

Crossing racial lines: geographies of mixed-race partnering and multiraciality in the United States

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Abstract:

This review highlights geographical perspectives on mixed-race partnering and multiraciality in the United States, explicitly calling for increased analysis at the scale of the mixed-race household. We begin with a discussion of mixed-race rhetoric and then sketch contemporary trends in mixed-race partnering and multiraciality in the US. We also weave in considerations of the public and the private and the genealogical and social constructions of race. Our challenge to current thought adds to the landscape of scholarship concerned with race and space. Thus, through thinking about mixed race in some new ways we offer sites for intervention in this evolving literature.

Key words: mixed-race partnering, multiraciality, mixed-race household, race, scale.

Introduction

“How does newness come into the world? How is it born? Of what fusions, translations, conjoinings is it made? How does it survive, extreme and dangerous as it is? What compromises, what deals, what betrayals of its secret nature must it make to stave off the wrecking crew, the exterminating angel, the guillotine?” (Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, 1988: 8).

We begin this essay by appending Rushdie’s well-known rhetorical questions with the additional query: “where?” Where does newness enter the world? Where is it born and by what processes? Where does it survive and flourish and where is it challenged? Reworking Rushdie’s questions in these ways enables us to conceptualize newness as it relates to scholarship concerned with race and space. We use this frame to survey the literature and direct attention to new research questions on mixed-race partnering and multiraciality. Previous studies tend to either emphasize the scale of the body (corporeal dimensions of mixed-race identity) or the structural forces (such as residential or workplace organization) that contribute to mixed-race partnering. Few

investigators question what happens once people create a mixed-race household or how a shift in scale might uncover different racial geographies. In other words, few people ask where mixed-race partners live, how these residential decisions are made, how place affects the identities of multiracial children, or what racial identities emerge in mixed-race households.

Of course, spatial analysis of mixed-race partnering, multiraciality, and households is not entirely new (e.g., Peach, 1980; Wong, 1999). Still, the racialized household remains under-examined. In speaking to this absence, this essay culminates with the argument that the household is a key geographical scale that links bodies to broader geographic contexts, especially neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are homes to not only mixed-race households but also multiracial people. Scholars often assume, however, that bodies and households are monoracialized. We stress in this paper that both households and bodies can be plural, mixing up commonplace notions of segregation, integration, and diversity. Thus part of this paper is a call to researchers to re-evaluate and re-imagine linguistic, physical, and theoretical conceptions of singularly “black,” “white,” or “Asian” bodies, households, and parts of town.

We begin our essay with a discussion of racial discourse, wherein our language choices correlate with scale, and then review the contemporary literature on multiscalar trends in mixed-race partnering and multiraciality in the US. We acknowledge that these geographies derive from a complicated history of racial mixing in the US where the black-white color line commands center stage (e.g., Sollors, 2000; Tyner and Houston, 2000). Throughout history mutually reinforcing systems of patriarchy, race, and class often drove whites to maintain their social, political, and economic advantage by vilifying

any person who transgressed this color line. This powerful and complex national history inflects contemporary geographies. Its full exploration, however, lies beyond the scope of this review.

Our accent on current racial mixing means that we consider mixed-race options in addition to the black-white union. By redirecting attention in this way, we hope to deflate the hierarchical structure that privileges whites as the main group with whom mixing occurs; this in turn renders deepened understandings of whiteness itself. Analyses at the national and regional scales open the section on contemporary trends. We then move on to multiracial identities, embodied in literal and metaphorical corporeal cartographies, and close by arguing for greater attention to the mixed-race household.

The inspiration for our review derives from several key political and social moments. Early twentieth century shifts in immigrant origin countries and the 1967 US Supreme Court decision in *Loving v. Virginia* dramatically changed race relations in the United States. Starting in the 1950s, the balance of immigration to the US from non-European countries relative to European countries and Canada has progressively tipped in favor of immigrants from Mexico, Central and South America, and Asia (Rumbaut, 1996). New immigration laws in the mid-1960s also paved the way for significant increases in the number of immigrants entering the US. Around the same time, *Loving v. Virginia* struck down remaining anti-miscegenation laws, thus lifting the political and legal prohibitions placed upon mixed-race partnering. Consequently, in the last few decades, the increasingly diverse US population has had new legal freedoms for crossing racial lines. As a result, the rate of mixed-race partnering has risen consistently for

almost all groups (e.g., Eschbach, 1995; Nash, 1995; Root, 2001; US Bureau of Census, 1998).

