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WHO COUNTS AS MULTIRACIAL?

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The contours of a highly diverse population

Who counts as multiracial? The answer to this question – while never straightforward in the past – is becoming more complicated and contested. Who is asking and counting, and why does it matter? Who is considered multiracial depends on a variety of competing criteria, such as one's physical appearance, and who the observer is; if someone self-identifies as multiracial; if someone is known to have parents of different races; someone's lived experiences; or more recently, if one asserts multiracial status on the basis of a DNA test. And this is not an exhaustive list of possibilities. This review article examines how deliberations around the question of who is multiracial are widespread, and why this question matters, for individuals, and for society more generally.

Although racially mixed people in Western multi-ethnic societies are not new, their identification as multiracial (or mixed race) is still relatively recent. In the last several decades, many studies in the USA and Britain (where a great deal of scholarship on multiracial people has been undertaken) show that racially mixed people (even those with some Black ancestry) are increasingly likely to identify themselves (and their children) as multiracial, and/or in relation to more than one race (in the USA see Rockquemore & Brunsma 2002; Roth 2005; Bratter 2007; Khanna 2010; Root 1996; in Britain, see Aspinall & Song 2013; Caballero et al. 2008; Joseph-Salisbury 2018; Ifekwunigwe 1999; Song 2017; Tizard & Phoenix 1993; Twine 2010). In the USA, part White people decreasingly report themselves as solely White, and part Black people reporting only a Black race with no White ancestry is no longer modal (Liebler 2016).

Such trends are fascinating at a time when the US is said to be experiencing 'unprecedented white demographic decline' (Kauffman 2018), fuelled in part by the significant growth of racially mixed people. In the USA, the multiracial population is due to triple by 2060 (US Census Bureau). In Britain, there is little doubt that the population of racially mixed people will continue to grow quite significantly, with many of the mixed population under the age of 16 (Bradford 2006). According to the Office for National Statistics, 'from 2001 to 2011, the percentage of the population of England and Wales that identified as White British decreased from 87.4% to 80.5%' (ONS 2018), and it is likely that this percentage will diminish in the findings of the forthcoming 2021 census. Such demographic trends point to a changing racial landscape, which is also evident in the growth of 'majority minority' cities in Europe (Crul 2015), such as Malmo, Amsterdam, or Vienna.

In fact, this relatively recent option to identify oneself in relation to multiple racial ancestries has engendered a spate of new research and debates about how, exactly, we should conceptualize and measure multiracial populations. Given the very significant growth of people with racially mixed ancestries, there has been surprisingly little written about who 'counts' as multiracial per se. As I discuss below, scholars employ variable definitions and understandings of 'multiracial', and the determination of who counts as multiracial is of broader political relevance.

Many scholars have debated whether the recognition of a distinctive multiracial category and status is inherently problematic (see e.g. Parker & Song 2001; Ali 2012; Mahtani 2002). Some analysts have argued that the idea of being mixed reproduces the problematic notion that race and racial differences are real, and that concepts such as multiracial or mixed race are necessarily based upon the premise that mixed people represent the commingling of 'pure' races (see Zack 1996; Spencer 2006). Nevertheless, we need terms (however imperfect) to be able to discuss what has historically been regarded as a transgressive process and population.

There are no clear conventions for how to define, and bound, this category of people. As Ann Morning (2014) observes, our understanding of who is (and isn't) multiracial depends on which groups are regarded as races in the first place: 'I define multiracial individuals as descendants of two or more groups currently believed to constitute distinct races. (p. 10)'. The significant demographic diversification of multiracial people has resulted in findings that reveal quite different lived experiences in terms of racisms and acceptance within White and monoracial minority communities. In addition to the heterogeneous racial and ethnic ancestries found in different populations of multiracial people, the growth of multigeneration multiracial people, some of whom are genealogically distant from their non-White ancestors, further complicates this demographic diversity (Pew 2015; Song 2017a). For example, in Britain, there is very likely to be a sizeable but 'invisible' mixed population within Black or Asian communities, whose mixed ancestry originates in Britain's colonial history (Caballero & Aspinall 2018) – but there is no way of estimating the size of this population based on current data (Mok 2019).

Furthermore, there cannot be one single conceptualization of 'multiracial' across societies, given the huge historical and demographic variations at play, including the fact that not all societies recognize and count racial differences in the first place (Simon et al. 2015), or employ shared understandings of ethnic or racial difference (Morning 2014), whether it be in Trinidad (Reddock 2014), Kazakhstan (Ualiyeva & Edgar 2014), or Australia and New Zealand (Fozdar & Perkins 2014). Japan's national discourse emphasizes ideas of cultural and racial purity (Osanama Torngren & Sato 2019); the Japanese census has no question about ethnicity, but rather, nationality, as Japanese or non-Japanese, thus obscuring the growing diversity of racially mixed Japanese people. Much of continental Europe adopts the same approach by eschewing measures of ethnicity or race. By comparison, being racially mixed (mestizo) has been central to Mexico's national discourse, and thus central to what it means to be a typical Mexican (Sue 2013). In North America and Europe, where the growth of (voluntary) racially mixed unions and people is historically more recent, being racially mixed is still regarded as anomalous, not typical, given the dominant beliefs and practices of categorizing people neatly in relation to distinctive racial categories (Parker & Song 2001). However, 'mixing' is becoming increasingly normalized in many areas, and not just in urban centres (Holloway et al. 2012).

This article discusses three ways in which the question of who is multiracial is currently contested. **First**, accompanying the growth and diversification of racially mixed people, the measures and categories used by states to enumerate their mixed populations are variable, and subject to constant revision, so that they may better capture this moving target. I argue that despite the ongoing changes introduced by states, there is still considerable discussion about their limitations. **Second**, there is growing debate about the politics of ethnic and racial group membership, and the *basis* of that membership, including that of multiracial people. On the one hand, there is an increasing emphasis on individual subjectivity and the malleability of ethnic and racial affiliations

and modes of belonging. At the same time, concerns about racial authenticity, racial and cultural appropriation, and the maintenance of racial membership and borders, are still rife. **Third**, the question of who is multiracial is fundamentally linked with debates about how multiracial people should be characterized in relation to White and non-white people, their minority status, and what a growing multiracial population portends in racially stratified societies in Western, multi-ethnic societies in North American and Europe.

