Refashioning the Intimate:
Race and Personal Relationships in Contemporary Multiracial Filipino America

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, especially my grandparents, Maria and Philip

Moore, and my parents, Gloria and Michael Andrews.

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Abstract

In the last quarter-century, immigration from Asia and Latin America has brought tremendous changes to the American racial landscape, most especially a rise in the U.S.'s multiracial population – those born to parents of two or more different races. Most studies on multiracial individuals have focused on their racial identities, yet few have examined their personal relationships (e.g. families, friends, romantic partners), the most racially segregated of social interactions. This dissertation utilizes the exemplar case of Filipinos in the U.S. to examine whether multiracial individuals, as products of interracial relations, perceive racial difference as a fading or enduring impediment in their familial, friendship, and romantic relations.

Through focused, life story interviews with over 60 multiracial adults born to Filipino/non-Filipino relationships in two U.S. regions, this dissertation reveals that multiracial respondents expressed two primary narrative orientations toward racial difference in their personal relationships: 1) reconciliation and 2) discordance. First, approximately three-quarters of respondents saw racial difference as not an impediment that fades or endures but as a compatible part of their closest relationships. They "presented" this seemingly counter-intuitive claim through telling *reconciliation narratives*, in which racial difference transformed from a liability to an asset. Second, roughly one-quarter of respondents held more ambivalent stances. These respondents were exposed to counter-narratives in college (e.g. university courses) that highlighted enduring gender and racial inequalities (e.g. sex work industry) and led them to tell *discordant narratives*, in which they felt they could neither fully embrace nor entirely reject the

possibility of close, interracial relationships. Finally, three male respondents saw race as not playing a significant role in their closest relations. These outlier respondents denied race's significance through gendered *negation strategies* that enabled them to present their personal lives as stable and changeless.

This dissertation illustrates that, while racial difference still persists as an obstacle in many multiracial individuals' closest relations, members of a growing subset of the U.S. multiracial population – those born to Filipino/non-Filipino relationships – are refashioning traditional understandings of racial difference in their personal relationships beyond only an obstacle that endures or fades but also something that can serve a valuable, compatible role.

Chapter 1

Introduction

> "I can pretty much get along with anybody. Being different races, I can identify with someone, you know. It has worked to my advantage." (Ben Campbell, late teens, Filipina mother-African American father, Michigan)[1]

> "It's more complicated…[Being mixed-race] I understand the interconnectedness of everything, so I'm definitely not against interracial dating, but I understand why people are critical of it." (Anna-Marie Charles, mid-20s, Filipina mother-white father, California)

> "I have no like outstanding or memorable instances or issues that have happened, you know, being part of an interracial family…Nothing, you know, dramatic where I was scarred for life." (Andrew Fowler, early 30s, Filipina mother-white father, Michigan)

The statements by the three multiracial individuals above illustrate divergent perceptions of racial difference's role in personal relationships.[2] In the first, Ben sees racial difference, specifically being mixed-race, as an advantage that can enhance the formation of close, personal relationships, enabling him to "pretty much get along with anybody."[3] In the second statement, Anna-Marie sees the matter as "more complicated." That is, while she also sees advantages in being born to an interracial relationship (i.e. "I understand the interconnectedness of everything"), she also understands how people can be "critical" of interracial relationships and, as a result, does not wholeheartedly embrace them. In the third statement, Andrew does not see

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[1] Pseudonyms (both first and last names) are used here forward to assure respondent anonymity.

[2] "Multiracial" and variants of the term (e.g., "multiraciality," "biracial," "mixed-race") are used throughout this dissertation to refer to individuals born to parents of two or more different races. These terms are used with caution understanding that they run the risk of re-inscribing biological notions of race (Spencer 2004). Nevertheless, they will be used here forward given their wide use both in interviewees' accounts and in much of the literature this article engages.

[3] While popularly associated exclusively with sexual relations, in this dissertation "personal relationships" refer to all "primary relationships," including family, friends, and sexual relations (see Jamieson 1998).

racial difference as playing a significant role at all in his interracial family, especially not something negative (i.e. "Nothing, you know, dramatic where I was scarred for life"). This dissertation explores how multiracial individuals like Ben, Anna-Marie, and Andrew came to such divergent understandings of race's role in their personal lives.

Over the past three decades, the rise in immigration from Asia and Latin America has brought tremendous demographic changes to the U.S. Two of the most prominent of these changes have been to American's intimate relations: 1) increased interracial marriage and 2) growth in the multiracial population born to these unions (Perlmann and Waters 2004; Lee and Bean 2004). These two trends are particularly significant given that of all the spheres of social interaction, such as work, the intimate historically has been the most racially segregated (Park and Burgess 1921). The American public has recognized the significance of these changes. Mainstream press, like *Time Magazine* (1993) and the *New York Times* (Saulny 2011), have heralded a "New Face of America." The Office of Management and Budget revised its data collection policies in 2000 to allow Americans for the first time to "mark one or more races" on the U.S. Census (OMB 1997). This recognition arguably reached its height in 2008 with the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, who in his campaign proudly exclaimed being "the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas" ("A More Perfect Union" 2008). However, despite this growth in public attention, surprisingly little is known about the intimate lives of the U.S.'s multiracial population. For example, although more common, are their interracial families more accepted today? Do they face difficulties forming friendships across racial groups?