Changes in immigration laws and the legalization of mixed-race partnering inspired *Time Magazine* to print a special issue in 1993 called “The New Face of America.” This edition signaled a new popular awareness of mixed race based on a computerized trope of the Melting Pot (see Chavez, 2001: 63-4). It also carried with it a set of apprehensions about US racial futures. The cover of the issue featured a computer-generated image of a “multiethnic” woman’s face that *Time* called “the New Eve.” The face represented the blending of elements from six different racial and ethnic groups: Anglo-Saxon, Middle Eastern, African, Asian, Southern European, and Hispanic. The editors commented: “[L]ittle did we know what we had wrought. As onlookers watched the image of our new Eve begin to appear on the computer screen, several staff members promptly fell in love. Said one: ‘It really breaks my heart that she doesn't exist.’ We sympathize with our lovelorn colleagues, but even technology has its limits. This is a love that must forever remain unrequited” (*Time*, 1993: 2). On the one hand, then, the special issue celebrated multiraciality by claiming that the country was becoming multiracial, that multiracial people were among us, and that the melting pot was simmering. On the other, the image on the cover showcased not only the woman’s multiraciality but also her sex, and was cast(e) as exotic, impossible to achieve, and therefore all the more desirable. Moreover, the essays that followed anxiously forecasted the eventual minoritization of “whites,” highlighted the need to reinforce “American” moralities, and eroticized otherness. *Time* publicly attempted to celebrate assimilation

and calm fears about difference, and yet its articles also reflected persistent private ambivalences about multiraciality and racially inflected societal change.

The writers in *Time* also contributed to other considerations of race, particularly in the field of race classification. In 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) revised its famous twenty-year old Directive 15 (which established monoracial categories for data collection) granting the option of multiple race responses for the 2000 Census and other Federal forms (see Perlmann, 1997; Spencer, 1999). The United States has always tinkered with race classifications in the Census, but this recent revision went further by allowing individuals for the first time to claim more than one race. Although debates over demographic enumeration, civil rights, racial projections, and multiracial identity predated and motivated this policy shift, the OMB's re-writing ushered in new opportunities for political action, legal battles, and scholarly inquiry (e.g., Anderson and Fienberg, 1999; Allen and Turner, 2001; Ellis, 2001; Goldberg, 1997).

The debate over race classification resonates in both public and private ways. In the US, race functions predominantly as a socially constructed category imbued with power (cf. Tyner, 2002) that, in turn, hierarchically and very publicly organizes differently racialized groups¹. The social distinction of whiteness, for example, carries with it a public and private position of power and privilege. For people without this racial identity, whiteness represents social, political, economic, and *spatial* advantage (Allen, 1997; 1994; Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Hartigan, 2000; Lipsitz, 1998; Roediger, 1991; Warren and Twine, 1997). Whiteness functions, then, as invisible and normative. In contrast, non-white identities are subject to public scrutiny, monitoring, and disciplining. This axis of power reproduces race, at the national scale, in “the service

of economic and social privilege;” it *also* indicates that, “at a personal level, race is very much in the eye of the beholder” (Root, 1992: 4). As the “process of racial labeling starts with geography, culture, and family ties and runs through economics and politics to biology” (Spickard, 1992: 16), everyone’s racialized identity has an individual (private) genealogy too. We can look to our ancestors, assess their racial backgrounds, and then, according to a conception of blood, establish our personal racial identities.

Race as social construct and race as genealogy apply and matter at a multitude of scales. This essay foregrounds the household because previous research either skips this scale or fails to situate mixed-race households in space. The household as monoracial incubates the idea of singular races and identities. The mixed-race household challenges all this because public and private discourses of mixed race come together here. Such unions, after all, are where newness can enter the world.

I “In Race Matters, Words Matter Too:”² The Language of Mixed Race

Inasmuch as visual imagery, such as *Time*’s cover, communicates racialized thoughts and perceptions, language is the main medium through which we express and convey racial identities and stereotypes (Chavez, 2001: 35). Language shapes (mixed) racial formation (Omi and Winant, 1994) through affording common idioms and facilitating discussion. It is fraught, though, with multiple meanings and situation-dependent (mis)understandings. Wu (2002: 22), for example, describes a personal moment when the word “jap” moved from being a derogatory term for the Japanese to stand for the insult “Jewish American Princess.” He notes that in different times and places words take on different derogatory connotations. Such variation both produces

barriers to effective sharing of racial research and knowledge and illustrates the contextuality of rhetoric.

Historically, amalgamation commonly described racial or ethnic sexual mixing in the US and Europe. By the 1830s, amalgamation became a pejorative term to describe black-white sexual and social relations in the US (Harris, 1999: 191). In 1864, miscegenation supplanted amalgamation in common discourse through a political hoax aimed to undermine President Lincoln's re-election bid. In late 1863 a pamphlet, entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro*, appeared on newsstands. The anonymous authors (later revealed to be David Croly along with George Wakeman, Copperhead [zealous, pro-slavery Democrats] journalists from the New York *World*) coined miscegenation from the Latin *miscere* -- to mix -- and *genus* -- race. Among a litany of ideas, the authors stated that Lincoln, evident in his emancipation proclamation, only passively supported amalgamation and failed to see the economic, biological, and moral imperative of "miscegenation." Croly and Wakeman argued that if the human race were to survive, racial mixing had to happen, as "the miscegenetic or mixed races are much superior, mentally, physically, and morally, to those pure or unmixed" (Croly, 1863: 8-9). This critique came at a pivotal moment as the Civil War raged and Lincoln worried about his prospects for re-election.