In exploring the question of who counts as multiracial, the scope of this article is necessarily limited. While mixed people and societies abound, whether in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Australasia, a primary focus on the USA and UK enables us to engage with important contemporary debates about the growth of racially mixed people (especially part White multiracials), and what their growth signals for changing racial hierarchies (Yancey 2006). Unlike the US and UK (where being White means having only European ancestry), in countries such as Mexico and Brazil, there is no contradiction in being mixed *and* White (Daniel 2006; Telles 2004). The USA and UK share many understandings of race and racial difference, despite disparate histories of empire, conquest, and immigration (Song 2003).

In this paper, I use the terms 'multiracial', 'mixed race', 'mixed' and 'racially mixed' interchangeably, to refer to people with known *disparate racial ancestries* (e.g. Black/Asian/White), *regardless of how they may identify themselves*. I do not focus here on people with mixed ethnic (though not racial) backgrounds – e.g. someone with two White parents who are English and German, or someone who has two Black parents (e.g. one who is British and one Zimbabwean) – not because such interethnic differences are inconsequential for such couples or families, but because they rarely garner the degree of opprobrium and controversy that 'visible' racially mixed unions have done (Song 2020).

Who is multiracial in a national census?

A key way in which multiracial people are recognized and counted is through the official enumeration of such people, via a decennial census. Historically, multiracial people have typically been seen in terms of one primary or dominant 'race' (Parker & Song 2001). The 'one drop' rule of hypodescent was imposed on Americans with African ancestry ever since the advent of slavery (Davis 1991; Noble 2000). But the norms around identifying monoracially, if one is racially mixed, are now in retreat (Roth 2005; Bratter 2007).

Since there are disparate conventions for how to measure racially mixed people across national contexts, censuses vary a great deal, and inevitably face a number of challenges. For example, while ethnic categories (e.g. Vietnamese) are used in Australia and New Zealand, there are no 'race' categories in their censuses (Fozdar & Perkins 2014). Even if countries like Japan avoid the use of ethnic and racial categories in its census, the term 'hafu', which evokes ideas about racial mixing, is widely used in Japanese society, and can change in meaning; hafu was originally an ascribed term meaning half white, but it is now evolving into a self-claimed identification that includes all mixed people, including racially mixed people without White parentage, such as the tennis player Naomi Osaka, who has a Japanese mother and Haitian father (Osanami Torngren & Sato 2019).

Generally speaking, census categories in countries that capture race (or ethnicity) have, over the last several decades, become more granulated with each decade, by creating more categories

from which to choose, and more guidance on the basis of people's choices. But as I discuss below, changes in census categories are still limited in their ability to capture the diversity of multiracial people, or what these choices may mean. Furthermore, as census categories become more numerous, the growing heterogeneity of multiracial people threatens to undermine the utility of any broad overarching category such as multiracial – an issue that is resonant in the subsequent sections of this paper. A population estimate of who counts as multiracial is important in various areas of public policy, civil rights issues, and for mapping socioeconomic outcomes, especially as later generation mixed people partner and experience 'ethnic attrition' (Duncan & Trejo 2014).

The US and UK Censuses

I focus here on the census measures used in the USA and Britain. Although both countries officially recognize the idea of ethnic and racial 'mixture', they have chosen very different ways of capturing this population.[1] With the growth of racially mixed people in Britain, the 2001 England and Wales Census introduced the 'Mixed' category for the first time, asking participants to *choose only one category* in response to the question: 'What is your ethnic group?' By the 2011 Census, the categories had expanded to 18 'tick boxes', housed under five overarching headings: 'White', 'Mixed/multiple ethnic groups', 'Asian/Asian British', 'Black/African/Caribbean/Black British', and 'Other ethnic group'. The 'Mixed/multiple ethnic groups' heading included the following four categories:

Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
□ White and Black Caribbean
□ White and Black African
□ White and Asian
□ Any other Mixed background (please write in)

By comparison, rather than providing specific mixed categories, and asking people to choose one category only, as in the British census, US census takers can 'mark one or more boxes' from 15 categories for their race.[2]

> 9. ***What is Person 1's race? Mark one or more boxes AND print origins****: White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Chinese; Filipino; Asian Indian; Vietnamese; Korean; Japanese; other Asian; Native Hawaiian; Samoan; Chamorro; other Pacific Islander; some other race.* (US Census Bureau 2020)

The 2000 US census decision to allow multiple choices on race (as opposed to choosing a multiracial category) reflects the political concerns around the possibility that mixed Black people may eschew identifying themselves as Black, if given the opportunity to identify as multiracial instead (J. Spencer 1997). In the British census, to choose only one of the 18 possible categories, such as 'White and Asian', is to implicitly commit to a singular affiliation with that one mixed category. This dual category system limits people to these two combined backgrounds.

In general, both national censuses are moving toward greater choice and detail in how respondents can identify themselves. In the newly released 2020 US census, it is significant that, under the categories of 'White' and 'Black or African American', respondents are asked to fill in their 'origins' – pointing to the heterogeneity contained within those categories. On the census form, it is stated: '*White – Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian,*

etc.', and under 'Black or African Am. – Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.' (US Census Bureau 2020)

The US census guidance states: '*Your answer to this question should be based on how you identify. Each person can decide how to answer.*' Furthermore, the respondent is told: '*You are not required to mark a checkbox category in order to enter a response in one of the write-in areas. You may respond by entering your specific identity or identities in any of the write-in response areas on the race question'.* This last statement is important because it acknowledges the possibility that people may not 'find themselves' in one of the 15 race categories, and may opt to respond with a more individualistic description.

In Britain, according to Peter Aspinall, who was involved in the Census Development program with Britain's Office for National Statistics (ONS), capturing mixed people's self-nominated identities was paramount: '… the ONS has sought *a measure of ethnic group based on self-ascription*. From an ethical perspective ONS takes the view that the respondent has to be the arbiter of their ethnic group (and this extends to other equality strands, like religion, sexual orientation, et al.).' (Aspinall 2013 email communication).