Based on over 60 focused, life story interviews conducted in two U.S. regions, this dissertation examines whether multiracial individuals, from their unique vantage point as

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products of interracial relations, perceive racial difference as a fading or enduring impediment in their most personal relationships (i.e. family, friends, romantic partners). To do so, this study focuses on the case of Filipinos in the U.S., an ethnic group that exemplifies key characteristics attributed for the rise in the U.S. multiracial population. Through applying a narrative approach that emphasizes how these individuals *have come to see* race, this dissertation examines the ways in which these multiracial individuals, who differed in gender, parentage, and region, came to divergent conclusions about the role of racial difference in their personal relations as well as what their perceptions can tell us about the role of "race" in an increasingly multiracial American landscape.

This introductory chapter has four objectives: 1) to review relevant literature, 2) to explain this dissertation's central case and methods, 3) to present general findings to frame subsequent chapters, and finally 4) to outline the organization of this dissertation.

Literature Review

Multiraciality and Personal Relationships

Mirroring the increased public attention on the U.S.'s multiracial population, over the past two decades there has been an exponential rise in sociological studies on multiraciality. However, this surfeit of interest has been limited in its focus. That is, while studies have varied in topic ranging from multi-race classification on the U.S. Census (DaCosta 2007) to negotiations of race and belonging in beauty pageants (King-O'Riain 2006), in general most of this scholarship has focused on multiracial individuals' racial identifications, whether personally asserted or ascribed by others. Many of these studies have been concerned with how multiracial individuals are racially identified by others, most especially by their parents (Saenz et al. 1995; Waters 2000; Xie and Goyette 1997). Such studies have considered how a variety of parental

characteristics (e.g. gender, nativity) may influence how a multiracial child is racially identified (Qian 2004) as well as the micro-cultural processes parents engage to "restrict" strategically their multiracial children's identity options (Twine 2004). In the past decade, an increasing body of scholarship has explored the racial self-identifications of multiracial individuals (Salgado de Snyder, Lopez, and Padilla 1982; Stephan and Stephan 1989; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2001). These studies have considered the contextual character of these identifications (Harris and Sim 2002) as well as how they may illustrate shifting dynamics in the U.S. racial order (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Although both bodies of scholarship have illuminated the increasing complexity of racial identity in the U.S., they have left underexplored arguably the most decisive barometer of U.S. race relations: personal relationships (e.g. family, friends, romantic partners).

In sociology, personal relationships traditionally have been regarded the most racially divided of social interactions, in which racial difference is an unyielding impediment to close, sustained relations between social groups (Park and Burgess 1921). Resultantly, for decades sociologists have studied rates of interracial marriage and friendship to measure the extent to which race remains an obstacle in social relations (Gordon 1964; Lieberson and Waters 1988; Quillian and Campbell 2003; Lee and Bean 2004; Qian and Lichter 2007). However, despite the analytical weight given to personal relationships, the topic has been given relatively little concerted attention in the sociological study of multiraciality. This is not to say that sociologists have ignored the topic altogether. One personal relationship, the family, has been central to the very concept of multiraciality, providing the logic – albeit a heteronormative one – traditionally used to define multiracial individuals (i.e. "multiracial" = biological parents of two or more different races) (DaCosta 2007). Even so, the family's incorporation in these studies largely has been in accordance with the literature's predominate focus on racial identification, serving either

as a source of identity ascription on multiracial offspring (Xie and Goyette 1997; Waters 2000; Qian 2004) or as one among several contextual factors influencing multiracial individuals' self-identities (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2001; Harris and Sim 2002). In the past decade, a relatively small number of sociological studies have given concerted attention to multiracial individuals' families, friendships, and to a lesser extent, romantic relations.

The first of these studies have been quantitative analyses of multiracial adolescents' friendship choices (Doyle and Kao 2007) and friendship networks (Quillian and Redd 2009). These studies have illustrated the racial demographics of multiracial individuals' friendships and the extent to which multiracial individuals successfully integrate into existing monoracial friendship groups (e.g. black, white, Asian). While providing useful data based on representative samples, as Doyle and Kao even point out, these studies provide less insight into the "meaning of race" these multiracial individuals ascribe to their personal relations, a central concern of this dissertation. A second set of studies based in the United Kingdom (Ali 2002; Twine 2010) more directly addresses these concerns. Suki Ali (2002) has examined how mixed-race children's understandings of "race" and belonging are shaped by, among other factors, their families, such as parenting practices. France Winddance Twine (2010) has offered a nuanced portrait of the families of black-white multiracial individuals, especially white birth mothers, and illuminates the micro-cultural processes these families engage to navigate persistent racism in British society. Although these studies provide rich and intersectional examinations of race in multiracial individuals' personal relations, both are based on the U.K. and not U.S. context. Further and more importantly, Twine's analysis focuses more on those within multiracial individuals' personal networks (e.g. their family members), and Ali, while exploring multiracial

individuals' understandings of race, provides less insight into how they perceive race's role in their personal relations (e.g. Do they see race as impeding, enabling, fading, etc.?).