The miscegenation debate splashed into national politics on February 17th, 1864 when Samuel Cox, the leading Lincoln opponent, attacked the Republican Party, accusing them of now "supporting" "miscegenation." From February through to the election newspapers of all political persuasions ran editorials, articles, and debates about miscegenation. Despite the heated dialogue, Lincoln won re-election and the word

miscegenation found a place in our lexicon (Saks, 2000; Kaplan, 2000; Bloch, 1958).

The miscegenation ruse reveals the power present in the mixing of politics, sex, language, and race.

Miscegenation is fading from usage and intermarriage, the umbrella term for racial mixing, has become convention.³ Some scholars employ the terms exogamy and endogamy or in-group and out-group relations instead of intermarriage (Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn and Flap, 2001; Jasso et al., 2000). Other recent literature spools out references to mixed parentage, mixed heritage, interracial, mulatto/a, mestiza/o, metis/se, creole, colored, mixed racial descent, mixed origins, dual heritage, dual parentage, biracial, multiracial, multiethnic, half-caste, half-breed, hybrid, mongrel, and so on. We settle on terms that mark and correspond to several scales of racial mixing. At the scale of the partnership, we prefer the term “mixed-race,” rather than any of the above choices, because it includes those who are married, people in co-habiting relationships, and same-sex couples. Moreover, mixed race centers attention on the process of racialization. Specifically, it “presumes differently racialized parentage” (Ifekwunigwe, 2001: 46), or as Tyner and Houston (2000: 390) phrase it “multiracialized sexual relations.” At the scale of the body, we invoke “multiracial” when describing the children of mixed-race partnerships. These offspring literally embody blended strands of differently racialized parentage and experience different, contextually dependent, types of racialization. Mixed-race partnerships and multiracial children live in an assortment of arrangements within mixed-race households. The expression “household” expands on “partnership” and provides increased latitude in understanding residential choice, identity formation, and assimilation.

Mixed race is the preferred language of scholars and researchers in Britain, used to describe both the children of mixed-race partners and the couples themselves. Critics claim that this usage refers exclusively to black-white mixed people. Mahtani and Moreno (2001) argue, for instance, that this definition of mixed race precludes the term from being inclusive or accurate. They suggest that such a definition marks all British mixed peoples' identities as white-black. Thus, they call for either a recasting of the term mixed race (particularly within Britain) or a switch to the more inclusive term of multiethnic. In the Canadian context, Mahtani (2001a: 173) uses the term multiethnic, rather than multiracial, because the socially constructed nature of race can "obscure, and sometimes even prevent, promising epistemological and pedagogical analyses of racialized experiences." Recently, though, Mahtani moved from using multiethnic to "mixed race" in her work on identity because she is "more concerned with informants' own participation in the ongoing process of the constitution of subjectivity within the rigid restraints of racialized hierarchy" (Mahtani 2001b: 304) as "the way they [informants] saw themselves was a very important part of their social identity" (Mahtani 2002: 440). Clearly Mahtani is not entirely settled in her language choices, perhaps because of the changing contexts of her work.

Some social scientists remain suspicious (rightly in our view) about granting too much credence to ethnicity. Koshy (2001), for example, warns against the displacement of race vocabularies with a renewed focus on ethnicity. Similarly, Tizard and Phoenix (2002: 4) note that people who share an ethnic background, that is related histories, languages, cultures, and religions, might not have the same skin color. Omi and Winant (1994: 23) add that, "the majority of Americans cannot tell the difference between

members of these various [ethnic] groups. They are racially identified...” They further state, “we utilize race to provide clues about *who* a person is” (1994: 59, italics in the original). Stereotypes and other forms of social subordination often stem from skin color not ethnic background. Thus, we, like others, prefer the term race to ethnicity (Tizard and Phoenix, 2002; Anderson, 2002).

No expression, including “mixed race,” is free from possible pejorative interpretation. We acknowledge that the term might suggest the existence of discrete racial categories. We also know that “mixed” carries in some quarters a politics of demonization and punishment. We stand up to this history and intentionally recast this phrase because, for us, “mixed” explicitly acknowledges prior racialization. The term “mixed race” may fix an inherently mobile concept but it allows us to linguistically depict a union of two differently racialized individuals.

II “It ain’t where you’re from, it’s where you’re at:”⁴ Contemporary Mixed-Race Geographies

We divide the main part of our literature review by scale. Much of the work coming from demography and population geography on mixed-race partnering and multiraciality privileges broad regional or national patterns. Feminist and post-structural research on multiraciality provides more nuanced readings of racialized identity construction. This work, however, tends to concentrate on the body, often leaving invisible the mixed-race household. Thus, we highlight questions emerging from the mapping of mixed-race households onto neighborhood geographies. In so doing, we anticipate that we will be able to “scale up” the insights of research on the body through

the household while at the same time “scaling down” the gaze of spatial demography and population geography to view neighborhood and household racial geographies in new ways. This hopefully will provide a fertile ground for fruitful engagement with geographies of mixed race.