While those in charge of the UK census may believe that the provision of the 'Any other Mixed' category is sufficient to capture other types of mixed people, such as minority mixed people without any White ancestry, a study of a range of mixed young people in England found that many did not like such residual categories (Aspinall & Song 2013). The US system of multiple choices is certainly less constraining (Mok 2019). Arguably, the overarching 'Mixed' category in Britain is too broad to be meaningful, even though 'Mixed' is comprised of several subgroups. The Office for National Statistics conceives of the 'Mixed' category as a broad 'ethnic group' which is comprised of a great deal of racial and ethnic diversity, including White mixed people (Bradford 2006).[3] The emphasis on self-identification and choice in both national censuses, however, creates some policy dilemmas in terms of how such choices should be treated in the allocation of various resources, as discussed later in this article.

Self-identification versus known ancestries

However, people's self-identifications on a census (or other forms) may not reflect each of their parents' ancestries. It is often the case that people's reported identifications are based upon some parts of their ancestry, while forgoing others (Waters 1990). Based on the 2011 England and Wales Census, the official estimate of the mixed population was 2.2% (ONS 2018). But the official estimate of 2.2% (based on those who chose a 'mixed' category) is almost certainly an under-count because some individuals who are mixed by parentage (estimated to be three times the number who self-identify as such) may still nominate a single ethnic box (Nandi & Platt 2012), and the same is true of some parents of multiracial children, who may categorize them in relation to only one ethnic or racial background (Xie & Goyette 1997; Qian 2004).

In fact, most censuses do not differentiate the numerator (those who identify as mixed) from the denominator (those who actually have mixed ancestry) (Roth 2018). Race scholars are increasingly noting the possible ways in which identification and known ancestry may or may not mesh. In her study of race responses in the US Census, Carolyn Liebler (2016) distinguishes

between reported race and known ancestry in her use of the terms 'mixed heritage', 'mixed ancestry', and 'multiracial':

> 'I use *mixed heritage* to describe a person with family origins in more than one race group, whether or not they report those varied origins…. I use *multiracial* to indicate that two or more races were reported, *mixed ancestry* to indicate a singular race response with contrasting ancestry (e.g., white with Han ancestry), and *monoracial* for persons with no indication of mixed racial heritage. (Liebler 2016:550; see also Goldstein & Morning 2000)'.

Despite ongoing efforts to better capture people's identifications, census enumerations can only provide a glimpse of what these choices mean, or on what basis people make these choices. If someone chooses, for instance, 'White / Black Caribbean' in the England & Wales Census, there is no way of knowing how salient this nominated category is for this person (whether it constitutes a 'thick' or 'thin' identity - Cornell & Hartmann 2007), whether this person is seen as phenotypically Black or racially ambiguous, or whether she has been subject to forms of racial discrimination. And in the case of those in the USA who choose, e.g. Filipino, Chinese, and Black, all three may be regarded as equally important, while for others, one ancestry may be dominant.

Thus people's census choices may or may not correspond to how others view them, racially – something which is critical for determining disadvantaged minority status. It is now well established that what we call 'race' is not experienced 'as a single, consistent identity but as a number of conflicting dimensions', including how someone self-identifies, how someone is seen by others, and one's racial ancestry (Roth 2016). While enabling greater choice in how people self-identify, census measures do not necessarily illuminate lived experiences or facilitate policymaking about which groups of people may be seen and treated as racialized minorities (Song 2020).

Nor do we know where, generationally, that 'mixing' has occurred. Britain's Office for National Statistics' use of specific two-group combinations suggests a first-generation mixed status, rather than a multigenerational mixed status, where one, or both parents, are mixed. Such a presumption, however, is short-sighted because research in Britain reveals that about a fifth of those identifying as 'mixed race' (when given the opportunity to describe their mixed ancestries more fully) choose to name three or more groups, which suggests the possibility that a parent or grandparent is also mixed (Aspinall & Song 2013; Caballero & Aspinall 2018).

In the USA, the Pew Research Center adopts a generational ancestry dimension to their understanding of who is multiracial: a person is regarded as multiracial if their background includes two or more races (not including Hispanic) if their and their parents' and grandparents' races are noted (regardless of how they identify). Pew's approach estimated that 6.9% (as opposed to 2.9 % enumerated in the 2010 census) of American adults (the denominator) are multiracial. If the races of great-grandparents and earlier ancestors been included, that percentage would have gone up to 13.1% (Pew Survey 2015). As discussed in the next section, differentiating how people report their identities, racially, from their actual known ancestries, can be critical in societal deliberations about who can and should be seen as a racially mixed person, and whether they should be regarded as a racial minority.

Another difficulty with measuring the multiracial population is that most studies can only capture 'a' multiracial population at one point (and place) in time. Aspinall (2017) notes that the validity and

reproducibility of various modes of capture are problematic because when participants were asked to identify themselves over time (e.g. in the UK Longitudinal study), they often designated themselves with different categories at different points. An important article by Harris and J. Sim (2002) found that the adolescents they studied varied in their propensity to identify as multiracial, depending on whether they were asked this question at their schools, or in their homes (and see Burke & Kao 2010). There is growing evidence that multiracial identification is subject to change – either over time, or across different contexts. According to the US Census Bureau, in the decade from 2000 to 2010, 10 million Americans changed their race or Hispanic origin (Liebler 2017; and see Tashiro 2011).

Many scholars of race now recognize that racial statistics alone cannot provide an understanding of how race is experienced in people's day to day lives (see Ali 2003; Troyer & Campbell 2007; Twine 2010; Aspinall & Song 2013). It is particularly challenging to obtain data about racial appearance, familial upbringing, and experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination – all of which influence racial identities and their salience (Song 2017).

Political and philosophical debates about who is multiracial

Categorical flux and racial contestation

In the last several decades there have been disparate bodies of scholarship that address the idea of individual choice and rights, in relation to a variety of statuses, such as gender and race. The discourse of an individual's right to identify as she wishes is evident in the guidance provided in the USA and British censuses, discussed above. Various scholars of race have articulated views about such rights. For example, David Hollinger (1995) argued, perhaps naively, for the desirability of a society in which people, regardless of whether they are White, Black, or Asian, are free to affiliate or disaffiliate themselves from ethnic groups at will, rather than being racially assigned according to one's ethnic or racial ancestry.

