Alcoff, 2000, p. 273). Alcoff talks about Adrienne Rich’s views of white solipsism in which the white perspective is viewed as universal.

She argues that “colorblindness,” or the ideal of ignoring racial identities, falls into white solipsism because a racist society has no truly accessible colorblind perspective. The claim to a colorblind perspective by whites works just to conceal the partiality of their perception (Alcoff, 2000, p. 267).

Colorblindness is based on the myth of racial equality (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Rush, 2000). Laws against discrimination endorse the idea that the system is non-racist (Rush). “Today, hegemony is much more subtle, much more pernicious than the form of blatant racism once exercised by the colonial West” (Trinh, 1989, p. 98). As long as racism continues – and I believe the stories in this dissertation reveal ample evidence of its existence – colorblindness only serves to uphold the hegemony.

All the Colors

Several participants made comments such as “I don’t care if he’s Black or White or green or purple.” This seems to diminish the significance of race or say that color doesn’t matter, since human beings are not green or purple (unless they are very sick).

Whiteness as Property

Property rights include possession, use, disposition, and exclusion (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Critical race theorists consider that being White is like owning property,

for example, with presumed access to academically rigorous curricula and white standards considered as the norm (DeCuir & Dixon). At some schools, students are limited in incorporating insignia of cultural identity, either on a day-to-day basis or at commencement ceremonies (DeCuir & Dixon). An African American doctoral student friend of mine told of being criticized by the professor when he was speaking in a class in his cultural traditional way of storytelling. Cindy referred to “standard” or “norm” a few times, and clarified that she meant White. Alexander told of being surprised that he – a child of Japanese American and Mexican American heritage – was chosen to play the lead in his first grade school play. By that age, he had figured out that whiteness was a property interest and he assumed that a White child would play the role of the brave little tailor, depicted in the book as White.

Whites as Primary Beneficiaries of Civil Rights Legislation

This area of critical race theory is also known as interest convergence (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). Civil rights legislation was enacted and enforced to the extent that it converged with interests of White people (DeCuir & Dixon). For example, after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), many African American teachers lost their jobs and Black schools were closed, while at the same time equal schooling did not become available to most Black students (DeCuir & Dixon; Ladson-Billings, 2004a). Fifty years after the decision, Black students are overrepresented in special education programs and underrepresented in programs such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and talented and gifted programs. Rush (2001) described difficulties in getting her African American daughter accepted into a new school’s program for gifted children, even though her records indicated she easily qualified.

Storytelling to Transform

Counternarrative challenges the hegemony (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004) and addresses racism inherent in American culture (Apgar, 1996; Cornell, 2000). This dissertation presents over 100 stories and poetic representations of people in interracial families.

The poetic representation uses participants' words to create the poems; I sent the individual sections to participants so they could respond and clarify their stories if they felt a need to do so. Of the people who provided feedback, two said that they thought the representation was authentic; two each found one word that they said they felt was not illustrative and we negotiated replacements so that their words gained preference.

Participants' stories and reflections reveal the prevalence of racism throughout previous generations and their own lives. Stories of Ivy's brother who was murdered because someone presumed he was a gang member, Alexander's mother who sneaked out of her window to meet his father, Jane's sister who stopped speaking to her when Jane became pregnant with a biracial child, Samuel's dropping out of a high school where pervasive fighting was overlooked, Trixie's young son being called "nigger" by a school friend, and Kathi's estrangement from her brother resonate along with other stories from Maggie, Julie, Oscar, Francisco, Scott, and Cindy.

Oppression

Experiences of oppression and internalized oppression weave throughout participants' stories. Ivy's uncle was shot when he spoke up to a customer at the watermelon stand. Francisco and his wife Molly, an interracial couple, decided not to move to North Carolina in 1987 when Molly heard about shootings of several interracial

couples there. Ivy's Mexicano father was not allowed to attend classes inside the school building because his skin was too dark. Trixie's African American father's school cancelled a school dance when they found out he planned to attend. Alexander tried to avoid acknowledgement of the Mexican American part of his heritage during his college undergraduate studies because of perceived racism. Julie told of constantly being asked, "What are you?" – a way of designating her as *Other*. Scott told of his older brother, whose Italian American grandparents did not allow their son to marry the baby's mother because she was African American. Cindy told of being the only African American in a class on multicultural issues and how people constantly looked at her for "the Black view" and how her views consistently differed with others' views – the White norm.

Lens: Feminist Standpoint Theories

Feminist standpoint theories take into account perspective, liminality and alterity, discourse, tolerance for ambiguity, voices, and oppression. Participant stories present a brief look at these areas.

Perspective

After receiving a master's degree from Stanford University and working in a refugee assistance program, I moved to a university town and encountered difficulty in finding a job. Eventually I began work as a receptionist at the university. I visited a psychologist at the employee assistance program when I became frustrated with my work. She told me to quit whining and recognize that I was just a misfit. Now I realize that my "misfit" status – in my family, schools, society, work – allowed me an opportunity to see issues more clearly than if I were immersed in mainstream culture. I have been an outsider within many situations throughout my life.

Kathi and Jane, both White women, noted that their perspectives broadened when they became intimately involved with African American men. They realized that they had opportunities to see race in ways not usually open to White people, since whiteness is the norm and can be invisible to those immersed in it (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Liminality and Alterity

Narratives can bring stories of liminal perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 2000) to awareness of those in the dominant culture, thus inciting possibilities of social change (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Alterity (otherness) can transcend the “either/or” epistemology put forward by the dominant paradigm (Ladson-Billings, 2000). People tend to define themselves in terms of what they are not. In this view, they need someone who is “other” to help them decide what they are not, because that helps them know who they are. Liminal groups are assigned the role of alter ego to the ideal self. By looking at liminal groups as “other,” people learn to define who they want to be. Liminal groups can subvert this role. From their unique perspective outside the mainstream, they have an advantage to their perspective and can challenge the hegemony.

Being part of the norm allows the privilege of not seeing what may be obvious to people at the margins. My mother as housekeeper knew a great deal about the people for whom she worked and about our own social culture; her employers knew about themselves but did not need to know much about our culture. This excerpt from Alexander’s poetic representation exemplifies his similar experience:

You not only need to understand
what it means to be an ethnic minority
you not only need to know how to live out
the rituals and values of being
Japanese American and Mexican American
how those two blend or intersect or don’t together

you also need to know how to negotiate that
in dominant culture as well, too
dominant white culture as well
in order to survive.

There's many layers of negotiation going on

Borderlands – Tolerance for Ambiguity

Many people in the United States of America find ambiguity difficult to face. During the 2004 presidential election, Democratic candidate John Kerry expressed openness to ambiguity and his critics countered that he flip-flopped. Ideas of borderlands and crossing borders create space for ambiguity (Anzaldúa, 1990; Trinh, 1989). All the racially mixed participants and some others spoke of ambiguity. Cindy, Julie, and Alexander told stories of people asking them what they were, where they were from, or what their racial makeup was. I told Cindy that my daughter Julie was “ambiguous looking” and she smiled and said she would have to remember that term.

Voices

Provocative
Evocative
Listen
Loud
Strong
Storytellers
Speaking out
Writing words
Making meaning

Do you hear us?

Oppression

Stories reveal oppression – stories that counter the rules of the oppressors. Stories reveal ways that patriarchal power impoverished some of the women, ways that racism

repressed people of color, ways that class created barriers for others. In a women's studies graduate seminar, we had a reading that talked about oppression. One of the class members objected to the use of the word and the teacher acquiesced. As long as oppression continues, we need to use the word *oppression*. As Black feminist bell hooks (2000) says, radical feminism educates for critical consciousness. It recognizes the intersections of race, class, and gender in oppression. We need to tell it like it is. "Words matter," as Norman Denzin (2000) says (p. 899).

Lens: Family Theories

Family Systems Theories

Looking at participating families from a systems perspective, each family is interconnected and a whole greater than its parts. When Scott talked of his brothers, he described them as similar "as a Driver" implying an overall family concept. Kathi talked of her mother-in-law's community building and bonding over cooking as a family concept. For Alexander, family collectivism was a major part of his identity.

Family members gave messages and took in messages as input in feedback loops. Alexander describes ways in which his older brother provided a reality check for his racial identity and how he responded to his brother and took in his messages. Trixie's father, Ivy's mother, and Kathi's mother taught about racism through stories they told.

Symbolic Interactionism

Root's ecological framework for racial identity is based on symbolic interactionism (Root, 2004), which is particularly apropos for constructs of self and identity. A basic assumption is that people act according to the meaning that they assign. Some people form families on the basis of their meanings, even when the partnerships are

not recognized legally in society if not sanctioned by marriage or under laws (such as gay marriage, which is outlawed in several states in 2004).

How Do These Stories Inform the Research Questions?

The following sections address how the stories inform the research questions:

What is the meaning of race for people in interracial families?

How do family relationships and dynamics influence thinking about race?

How do community, work, religion, and other contextual factors influence racial identity?

How do intersections of race, class, gender, generation, family, sexual orientation, and historical context shape racial identity?