1. Coarse-scale mixed-race projects:⁵ the region and the nation

Generation, gender, place of birth, and nativity bear on regional and national patterns of mixing. Few extensive in-depth regional studies, however, have been conducted since T. Monahan’s (1977; 1976; 1971; 1970) explorations of mixed-race marriage. Given the changes in the number and proportions of mixed-race partnerships in the last twenty-five years, the time is ripe for a renewed research effort. To provide some context, the US witnessed a decline in mixed-race partnering in the few years immediately following the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* decision, driven primarily by Black Nationalism and national scale identity politics related to the Civil Rights movement (Roberts, 1994: 57). Since that initial decrease, mixed-race marriage (not counting Hispanics as a “race”), as a percentage of all marriages in the United States, has increased. For example, between 1960 and 1992 mixed-race marriages grew from about 0.4 percent to 2.2 percent of all marriages⁶ (US Bureau of the Census, 1998). If we count Hispanics as a racialized minority then almost five percent of all marriages crossed racial lines in 2000. Not surprisingly, between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of non-Hispanic whites that out married tripled. Blacks recorded a similar rate of change: 2.2 percent to 5.8 percent. For those identifying themselves as Hispanic, out marriage rose from 13 percent of all marriages to 19 percent. In 1990, almost 60 percent of all American Indians out

partnered; they, along with Hawaiians (52.4 percent), were the racial group most likely to out marry. Only the Asian rate of out marriage declined in this decade, shifting down noticeably from 25 percent to 15 percent of all marriages (Lee and Fernandez, 1998: 328).

The 1970 US Census showed that 35 percent of married American Indian women partnered with white men and 2.3 percent partnered with black men. American Indian men chose white wives 33.4 percent of the time; 1.3 percent of them married black women (Roberts, 1994: 63). Breaking down the Native population into tribes, the US Bureau of the Census (1995) observed that Cherokee, Chippewa, Navajo, and Choctaw tribes out married with people from other tribes with the greatest frequency whereas Sioux rarely partnered with non-Sioux people. American Indians in small tribal groups tended to form mixed-race households with whites in greater numbers, primarily because of the pool of available partners (Wong, 1999: 35). Of the 84,000 or so recorded marriages for American Indians in the Southwest in 1990, for example, only 16 percent were with a non-Native partner. In contrast, 82 percent of the 39,442 unions in the Midwest were with a non-Native partner (Eschbach, 1995: 95). The progeny of such racial crossings command a significant presence, as multiracial individuals claiming both white and American Indian ancestry in the 2000 Census are the largest group of biracial persons in the US (Allen and Turner, 2001).

The majority of out marriages involving Asians occurs between native- and foreign-born Asian women (of different ethnicities) and white men (Goldstein, 1999: 401). This trend largely depends on location as Asian women disproportionately reside in large metropolitan areas, places where highly educated white men also tend to be

overrepresented (Lee and Fernandez, 1998). Using 1990 Census data Qian (1999: 588) found that mixed-race partnering rates between Asians and whites had a direct correlation with educational attainment. White men who completed college were 3.5 times more likely to marry an Asian woman than those who had less than a high school diploma. Surprisingly, these better-educated men were 34 percent more likely to be less educated than their Asian wives. These high rates for college-educated white males may be associated with interactions that take place in academic settings, residential neighborhoods, and work places, but as far as we know, these hypotheses remain understudied. College-educated white women were 3.7 times more likely to marry Asian men than their high-school educated counterparts. These Asian men were 89 percent more likely to be better educated than their wives (Qian, 1999: 588). Most Asian-origin Americans reside in metropolitan areas, but, since the geography of Asian mixed partnering remains largely unknown, future research might also compare patterns between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan regions.

Asian is a broad, problematic category. Lee and Fernandez (1998) divided “Asian” by nativity and found that trends in three Asian subgroups drove the decline between 1980 and 1990 in racially mixed Asian marriages. Out marriages among Koreans declined from 32 percent to 6.5 percent and rates for Vietnamese and Filipinos declined 20 and 10 percent respectively. These shifts may stem from changes in the proportion of foreign-born (who are less likely to out marry than native-born) and the fact that more Asian immigrants are arriving already married. The trends may also be related to the development of a pan-Asian identity in the US. In the 1980s, while rates of Asian-

other marriages declined, pan-Asian marriages (e.g., Korean-Chinese) increased from about 11 percent to 21 percent (Lee and Fernandez, 1998: 328-9).

Of all mixed households in the US in 1990, white and non-white Hispanic ones accounted for just over 25 percent (Wong, 1999: 34). White-non-white Hispanic households were among the three most common in all states but seven (Wong, 1999: 39). Regionally, 13.4 percent of all Hispanics living in the Northeast, 13.6 percent in the Midwest, 32.9 percent in the South, and 40.1 percent in the West out married (Suro, 1999: 58). The rates of out marriage for Hispanics increase with education: those with high-school education out married about 5 percent of the time whereas those with a college degree out married 35 percent of the time (Suro, 1999: 58). Fu (2001: 156) found that the white husbands of Mexican American women were 13 percent more likely to have a college degree than white men who married white women. White women were 34 percent more likely to be better educated than their Hispanic partner but college degrees made white women 53 percent less likely to marry Hispanics (Qian, 1999: 588).