The final set of studies is the work of Kimberly DaCosta (2004; 2007), whose in-depth analysis of the social movement to include multi-race classification on the 2000 U.S. Census most closely addresses the chief concerns of this dissertation. That is, while examining the role of the state and the market on the U.S. "multiracial movement," DaCosta importantly illustrates how this movement also worked to transform societal perceptions of the role of race in the "American family." Specifically, she contends that the multiracial movement legitimized "*the very idea* of the interracial family," where social and legal measures (e.g. anti-miscegenation laws, the "one drop rule") previously rendered the idea an "oxymoron in American cultural consciousness" (2004:17, emphasis added). This dissertation extends upon DaCosta's observations by not only exploring how multiracial individuals negotiate societal perceptions of interracial relations but also how, depending on a variety of factors like gender and education, multiracial individuals can come to very different conclusions on the matter. However, to explain these divergent viewpoints requires not only a shift in focus from racial identification to personal relationships but also a shift in analytical approach.

The Prospects of Narrative

Due in large part to their emphasis on racial identity, in many sociological studies on multiraciality categorical outcomes (e.g. identification) have held pride of place. However, in explaining multiracial individuals' divergent conclusions about the role of race in their personal relationships, determining *how* these individuals came to these outcomes is just as important as the outcomes themselves. Therefore, this dissertation's analysis requires a more analytically

capacious approach that is less categorical and exclusively outcome-focused. To do so, this dissertation draws on the growing scholarship on narrative in the social sciences.

Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson (1994) have argued that every discipline needs an "epistemological other" in order "to consolidate a cohesive self-identity and collective project" and that, for the social sciences, narrative – a subject long-associated with the humanities – has traditionally occupied this role (38). Somers and Gibson elaborate:

> Variously formulated in binary terms "idiographic" versus "nomothetic," "particularistic" versus "generalizable," or "description" versus "theory," the contrast between the "mere narrative" approach of the historians and the more rigorous methodologies of the social sciences has effectively cordoned off narrative studies from the legitimate "identity terrain" of social science epistemology (1994:38).

However, as Somers and Gibson note, since the 1990s there has been a "narrative turn" in the social sciences. Whereas before narrative largely was dismissed as anecdotal and yielding no more than conjecture, social scientists began to recognize the analytical import of what cultural theorists have long-regarded a "human universal" of communication (Barthes 1977; White 1980). Sociologists have played a significant role in this revaluation of narrative and have argued that "social life is itself *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*" (Somers and Gibson 1994:38, emphasis in original; also see Plummer 1995). Although narrative has been adopted in many quarters of the discipline, such as historical sociology (e.g. Abbott 1992), it has been most fully embraced and developed in cultural sociology, and it is from insights in this sub-field that this dissertation draws its narrative approach.

While narratives can take various forms, cultural sociologists generally have defined narratives as possessing three fundamental features: 1) plot, which traditionally contains a beginning, middle, and end, 2) characters, typically a set of protagonists and antagonists, and 3) a "set of devices and functions" that connect the characters to the plot to tell a story (Jacobs and

Sobieraj 2007:6-7). Over the past decade, cultural sociologists have illustrated how narrative

structures have shaped media representations (Jacobs 2000), military conflict (Smith 2005),

social movements (Polletta 2006), and public policy (Jacobs and Sobieraj 2007). This

dissertation extends upon this growing scholarship by exploring how narrative structures, in

conjunction with other social forces (e.g. race, gender), shaped multiracial individuals' divergent

conclusions about racial difference in their closest personal relationships. However, to uncover

precisely how narratives shaped these multiracial individuals' varied conclusions relies primarily

on one important facet of the cultural form that is alluded to in the definition above but not

explicitly stated: narrative's relational character.

As Margaret Somers has argued, relationality is a key feature of narrative that makes it

particularly relevant for the social sciences: "[T]he chief characteristic of narrative is that it

renders understanding only by *connecting* (however unstably) *parts* to a constructed

configuration or a *social network* of relationships (however incoherent or unrealizable)

composed of symbolic, institutional, and material practices" (1994:616, emphasis in original). In

this study's employment of narrative analysis, narrative's relational character proves valuable in

two key ways: 1) its attention to process or emplotment and 2) its propensity to capture the

dynamic, non-static character of race.

First, unlike other cultural forms, such as frames (Goffman 1974) and binary oppositions

(Alexander and Smith 1993), narratives are adept at capturing *diachronic* processes or change

over time (Wagner-Pacifici 2000:9).[4] As such, meaning is discerned through what Somers has

termed "causal emplotment":

> Unlike the attempt to produce meaning by placing an event in a specific category,
> narrativity precludes sense-making of a singular isolated phenomenon. Narrativity

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[4] Somers and Block (2005) argue that in contrast to the "causal temporality" of narrative, "the term 'frame' invokes a static discursive image contained and enclosed inside a solid, immobile, airtight picture frame" (274).

demands that we discern the meaning of any single event only in temporal and spatial relationship to other events (1994:616).