Meanings of Race for People in Interracial Families

The meaning of race varies for people in this study and others in interracial families. Meanings vary at different ages, at different times, in different situations, and relative to many other contextual areas. Looking at participants' stories and comparing them to racial identity theories can give us glimpses of participants' perspectives relative to the theories. Identities for most people shift, depending on their lived experiences, ideas they hear about, and contextual factors, including their generation and media presentation. Even though I primarily relate the Cross Black identity model to Black participants' stories and Helms White identity model to White participants' stories, I consider aspects of Root's ecological framework for racial identity for everyone.

Repeating words from Beverly Daniel Tatum (2003),

Unraveling and reweaving the identity strands of our experience is a neverending task in a society where important dimensions of our lives are shaped by the simultaneous forces of subordination and domination. We continue to be works in progress for a lifetime (p. 88).

Black Identity Models

Samuel, Scott, and Trixie identify primarily as Black, even though Scott said he has Cherokee or Blackfoot ancestors and Trixie said she has German, Cherokee, and French Canuck ancestors. Using the Cross Black identity model and understanding that people may recycle through the stages he suggests (Cross, 1991), I venture to say that much of what Samuel said was in the pre-encounter stage, in which people have a low awareness of Blackness or are even anti-Black. Samuel talked against affirmative action in two different interviews; he emphasized the safety of whiter environments both in the projects and schools of his childhood and in his moving to Newhart, Colorado; he stepped back from defending his son's actions as being related to being Black in white society. He was previously married to a Filipina woman and is now married to a White woman. He had three children before marrying his current wife.

Scott is a young man who appears to be beginning an awareness of being Black in a predominantly white community, with the feeling of isolation perhaps signaling a change into the encounter stage. On the other hand, he is steeped in hip hop music and comfortable with people of diverse backgrounds. He and Jane, who is White, have two biracial children. He may embody aspects of the immersion and internalization stages as well as the encounter stage.

Trixie expresses different levels of awareness through comments on civil rights occurrences and her purveying Black culture to her children through music. She indicated a comfort level with Black issues and indicated that she helped with a university's Black issues forum. She is married to a White man and has two biracial sons, whom she identifies as Black and biracial.

Oscar identified puberty as the time his adopted Black daughters began to want to associate with only Black people. Beverly Daniel Tatum (2003) addresses the tendency of Black and mixed youth to associate with Black peers during adolescence in *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* According to the Cross Black identity model, people in the encounter stage (often high school students) may become anti-White and immerse themselves in Black culture (Wright, 1998). This is a time for confronting racism, when they see themselves primarily as Black (Wright). To be seen as authentically Black, they hang out with other Blacks (Wright).

White Identity Models

Janet Helms developed a theory of White racial identity development (Tatum, 2003) with two phases (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Hardiman (2001) also developed a theory of White racial identity development, which she later noted was more of a model for White antiracists and what she felt Whites needed to do.

Jane, Maggie, Kathi, and Oscar identify as White. To a certain extent, all the White participants – and Cindy, who is mixed – told stories or made statements that support the idea of whiteness as being the norm. For example, when Cindy wanted to play with only White Barbie dolls and fantasized about marrying a blonde, blue-eyed White man, she was going along with this idea. She even said “normal” a couple of times and then clarified that she meant white society.

Maggie’s stories seem indicative of the contact status in which White people do not think about race. She indicated that she thought about it, but considered White as the norm. She disregarded race and racism as factors when telling about when her stepson got into trouble. She emphasized that various things “were not about race” several times.

However, she expressed an appreciation for diversity – as long as certain moral rules are followed. She told a story about a former employee who threatened to file a discrimination lawsuit against her, emphasizing that she did not hire him because of his race and she did not fire him because of his race.

Oscar, 67, grew up with a White paternalistic father, he said. His stories indicated an acceptance of whiteness as the norm, but he talked a great deal about liberalism, which Helms identified as part of the second phase, of pseudo-independence (Tatum, 2003). He associated with Black people at the Renaissance Church and adopted two Black children. He indicates some sense of shame regarding being White when he calls his home country “colonial bastards like the rest of them.” Although he denounced colonial attitudes of his father, including considering Black people of lower intelligence, he seemed to perpetuate them in some statements he made about his Black daughters. He expressed bafflement when describing his Black daughters’ desire to associate almost exclusively with Black people during adolescence.

Jane, a young woman born after 1980, expressed increased awareness of racism. She associated with Black people, including Scott and the people at the multicultural church they attend, but did not indicate that this was her focus. Her stories indicate that she experienced a burgeoning awareness of White privilege, although she might not know that terminology, not having taken ethnic studies classes. She indicated that if she had her choice of areas to study, she would choose the civil rights movement and related studies. She did not appear to be attached to a strong White identity, but she told stories of confronting racism and expressed concerns about what others think of her biracial children and the challenges the children will face as they grow up in a racist society.

Several statuses identified by Helms seem to be part of Jane's ongoing racial identity development in an interracial relationship and as the mother of biracial children.

Kathi also exhibited characteristics of several statuses. She indicated some acceptance of White as normal, such as in talking about the importance of finding good – rather than integrated – neighborhoods and schools for her multicultural children. She took African American Studies courses in the 1970s and expressed her understanding that her preference to use the term *multicultural* rather than *multiracial* is problematic to some people, before delivering an impassioned speech on her beliefs that everyone is the same, based on what her mother told her and her experiences during the Vietnam War era. She demonstrated awareness of white privilege and told of numerous experiences in which her whiteness protected her.

Kathi married a Black man and experienced closeness to his family and association with Black people in all-Black situations, especially before her divorce and to some extent after her divorce, until she remarried a White man several years later. She worked hard to instill a strong Black identity in her multicultural children so that they would be tough enough to stand up to racism they would experience as adults. Kathi seems to indicate aspects of all the statuses that Helms describes.

Aspects of Root's (2003, 2004) ecological framework also are salient in looking at Kathi's racial identity. Her generation, geographic locations and experiences in White and diverse communities, gender, class, attributes of her children (somewhat ambiguous racial appearance, attractiveness, academic competence, leadership) all appear to play significant roles for her. Her intimate relationship with her multicultural children – born

in 1980 and after – as they develop their racial identity could have more to do with Kathi's emphasis on sameness than a naiveté about race.

Biracial and Multiracial Identity

Alexander, Francisco, Cindy, Julie, and Ivy identify as being mixed, which is more common in the early 21st century than it was in the mid-20th century (Root, 2003, 2004). Cindy and Julie said that they identify as *Black* when they can check only one box; Francisco prefers to check *other* and list African American and Italian; Alexander identifies as both Japanese American and Mexican American; Ivy says that her indigenous identity is most important to her, although her brothers emphasize their Mexicano identity – which, as she indicates, includes indigenous. None of this research's participants identified as mixed or multiracial to the exclusion of their specific racial backgrounds.

When Rodger and I adopted Matthew, friends who had adopted a biracial daughter earlier that year suggested that we ask that he be identified as *mixed* on the adoption records, so without considering all the consequences, we did. Later, I wished that we would have asked the adoption personnel to designate him as *mixed – Black and White*. Just saying *mixed* without indicating the mixture left too many questions open. As one person in a small Iowa town told us, "To us, mixed means German and Danish."

Additional complications come to bear on identity for mixed Native Americans. The United States government imposed a blood quantum rule in 1877 (Gong, 2004). American Indians are required to prove the percentage of Indian blood and are issued a certificate of degree of Indian blood. Generally, the U. S. government considers one quarter sufficient for benefits accruing to Native Americans, although each tribe has its

own criteria for determining eligibility for membership in that tribe. Some American Indians “cop an attitude” as Ivy’s daughter related, and resent mixed people’s trying to affirm their Native American ancestry. Vine Deloria (1969/1988) criticizes White people who claim to have a Cherokee princess for a grandmother.

Root’s ecological framework for racial identity. Maria P. P. Root (1992, 1996b, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004) suggests that identity development is a complex process and that, with increased permeability of racial boundaries and more multiracial identity, other aspects of identity need to be considered. In her early research, Root (1998) identified factors influencing racial identity included experiences, gender, and family. In her later versions of a racial identity model, she emphasizes its ecological nature, considering the importance of context, gender, sexual orientation, class, and generation (Adermann, 2000; Root, 2000, 2003, 2004). Root says that ecological models focus more on social process and variables than on stages (Root, 2004).

Root (2004) explains that the experience of mixed race individuals differs for people coming of age early in the 21st century. Those born before approximately 1980 were more strongly influenced by ideas of hypodescent and the one-drop rule, being pressured to hide their mixed race identity and choose only one, usually the one of lower status. Root identifies three labels for different generations of multiracial people: *exotic* for those born before the late 1960s (this would include Neil, my college friend, and Francisco); *vanguard* for those born between the late 1960s and the late 1970s (this would include Trixie, Alexander, Oscar’s children, my children); and *biracial boomer* for those born after approximately 1980 (this would include Cindy) (Root, 2004, p. 112). I believe that monoracial-identified people in intimate relationships with individuals of

different races and mixed races are influenced by those associations relative to racial identity.