A pioneer in the study of multiracial people, Maria Root (1996), famously declared the so-called 'bill of rights' of multiracial people, which pointed to the right of people to identify variably in different situations, and the right to change the way they identify over the life course. Root's bill of rights explicitly challenges other people's discomfort with racially mixed people, and refutes the legitimacy of a wooden, fractional way of thinking about multiracial people and their sense of selves. Root knew all too well that while the assertion of one's desired identity on a census is a privatized act that cannot be refuted by others, it is another thing to claim to be multiracial in social interactions with others.

While it may be difficult to take issue with the sentiments in Root's bill of rights, in the abstract, the assertion of such rights is far from easy. The growing emphasis upon individual rights around the determination of their identities is also evident in legal scholarship concerning multiracial people and the rights of individuals to claim different types of racial identities in disparate contexts, such as in the workplace, or on documentary forms (Lucas 2014). Legal scholar Camille Gear Rich (2013) argues:

> '…. We are currently living in an era of "elective race" – a time when antidiscrimination law is being asked to attend to the dignity concerns of individuals as they attempt to control the terms on which their bodies are assigned racial meaning.' (1505)

What Rich refers to, above – people's attempts to control how others attribute meanings to their bodies (especially racially ambiguous bodies) – points to the fact that people (including multiracial people) are increasingly litigious about asserting control over their chosen race(s) across disparate contexts.

Given the growing number of people who identify as multiracial, the question of who 'counts' as multiracial, especially if someone is genealogically removed from one or more minority ancestors, is bound to involve debates about how one may need to 'be', to be deemed mixed race. The discourse of individual rights may be problematic for those who value the hard-won politics of recognition achieved for groups who have historically been oppressed and disadvantaged (Taylor 1992); some groups such as Native Americans in the US, or Aboriginal people in Australia, do not confer membership status so freely.

In the early 21st century, the normative basis of membership in disparate racial and ethnic groups (including the question of who counts as multiracial) is increasingly contested. Debates about who can claim race-group membership are now shaped by recent developments in genetics and cosmetics, as well as by a greater recognition of subjective self-identification (Morning 2018). As a result, there are now more ways to claim and demonstrate racial belonging (Morning 2018). We are living through a period of considerable categorical flux. As Rogers Brubaker (2016) has argued, 'basic categorical frameworks have become the objects of self-conscious debate, critical scrutiny, strategic choice, and political claims-making, they have lost their self-evidence, naturalness, and taken-for-grantedness.' (3).

Such categorical flux is also evident in relation to gender categories. There are ongoing debates about whether transgender women can be regarded as 'real' women, as in the heated coverage of the author J. K. Rowling and her purported views about transgender women. Suggested parallels between being transgender and transracial have been met with some furious denials, as illustrated in the furore around Rachel Dolezal's claim to feel and identify as Black, despite having two White parents. The philosopher Rebecca Tuvel (2017) incurred a significant degree of outrage when she wrote: '… I suggest that Dolezal offers an important opportunity for us to think seriously about how society should treat individuals who claim a strongly felt sense of identification with a certain race.' (264) In short, Tuvel argues that if people can support the idea of being transgender, there is also a case for the idea of being transracial (and see Reed 2015).

Despite the willingness to debate historically strict criteria for group membership along gender or race lines, few scholars adopt a wholly voluntaristic view on the rights of individuals to be seen and treated in the ways they wish. For instance, in her consideration of whether a White person could feel, or identify as a Black person, Tuvel acknowledges the importance of someone's 'social treatment' (Haslanger 2012) by others (e.g. as a non-White person). Nevertheless, Tuvel's suggestion that Dolezal (or some other person without known Black ancestry) could legitimately identify as Black is too radical for most. For example, Amanda Erekson, the MAVIN president, rejects Dolezal's assertion, because while identity may be fluid, it "has to be based on *something*." (quoted in Shapiro 2015). It can't just be fabricated.

In light of the heated debates about Rachel Dolezal's claim to identify as a Black person, it is not difficult to imagine how a similar debate may arise in relation to multi-generation multiracials who appear White. As Roth (2018) notes, 'The rejection of Rachel Dolezal's Black identity reflects a widely held belief that that some known ancestry or biological descent from the group is a criterion of racial membership.' (1107). However, a problem with an insistence upon some demonstrable ancestry (however small) in determining racial membership is that it effectively relies upon notions of racial fractions and blood quantum. As Adolph Reed (2015) points out, this way of thinking problematically invokes the 'one drop rule'. Therefore, even if the means to achieving racial belonging is less rigid than in the past, claims to racial membership are often far from uncontroversial. We still have relatively little understanding of how societal norms about racial classifications change or why certain identity claims (such as US Senator Elizabeth Warren claiming American Indian ancestry) are deemed controversial or rejected outright, while others (concerning gender) are not.

Recent research suggests that forms of 'racial contestation' among self-identified individuals – especially self-identified Asians and Latinos in the USA -- are not uncommon (Vargas & Stainback 2016). The authors of this study suggest that experiences of racial contestation can result in 'thinner' (less personally salient or meaningful) racial/ethnic identities – and note that multiracial people and families may exemplify such racial contestation (443). According to Vargas and Stainback, some people may 'seek to offset the stress of racial contestation by affectively distancing themselves from coracial others and decreasing the extent to which they believe their racial identity is an important and valuable aspect of their lives.' (447). However, I question the authors' reasoning that associates racial contestation and the 'thinning' of racial identities; they conclude that 'If racial contestation becomes more common and continues to lead to thinner identities, it could result in an increase of racial apathy in the United States.' (459) But it is possible that their measure of 'thinning' fails to capture more complex dynamics and experiences at work.

While the salience of race may decrease for some people, whose racial identities are challenged by others, it may actually increase salience for some individuals, such as multi-generation multiracials, who purposefully work at retaining ties with their minority ancestries. In fact, those who report racial contestation may actually be more invested in how others see them in the first place (Song 2017b). In the case of multigeneration multiracial people, many studies suggest that the assertion of their racial identities is of personal importance to them, especially if they insist upon being mixed in the face of opposition. This does not constitute the 'thinning' of an identity.