Nationally, between 1970 and the mid-1990s the number of black-white marriages grew considerably (Nash, 1995: 959). About 1 percent of black men married white women in 1970 and 0.7 percent of black women married white men. These rates varied regionally with the West having the highest rate, recording 4.5 percent of black men married to white women and 1.6 percent of black women married to white men. Similarly, in the 1990s, African Americans were four times more likely to marry whites if they lived in the West compared to the South. The magnitude of difference was lower in the Northeast and Midwest, but African Americans were also more likely to out marry whites there than in the South (Qian, 1999: 589) where the legacy of race relations

inhibits mixed-race partnering (or might encourage the outmigration of mixed-race partners!). Other questions deriving from this sort of regional analysis should include more attention to scale (within and between regions) and analyses of intergroup contact/partnering that does not include whites and their associated social status.

The 1990 Census reported that 17.6 percent of all black unions occurred with whites. Black men married white women more often than black women married white men. This unequal rate of out marriage between black men and women contributed to what Crowder and Tolnay (2000) called a “marriage squeeze” for black women, meaning that the most eligible and desirable men out married leaving black women with few partner options (see also Spickard, 1989). Education factored into this. College-educated African American men were 34 percent more likely to marry a white woman than black men with only a high-school education. They were also 34 percent more likely to be better educated than their wives (Qian, 1999: 580). African American women were also more likely to out partner after college but the numbers remain small. College degrees made white women 42 percent less likely to partner with African Americans (Qian, 1999: 588). Black/white relationships between members of socio-economic groups with relatively equal income and educational levels are not usually as controversial as those between individuals with differing economic and educational status (Cready and Saenz, 1997; Johnson and Warren, 1994; Roberts, 1994).

Shifting scales and adding nativity, Model and Fisher (2001: 177-181) compared 1990 rates of partnering for blacks from the British West Indies and whites and African Americans and whites for both sexes in the United States. They divided West Indian blacks into four categories, according to time of arrival and native and foreign birth, to

underscore the influence of generation and immigration status. Model and Fisher found that native-born British West Indians were more likely than African Americans to out partner. Nearly twelve percent of native-born British West Indian men and 8.6 percent of the women had white partners. These numbers were significantly higher than the 3.9 percent for African American men and 1.1 percent for African American women. Foreign-born British West Indians who arrived as adults had the lowest rates of out partnering with whites and foreign-born people who arrived as children had the highest among all foreign-born British West Indians.

Recently, Model and Fisher (2002: 728) expanded upon this research to compare mixed-race partnering between native-born whites and blacks in England and the US. Blacks were divided into three categories in this study: black Caribbeans, “other” blacks, and, in the US, African Americans. Model and Fisher found that, with or without controls and irrespective of ethnicity, British blacks were more likely to have a native-born white partner than US blacks. These results could indicate a more hospitable environment for mixed-race partnering in Britain, greater levels of racial residential segregation in the US, varying rates and types of assimilation, and different national conceptions of who is black or white (2002: 746-748).

In the United Kingdom, rates of intermarriage between first and second-generation blacks and native-born whites are at least double those found in the US. Tizard and Phoenix (2002: 22) report that 24 percent of “black” (where “black” was taken as first and second generation immigrants from West Indies or Africa) males and 18 percent of “black” females were married to or living with a white partner. They found even higher rates among West Indian populations under age thirty. Twenty-seven

percent of men and 28 percent of women had a white partner. Part of the difference between Britain and the US undoubtedly results from dissimilar opportunities for finding a partner from the same group; the smaller black population of Britain decreases the odds that a member of this community will find a black partner. Other factors could include immigration and settlement policies and the particular cultures of racism in the two countries.

Immigration shapes the regional geographies of mixed-race partnerships in the US (Liu, 2000; Wong, 1998; 1999). Today, racially mixed marriages are more than twice as likely in California -- the major immigration state -- than in the nation as a whole. In this state, the number of children born to parents whose racial identities differ ranks third to those born to all-Hispanic and all-white couples, and therefore outnumber those born to couples who are all-Asian or all-black (Tafoya, 2000). Over 75 percent of these mixed-race couples include a non-Hispanic white parent, and most of these non-Hispanic white mixed unions are with Hispanics.⁷ Also in the West, Qian (1999: 588) found for a sample of young married people that foreign-born white immigrants were more likely to out marry than native-born whites. In particular, white men who arrived in the US over 15 years ago as children were 136 percent more likely to marry blacks, 70 percent more likely to partner with Hispanics, and 43 percent more likely to have relations with Asian Americans than native-born whites. Conversely, Suro (1999: 60) observed that both native-born Hispanics and Asians were more likely than their foreign-born counterparts to participate in mixed-race partnering.