Root's (2003, 2004) macro lenses that play roles in racial identity development, such as generational history and regional history (geography), sexual orientation, gender, and class, were evident in stories from all the research participants, not just those who identify as multiracial. Both Alexander and Kathi talked at length about class as it intersects with race. Kathi said she felt that her impoverished background assisted her in empathizing with marginalized Black classmates. Alexander portrayed struggles with accepting the Mexican American part of his identity because of perceived class struggles associated with that aspect.

Alexander also talked about racial identity taking a backseat to sexual orientation issues. Root (2003, 2004) says that gay men and lesbians of all racial identities may find greater acceptance in the white community than in communities of color. Alexander talked of his struggles with deciding whom he could date. He identified so strongly with other men of color as "brothers to the cause" that at first he did not feel sexually attracted to them so he dated White men – some of whom also were the most oppressive toward him. His two long-term gay partnerships have been with international men with complex identities.

Root's (2003, 2004) areas of other influences on racial identity development – individual (traits and aptitudes, physical attractiveness, phenotype), family (functioning, influences, and socialization), and community (attitudes and racial socialization) – all played strong roles in racial identity for several participants. Family was included in a previous section in this chapter. Community was included in the previous chapter.

Participants told stories about or mentioned several characteristics discussed by Root (2003, 2004). Individual traits and aptitudes included academic excellence, as mentioned by Cindy and Alexander; sports proficiency, as mentioned by Francisco; physical attractiveness, as mentioned by Cindy and Julie; and open personality types, as mentioned by Kathi, Francisco, Julie, Alexander, Jane, and Scott).

Root (1996a) offers a widely published bill of rights for racially mixed people, which tends to emphasize individual choice. In 2004, she released a multicultural oath of social responsibilities (Verdadero, 2004).

*How Family Relationships and Dynamics Influence Thinking about Race
Individual and Collective*

Most participants seemed to assume individuality as of prime importance. Francisco in particular described how he and his children wanted to identify as each one chose. Julie described being whoever she wanted to be. Scott and Jane projected their children growing up to be outspoken. Cindy and Kathi commended individual achievement. Trixie talked of dissimilarity between her experiences as an African American mother of biracial children and a White mother of biracial children.

Some participants talked of collectivist identities, particularly Alexander, who is Japanese American and Mexican American, and Ivy, who is Mexicana, Mesqualero-Apache, and Yaqui. Alexander lamented the difficulties of separating from his cherished family to study for his Ph.D. and accept a faculty teaching position in another state. He said that his family is collectivist oriented and he feels like an outsider when he returns home to visit. His three siblings continue to live in the area where they grew up. When Ivy talks of her mother's activism, she points out her mother spoke out for the

community, not as an individual act. Kathi talked of community bonding with her African American-Blackfoot mother-in-law. Cindy talked of her close ties with her African American-Blackfoot grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

Open and Closed

The degree of permeability in family systems may relate to a family's willingness to accept new family members who differ from that family. Francisco described his family as open and welcoming to his wife, whose family had a more closed system. Trixie described her husband's father as closed, although other members of his family were more open. Alexander's grandparents displayed differing degrees of openness, with the more closed family systems becoming more open as time went on and Alexander's parents had their first child. Kathi's and Jane's families exhibited a range from closed to open, while Scott's and Samuel's families were more open and Maggie's family was more closed, but then opened to accept Samuel.

Some participants talked about certain family members always being open. Francisco described his wife Molly as being open, unlike her family members. Kathi contrasted her mother's openness with other family members' resistance and patterns of being closed. At first I was somewhat concerned about participants' saying they were always open (Kathi, Jane), but I read Angie Paccione's 1998 study of White activists and discovered that some people stated that they were open from the time they can remember.

Racial Identity in Context: Community, Work, Religion

These areas are addressed in the stories in the previous chapter. Each of the participants touched on one or more of these contexts, with some relating stories that held significance in their lives. Homogeneous and diversity in communities played roles

in participants' feelings of isolation or welcome. Religion seemed to play a critical role – positive, negative, or both – for most participants. Not as many participants related stories about work experiences, but Maggie and Trixie recounted stories related to affirmative action.

Intersections: Race, Class, Gender, Generation, Sexual Orientation, Historical Context

Trinh Minh-ha (1989) describes racism, sexism, and colonialism as interconnected. Even though the way people in Western culture academia structure scholarly writing tends to divide and separate interconnected ideas into dualistic categories, it is important to keep in touch with the concept that race, class, gender, generation, sexual orientation, historical context and other aspects of identity cannot be separated one from another. All are part of each person all the time, even when she or he focuses on one while seemingly ignoring the others.

CHAPTER NINE: COMPLEXITY AND RESEARCH

Social science research from positivist and post-positivist traditions emphasized finding answers, proving or disproving hypotheses, and following clear formulaic structures to be considered valid and worthwhile. Research to continue the hegemony requires compliance to certain rules.

Narrative/Counters

Narrative inquiry
subverts the rules
authority requires

overflows boxes
into margins
fertilizes
activates
enlivens
improvises
moves about
problematizes

tells the stories
past present future
pregnant with possibilities

Jam Session

The fruit of this narrative research is an open jam session with the researcher improvising with the reader. I am required to present my findings in this section, preserving the core of the stories, boiled down, sweetened, jelled, and sealed into jars. Rather than assuming a power position in which I suggest to the reader what to think, I take a reflexive approach and open windows rather than close doors as I move toward the

end/beginning. I ask the reader to consider implications of the stories, let them live alongside your own tales, and circulate the stories.

Storyteller Opalanga Pugh urged standing in the space of inquiry. Recognizing the ambiguity and complexity of life related to research compels questioning. Who makes the rules about research? Why are the rules made? Who enforces the rules? Whose voices are heard? What compromises do people have to make to get their voices heard? Whose meanings are excluded? Why are they marginalized? How can academia include cacophonous voices? Can gatekeepers in academia hear stories outside of a grand narrative? What is the value of lived experience? Who generates categories? How do categories serve hegemony? How can people subvert the use of categories without causing harm? Questioning reveals oppression and encourages transformation.

What did I as the researcher find? I found people in context, telling stories, living together, normalizing their relationships. I found people who loved across racial boundaries, who blurred the color line that is so deeply entrenched within United States American culture. I found people asking to be accepted, not “othered.” I found people whose contexts – generation, geography, appearance, abilities, experiences, orientations, religion, families – influenced their identities. I found people with individual and collective uniqueness asking for honor and respect. I found people who did not look alike but loved and lived like any family. I found people whose stories continued their family stories, people in whom the past, present, and future speaks to a time for healing, a time for harmony, a time for reconciliation.

Stories and songs of people from this study tell of coming together, facing resistance and estrangement, challenging racism, learning new music, sharing love and

daily lives, changing, and growing. This jam session is to invite participation from people in interracial families and their friends to choose their own instruments and come together to make music for a new day – a day of harmony and healing.

Color Line

W. E. B. Du Bois (1903/1989) talked about the importance of the color line and the value of lived experience related to understanding race. He said that the color line was the issue of the 20th century, and some say it is the issue of the 21st century as well (Dalmage, 2000; Root, 1996b). Many people in education and general society do their best to maintain discrete racial categories. It is time to problematize this need to categorize.

Blur, Blurry, Blurring

When I was a college senior in 1967, I applied for a government job. The interviewer asked me my views on race. I responded enthusiastically: “I think more and more people will intermarry and there will be more people of mixed race and the colors of all people will span the whole range from off-white to ebony.” I thought that transformation would happen sooner, but it seems well on the way as the color line blurs.

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (2003) provides the following definitions for blur:

Blur *vt* (1520) 1: to obscure or blemish by smearing; 2: sully; 3: to make dim, indistinct, or vague in outline or character; 4: to make cloudy or confused
Blur *n* (1519) 1: a smear or stain that obscures; 2: something vaguely or indistinctly perceived, *esp*: something moving or occurring too quickly to be clearly perceived (p. 137).

Some might say this study is about blurring the color line in the sense of smearing or sullyng it, particularly people who prefer discrete racial categories and propagate an

idea that races should be pure. My hope is that readers will see the color line as becoming indistinct or confused, with an additional aspect of changes happening so rapidly that that the color line cannot be perceived distinctly.

That does not mean I advocate a melting pot or assimilation. I think the color line can blur even as people claim and celebrate their entire heritage.

Many people identifying with historically marginalized races speak out for discrete categories for the purpose of receiving recognition and benefits from civil rights legislation (Burroughs & Spickard, 2000). If the color line is too blurred, they say, the dominant system can pretend to be colorblind and perpetuate racist ideology. Thinking about this problematizes the implications of blurring the color line (Burroughs & Spickard, 2000).

What Are All These Stories Doing in a Dissertation?

One of the ways in which narratives of multiplicity are subversive lies in their tendency to be integrative. They are narratives of connection, focused not on boundaries—on what separates peoples—but on connection, on the intertwined patterns of descent that muddy boundaries, fuzz differences, and create shared narrative spaces (Cornell, 2000, p. 50).