With its attention to emplotment, narrative usefully reframes multiracial individuals' divergent conclusions about race in their personal relationships as not singular isolated phenomena but as the product of a culmination of narrated events, morals of stories told. For instance, in Chapter 3, many multiracial respondents ultimately come to see racial difference as an asset in their personal relationships as opposed to a liability, as it is traditionally perceived. Whereas a more categorical approach, such as those used in survey research, would surely highlight the sociological importance of such atypical claims, a narrative approach – with its attention to emplotment – illuminates how respondents' spatial and temporal arrangement of events in recounting these claims enable them to present what at the surface seems counter-intuitive in the end as logical and even morally correct.

Second, the relationality of narrative also makes it especially attuned to capturing race's dynamic, non-static character. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) have argued, "racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process," in which race is neither "an illusion we can somehow 'get beyond'" nor "something objective and fixed" (Omi and Winant 1994:55). Across disciplines, race scholars have turned to narrative to illuminate race's protean force in social relations. This has been especially seen in critical race theory, in which legal scholars have utilized narratives and storytelling to break through the alleged neutrality and objectivity of legal discourse (Bell 1987; Delgado 1989; Ross 1989). Although less prevalent, narrative has been utilized toward similar ends in the sociology of race and ethnicity, most notably in the study of whiteness (e.g. Frankenberg 1993) and color-blindness (e.g. Bonilla-Silva 2003). In these studies, close-examinations of people's stories and testimonies have illustrated how race and racism persist in seemingly race-less conditions. Likewise, through narrative's

attention to relationality, this dissertation is able to highlight the myriad ways race manifested in multiracial individuals' divergent accounts of their personal relationships. For example, in Chapter 5, a select number of respondents claim racial difference has not played a significant role in their closest relations. However, through an analysis of the narrative structure of these respondents' accounts, their "race-less" conclusions reveal to be the product of the subtle and not so subtle negation of instances in which racial difference impeded close relations.

This last example highlights a final but equally important feature of the application of narrative in this study. That is, although the task of applying a narrative approach is to assiduously discern (often retrospectively) the temporal and spatial relationship between narrated events, it is not the verisimilitude of narrators' accounts but rather their structural similarities that is of primary interest (Alexander 2004). In this sense, multiracial respondents' narrations are seen as "performances" akin to what Erving Goffman (1959) has called "presentations of self." They are taken as symbolically rich projections of what these multiracial individuals wish to convey about race in their personal relationships, however probable they might be. To explore how multiracial individuals narratively "present" race's role in their personal relations, this dissertation focuses on the exemplar case of Filipinos in the U.S.

Case

Filipinos serve as a propitious case study to examine multiraciality and personal relationships in the contemporary U.S., for Filipinos are an ethnic group that exemplifies the two key characteristics attributed for the rise in the U.S.'s multiracial population over the past three decades: 1) immigration and 2) intermarriage (Lee and Bean 2004).

First, Filipinos are the second largest immigrant group in the U.S., second only to Mexicans (Terrazas and Batalova 2010) (see Table 1.1). Due to their origins in the U.S.'s only

"former" formal colony in Asia (1899-1946), Filipinos have immigrated to the U.S. in sizeable numbers, compared to other Asian ethnic groups, throughout the twentieth century.[5] During the American colonial period, Filipinos were classified as American "nationals," in which they were ineligible for naturalized U.S. citizenship but were permitted to migrate to the U.S., most often as migrant labor recruited to replenish the labor pool diminished by U.S. bans on Chinese and Japanese immigration (Baldoz 2011). Although Filipino immigration was brought to a virtual halt with the Philippines' re-designation as a U.S. commonwealth in 1934 and an independent nation in 1946, within a decade the U.S. government enacted its colonial ties to recruit Filipino nationals as menial labor in the U.S. Navy (e.g. stewards) and in the health industry (i.e. nurses) (Espiritu 2003; Choy 2003). Both channels of immigration, rooted in U.S.-Philippine colonial relations, remained popular well beyond the eradication of nationality-based U.S. immigration quotas in 1965 (Espiritu 2003). The endurance of these historically-entrenched channels are reflected in the demographic makeup of interviewees (see Table 1.4), for the U.S. military and health industry comprised almost three-quarters of all routes of migration and settlement for respondents' Filipino relatives and often shaped the very circumstances in which respondents' parents met (see Andrews 2012).

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[5] The status of the Philippines as a "former" colony of the U.S. is debatable among scholars, for as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, when the Philippines gained formal independence from the U.S. in 1946, legal measures like the 1947 Military Bases Agreement – the terms of which were set during the colonial period – enabled the U.S. to maintain a neo-colonial relationship with the islands on through the rest of the twentieth century, including the full use of U.S. military bases for 99 years and the continued recruitment of Filipino nationals to serve in the U.S. Navy (Espiritu 2003).