2. Fine-scale multiracial projects: the body

Gary Nash (1995) claimed that three-quarters of all African Americans are multiracial, that virtually all Filipino Americans, American Indians, and Hispanics have mixed heritages, and that millions of whites have multiethnic/multiracial backgrounds; yet, less than 3 percent of the US population chose to identify as multiracial on the 2000 Census. Brewer and Suchan's (2001: 82) cartography of people claiming at least two races as a percent of total population by county revealed primary concentrations of self-identified multiracial people in central and eastern Oklahoma, Hawaii, and Alaska, and secondary concentrations in the west and Puerto Rico. The small proportion indicates a collection of personal life stories and political choices about racial identity (shaped by national narratives), rather than a count of multiracial bodies. In other words, most census respondents do not rely on their genealogy to declare their race on the census. Their decisions instead emerge from a world where racism and racialization frame life choices and social constructions of race.

The power of being named and naming oneself and other "micro experiential levels" of multiraciality (Williams-León and Nakashima, 2001: 58) motivate much of the literature on the multiracial body. Multiracial people blur conceptions of separate and distinct racial categories and multiraciality assails assumptions that identities are located and fixed within a singular racial designation. Multiracial bodies are complex and malleable, encompassing many "axes of difference" (not just race or gender) (Pratt, 1998). An intellectual focus on the multiracial body draws out particular facets of racialization, but the scholars engaged in this type of work typically do not consider how space might affect these identities.

Mahtani (2001a; 2001b) is one exception. She offered a new paradigm for spatializing multiracial identities in an effort to depart from research that relies on singular and compartmentalized identity theories. She focused on the multiple spaces and places that women occupy as they negotiate gender, ethnic, racial, and class identities. She engaged with “the situated practices through which many ‘mixed race’ women...not only contest, but also produce, their own racialized and gendered locations, challenging racialized readings of their bodies” (Mahtani, 2002: 425). Conceiving of identity in this way captured the contradictions that inform the experiential realities of mixed-race women, particularly as “context and location play a key role in the ways...[people] are perceived racially” (Mahtani, 2001b: 300). Her application of the theory of mobile paradoxical spaces, drawn from Rose (1993) and Probyn (1996), opened up possibilities for self identified multiracial women to locate themselves in several subject positions simultaneously, thereby granting a subversive aspect to multiracial bodies (see Ifekwunigwe, 2001; Brah, 1996).

In other research that empirically connects with such ideas, Twine (1996) explored the multiracial identities of “brown skinned white girls.” She linked racial identities with gender, class, location, and sexuality to examine the creation of white identities for a group of young multiracial women of African and Asian or European descent. She argued that middle-class contexts contributed to the construction of white identities. As these girls matured and left their racially homogeneous (white) neighborhood (a location that Twine chose not to problematize [Pratt, 1997]) for a multiracial place, Berkeley, California, they almost all shifted to a decidedly singular, black subjectivity. Few claimed a multiracial, or even a multidimensional, heritage.

Asking similar questions, Tizard and Phoenix (2002) examined teenage multiracial identities in London. In one of the few studies of multiracial childhood identity, they investigated how young people living with their parents identified, what kinds of racist interactions they experienced, and what perceptions of mixed-race families surfaced. Specifically, Tizard and Phoenix (2002) asked if interviewees identified as black, whether they felt positive or negative about their parentage, if racialized identities were central to their life, and to what extent they felt an affinity for black culture and black and white people. Some respondents viewed themselves as a bridge between cultures and recognized the positive nature of such an identity (30 percent felt actively engaged in both black and white communities). Others wished that they were a different color, particularly during childhood, but as they aged, a majority noted that they liked their unique color and few desired a difference. Those who chose a black rather than a mixed identity often did so because of their experiences with racism and also because there were more historical figures with whom to identify.

Studying multiraciality in one city allowed Tizard and Phoenix (2002) to examine the impact that living in London's suburbs and central city had on children's identity formation. Middle-class and working-class young adults experienced being mixed race in different ways based on degrees of residential segregation. Youth living in racially integrated neighborhoods, for instance, professed a positive multiracial identity. Those living in hyper-segregated areas, on the other hand, were much more likely to presume a monoracial (and often minority) racial identity. In related research, Harris and Sim (2002) also studied the contexts within which three groups of multiracial children (black-white, white-Asian, and American Indian-white) claimed a singular or plural multiracial

identity. Instead of a central city-suburb dichotomy, they focused on the home/school contexts. They found that about two-thirds of children with multiracial ancestry chose that identity consistently but that significant differences in identity expression occurred between home and school. They also found that these articulations varied considerably by group, with white/American Indian child identity being more unstable and subject to contextual influences than white/black and white/Asian.