Multi-generation multiracials

Scholars of race have documented how *racial* categorization (how one is seen and racially assigned by others) differs from *self-identification* (Jenkins 1996; Harris & Sim 2002), and how these two processes pose different implications for the conceptualization and measurement of race (see Roth 2016; Gullickson & Morning 2011). Because some multiracial people may appear racially ambiguous (or even White) to others, their liminality can be the basis for disjunctures between how they see themselves, and the ways in which they are seen by others (Jenkins 1996). Not only are mixed people's identity options constrained by how others see them, but also by how they think others see them (Khanna 2004). On an individual level, validation of one's felt racial identity can be important, since people cannot easily assert and 'own' that identity without such affirmation from others (Waters 1990; Song 2003).

Historically oppressive racial structures in both the USA and Britain led some mixed people to 'pass' in order to evade persecution and disadvantage. In the present day, xenophobic national discourses and growing populism can influence patterns of identification, given the Trump and Brexit eras, respectively. In her study of how mixed people are enumerated in Britain, Tze Ming Mok (2019) found a 'defensive White identification' among part-White mixed people, especially less privileged people, who did not want to advertise their non-Whiteness (and in the USA see Dowling 2014 on what it may mean for Mexican Americans to choose 'White' on the census). However, there is growing evidence that racially mixed people of various ethnic and racial backgrounds, including those with more genealogically distant non-White ancestries, wish to claim membership in a multiracial category or even a monoracial minority group (Song 2017b).

In a study of multiracial people in Britain who are parents, Song (2017b) found that many of her multiracial participants (those who had White ancestry and White partners) wished to identify their children as mixed, but they expressed uncertainty about whether they were 'allowed' to identify their children in this way. And many of those with White partners expressed sadness and a sense of loss about the idea of ethnic and racial 'dilution' (Song & Gutierrez 2015). The racial visibility of later-generation mixed people is highly variable, making their claims to minority and/or multiracial ancestries more difficult to assert (Song 2020). Norms about racial appearance remain especially important. For instance, in Australia, the media highlighted a story about a young Aboriginal woman who was regarded as too White to work for an Indigenous rights charity; authentic Aboriginal identity is associated with blackness, and her light skinned appearance was thus problematic (Fozdar & Perkins 2014:125). In addition to the material resources one can derive from a recognized status as Indigenous, the authors also note that 'Indigeneity is also desirable as an identity of right or legitimacy.' (126)

Given the degree of heterogeneity among racially mixed people, especially in terms of one's racial appearance and the 'amount' of one's non-White ancestry, political and ethical questions about the basis and recognition of multiraciality abound. What should be the basis of one's claim to be multiracial? Should claims to being multiracial be based upon known ancestry or lived experience (or both)? Can you legitimately claim a mixed status if you are not seen or validated in 'real life' as a mixed person (based on appearance and known genealogy)?

There is no convention, generationally, for who is deemed multiracial, beyond a first generation mixed person (the child of an interracial union between two monoracially distinct individuals) (Morning 2000; Song 2017a). As Jimenez (2018) has observed, 'the post-1960s immigration boom and contemporary demographics have elevated *generation-since-immigration* as a category that is central to analysts…' (119). Given the emphasis on generation of settlement in studies of migration, and what it can tell us about the integration and socioeconomic positions of each generation, it is surprising that the generational or genealogical locus of 'mixing' has been neglected in studies of multiracial people with White and non-White ancestors (Song 2017a; Morning & Saperstein 2018).

According to Morning and Saperstein (2018), the generational locus of multiraciality is 'the place in one's family tree when the earliest interracial union appears.' (58). In relation to the US, Morning (2000) notes that contemporary understandings of multiracial people do not usually include people with *genealogically distant mixed ancestry* (such as African Americans with some White ancestry borne of slavery, which makes most African Americans mixed). Rather, most contemporary investigations into multiracial people focus on people whose mixed ancestries stem from 'recent,

voluntary unions, as opposed to older, coerced unions in the context of slavery and imperialism' (p. 11). But in light of increasing numbers of (voluntary) interracial unions in contemporary multiethnic societies, the question of what is considered genealogically distant mixed ancestry becomes more pressing.

<u>Demonstrating racial authenticity</u>

Ideas about racial authenticity and rights are highly resonant in the case of Native Americans, many of whom have some White (and other) ancestry. Unlike any other ethnic groups in the USA, American Indians are defined not solely by self-designation but by federal, state, and tribal laws, and to obtain federal recognition, they must typically refer to their blood quantum -- a system that the federal government introduced in an effort to limit tribal citizenship (Nagel 1996; Snipp 1997). But some Native Americans reject the use of blood quantum in the determination of tribal membership, and advocate for membership on the basis of lineal descent, arguing that tribal membership based on descent will help tribes to survive and grow. Yet that same discourse of survival can be employed to defend more stringent approaches to Native tribal membership, as well as multigeneration multiracials and their membership in both multiracial and monoracial groups more generally (Song & Gutierrez 2015).

Studies show that racially mixed people who wish to claim membership in monoracial minority groups, such as Black, Asian, or Native American, can experience forms of racial hostility or exclusion from monoracial minority people (Mengel 2001; Montgomery 2017). One recent study of Black/White mixed individuals in England found they can experience 'horizontal hostility' – a form of black rejection (Campion 2019). In the USA, Heather Dalmage (2000) documents 'borderism' -- a form of discrimination experienced by people 'who cross the color line, do not stick with their own, or attempt to claim membership (or are placed by others) in more than one racial group' (40). Border patrolling and racial scripts of behaviour can constrain mixed people's identity options and pressure people to conform to expected norms of identification and behaviour.

Discussions about the racial authenticity of racially mixed people mirror debates about who or what constitutes blackness, and who gets to determine its meaning. Both explicit and unspoken rules about racial group membership are undergirded by norms about one's appearance, behaviors, and preferences, and how such scripts of behavior (Dyson 1994) constitute the criteria for racial group membership. When the writer and broadcaster Toure (2011) wrote a book about 'what it means to be black now', in which he argues, 'We're in a post-black era, where identity-freedom is infinity and you can be black however you choose', there were bound to be some raised eyebrows. In an interview, Toure rejects restrictive notions of racial membership, and observes: 'So someone who grows up Black in an inner city (e.g. Watts) is no more Black than someone who grew up in Alaska.' (NPR 2011).