Table 1.1. Total and Filipino Foreign-Born Populations, 1960-2008

Year	All foreign-born	Filipino foreign-born		
		Number	Percentage of all foreign born	Rank[6]
1960	9,738,091	104,843	1.1	21
1970	9,619,302	184,842	1.9	12
1980	14,079,906	501,440	3.6	8
1990	19,797,316	912,674	4.6	2
2000	31,107,889	1,369,070	4.4	2
2008	37,960,773	1,684,802	4.4	2

Source: Terrazas and Batalova 2010

Second, of U.S. Asian ethnic groups, Filipinos have one of the highest rates of out-marriage with both whites and non-whites (Le 2007) and of individuals who identify with more than one racial or ethnic group (25.2 percent) (Hoeffel et al. 2012) (see Tables 1.2 and 1.3).[7] In both rates of intermarriage and multi-race identification, Filipinos are only second to Japanese Americans. However, Japanese Americans' high rates of intermarriage and multi-race identification are attributed to their steadily declining rates of immigration (e.g. declining intra-group marriage pool) (King-O'Riain 2006). In contrast, Filipinos' high rates are attributed to their increased immigration, the demographic trend credited for the growth in intermarriage and the multiracial population in the U.S. more generally in the last half-century (Perlmann and Waters 2004; Lee and Bean 2004). Therefore, of U.S. Asian ethnic groups, Filipinos present the most exemplary case to represent the key demographic shifts in the U.S. racial landscape.

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[6] "Rank refers to the position of the Filipino born relative to other immigrant groups in terms of size of the population residing in the United States in a given census year" (Terrazas and Batalova 2010).

[7] As in much of the literature this dissertation engages, "out-marriage" and "intermarriage" are used interchangeably to refer to marriages between individuals of two or more different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Table 1.2. Marriage Patterns for the Six Largest U.S. Asian Ethnic Groups: 2010 U.S. Census

Ethnic group	Percentage of out-marriage by gender				
	Other Asian	White	Black	Latino	Other
Asian Indian					
Men	1.5	4.3	0.3	0.8	0.6
Women	0.9	4.7	0.5	0.4	0.7
Chinese					
Men	4.8	5.2	0.1	0.7	0.5
Women	3.5	14.5	0.3	0.9	0.8
Filipino					
Men	2.6	7.9	0.2	2.8	1.4
Women	2.6	27.0	2.6	3.7	2.6
Japanese					
Men	11.5	18.8	0.2	3.3	3.5
Women	8.0	38.1	2.1	3.2	4.1
Korean					
Men	2.9	5.3	0.2	0.9	0.4
Women	3.6	24.4	1.4	1.3	1.2
Vietnamese					
Men	3.4	2.8	0.0	0.5	0.6
Women	4.2	9.4	0.2	0.9	0.7

Source: Le 2012

Table 1.3. Multiple Racial/Ethnic Identification Patterns for the Six Largest U.S. Asian Ethnic Groups: 2010 U.S. Census

Ethnic group	Percentage of identification			
	Multiple Asian groups	One Asian group and another race(s)	Multiple Asian groups and another race(s)	Total
Asian Indian	2.4	7.6	0.7	10.7
Chinese	4.7	8.3	3.5	16.5
Filipino	2.8	18.9	3.5	25.2
Japanese	6.0	28.2	7.2	41.4
Korean	2.3	12.7	1.6	16.6
Vietnamese	4.9	5.4	0.7	11.0

Source: Hoeffel et al. 2012

Like its case selection, this study's methods of data collection and analysis are also particularly attuned to answering this dissertation's central research questions.

Methods

Data Collection

From Summer 2007 to Fall 2010, I conducted focused, face-to-face life story interviews with a total of 61 adults in southeastern Michigan and California's San Francisco-Bay Area. Fifty of these individuals were born to one Filipino parent and one black or white parent. The additional 11 included individuals who were of "mixed" Filipino/non-Filipino heritage but *both* of whose parents were of Filipino descent. In order to best capture how individuals *came to understand* the place of race in their personal relationships, I employed life story interviews, a humanistic method that continues to constitute an "underbelly" of social science research (Plummer 1983). I adapted the interview schedule from established life story methods (Atkinson 1998), and the interviews were "focused" in the sense that questions concentrated on the themes of race and personal relationships over the course of an individual's life. Interviews were supplemented by historical documents provided by respondents, such as family oral history documents and photographs. The life story interviews ranged from one hour to over five hours in length with the average lasting around two hours. When necessary (e.g. clarification purposes), I conducted follow-up interviews either in-person or by telephone.