Other recent additions to the literature often ignore space and context. Xie and Goyette (1997), for example, investigated whether biracial Asian children racially identified with their Asian or non-Asian parent. Using the 5 percent Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS) from the 1990 Census, the authors tested identity choices arising from child's characteristics, parents' characteristics, time of arrival, and the racial composition of the residential neighborhood. They discovered that first- and third- generation children were more likely to identify as Asian than second-generation children and that education affected choices as well. Without including Latino as a race, multiracial children of mixed Asian and white descent accounted for nearly half of the one million multiracial children identified in the 1990 Census (Williams-León and Nakashima, 2001: 6). In related research using the same Census, Waters (2000: 31) determined that 27 percent of the children of black-white couples were given a white racial identity. Not only does such designation speak to the power and influence of a dominant racial paradigm, but Waters also commented that, "no single rule governs [the] choices" of a child's racial identity. This might be the case, but Twine (1996) and Harris and Sim (2002), for example, provide sufficient evidence on context and multiracial identity to suggest that geography most likely matters.

3. In between: the mixed-race household

Mixed-race partnerships confound conceptions of social (in)equality between groups through reconfigurations of status and privilege. Accordingly, people outside of mixed-race unions may feel threatened by these associations (Johnson and Warren, 1994; Root, 2001). Such fears customarily stem from anxiety about sexual relations between different races (e.g., Tyner 2002), from sexual stereotypes linked with racial groups (e.g., “once you go black, you can never go back”), and from implied, real, and perceived challenges to existing notions of white privilege. Given this, mixed-race couples must make decisions about family life that take into account public responses while also upholding their own personal and private needs, desires, and values. In particular, mixed-race household residential decision-making takes on new importance as the scale of the household makes explicit the implicit spatiality of the metaphor of crossing boundaries (Delaney, 2002). Critical race theories center attention on the body and personal experiences of race, as does most of the mixed-race literature, with the result that the mixed-race household and its links to neighborhood-scaled geographies remains understudied and undertheorized.

Scholars approach questions about neighborhoods through various avenues. Urban social ecology, for instance, frequently relies on monoracial characterizations of neighborhoods, but we ask how bodies are organized by living arrangement. In related work, Wu and Sui (2001) examined the multiscale heterogeneity of neighborhood segregation via GIS. They argued that existing indices are limited by their single scale deployment. In another neighborhood context, Allen and Turner (1996) found that

mixed-race couples in Los Angeles were more likely to live in neighborhoods outside of either group's geographical concentration than in them. Similarly, White and Sassler (2000) measured neighborhood attainment with a particular emphasis on mixed-race partnering using 1990 data. They found for some Latino and black native born and immigrant groups that marriage to white spouses had a significant effect on neighborhood location, net of income or education. In an effort to direct attention away from whiteness as a normative standard, Wright et al. (2002) tested how partnering out (i.e., to someone of a different race or nativity) affected neighborhood location. They discovered that residence outside of ethnic enclaves (measured at the tract scale, spatial units of about 4,000 residents) correlates strongly with households comprised of a partnership made up of different nativities and racialized groups. Thinking about the geographical placement of bodies in households makes more meaningful mixing at the scale of the neighborhood.

Mixed-race household residential location in neighborhoods reflects a combination of choices and constraints. Constraints include financing, the activity of real estate agents, and neighborhood milieu. On the choice side, mixed-race households, much like everybody else, view neighborhoods as sites for creating and enacting their identities. As such, household choice of neighborhood combines an array of factors that include racial identity, class, sex, family status, and education (cf. Hanson and Pratt, 1995; Merton, 2000). Therefore, high-income mixed-race households may be more likely than low-income households to live in white dominated areas. Mixed-race households and their progeny, no matter their class, erode the construct of discrete and hierarchically organized racial categories, forcing us to question discrete and hierarchically arranged *spatial* categories such as neighborhoods. At the very least,

depictions of neighborhoods as monochrome, such as those found in many spatial assimilation narratives, render mixed-race households and multiracial people invisible.

Our goal is thus to place the mixed-race household in view. Diana Fuss (1991: 4) reminds us that to be “out” in gay idiom is paradoxically also to be “in”, visible, and present. Gillian Rose (1993: 155) spatialized this idea and called for paradoxical geographies that allow for the prospect of a new kind of space where difference is not limiting. For us, then, including a consideration of the mixed-race household in segregation measures leads to new perspective on neighborhood social process. For example, the very commonly used index of dissimilarity is calculated from a count of bodies, usually by census tracts. We ask: How should we index segregation if the majority of people in a neighborhood live in a mixed-race household? What kinds of racial identities emerge in such places? These questions provide important mechanisms for understanding neighborhood segregation, identity construction, and racial hierarchies. All this leads to the conclusion that we need to better understand the process of mixed-race household residential choice, the effects of these decisions on the identity of multiracial children, *and* the roles that these sorts of crossings play in remaking urban racial geographies.