Ann Morning and Aliya Saperstein (2018) observe that there is growing 'incongruence' among racial group members in terms of their adherence to what were previously considered the cardinal behaviours or attitudes for membership:

> *A consequence of the ever-broader array of racial members is that while some people*
> *will be consistent across all forms of membership – for example, will self- identify with*
> *race X, claim X ancestry, perform X cultural practices, etc. – there will be a growing*
> *share of members of each race group who experience some kind of incongruence*

across them (e.g. by identifying with race X and producing DNA test results showing X descent, but not having the phenotype or performing the cultural consumption associated with X). Thinking about the range of people who could be considered members of a racial group, then, any such group could be said to contain both "core" (i.e. consistent) members, and more "peripheral" members who lay claim to only a subset of membership attributes. (1067)

These disparate, though often related, dimensions of racial membership may not all cohere, neatly, in one direction. According to this way of thinking, it is possible that some multi-generation multiracial people may be seen as 'peripheral' members of their respective race groups, just as this could be true for some monoracial minority individuals (and see Mills 1998:50).

Are multiracial people a minority group?

Another way in which the question of who is multiracial is in flux is that in countries that do recognize and enumerate racially mixed people, such as the USA and UK, there is disagreement about how to characterize multiracial people and their experiences as a whole. There are no laws in either country which specifically address the experiences of mixed race people (Hernandez 2017; Song 2020). The question of where multiracial people belong in a polarized White/non-White hierarchy is bound to vary across societies, as discussed earlier. Should multiracial people, as a whole, be considered racialized minorities (Song 2020)? As multi-ethnic societies continue to diversify, researchers in the USA and UK increasingly investigate disparate types of racially mixed people; however, there is very little attention given to generational differences.

Are multiracial people disadvantaged ethnic minorities?

Given the growing diversity of multiracial people, there is no consensus on how mixed people (many of whom are part White) should be situated vis-à-vis monoracial minority people and white people (see Smith & Moore 2000; Joseph-Salisbury 2018; Khanna 2010). In many postcolonial societies, intermediary racial categories, such as 'Eurasian' in Singapore, were introduced and used to maintain colonial power (Rocha 2014; Nobles 2000), perhaps most famously exemplified by the designation 'Coloured' in Apartheid South Africa. In Britain's colonies, Anglo-Indians were an intermediary mixed race Indo-European population that arose from Britain's imperial presence in India; they were a category used to demarcate racial difference within the Raj's racial hierarchy (Carton 2012). Given the histories of their intermediate status in many racially stratified societies, the growth of multiracial people poses some thorny political questions about how they should be characterized and treated in policy terms.

While increasing numbers of multiracial people signals the welcome blurring of racial boundaries for some, for others, their recognition is troubling, in terms of racial justice, if racially mixed people (who are part White) are treated more favourably than racialized minorities with no known White ancestry, especially those deemed Black (Yancey 2006). Various analysts argue that a recognition of increasing interracial unions and mixed people does not mean that our awareness of race diminishes; in fact, ideas about racial differences can be reinforced by this growing phenomenon, especially when there is a status differential involved (Osuji 2019; Collet 2015; Childs 2015; Strmc-Pawl 2018).

Comparative studies of different types of racially mixed people are growing, but there is still a dearth of qualitative studies that document the highly variable experiences and social treatment of disparate kinds of mixed people. A number of studies in the US have argued that, based upon physical appearance, and marital patterns, Asian/white multiracial people possess a greater array of ethnic options, including the possibility of being seen as White, than do Black/white multiracial people (see Lee & Bean 2007; Miyawaki 2015; Tashiro 2011; Herman 2004; Strmc-Pawl 2018). In Britain, one of the only comparative studies of mixed race people found that while part South Asian, East Asian and Arab respondents reported forms of racial stigma and discrimination, a greater proportion of racially mixed Black respondents did so (Aspinall & Song 2013). There is debate about whether some multiracial people are more 'white' than others, both phenotypically and socially (see Lee & Bean 2007; Alba et al. 2018), but there is still a very limited base of comparative research on mixed people.

Richard Alba (2020) has linked the characterization of multiracial people with debates about the changing boundaries and size of the White population in the USA. Alba takes issue with the US census practice of counting any part White individuals as racial minorities. According to Alba and his colleagues (2018): 'Given the high proportion of ethno-racial mixtures that involve majority and minority parents, we have to ask whether it is reasonable to regard [part White] mixed individuals in wholesale fashion as minorities....' (32). They go on to argue that the US census bureau practice of assigning people who report ethno-racially mixed backgrounds to the *minority* side of their backgrounds ends up providing inaccurate projections of a declining White majority, thus providing a distorted picture of population change (36). By automatically counting any people who report being racially mixed as ethnic minorities, those deemed 'minority' by the census become an undifferentiated mass, whereby people who are racially stigmatized and disadvantaged can be lumped together with those who may not actually experience any such disadvantage at all.

In Britain, the term 'mixed' can be used in reference to disparate types of mixed backgrounds (including mixed White backgrounds, such as Polish and English), but usually evokes racially mixed individuals, such as a Black and White person (Bradford 2006). Someone who self-identifies as 'mixed' on an official form would be included under the acronym 'BAME' (Black and minority ethnic), which is commonly used in British public policies. Thus the inclusion of mixed race Britons under the category BAME automatically suggests some sort of disadvantaged minority status.

So why is the treatment of all racially mixed people as minorities problematic? Alba argues that many racially mixed people (especially of the younger generation) in the US are integrating into a largely White mainstream, and that many of them don't see themselves as excluded minorities (Alba 2020). He distinguishes between part Black mixed people from racially mixed people who are part White and Asian or Latino. In this scenario, the white mainstream is absorbing many (non-Black) mixed people and families, and is growing, not diminishing. Some legal scholars also point to the salience of the Black/non-Black binary in the USA. There is debate about whether we need a legal recognition of multiraciality as a basis for racial discrimination – something that would require a rethinking of existing laws. Tanya Hernandez (2017) has argued that while multiracial people can suffer racial discrimination, they don't do so in a unique manner; as such, existing laws should not be changed. Being multiracial per se does not engender discrimination; rather, some multiracial individuals face discrimination on the basis of their Blackness (Hernandez 2017).