Recognizing that rates of immigration and intermarriage vary by region, I conducted interviews in two disparate parts of the U.S. Beginning in southeastern Michigan, a region with a comparatively low Filipino population, I expanded my interviews to a region with a comparatively high Filipino population and higher rates of intermarriage and multi-race identification: the San Francisco-Bay Area (Terrazas and Batalova 2010; Jones and Bullock

2012). Further, given that all those I interviewed in Michigan were born to either Filipino-black or Filipino-white interracial relationships, for comparative purposes, I interviewed individuals born to similar relationships in California, despite the larger incidence of, for instance, Filipino-Mexican interracial relationships in the region (Guevarra 2012). Finally, I recruited prospective interviewees through snowball sampling methods, and to lessen the resultant potential for selection bias, I dispersed advertisements at a variety of venues in both regions, including local Filipino American, African American, mixed-race, and interracial family organizations and centers.

The average age of the interviewees was 27 with all but one respondent born between the mid-1970s to the late 1980s (see Table 1.4). Approximately 40 percent of the interviews were conducted in Michigan and 60 percent in California. Forty percent of interviewees were men, while 60 percent were women. Roughly 40 percent of respondents were born to a Filipino-black interracial relationship and just over 60 percent to a Filipino-white interracial relationship. Seventy-eight percent of the interviewees were born to a Filipina mother, and 76 percent of interviewees' Filipino parents were foreign-born.[8] Finally, the class status of respondents often was difficult to determine. Of those who explicitly indicated a class self-identification, some identified as "working class" while a majority of the others identified as "middle class." However, all respondents could be classified as "upwardly mobile," since at the time of the interviews all respondents had at least earned or were in the process of earning college degrees.

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[8] With 55 per cent of Filipinos in the U.S. foreign-born (Terrazas and Batalova 2010) and given the tendency for Filipina women (both foreign- and U.S.-born) to out-marry at higher rates than Filipino men (Le 2007), these trends roughly correspond with general characteristics of Filipinos in the U.S.

Table 1.4. Respondent Demographic Makeup

Demographic Category	Percentage	Respondent Example
Race/Ethnicity of Parents		
Filipino-white	64 (32/50)	Zach Bell
Filipino-black	36 (18/50)	Cristina Berry
Race/Ethnicity of Parents by Gender		
Filipino mother-white father	48 (24/50)	Andrew Fowler
Filipino mother-black father	30 (15/50)	Dennis Reed
Filipino father-white mother	16 (8/50)	Josh Bautista
Filipino father-black mother	6 (3/50)	Ryan Galang
Gender of Interviewee		
Women	60 (30/50)	Allison Rudkus
Men	40 (20/50)	Mark MacDonald
Region		
California	62 (31/50)	Tony Mendoza
Michigan	38 (19/50)	Noah Fischer
Generation of Filipino Parent		
Philippine-born (1 and 1.5 gen.)	76 (38/50)	Cathryn Mahoney
U.S.-born (2 gen.)	24 (12/50)	Ben Campbell
Migration/Settlement Route of Filipino Parent[9]		
Military (e.g. military bride)	52 (26/50)	Shannon Hart, Robert Lawson
Health Industry (e.g. nurse)	20 (10/50)	Danise James
Other		
Professional (e.g. education)	14 (7/50)	Gwen Knight
Non-Professional (e.g. pen pal, migrant labor)	20 (10/50)	Anna-Marie Charles

Data Analysis

In my data analysis, I sought to identify general trends in the interviews while remaining

attentive to the particularities of individuals' accounts. Therefore, I employed a combination of

humanistic and social science methods: narrative analysis (Somers 1994; Riessman 2007) and

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[9] The percentages in this category add to over 100 percent. This is due to overlap that occasionally occurred between migration/settlement routes within a single respondent's biography. For example, in the case of one interviewee, Jon Barrow (not included in dissertation examples), his Filipina mother met his African American father through one migration/settlement route: the health industry (i.e. She was a nurse assistant at the elderly care facility he managed). However, her migration to the U.S. was enabled by another migration/settlement route: the U.S. military. Specifically, Jon's maternal uncle petitioned Jon's mother upon receiving U.S. citizenship for his service in the U.S. Navy as a Filipino national. Thus, Jon is counted under two routes, one that enabled his mother to immigrate to the U.S. and the other that enabled Jon's parents to meet.

grounded theory (Charmaz 2006). While, as discussed earlier, the former enabled an

examination of event-centered meaning-making *within* each interview, the latter facilitated a

consideration of how these processes patterned *across* them. In addition, I organized and

managed my data analyses with the aid of qualitative analysis software program Atlas.ti.

Positionality

Born to a white (Danish/Scottish) father and a mother born to an African American father

and Filipina mother, I entered this project as an individual with a somewhat similar racial

background as those I interviewed. Generally, I found that my particular racial background often

afforded me "insider status" among both respondents born to white-Filipino relationships and

respondents born to black-Filipino relationships (Twine 2000).[10] This was indicated in various

ways but most frequently through interviewees' periodic use of the first-person plural "we" in

reference to me, suggesting a common understanding most often as a fellow mixed-race

individual.[11] Commonalities in both race and sexuality also aided the recruitment of

respondents. That is, my pre-existing membership in Filipino, mixed-race, and gay networks in

both southeastern Michigan and the San Francisco-Bay Area opened multiple channels to meet

various members of what many might consider a hard-to-reach population, especially given its

specificity. However, differences between me and the respondents made me at times an

"outsider" as well.