I carry the stories of the research participants in my heart. I carry their images – from seeing them in person and from the visual images I created when hearing their stories. I think of Cindy’s story about clerks’ placing her change on the counter rather than in her hand when a darker-skinned person hands me change; I consciously bring my hand close to honor that person. I think of Jane defending her children and all African Americans to her coworkers. I think of Alexander’s story of his parents’ marriage – some family members’ accepting their marriage immediately and others not accepting until time passed and the first child was born. I think of participants’ challenging oppression in

bold and outspoken ways and in quiet and loving ways. I think of how sometimes the color line blurs rapidly and other times it becomes a little fuzzy and gradually blurs.

“I imagine a world where race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation intersect; a world where language empowers and humans are free to become who they can be, free of prejudice, repression, and discrimination” (Denzin, 2000, p. 899).

May the language of these stories reverberate in the hearts and minds of the readers. Stories carry a dissertation to levels of meaning that may challenge readers’ expectations and encourage transformation. As you think of your own stories of connection and subversion, I hope you share your stories with others and continue blurring the color line. “The story depends upon every one of us to come into being” (Trinh, 1989, p. 119).

Whose Stories Will We Hear Next?

Suggestions for further research include studies of several members of extended interracial families, including spouses or partners, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and children. As Root’s (1998) study on biracial siblings indicated, family members may come to varied views on race and racial identity. Although I selected participants who are members of immediate families that are interracial, some participants mentioned nieces, grandchildren, cousins, grandparents, and others in their families who play important roles in their stories about race and family. I wondered what stories some of these other family members might tell. I believe that studies that include additional family members and children of various racial identities in a single extended family would contribute to understanding of race, racial identity, and family relationships.

A topic that came up with several participants was food – family customs, tastes in food, experiences with cooking and eating. Several used food as a metaphor for diversity. Some talked of adjusting to different types of food from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Another potential research area is studying interracial families around food or another specific area, such as clothing, music, dance, family customs, and cultural activities. This study could be ethnographic, narrative, or a combination.

Narratives of people from different geographic locations, religions, economic and educational backgrounds, generations, and racial identities will contribute to stories of identity. Each study in a particular location and studies that comprise people from many locations contribute to making meaning. I encourage studies on people over 30, people who have not attended college, and people in communities not influenced by a large university presence. I also encourage collaborative studies of people from interracial families who are in academia.

In addition, I encourage more studies that employ broader and deeper use of visual images along with narratives; studies that encourage the interaction of participants with one another; and studies that include greater collaboration of participants and researcher. I encourage studies that problematize traditional ways of looking at research.

CODA

As I was writing, an eclectic CD played in the background. I wasn't paying much attention until I heard the lyrics: "Love can build a bridge between your heart and mine; love can build a bridge – don't you think it's time? Don't you think it's time?" (Overstreet, 1995, track 5).

I thought of the title of Maria P. P. Root's (2001) book on interracial marriage: *Love's Revolution*. Her conclusion, after hundreds of hours of interviews with participants in interracial marriages and other family members, was that love was the primary motivation in people getting together across racial lines. For me, love was the driving force in adopting children across racial lines.

Our oldest son was just a baby when I ran across a Smokey Robinson (1970) record called *Season of Miracles* with a large photograph of the Miracles and their families on the front, with people of many skin colors. I bought it and took it home. When I played it, one song in particular enthralled me:

A child is waiting for you somewhere
A child is waiting with love to share

Each of the participants in this study shared their love with family members – parents, grandparents, spouses, partners, children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews – through partnership, marriage, birth, adoption, and informal familial ties across racial lines. Some encountered family resistance; some of their family members stopped speaking to them; some enjoyed acceptance and support from family.

Their stories tell how people who love each other blur the color line even in the face of racism.

Ending/Not Ending the Story

“A story is *not* just a story. Once told, the story is bound to circulate; humanized, it may have a temporary end, but its effects linger and its end is never truly an end” [italics in original] (Trinh, 1989, p. 133).

The last poetic representation is a composite from voices of participants. This ends the dissertation and continues the circulation of stories in past, present, and future.

Multi/Vocal

We started talking
We got together
We started a family

That’s my grandma
I knew I was somewhere in-between

What a beautiful baby
Is he adopted?
She’s with me

My kids know who they are
You can be whoever you want
Black and White together
We are family

Those kinds of stories

REFERENCES

- Adermann, C. Y. (2000). A narrative approach to biracial identity development. (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1990). *Dissertation Abstracts International* 61 (2188), 04B.
- Alcoff, L. M. (2000). What should White people do? In U. Narayan & S. Harding (Eds.), *Decentering the center: Philosophy for a multicultural, postcolonial, and feminist world* (pp. 262-282). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Allen, P. G. (2003). *Pocahontas: Medicine woman, spy, entrepreneur, diplomat*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco.
- American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Anderson, D. C. (1971). *Children of special value: Interracial adoption in America*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1990). La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a new consciousness. In Gloria Anzaldúa (Ed.) *Making face, making soul: Haciendo Caras: Creative and critical perspectives by feminists of color*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute.
- Apgar, S. C. (1996). Writing (for) our lives: (Auto)biography as contestatory practice. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1996.). *Dissertation Abstracts International* 57 (2463), 06A.
- Arrien, A. (1993). *The four-fold way: Walking the path of the warrior, teacher, healer and visionary*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Bachrach, S. D. (1994). *Tell them we remember: The story of the Holocaust*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Banks, J. A. (2003). Forward. In M. P. P. Root & M. Kelley (Eds.), *Multiracial children resource book: Living complex identities*, pp. x-xiii. Seattle, WA: Mavin Foundation.
- Bartholet, E. (1995). Race separation in the family: More on the transracial adoption debate. *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy* (2), 1. (Full text retrieved 4/18/2002).

- Beyer, C. (2004). The politics of perception. *Mavin: The Mixed Race Experience*, 8, pp. 61-63.
- Bochner, A. P., & Ellis, C. (Eds.) (1996). Talking over ethnography. In C. Ellis & A. P. Bochner (Eds.), *Ethnographic Alternatives Book Series: Vol. 1. Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, Inc.
- Brown v. Board of Educ., 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Brown, L. H. (1998). "I can't segment my heart": A phenomenological investigation of biracial identity construction. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 59 (1346), 04A. (UMI No.9829177)
- Buck, P. D. (2004). Constructing race, creating White privilege. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study* (6th ed.), pp. 31-37. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Burroughs, J. W., & Spickard, P. (2000). Ethnicity, multiplicity, and narrative. In P. Spickard & J. W. Burroughs (Eds.) *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*, pp. 244-253. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- Buxton, A. P. (1994). *The other side of the closet: The coming-out crisis for straight spouses and families* (rev. ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Chafe, W. (2004). Sex and race: The analogy of social control. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study* (6th ed.), pp. 546-559. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Chideya, F. (1999). *The color of our future: Race for the 21st century*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Christian, M. (2000). *Multiracial identity: An international perspective*. New York: St. Martin's Press, LLC.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Collins, P. H. (2000a). Comment on Hekman's "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited": Where's the power? In C. Allen & J. A. Howard (Eds.), *Provoking feminisms*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Collins, P. H. (2000b). It's all in the family: Intersections of gender, race, and nation. In U. Narayan & S. Harding (Eds.), *Decentering the center: Philosophy for a multicultural, postcolonial, and feminist world* (pp.156-176). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Collins, P. H. (2002a). Defining Black feminist thought. In D. T. Goldberg & P. Essed (Eds.), *Race critical theories: Text and context* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Collins, P. H. (2002b). Reflections on "Defining Black feminist thought" (P. H. Collins). In D. T. Goldberg & P. Essed (Eds.), *Race critical theories: Text and context* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Cornell, S. (2000). That's the story of our life. In P. Spickard & J. W. Burroughs (Eds.) *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*, pp. 41-53. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- Cross, W. E., Jr. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American Identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Dalmage, H. M. (2002). *Tripping on the color line: Black-White multiracial families in a racially divided world*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Daniel, G. R. (1992). Passers and pluralists: Subverting the racial divide. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially mixed people in America*, pp. 91-107. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Daniel, G. R. (2002). *More than Black? Multiracial identity and the new racial order*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Davis, F. J. (1991). *Who is Black? One nation's definition*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher* 33(5), 26-31.
- Delgado, R. (1995). (Ed.) *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Delgado, R. (1998). The Black/White binary: How does it work? In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), *The Latino/a condition: A critical reader* (pp. 369-375). New York: New York University Press.
- Delgado, R. (1998b). Storytelling for oppositionists and others. In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), *The Latino/a condition: A critical reader* (pp. 259-270). New York: New York University Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1998). Racial depiction in America: Law and culture. In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), *The Latino/a condition: A critical reader* (pp. 209-214). New York: New York University Press.
- Deloria, V., Jr. (1988). *Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. (Originally published 1969).

- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1989). *The souls of Black folk*. New York: Penguin. (Original work published 1903.)
- Eakin, P. J. (1999). Autobiography and the value structures of ordinary experience: Marianne Gullestad's *Everyday Life Philosophers*. In R. Josselson and A. Lieblich (Eds.), *Making Meaning of Narratives, Vol. 6*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Eastman, P. D. (1988). *Are you my mother?* New York: Random House.
- Ellis, C. (1995). Final negotiations: A story of love, loss, and chronic illness. In S. Ruzek & I. K. Zola (Eds.) *Health, Society, and Policy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), pp. 733-768. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Emmison, M., & Smith, P. (2000). Researching the visual: Images, objects, contexts and interactions in social and cultural inquiry. *Introducing qualitative methods*. (D. Silverman (Series Ed.)). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Erikson, J. M. (1997). *The life cycle completed* (extended version). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1998). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Ferdman, B. M., & Gallegos, P. I. (2001). Racial identity development: Further analysis and elaboration. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson, III (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology*, pp. 32-66. New York: New York University Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Funderburg, L. (1994). *Black, White, other: Biracial Americans talk about race and identity*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Galvin, K. M., Bylund, C. L., & Brommel, B. J. (2004). *Family communication: Cohesion and change* (6th Ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Garrett, J. T., & Garrett, M. (1996). *Medicine of the Cherokee: The way of right relationship*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Company Publishing.
- Gibson, D. B. (1989). Introduction. In W. E. B. Du Bois, *The souls of Black folk* (pp. vii-xxxv). New York: Penguin Books. Original work (without introduction) published 1903.

- Gong, L. (2004). Mixed blood Native Americans. *Mavin: The Mixed Race Experience*, 8, pp. 24-27.
- Gordon, A. I. (1964). *Intermarriage: Interfaith, interracial, interethnic*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hardiman, R. (2001). Reflections on White identity development theory. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson, III (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology*, pp. 108-128. New York: New York University Press.
- Hartsock, N. C. M. (2000). Comment on Hekman's "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited": Truth or justice? In C. Allen & J. A. Howard (Eds.), *Provoking feminisms*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hatcher, C. L. (1988). The interracial maternal experience. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 50 (1646), 04B. (UMI No. 8913842).
- Hekman, S. (2000). Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited. In C. Allen & J. A. Howard (Eds.), *Provoking feminisms*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Henry, N. (2001). *Pearl's secret: A Black man's search for his White family*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hodes, M. (1999). Introduction: Interconnecting and diverging narratives. In M. Hodes (Ed.), *Sex, love, race: Crossing boundaries in North American history* (pp. 1-9). New York: New York University Press.
- hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (2000). *Where we stand: Class matters*. New York: Routledge.
- Horse, P. G. (2001). Reflections on American Indian identity. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson, III (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology*, pp. 91-107. New York: New York University Press.
- Jackson, B. W., III. (2001). Black identity development. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson, III (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology*, pp. 8-31. New York: New York University Press.
- Jaheil, E. (1999). Movie review. *The boy with green hair* (1948). Retrieved December 16, 2002 from http://www.prairienet.org/ejahiel/boy_with_green_hair.htm

- Janesick, V. J. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design: Minuet, improvisation, and crystallization. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), pp. 733-768. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Jay, M. (2003). Critical race theory, multicultural education, and the hidden curriculum of hegemony. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 5(4), 3-9.
- Jenkins, P. (2003). *A history of the United States* (2nd ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Johnson, V. M. (2000). Black immigrants in the United States. In P. Spickard & J. W. Burroughs (Eds.) *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*, pp. 57-69. Philadelphia: Temple University
- Josselson, R. (1996). *Revising herself: The story of women's identity from college to midlife*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Josselson, R., & Lieblich, A. (Eds.) (1999). *Making meaning of narratives*. The Narrative Study of Lives, Volume 6. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kaesler, G., & Gillespie, P. (1997). *Of many colors: Portraits of multiracial families*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Karis, T. A. (2000). Racial identity construction of White women in heterosexual Black-White interracial relationships. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 61 (1179), 03A. (UMI No. 9966236).
- Kennedy, R. (2002). *Nigger: The strange career of a troublesome word*. New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc.
- Kennedy, R. (2003). *Interracial intimacies: Sex, marriage, identity, and adoption*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kim, J. (2001). Asian American identity development theory. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson, III (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology*, pp. 67-90. New York: New York University Press.
- Klein, D. M., & White, J. M. (1996). Family theories: An introduction. In *Understanding Families* series, B. N. Adams & D. M. Klein (Eds). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Korgen, K. O. (1998). *From Black to biracial: Transforming racial identity among Americans*. Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), pp. 257-278. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2004a, October). Landing on the wrong note: The price we paid for Brown. *Educational Researcher* 33(7), pp. 3-13).
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2004b). New directions in multicultural education: Complexities, boundaries, and critical race theory. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.), pp. 50-65. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- LaDuke, W. (1999). *All our relations: Native struggles for land and life*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Lamanna, M. A., & Riedmann, A. (2003). *Marriage and families: Making choices in a diverse society*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Lawton, J. E. (1997). Reconceptualizing a horizontal career line: A study of seven experienced urban English teachers approaching career end. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 58 (3880), 10A. (UMI No.9813296).
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, N. K. (2000). The seventh moment: Out of the past. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), pp. 257-278. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Loewen, J. W. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. New York: Touchstone (Simon and Schuster).
- Loving v. Virginia, 388 U.S. 1 (1967).
- Mac an Ghaill, M. (1999). Contemporary racisms and ethnicities: Social and cultural transformations. A. Warde (Series Ed.), *Sociology and social change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McBride, J. (1996). *The color of water: A Black man's tribute to his White mother*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Matterly, D. (2003). *Strom Thurmond's family confirms paternity claim*. CNN.com. Retrieved October 26, 2004, from <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/12/15/thurmond..paternity>
- McIntosh, P. (2004). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study* (6th ed.), pp. 188-192. New York: Worth Publishers.

- Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.). (2003). Springfield, MS: Merriam-Webster, Inc.
- Moore, M., Glynn, K., & Czarnecki, J. (Producers), & Moore, M. (Director). (2004). *Fahrenheit 9/11* [Motion picture]. United States: Lions Gate Films.
- Nash, G. B. (1999). The hidden history of Mestizo America. In M. Hodes (Ed.), *Sex, love, race: Crossing boundaries in North American history* (pp. 10-32). New York: New York University Press.
- Nick, S. (2004, October 7). State's system to track students frustrates dad. *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, pp. 1-3. Fort Collins, Colorado.
- Narayan, U., & Harding, S. (2000). Introduction. In U. Narayan & S. Harding (Eds.), *Decentering the center: Philosophy for a multicultural, postcolonial, and feminist world* (pp. vii-xvi). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- O'Donoghue, M. (2000). White mothers of biracial, Black-White adolescents: Negotiating the boundaries of racial identity, culture, and ethnicity. Doctoral dissertation, New York University, 2000.) *Dissertation Abstracts International* 61 (2921), 07A.
- Obama, B. (1995, 2004). *Dreams from my father: A story of race and inheritance*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2004). Racial formations. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study* (6th ed.). New York: Worth Publishers.
- Ortega, M. (Summer 2001). "New mestizas," "'world'-travelers,' and "Dasein": Phenomenology and the multi-voice, multi-cultural self. *Hypatia*(16), 3.
- Overstreet, P. (1995). Love can build a bridge. [Recorded by the Judds]. *Saving grace* [CD]. New York: PolyGram Records, Inc. (1998).
- Paccione, A. V. (1998). Multicultural perspective transformation: a study of commitment to diversity. Dissertation. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University.
- Parker, L., & Lynn, M. (2002). What's race got to do with it? Critical race theory's conflicts with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology. *Qualitative inquiry* 8(1), 7-22.
- Pascoe, P. (1999). Miscegenation law, court cases, and ideologies of "race." In M. Hodes (Ed.), *Sex, love, race: Crossing boundaries in North American history* (pp. 464-490). New York: New York University Press.