While we do need to investigate whether some multiracial people can be deemed racialized minorities, while others are not, generalizations about different types of multiracial people can be problematic, given the limited empirical base. For example, in comparisons between Black/White and Asian/White multiracials, we must remember that there is real diversity in the experiences of part Black people, just as there is among part Asian people. There is very considerable phenotypical diversity even among Asian multiracial people (see Song 2019; Aspinall & Song 2013; Rondilla & Spickard 2013; Khanna 2004; Fulbeck 2006; Root 1996), some of whom may appear White, Eurasian, or 'fully' Asian by the conventional norms operating in specific localities. Furthermore, there is considerable variation in part Asian people's attachments to their Asian ancestries; some Asian/White people strongly identify as racially mixed Asian people, and some choose Asian partners (Chong 2013; Chang 2016; see Masuoka 2008 on political attitudes). Thus, not only do people with disparate kinds of racial ancestries differ – there is considerable diversity even among people with the same racially mixed backgrounds.

With the growth of multigeneration multiracials, some of who will, genealogically, have mostly White ancestors, a clearer distinction between mixed people who are mostly White and mostly non-White is likely to emerge. While 'minority mixed' (Aspinall & Song 2013) multiracial people are still numerically modest in many societies (though there are bound to be many people who have unknown Black and Native American and other 'hidden' non-white mixed ancestries – see Montgomery 2017), it is important that we recognize such racially mixed people, such as multiracial Latinos (Miyawaki 2017). In the USA and Britain today (and arguably many other multi-ethnic societies today), being multiracial per se is unlikely to be the basis of racial discrimination -- though such individuals may encounter racial hostility from some of their coethnics.

Race-based entitlements and minority status

One key reason why debates about who counts as multiracial, and whether multiracial people should be treated as disadvantaged minorities, are controversial and charged, is that valuable resources, both material and symbolic, are allocated on the basis of group membership, such as university tuition, free prescription medicine, and the ability to participate in various social networks. Almost a quarter century ago, Matthew Snipp (1997), writing about growing multiracialism and American Indians, predicted the policy difficulties that would arise: 'The ambiguity of racial self-identification has serious implications for public policy, especially for so-called 'race-based' public programmes. Race-based public programmes are likely to become increasing problems because they depend on the assumption that racial boundaries are fixed and unambiguous' (1997:674). While Snipp was writing primarily about how such change would affect American Indians, the ambiguity surrounding many multiracial people more generally is now a genuinely pressing issue for public policy.

Such political dilemmas are evident in other parts of world, such as in Brazil, which has a very large racially mixed population. The introduction of preferential policies (such as in university entrance) meant for disadvantaged Black and indigenous Brazilians has been welcomed by many, countering the idealized discourse of Brazil as a colorblind racial democracy (Telles 2004). However, black Brazilian activists have pointed to instances of what they regard as racial fraud, with light-skinned people benefiting from preferential policies that were not meant for them, but rather, for phenotypically black Brazilians (de Oliveria 2017). Yet there are bound to be racially mixed Brazilians (who may not look 'sufficiently' Black in the Brazilian context) who may believe

that they have a legitimate claim to such initiatives – especially if they are from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. One's 'visibility' can also be based on perceived religious differences, and they are often intertwined with 'racial' otherness (Rodriguez-Garcia et al. 2019).

Although there are serious problems with the use of blood quantum measures to determine tribal membership, measures such as blood quantum can have what Snipp calls a 'veneer of certainty about them' (681). As Snipp (1997) notes, self-identification on official forms involves a kind of 'ethnic honour system' (680). Nevertheless, the freedom with which individuals can identify themselves, racially, has come under legal scrutiny, in various cases concerning forms of affirmative action in higher education. For instance, in the second case of Fisher v. the University of Texas at Austin (based on a case brought by a White student, Abigail Fisher, who had challenged the admissions procedure used by the U. of Texas), considered by the Supreme Court in 2016, Justice Antonin Scalia inquired whether someone who is one 1/32 Hispanic would be considered "Hispanic" by the University of Texas (Lucas 2014).

Given the growth of racially mixed people, some of whom are 'only' 1/32, as discussed above, how can we reconcile the recognition of individual identity (e.g. as multiracial) with the continuing need to address group-based racial discrimination and subordination (Lucas 2014)? Even if state organizations, such as universities, decided to require proof of ancestry in the future, it is hard to imagine states adopting a viable means of determining who can count as multiracial (given how broad and diffuse this concept and population is), and then ascertaining whether a multiracial individual should *also* be treated as a disadvantaged racial minority.

The official categories used by states are highly consequential because they '… represent systems of power and authority which prejudge who are minorities or 'others' and the implicit or explicit bases on which they are to be distinguished….' (Burton et al. 2010: 1336). In the USA, the option to choose multiple race categories poses various policy questions with no obvious answers. '*At an individual level, multiple responses will create a series of conundrums for race-based policies. To give just two examples: Does someone who used to identify as "White" and now marks "White" and "American Indian" now qualify for a minority small business loan?* (Goldstein & Morning 2000:6230). Opportunistic claims to multiracial status are a concern, as also noted by Rich (2013): "What's happening now is that someone may say, 'Oh, I'm Latino' and then change back to white once they're admitted or hired' (Shapiro 2015)."

With either multiple race choices (USA) or the choice of one of the 'Mixed' census categories (UK), the practice of counting someone with *any* non-white ancestry (however distant genealogically) as a minority (or BAME) can be problematic. As 2nd and even 3rd generation mixed people (many of whom have mostly White ancestors) grow in numbers, how do states manage and enumerate this diversity in their considerations of race-based entitlements? Even if it is possible to capture this generational depth in multiracial ancestry, key political questions about how to recognize more distant multiracial ancestries are yet to be determined.

For the purposes of ethnic monitoring and equality concerns, is there a generational tipping point at which states should disregard reported multiraciality, if someone's ancestry is almost wholly White on both sides of her family (Song 2020)? For instance, should someone with a maternal Chinese grandmother (and 2 White British grandfathers, and 1 White grandmother) 'count' as mixed (Bratter & Heard 2009)? What about someone who is known to have all White ancestors, with the exception of one Black Jamaican great-grandfather? And all of these questions rely upon someone's knowledge of

their mother's and father's ancestries. If multiracial people wish to assert a specific 'public race' (Rich 2013), will there need to be some accountability for such a publicly asserted identity? Going forward, it is difficult to see how race-based public policies can operate without more detailed information about someone's ancestries, her experiences and treatment by others, and her socioeconomic background.