Two differences were particularly notable in prompting my "outsider" status: 1) my

racially ambiguous phenotype and 2) my association with the university as a researcher. First,

although in the end I feel my particular racial background initiated trust and comfort among

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[10] See Young 2004:207-10, for a useful account of how commonalities, such as in age, race, gender, and class, can as much inhibit as enhance the interview process.
[11] See Twine (2000) for a thorough examination of the benefits and limitations of racial "insiderness" and the model of "racial matching" in general in interview-based/ethnographic research.

respondents, at least initially, my ability to pass as Latino, Middle Eastern, and even white

seemed to elicit hesitance for some interviewees who until learning my background, for instance,

did not know how much I might know about the experiences and cultures of Filipinos and

African Americans. However, I found my outsider status was most salient in respect to my

associations with the university. In various cases, respondents expressed initial skepticism,

sometimes cloaked in the form of curiosity, about the intentions of my project and my

"hypotheses." In the case of one respondent, Ryan Galang, both my ambiguous racial

background and my university affiliation intersected as an early obstacle in establishing trust.

That is, Ryan, who was born to a Filipino father and African American mother, explained that,

when he saw my Anglo surname on my project advertisement, he assumed I was "an old white

man" and that he did not want to be "studied" like an "anthropology study." It was only when he

was referred to my study by a trusted friend at a local Filipino community center that he

contacted me to participate. However, this "outsider" status was not always an obstacle to

valuable data. As illustrated in the case of Andrew Fowler in Chapter 5, respondents' skepticism

of my intentions as a researcher also illuminated their perceptions of academic and societal views

of interracial families and mixed-race individuals, in Andrew's case, as "abnormal" and

"scarred."

Thus, while my status as both an "insider" and "outsider" did pose (initial) limitations in

the interview process, it was often a rich source of data as well (see Merton 1972).

General Findings

Before outlining the organization of this dissertation, it bears discussing two general

findings from the interviews with multiracial respondents that carried across many of their

accounts: 1) central dilemma and 2) close vs. not close relationships. Both are foundational in

that the first provided the impetus or "crisis" for many respondents' narratives and the other served as a shared language through which respondents articulated their stories.

Central Dilemma

Although multiracial respondents eventually came to varied conclusions on the role of racial difference in their personal relationships, almost all recalled that, at least one time in their lives, they were made to feel that racial difference was a liability to the formation of close, personal relationships, whether that was in their families, friendships, or romantic relations. This presented a "central dilemma" for many of them that manifested in two primary ways. First, respondents were made to feel that their families were abnormal and even unstable because they were interracial, such as assumptions that their parents were divorced or that, due to phenotypic differences, they were not biologically related to their parents or siblings. Second, as mixed-race, multiracial respondents expressed difficulty forming close friendships in public settings, such as school, where same-race friendships were the norm. In the words of one interviewee, being mixed-race presented a "paradox" ("I'm both, but I'm neither"), in which they felt they did not "fit" within established monoracial groups, especially if they were racially ambiguous.

Both manifestations of this central dilemma reflect realities scholars have noted mixed-race individuals and their interracial families can often face. For instance, the first dilemma highlights negative stereotypes many interracial couples and families confront, in which interracial romantic relations are assumed to be non-lasting (e.g. high rates of divorce) often at the expense of the mixed-race children (Childs 2005; Campbell and Eggerling-Boeck 2006).[12] In addition, the second dilemma reflects a disadvantage commonly discussed in early multiracial

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[12] This stereotype is often invoked by opponents to interracial marriage and was evidenced in 2009 in the highly publicized denial of a marriage license to an interracial couple in Louisiana by a local justice of the peace, who in his reasoning explained: "My main concern is for the children…I don't do interracial marriages because I don't want to put children in a situation they didn't bring on themselves… In my heart, I feel the children will later suffer" ("Interracial Couple Denied Marriage" 2009).

scholarship, especially psychological studies, in which mixed-race individuals reported feelings of loneliness and isolation due to the lack of acceptance from monoracial groups, what some scholars termed feeling "betwixt and between" (Root 1992; Root 1996). Although this central dilemma was not the defining characteristic of all respondents' accounts, it often served as the catalyst in their narratives, providing the "crisis" respondents sought to solve. The second general finding provided the language through which many multiracial respondents articulated this dilemma and their efforts to resolve it.

Close vs. Not Close Relationships

All multiracial respondents, irrespective of their ultimate conclusions, shared similar definitions of what did and did not constitute a "close" relationship. Respondents described "close" relationships as trustworthy, genuine, welcoming, and often comprised of individuals similar to them. In contrast, "not close" relations were the opposite: untrustworthy, superficial, rude, and comprised of individuals deemed dissimilar to respondents. Respondents drew upon these shared definitions to articulate the role of racial difference in their personal relationships. Further, these definitions often manifested as oppositions, in which examples of close relations were often, implicitly or explicitly, accompanied by those of not close relations (see Table 1.5). In this sense, these definitions manifested akin to what cultural sociologists have called "binary codes" (Alexander and Smith 1993; Somers 1995). For instance, when invoked in respondents' narratives, these close vs. not close distinctions often took the form of "zero-sum dichotomies" that imbued respondents' accounts with added moral force (Somers 2008:280). This is especially shown in Chapter 3, where respondents transformed racial difference from a liability to an asset in their personal relations through their manipulation of these distinctions. For example, respondents described interracial relationships as *not* "not close" (e.g. superficial,

untrustworthy, uncomfortable), as they traditionally have been perceived, but rather as paragons of "close" relations (e.g. genuine, trustworthy, comfortable).