- Pierce, L. (2000). The continuing significance of race. In P. Spickard & J. W. Burroughs (Eds.), *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*, pp. 221-228. Philadelphia: Temple University
- Pinderhughes, R. B. (1997). The experience of racial identity development for transracial adoptees. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 59 (1785), 05A. (UMI No. 9832078).
- Pink, S. (2001). *Doing visual ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pinkney, S. L. (2000). *Shades of Black: A celebration of our children*. New York: Scholastic, Inc. (Photographs by Myles C. Pinkney).
- Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).
- Pragatwutisarn, C. (2002). Place, writing, and identity: The construction of in-between world subjects. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 63 (4316), 12A. Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York.
- Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Robinson, S. (1970). A child is waiting. [Recorded by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles]. On *Season for Miracles* [record]. Detroit, MI: Motown.
- Roediger, D. R. (1999). *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class* (rev. ed.). London: Versa.
- Romano, R. C. (1996). Crossing the line: Black-White interracial marriage in the United States, 1945-1990. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 57 (2180), 05A. (UMI No.).
- Rogers, A. G., Casey, M. E., Ekert, J. J., Hillard, J., Nuhkala, C., & Shainberg, N. (1999). An interpretive poetics languages of the unsayable. In R. Josselson and A. Lieblich (Eds.) *Making Meaning of Narratives*, Vol. 6, pp. 77-106. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Root, M. P. P. (1992). Within, between, and beyond race. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially mixed people in America*, pp. 3-11. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Root, M. P. P. (1996a). A bill of rights for racially mixed people. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *The multiracial experience: Racial borders as the new frontier*, pp. 3-14. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Root, M. P. P. (1996b). The multiracial experience: Racial borders as a significant frontier in race relations. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *The multiracial experience: Racial borders as the new frontier*, pp. xiii-xxviii. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Root, M. P. P. (1998). Experiences and processes affecting racial identity development: Preliminary results from the biracial sibling project. *Cultural diversity and Mental Health* (4), 237-247.
- Root, M. P. P. (1999). The biracial baby boom: Understanding ecological constructions of racial identity in the 21st century. In R. H. Sheets & E. R. Hollins (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity in school practices: Aspects of human development*, 67-89.
- Root, M. P. P. (2000). Rethinking racial identity development. In P. Spickard & J. W. Burroughs (Eds.), *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*, pp. 205-221. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- Root, M. P. P. (2001). *Love's revolution: Interracial marriage*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Root, M. P. P. (2003). Racial identity development and persons of mixed race heritage. In M. P. P. Root & M. Kelley (Eds.), *Multiracial children resource book: Living complex identities*, pp. 34-42. Seattle, WA: Mavin Foundation.
- Root, M. P. P. (2004). Multiracial families and children: Implications for educational research and practice. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.), pp. 110-126. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Root, M. P. P., & Kelley, M. (Eds.). (2003). Introduction. *Multiracial children resource book: Living complex identities*, pp. xiv-xvi. Seattle, WA: Mavin Foundation.
- Rosenwald, G., & Ochberg, R. (Eds.). (1992). *Storied lives*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scales-Trent, J. (1995). *Notes of a White Black woman*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Seabaugh, P. (2000). So you were told you were Black Irish or Black Dutch. In *Pitter's Cherokee Trails*. Retrieved November 11, 2004 from <http://www.rosecity.net/cherokee/blackdutch.html>
- Simon, R. J. & Altstein, H. (1987). *Transracial adoptees and their families: A study of identity and commitment*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Simon, R. J. & Altstein, H. (2000). *Adoption across borders: Serving the children in transracial and intercountry adoptions*. Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

- Simon, R. J. & Altstein, H. (2002). *Adoption, race & identity: From infancy to young adulthood*. (2nd ed.) New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Simon, R. J. & Roorda, R. M. (2000). *In their own voices: Transracial adoptees tell their stories*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Spencer, J. M. (1997). *The new colored people: The mixed-race movement in America*. New York: New York University Press.
- Spickard, P. R. (1989). *Mixed blood: Intermarriage and ethnic identity in twentieth-century America*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Spickard, P., & Burroughs, W. J. (2000). We are a people. In P. Spickard & J. W. Burroughs (Eds.), *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*, pp. 205-221. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Stanton, Y. T. (1999). Parent racial socialization messages and their impact on racial identity development and psychosocial development in biracial individuals of African-American and Anglo-American heritages. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 60 (0662), 03A. (UMI No. 9921199)
- Stone-Mediatore, S. (2000). Chandra Mohanty and the revaluing of "experience." In U. Narayan & S. Harding (Eds.), *Decentering the center: Philosophy for a multicultural, postcolonial, and feminist world* (pp. 110-127). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Sturm, C. (2002). *Blood politics: Race, culture, and identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Takaki, R. (1993). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Tashiro, C. J. (1998). Standing on both feet: History and the construction of identity for older mixed race Americans. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 60 (1345), 04A. (UMI No. 9925199).
- Tatum B. D. (2003). *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" and other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group.
- Tillmann-Healy, L. M. (2003). Friendship as method. *Qualitative Inquiry* 9, 729-749.
- Tjheritage.org. (n.d.). *Primer on Jefferson DNA*. Retrieved November 10, 2004 from <http://www.tjheritage.org/documents/DNA.pdf>
- Trinh, T. M. (1989). *Woman, native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Tucker, M. B., & Mitchell-Kernan, C. (1990). New trends in black American interracial marriage: The social structural context. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52(1), 209-218.
- Tunesh, T. P. (2001). *The myth of the Black Irish: Spanish syntagonism and prethetical salvation*. Retrieved November 11, 2004 from <http://www.darkfiber.com/blackirish/>
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2001a). *Married couple family groups, by presence of own children under 18, and age, earnings, education, and race and Hispanic origin/2 of both spouses*. Retrieved November 7, 2004 from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-1.pdf>
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2001b). *Overview of race and Hispanic origin: 2000*. Retrieved November 7, 2004 from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-1.pdf>
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2001c). *Profiles of general demographic characteristics: 2000*. Retrieved October 13, 2004 from <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/dp1/2kh00.pdf>
- Vagas, R. J. (1991). The psychological and social functioning of latency age Black/White biracial girls from intact interracial families. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 52 (5571), 10B. (UMI No. 9209758).
- Verdadero, C. (2004). Prominent personalities in the multiracial community. *Mavin: The Mixed Race Experience*, 8, pp. 50-55.
- Walker, R. (2001). *Black White and Jewish: Autobiography of a shifting self*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Walton, D. (1973). *What color are you?* Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc.
- Waters, M. C. (2000). Multiple ethnicities and identity in the United States. In P. Spickard & J. W. Burroughs (Eds.), *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*, pp. 23-40. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J. H., & Jackson, D. D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies, and paradoxes*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J., & Fisch, R. (1974). *Change: Principles of problem formation and problem resolution*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Williamson, J. (1980). *New people: Miscegenation and mulattoes in the United States*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press.
- Woolston, H. C. (Lyricist). *Jesus loves the little children*, n.d. Retrieved November 20, 2003, from <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/hym/j/e/jesloves.htm>.

- Wright, M. A. (1998). *I'm chocolate, you're vanilla: Raising healthy Black and biracial children in a race-conscious world: A guide for parents and teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wright, R. (2004). The ethics of living Jim Crow: An autobiographical sketch. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study* (6th ed.), pp. 22-30. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Zinn, H. (2003). *A people's history of the United States: 1492 – present*. New York: Perennial Classics.

Appendix A: Guiding Interview Questions

Because of the nature of narrative inquiry, the interview questions may vary slightly according to the context and the stories participants tell. Interview questions (listed below) are designed to evoke narrative and serve to guide the interviews. The focus of the first interview will be on family questions, with questions about the broader community being asked primarily in subsequent interviews.

1. Tell the story of how you became part of an interracial family.
2. Tell me about your earliest or most significant memories of becoming aware of race.
3. How would you describe your race [racial identity]?
4. How would you describe the race of others in your family?
5. Tell me the story of your life as part of an interracial family.
6. Tell me how others have responded to you as part of an interracial family.
7. Tell me about significant events that occurred with other family members related to race.
8. Think about how other people in your family have influenced you in your thinking about race. Tell me about who has influenced you and how.
9. How do people in your family of different races get along with one another?
10. What stories does your family tell regarding race?
11. [Now we will talk about influences outside your family.] Describe your community [where you grew up; where you live now].
12. Talk about your religious affiliation[s], if any. [What influence has this had on your views of race and racial identity?]
13. Tell me about your work [career]. What experiences relating to race or being in an interracial family have you had in your work?
14. Think about your [your child's] experiences in [elementary, middle, high] school [or college]. Describe experiences related to race and racial identity. In your view, how were those experiences related to your [your child's] being part of an interracial family [if they were]? (The phrasing of the question is relative to experiences the person has already related.)
15. Think about other people – coworkers, friends, school teachers, members of your religious group. Share stories about how these others outside your family have influenced your thinking about race.
16. [If this has not been addressed through earlier stories] tell me about your generation – when you were born, any influential events related to race that happened in the larger community [nation, region, city] while you were growing up or as a young adult.

17. How has your thinking about race [and racial identity] changed over the years (if it has)? Describe any critical incidents.

Interviews after the first interview will include follow-up questions to probe more deeply into the stories participants told. For example, a question might be: "You told about _____. Could you elaborate on this?" or "Could you tell an additional related story?" Another example might be: "You said that _____ family member was cautious about accepting your interracial family at first. How did that change? What do you remember as being an important part of that change?" The researcher will go over each interview transcript to determine where to probe deeper in subsequent interviews.

At the completion of the interview sessions, the researcher will provide participants an opportunity to give direct messages to people interested in understanding the issues faced by interracial families by asking the following question:

What would you like teachers, counselors, school administrators, and your community to know about multiracial families?

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

**Are you a member of an
interracial family?**

Let's talk!

NEEDED

I need people who meet the following criteria:

- You would like to share your stories about race and family.
- You are part of an interracial family. This means you are a mother, father, husband, wife, partner, son, daughter, brother, or sister in a family with people of different races.
- You can be of any race or racial mix.
- You can participate sometime between January and April 2004.

It is okay for more than one person from your family to participate.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY

This is a research project to explore how people in interracial families come to understand race and racial identity.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Please contact Sandy Tracy if you want to know more or you want to volunteer. Phone: (970) 493-1445 or 491-5296

Email: Sandy.Tracy@ColoState.edu

Thank you!