Conclusion

The continuing growth and diversification of interracial unions and mixed people and families will mean more varied family trees for many people in multiethnic societies such as the USA and Britain (and in much of continental Europe). This trajectory is unlikely to abate. The often ambiguous status of multiracial people has engendered increasing debate among sociologists, legal scholars, philosophers, and political scientists, about how we should identify and enumerate mixed race people, and how we should characterize this highly varied population in racially stratified societies. In addition to specifying the generational locus of mixture in the lineages of multiracial people, the heterogeneity of different types of racially mixed people, and their varied life experiences, requires further comparative investigation.

There are two main reasons why the question of who is multiracial is now more contested and pressing than ever. First, despite the increasing heterogeneity of racially mixed people, including some with more genealogically distant mixed ancestors, there are no clear conventions for how to define, and bound, this category of people. It is therefore unsurprising that how we define, measure, or determine membership for people who are multiracial, is in flux and constantly debated. Current terms and categories used in the census and/or everyday encounters are unlikely to be used and understood in consistent ways across disparate contexts. For people who live in areas with a sizeable number of other multiracial people, other non-/white coethnics, and streams of incoming migrants (of various ethnicities), categories such as 'multiracial' or 'mixed race' will need to be used in conjunction with other descriptors, since these overarching terms, on their own, will become increasingly hollow.

Second, we live at time when there is a great deal of debate and contestation about various forms of group membership, including racial membership; while ascribed forms of identity still abound, subjective assertions of people's identities are now accorded more importance and recognition. However, individualistic assertions of membership can be problematic for groups and organizations that aim to guard membership criteria, especially in cases where material and other symbolic resources are concerned.

Public policy considerations are becoming more pressing – do we count as multiracial those who can demonstrate ancestral minority lineage, and if so, up to what generational remove (a variant of blood quantum)? Given the highly heterogeneous experiences of multiracial people, it is not plausible to conceive of racially mixed people (as a whole) as racial *minorities*. While most studies of racially mixed people do not suggest that such individuals identify in ways that are primarily instrumental, those who feel they have a legitimate stake in an ethnic or racial affiliation may assert group membership when there are various incentives to do so (Snipp 1997).

Therefore, the question of whether multiracial people can be deemed racialized minorities will remain a pressing concern for many societies such as the USA and Britain. The growth of multiracial people will continue to influence which kinds of boundary crossing are stigmatized, and the shape of racially stratified societies in which White people have been politically and socially

dominant. How we conceive of multiracial status is premised upon an underlying set of assumptions about where racial boundaries demarcate the key social experiences that determine our wellbeing and status in the wider society.

The growth and diversification of racially mixed people has necessitated not just a critical appraisal of existing racial taxonomies, but also a rethinking of contemporary racial projects. It is not possible to rely on the 'old' polarities of white/non-white, or use the term 'minority', in ways that assume a commonly shared understanding of what is meant by these terms. For some scholars, the growth of racially mixed unions and children points to an expansion of the American mainstream. Alba (2020) has argued that the growth of majority/minority unions means that many mixed people lean more toward their White than their minority ancestries; as such, claims that the white majority in the USA is being eclipsed by a minority population are unfounded and distorted. However, we do not yet know enough about the range of lived experiences across disparate types of racially mixed people; as such, the idea of an expanding White category that absorbs more racially mixed people (who are not Black) requires more investigation.

In the case of multigeneration multiracials, we should not assume an ineluctable pathway toward whitening (Song & Gutierrez 2015; Song 2017b; Chong 2013). It is possible that some 2nd (or 3rd) generation mixed people (who look White) may reverse this trend and partner with people who are not White, or who are mixed, with shared or disparate ethnic and racial backgrounds to their own. Very little is known about how 2nd or 3rd generation mixed people 'assimilate' into monoracial Black, Asian or Latino communities – not just White ones (see Miyawaki 2017).

If a generational tipping point is identified (a point at which one's multiracial ancestry no longer registers for public policy purposes, e.g. for programs which consider ethnic and racial diversity), at which generational juncture should this occur? It is difficult to imagine how a genealogical formula on its own, in isolation from key indicators such as physical appearance and 'observed race', and someone's lived experiences (including one's upbringing and socioeconomic background), would be adequate to address how policymakers should treat multiracial people of varying racial mixtures and generational depth. However, practically speaking, even if we wanted to consider people's lived experiences, there is no easy way to assess what someone's 'lived experience' is, and how it may or may not correspond with the memberships/categories that are sought.

Ultimately, over time, the use of categories such as 'multiracial' or 'mixed race' may be both administratively and politically problematic, especially when they are used to represent mixed people in a non-reflexive manner (Ali 2012). In neither national context does 'Mixed' or 'multiracial' constitute a viable ethnic category, and when used this generally, it can become a zombie category with little correspondence to how racially mixed people think about and experience their lives (Song 2020). The use of these categories is therefore (currently) necessary, but their use should not be assumed to refer to a 'multiracial community' as such. Given all the demographic diversity both between and within disparate multiracial populations, the broader question of who is or is not multiracial needs to be reoriented to the questions of in what way someone is said to be mixed, and secondly, whether that way of being racially mixed entails a form of racial disadvantage.

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[1] It was not until the 1991 England and Wales census that a question about ethnicity was introduced, with the provision of 9 'ethnic' categories.

[2] Before 2000 (when multiple race responses first became possible in the USA) it was possible to report a mixed heritage by reporting an ancestry that differed from their race response. From 1980, a person could report mixed heritage by giving an answer in the ancestry question that indicated a different race group than their answer to the race question. The ancestry question ("What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?") is an open-ended question (forthcoming Liebler & Song).

[3] In fact, the category 'Mixed/multiple groups' in the 2011 British census includes people with disparate European ancestries: 'The ethnicity of the people within the 'Other Mixed' category is undoubtedly the most difficult to conceptualise. Within this category are many different identities, including Mixed white ethnic identities. Their demographic and socio-economic characteristics will vary accordingly. The result is that findings for the 'Other Mixed' will be unique.' (Bradford 2006: 11).