IV “Ingenious Hybrids and Strange Global Grafts:”⁸ Conclusions

Critical studies of mixed-race partnerships and reflections on multiraciality participate in a broader progressive agenda, one that roots out racialization processes and scratches away at veneers of difference among groups (Sibley, 1995). From this standpoint, a re-reading of *Time* magazine’s “New Face” issue unearths a deep irony. It

turns out that the face is, after all, not as “exotic” as *Time* purports. Using current Census Bureau standards and simply categorizing the proportions of this idealized female form -- “15 percent Anglo-Saxon, 17.5 percent Middle Eastern, 17.5 percent African, 7.5 percent Asian, 35 percent Southern European and 7.5 percent Hispanic” -- reveals that this multiracial body could be as much as 75 percent “white” (Goldberg, 1997: 60). Even in light of this, *The National Review* thought the image of *Time*’s “New Eve” sufficiently threatening to national (white) interests that it saw fit to reproduce *Time*’s cover in its entirety on the front of its own 21 February 1994 issue. The cover was, however, reduced in size and placed on a brick wall like a wanted poster. Fleeing off to the left was the assumed artist of the graffiti that defaced “Eve” with a black curly moustache, a pointed goatee, and the words “demystifying multiculturalism.” Leo Chavez (2001: 180) observes that the “act of vandalism by the ... youth suggests that ‘The New Face of America’ heralded by *Time* magazine is not a pleasing sight to all who encounter it.”

Apparently beauty and race still remain in the eye of the beholder. The cover of *The National Review* leaves us wondering about the exact purpose of this reinscription. Does it suggest that even the relatively white “new face of America” is a threat because it is not *completely* white and presages the “suicide” of the white race? Or maybe the cover strives to instill fear through distorting the beautiful Eve’s face into a *male* and *foreign* countenance (Chavez, 2001: 188). Or perhaps this image symbolizes that America’s new face has been defiled by recent waves of immigration. These tides bear a flotsam of multicultural politics that submerge the assimilative trope of the melting pot literally embodied in the “New Eve.” In such readings of mixing, no matter the spatial scale, race remains a nexus of power and ideology.

We cannot fully appreciate the complexities of mixed-race partnering and multiraciality without accounting for the rhetorical and socio-spatial meanings of race. Language is implicated in this process; we should develop fresh language to identify racial newness when and where it enters the world. New language stands up to the taken for granted social and spatial aspects of everyday life. Thus, part of our agenda in this essay is to deconstruct, and hopefully move away from, ingrained linguistic and theoretical habits surrounding race and space. Choosing to foreground partnering, for example, opens doors to consider couples and households and helps undo the heteronormativity of previous research.

Mixed-race partnerships and subsequent multiracial progeny comprise and physically represent an infringement of social codes and boundaries. These relationships have geographies that we must critically engage with if we are to understand racial mixing and its impacts. Examining mixed-race partnering and multiraciality at a variety of scales, such as the region, nation, and body, reveals gaps in our understanding of racialization processes and space and opens up opportunities for new and different research. Drawing on the insights provided from a critical reflection of the body, we find particular utility at the scale of the mixed-race household. Analogously, mixed-race households collectively construct, contest, and perform paradoxical racialized identities. These complex relations touch ground as soon as mixed-race households take up residence in a neighborhood. When we better understand the intersection of mixed-race household identities with other social dynamics we will learn more about the nature of identity formation. In addition, we will recognize more about how neighborhood spaces are racialized, potentially altering how we “see” and understand broader patterns of

segregation, integration, and diversity. Privileging the mixed-race household scale produces both a new reading of “mixed race” and a wedding of neighborhood residential location with mixed-race research.

In thinking about our efforts to make visible the mixed-race household, we return to Salman Rushdie’s provocative questions and ponder where mixed-race households survive and flourish. How do mixed-race households come to be in place? Do mixed-race households, when changing residence, choose to live in neighborhoods that are more diverse than others in the same city? A related mobility question might ask about migration between states and metropolitan areas. Previous research effectively counts and maps partners by location; future research should investigate the migration behaviors of mixed-race partners and mixed-race households and the impact of such mobility on neighborhood creation. We might ask, for instance, do mixed-race partners move from unwelcoming places, such as those perhaps with extensive anti-miscegenation histories, to more comfortable places? In other words, paraphrasing Rushdie, what compromises were struck and what deals were made for the household to move and stave off the wrecking crew?

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¹ The Chicago School helped develop the idea of race as a social construct rather than a biological given (Winant, 2000: 176).

² Wu, 2002: 20.

³ In the past, intermarriage often referred to marriage between people of different religions. We recognize this history, but, in this essay, we choose to focus exclusively on the contemporary connotation that “intermarriage” conveys--marriage across racial lines.

⁴ Gilroy, 1991: 3.

⁵ “Mixed-race projects” plays on Omi and Winant’s (1994) idea of “racial projects.” Racial projects are meant to discursively explain racialization while simultaneously being a means by which racialized groups appropriate power or resources.

⁶ We strive to be inclusive in our analyses (thus the use of mixed-race partnering) while also realizing that much of the literature, and many of the following examples in this section, represent a heterosexual bias and a focus on marriage.

⁷ This observation derives from birth certificates that report the “race” and Hispanic origin of the mother and father, as well as that of the child.

⁸ Ozeki, 1999: 57.