Questions about this research project may be addressed to James H. Banning, Ph.D.
970-491-7153. (HRC 03-344)

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter to People Known To Researcher (for snowball)

Dear _____,

{opening sentence referring to how I know the person} I have been back in school for about 3 years at Colorado State University, working for a doctorate in Education and Human Resource Studies. I finished all my courses and my comprehensive exams, and now I am ready to start doing my research.

I am studying how people think about race and racial identity. I will ask for stories from people who are in interracial families to see how that relates to how they think about race and racial identity.

No researcher is without bias. In the kind of research I do (narrative inquiry), the researchers tell where they are coming from. I recognize that I participate with the people in my research. Like my participants, I am a part of the study, too. I will be using my experience of being part of an interracial family when I interview people and when I write up the stories.

I am writing to you as a member of an interracial family in case you may be interested in participating in my research or you know someone else who might be interested. You do not have to do it. It is okay if you want to participate and it is okay if you do not want to participate. If you think you want to participate and we start doing an interview and you change your mind, that is okay, too. It is your choice.

If you want to participate, this is what we would do. I would interview you two to four times. You could stop at any time you felt like it. It would be better if the interviews were in person, so we would need to arrange meetings.

We would decide on a time and place that worked for you and me both. I need to be finished before April 2004. If it was okay with you, I would tape the interviews with an audio tape recorder and a camcorder. This would make it easier for me to write down what you said and what I said. With the camcorder tape, I could see people's expressions and gestures. After I type up the interviews, I would send you the transcript so that you could read it if you wanted. I will also take photographs (if that is okay with you) and send you the photographs for you to keep. I will not use any identifying photographs in the write-up.

Think about whether you would like to participate in my research. If you want to, sign the informed consent form and send it back to me in the envelope provided. If you have a friend who might be interested, please give that person the enclosed flyer. Then he or she can contact me and ask any questions.

Sandy Tracy, M.A.
Doctoral student researcher

James H. Banning, Ph.D.
Advisor and Principal Investigator

Appendix D: Cover Letter to Research Volunteers

Dear Research Volunteer,

I am a student at Colorado State University, working for a doctorate in Education and Human Resource Studies. My advisor is James H. Banning, Ph.D., professor at Colorado State University.

I am doing a research study on how people think about race and racial identity. I will do interviews and ask for stories about race and racial identity from people in interracial families.

No researcher is without bias. In the kind of research I do (narrative inquiry), the researchers tell where they are coming from. I recognize that I participate with the people in my research. Like my participants, I am a part of the study, too. I will be using my experience of being part of an interracial family when I interview people and when I write up the stories. I am Caucasian with a Chickamauga great-grandmother. I have three grown children who are biracial (Black-White) and transracially adopted, four stepchildren (White with a Native American ancestor, most likely Mesquakie), and ten grandchildren who are various combinations of African American, Caucasian, American Indian, Sudanese, and Laotian.

If you want to participate, this is what we would do. I would interview you two to four times. You could stop at any time you felt like it. It would be best if the interviews were in person. We would meet at a place where you felt comfortable, maybe your home or office. We would decide on a time and place that worked for you and me both. I need to be finished before April. If it was okay with you, I would tape the interviews with an audio tape recorder and a camcorder. This would make it easier for me to write down what you said and what I said. With the camcorder tape, I could see people's expressions and gestures. After I type up the interviews, I would send you the transcript so that you could read it if you wanted. I will invite you to talk to me about the transcript after you read it.

If it is okay with you, I will take photographs of you. I especially want to take photographs of people's hands. I will not use any identifying photographs in my write-up. I will give you copies of any photographs I take of you. I will invite you to show me objects such as photographs or documents that are important to you in relation to race and your family.

It is okay if other people in your family want to participate. It is okay for children in your family to participate. If more than one person from your family participates, I will check with you that the information I have from you is okay to include. If you decide that you do not want me to include something that you said, you could tell me and I would take that part out.

To protect your confidentiality, I will not use your real name. I will check with you on any information that could identify you. We could decide together how to disguise such information.

Think about whether you would like to participate in my research. If you want to, sign the informed consent form and send it back to me in the envelope provided. You can reach me at 970-493-1445 or Sandy.Tracy@ColoState.edu. James H. Banning is my advisor and the principal investigator. You can reach her at 970-491-7153 or middleton@colostate.edu.

Sandy Tracy, M.A.
Doctoral student researcher

James H. Banning, Ph.D.
Advisor and Principal Investigator

Appendix E: Informed Consent

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Blurring the Color Line: Racial Identity of Individuals in Interracial Families (HRC 03-344)

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: James H. Banning, Ph.D.

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Sandy Nesbit Tracy, M. A.

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: James H. Banning, Ph.D. 970-491-7153

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: This study uses research to explore how people in interracial families think about race and racial identity.

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED: I will interview you two or three or four times. Each interview will last about 1 hour to 1 ½ hours. In the interviews, I will ask you to tell stories. It will be best if the interviews are in person. You can stop at any time you feel like it.

We will decide on a time and place that works for you and me both. We might meet at your home or where you work or in my office. We would finish the interviews before April 2004. If it is okay with you, I will tape the interviews with an audio tape recorder and a camcorder. This will make it easier for me to write down what you said and what I said. With the camcorder tape, I can see people's expressions and gestures. After I type up the interviews, I will send you the transcript so that you can read it if you want to. I may take photographs with your permission and if so, I will give copies to you.

I will invite you to show me special objects, such as books, photographs, documents, art, or toys, that are important to you when you think of race and family. I will look at these objects and take notes about them. I may photograph them with your permission so that I can look at the photographs when I am analyzing the data.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

There are no known risks.

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

BENEFITS: There is no direct benefit for participating, but we hope you may come to understand racial identity better for you as a member of an interracial family. You may come to understand your family better around ideas of race. Others might come to understand race and interracial families better.

CONFIDENTIALITY: I will not use your real name in what I write. You can help me decide how to disguise any information that could identify you. You will get a chance to read the transcripts of your interviews. If you think someone could tell who you are from what you said, you can tell me. I will not use that part in what I write unless you tell me you want me to use it. If other people in your family participate in the research, it is possible that they might recognize your stories. I will remind you of this when you are telling your stories.

Page 1 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

LIABILITY: The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about participants' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Initial below to indicate your agreement to be taped or photographed.

I agree that my interviews may be audiotape. _____

I agree that my interviews may be videotaped. _____

I agree that I may be photographed. I understand that no identifying photographs will be used in the write-up. I understand that I will receive photographs of me taken by the researcher. _____

I prefer that my interview be with _____, who is (are) part of my family. I understand that information I share during the interview with my family member(s) will be shared with my family member(s) who also participate in the interview.

Obtain your parent's permission ONLY if you are under 18 years of age.

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian you authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to you by Sandy Tracy and you are satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Minor's date of birth

Parent/Guardian name (printed)

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Page 2 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

Appendix F: Cover Letter to Family Members

Dear _____,

As you know, I have been back in school for about 3 years at Colorado State University, working for a doctorate in Education and Human Resource Studies. I finished all my courses and my comprehensive exams, and now I am ready to do my research.

I am studying how people think about race and racial identity. I will ask for stories from people who are in interracial families to see how that relates to how they think about race.

No researcher is without bias. In the kind of research I do (narrative inquiry), the researchers tell where they are coming from. I recognize that no one can be completely objective. I understand that I participate with the people in my research. Like my participants, I am a part of the study, too. I will be using my experience of being part of an interracial family when I interview people and when I write up the stories.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that my own interracial family members need to have a chance to talk about their stories about race and identity **if** they want. It would not be fair for me to tell stories only from my point of view without asking other family members the stories they would like to tell. One family member has already asked to participate.

So this is your chance – if you want to take it – to participate in my research. You do not have to do it. It is okay if you want to participate and it is okay if you do not want to participate. If you think you want to participate and we start doing an interview and you change your mind, that is okay, too. It is your choice.

If you want to participate, this is what we would do. I would interview you two to four times. You could stop at any time you felt like it. It would be better if the interviews were in person, so we would need to figure out how I would visit you or you would visit me. The main advantage to you is a chance to share your stories with me in person.

We would decide on a time and place that worked for you and me both. I need to be finished before April 2004. If it was okay with you, I would tape the interviews with an audiotape recorder and a camcorder. This would make it easier for me to write down what you said and what I said. With the camcorder tape, I could see people's expressions and gestures. After I type up the interviews, I would send you the transcript so that you could read it if you wanted. I will also take photographs if that is okay with you and send you the photographs for you to keep. I will not use any identifying photographs in the write-up. Also, you may have some special objects (books, toys, papers, art) with meaning about race and family. I will ask you if you have special objects that you want to show me. I may take photographs of those objects if that is okay with you and write about those special objects.

Because other people in the family might participate, I would be sure to check with you that the information I have from you is okay to include. If you decided that you did not want me to include something that you said, you could tell me and I would take that part out.

Think about whether you would like to participate in my research. If you want to, sign the informed consent form and send it back to me in the envelope provided.

Sandy Tracy, M.A.
Doctoral student researcher

James H. Banning, Ph.D.
Advisor and Principal Investigator

Appendix G: Informed Consent: Family

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT FOR FAMILY MEMBERS
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: **Blurring the Color Line: Racial Identity of Individuals in Interracial Families (HRC 03-344)**

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **James H. Banning, Ph.D.**

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: **Sandy Nesbit Tracy, M. A.**

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: **James H. Banning, Ph.D. 970-491-7153**

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: **This study uses research to explore how people in interracial families think about race.**

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED: **I will interview you two to four times. Each interview will last about 1 hour to 1 ½ hours. In the interviews, I will ask you to tell stories. It will be best if the interviews are in person. You can stop at any time you feel like it.**

We will decide on a time and place that works for you and me both. I would travel to your town or you would travel to my town so that we could do the interviews in person. We might meet at your home or in my office or my home. Since we live far away from each other, I might call you later to check the meaning of something you said if I am not clear when I review the tapes and transcripts.

I will invite you to show me special objects, such as books, photographs, documents, art, or toys, that are important to you when you think of race and family. I will look at these objects and take notes about them. I may photograph them with your permission so that I can look at the photographs when I am analyzing the data.

We would finish the interviews before April 2004. If it is okay with you, I will tape the interviews with an audiotape recorder and a camcorder. This will make it easier for me to write down what you said and what I said. With the camcorder tape, I can see people's expressions and gestures. After I type the interviews, I will send you the transcript for you to keep if you want it. I may take photographs with your permission and if so, I will give copies to you.

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES: **There are no known risks.**

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

BENEFITS: **There is no direct benefit for participating, but we hope you may come to understand racial identity better for you as a member of an interracial family. You may come to understand our family better around ideas of race. Others might come to understand race and interracial families better.**

Page 1 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

CONFIDENTIALITY: I will not use your real name in what I write unless you ask me to. You can help me decide how to disguise any information that could identify you. If you think someone could tell who you are from what you say, you can tell me not to use that part in what I write. If other people in our family decide to take part in this research, it is possible that other family members might recognize you from what you say. We will work together to decide what you do and do not want included.

LIABILITY: The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about participants' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

I want you to know that it is okay if you want to participate and it is okay if you do not want to participate. It is all right either way. You do not have to participate in this study.

If you think you want to participate in this study and then you change your mind, that is all right, too. Even if we are in the middle of an interview and you decide to stop, that is okay.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Witness to signature (project staff)

Date

Initial below to indicate your agreement to be taped or photographed.

I agree that my interviews may be audiotaped. _____

I agree that my interviews may be videotaped. _____

I agree that I may be photographed. I understand that no identifying photographs will be used in the write-up. I understand that I will receive photographs taken by the researcher. _____

I prefer that my interview be with _____, who is (are) part of my family. I understand that information I share during the interview with my family member(s) will be shared with my family member(s) who also participate in the interview. _____

Page 2 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

Appendix H: Options for Further Processing

TITLE OF PROJECT: **Blurring the Color Line: Racial Identity of Individuals in Interracial Families** (HRC 03-344)

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **James H. Banning, Ph.D.**

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: **Sandy Nesbit Tracy, M. A.**

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: **James H. Banning, Ph.D. 491-7153**

If you would like to process emotional issues that come up around the stories you have shared during this research, you have several options:

- You may contact your local counseling service.
- If you were recruited through a flyer at a student advocacy office or a church, you may talk to professional staff at the advocacy office or church.
- If you are a CSU student, you may seek counseling from the University Counseling Office in C36 Clark Building. There is no charge for currently enrolled students. Call (970) 491-6053.
- You may seek counseling from the Center for Family and Couple Therapy housed in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies in the Gifford Building at Colorado State University. Counseling is provided by graduate students of the CSU Marriage and Family Therapy Program under the supervision of licensed family therapists. Charges for community residents for an individual or family session begin at \$20 per session on a sliding-fee scale. CSU students are charged \$15 per session. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (970) 491-5991.
- You could participate in practicum lab by students in the counseling and career development master's degree program in the School of Education for no charge for 6 sessions during the spring semester (January to May 2004), when this research is expected to take place. This is open to students and community residents. Students are under the supervision of licensed counselors. Call Sharon Anderson ([970] 491-6861) or Laurie Carlson ([970] 491-6826) in the School of Education.
- I can give you the name of a therapist in private practice who will charge at the current market rates.

Appendix I: Resources for Participants

Blurring the Color Line: Racial Identity in Individuals in Interracial Families

Thank you for participating in my doctoral research. If you think of something else you would like to say, call me at 970-493-1445 or email me at Sandy.Tracy@ColoState.edu.

In some places, interracial families or mixed-race people may feel alone. Listed below are some web sites and books and magazines especially for people in interracial families. You might find some of them helpful.

Web sites and magazines (link to many more)

Interrace: For interracial individuals and families.

<http://members.aol.com/intrace/index.html>

Mavin: This organization for multiracial people and people who were transracially adopted (adopted across racial lines) publishes a magazine for young adults.

www.mavin.net

The Multiracial Activist: Focus on civil rights <http://www.multiracial.com>

Books

About interracial families

Alperson, M. (2001). *Dim sum, bagels, and grits: A sourcebook for multicultural families*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. **This book lists many resources, including Web sites, books, magazines, toys, and games, including resources for adoptive families.**

Dalmage, H. M. (2002). *Tripping on the color line: Black-White multiracial families in a racially divided world*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. **Heather Dalmage, a sociology professor, is part of interracial family. She interviews people in Black-White interracial families.**

Kaesler, G., & Gillespie, P. (1997). *Of many colors: Portraits of multiracial families*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. **This book is based on a photo exhibit and includes photos and brief descriptions of many different multiracial families.**

Root, M. P. P. (2001). *Love's revolution: Interracial marriage*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Rush, S. E. (2000). *Loving across the color line: A White adoptive mothers learns about race*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Simon, R. J. & Roorda, R. M. (2000). *In their own voices: Transracial adoptees tell their stories*. New York: Columbia University Press.

About mixed-race people

Funderburg, L. (1994). *Black, White, other: Biracial Americans talk about race and identity*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. **Lise Funderburg interviewed 65 biracial adults, whose stories you can read in this book.**

Gaskins, P. F. (1999). *What are you? Voices of mixed-race young people*. New York:

McBride, J. (1997). *The color of water*. New York: Riverhead Books. **James McBride tells the story of his White Jewish mother and her twelve biracial (Black-White) children.**

Root, M. P. P., & Kelly, M. (Eds.) (2003). *Multiracial child resource book: Living complex identities*. Seattle, WA: Mavin Foundation. **This book includes many resources – Web sites, books, magazines, and more – for multiracial children and families, including families participating in transracial adoption.**

Walker, R. (2001). *Black White and Jewish: Autobiography of a shifting self*. New York: Riverhead Books. **Rebecca Leventhal Walker, daughter of noted feminist and author Alice Walker and Jewish lawyer Mel Leventhal, tells the story of her life.**

About race

Tatum B. D. (2003). *“Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?” and other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group.

Wright, M. A. (1998). *I’m chocolate, you’re vanilla: Raising healthy Black and biracial children in a race-conscious world: A guide for parents and teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

For young children

Adoff, A. (2004). *Black is brown is tan*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. **Newly illustrated version of 1973 story poem of a multiracial family.**

Davol, M. W. (1993). *Black, White, just right!* Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company. **Story about a biracial girl with a White father and Black mother.**

Appendix J: Sandy Nesbit Tracy Brief Curriculum Vita

EDUCATION

**Doctor of Philosophy candidate in Education and Human Resource Studies,
Interdisciplinary Specialization, Multicultural Concentration**

May 2005. Dissertation defended December 7, 2004.

Dissertation Topic: *Blurring the Color Line: Racial Identity Construction
of Individuals in Interracial Families*, a narrative inquiry.

Certificate in Women's Studies, May 6, 2004.

Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

Master of Arts, Communication (Journalism)

Stanford University, CA. June 1995.

Theological Study, 48 credit hours in a Master of Divinity program.

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, IA. December 1968.

Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy and Religion, Minor in Psychology.

Tarkio College, MO. Cum Laude, April 1967.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Supervised College Teacher. Colorado State University. Spring 2003. Supervisor: Val Middleton, Ph.D. ED551: Multicultural and Special Populations. Students primarily were in master's in education or master's in counseling programs.

Job Corps Instructor. Lockyear Business College [now defunct] extension program at Denison Job Corps Center, Denison, IA. 1989.

Evaluator. Larimer County Palliative Care Initiative (LCPC), funded by a grant from The Colorado Trust. August 2001-December 2003. Part of two-member evaluation team.

Editor, Family and Youth Institute Briefs. Family and Youth Institute, Dean's Office, College of Applied Human Sciences, Colorado State University. 1999-2001.

Client Advocate. Iowa Protection and Advocacy Services, Inc., Des Moines, IA. Mental Illness Advocacy Project; funded by a grant from IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers Trust Account). 1990-1991.

Technology Education Fellow and Webmaster. Colorado Front Range GK-12, funded by National Science Foundation GK-12. Colorado State University. June 2001-August 2004.

Contact information

Sandy.Tracy@Stanfordalumni.org