Table 1.5. Close vs. Not Close Distinctions

Close	Not Close
Sentiments	
Similar	Dissimilar
Familiar/"Knowing" Someone	Unfamiliar/Not "Knowing" Someone
Trustworthy	Untrustworthy/Deceitful
Genuine	Superficial
Comfortable	Uncomfortable/Awkward
Kind/Welcoming	Mean/Rude
Willingness/Choice	Forced/Dependent
Mutual Respect	Self-Centered
Romantic Love	Pragmatic Love
Actions	
Open Communication	Non-Open Communication
Sustained Interaction	Un-Sustained Interaction
Agreement/Ease	Disagreement/Tension

The salience of these definitions corroborates assertions made by cultural sociologists (Swidler 2001; Gross 2005), who have contended that, despite arguments that social and economic changes over the past century have "de-traditionalized" intimate relations (e.g. Giddens 1992), certain traditional beliefs about intimacy, such as what constitutes "romantic love," still resonate strongly with the American public. Further, multiracial respondents drew on these definitions to describe *all* types of personal relationships (e.g. family, friendships, romantic relations) with the exception of one distinction: romantic love vs. pragmatic love. As will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 4, this distinction was most often invoked in respondents' discussions of their parents' relationships and was gendered, mostly used by female respondents.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters in total. This introductory chapter, Chapter 1, has reviewed relevant literature, presented this dissertation's central case and methods, and outlined general findings to frame multiracial respondents' divergent conclusions on interracial relations. Chapter 2, "'Personal Troubles' as 'Public Issues,'" examines three general themes that arose in respondents' accounts: 1) the increasing acceptance of interracial relationships, 2) regional differences in acceptance, and 3) negative images of Asian women as "good wives" and "military brides." In doing so, this chapter maps a macro context within which to situate multiracial respondents' divergent conclusions about the role of race in their personal relations. Chapters 3-5 are the dissertation's central chapters. Each focuses on a different conclusion respondents reached about the place of racial difference in their personal relationships.

Chapter 3, "From a Liability to an Asset," examines the most common conclusion. That is, it explores how approximately three-quarters of respondents, across demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, parentage, region), recalled eventually coming to see racial difference as neither ceasing nor enduring as an obstacle but as an integral, compatible part of their closest relationships. Interviewees "presented" this seemingly counterintuitive claim through telling a common story, what I term a *reconciliation narrative*, through three *narrative strategies*: 1) legitimization, 2) naturalization, and 3) disassociation.

Chapter 4, "'It's more complicated,'" examines the second most common conclusion respondents reached. Expressed by roughly one-quarter of respondents, this conclusion was more ambivalent in its position and the product of the irresolution of opposing perspectives on interracial relationships. Specifically, respondents' efforts to present racial difference as an asset were complicated by their exposure to counter-narratives in college, such as university courses

and study abroad programs, that highlighted persistent racial and gender inequalities (e.g. racialized desire, sex industry in the Philippines) that can impede the formation of close, personal relations. The uneasy co-existence of these opposing narratives led respondents to tell, what I term, *discordant narratives*, in which respondents ultimately felt they could neither wholly embrace nor completely reject the possibility of close, interracial relationships.

Chapter 5, "Foils and Foreclosures," focuses on the outlier cases of three male respondents who did not see racial difference as playing a significant role at all in their closest relations. These multiracial respondents denied the significance of racial difference through two *negation strategies*: 1) foils and 2) foreclosures. Through these strategies, these respondents were able to present "non-narrative" portrayals of their personal lives, in which their closest relations were stable, changeless, and most importantly, absent of race-related "crises."

Finally, the concluding chapter, Chapter 6, synthesizes this dissertation's main findings, illustrates their contributions to the sociological study of race and personal relationships, multiraciality, and narrative, and considers their implications for future scholarly inquiry.

Chapter 2

"Personal Troubles" as "Public Issues":
Contextualizing Perceptions of Interracial Relationships

Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues (Mills 1959:226).

Introduction

This chapter contextualizes multiracial respondents' varied perceptions of interracial relationships in the U.S. today. I examine three general themes that arose in respondents' reflections on the subject: 1) the increasing acceptance of interracial relationships, 2) regional differences in acceptance, and 3) negative images of Asian women as "good wives" and "military brides." Using C. Wright Mills' concept of the "sociological imagination," I position these themes as not merely the "personal troubles" of respondents but as indicative of larger "public issues" in contemporary society, including shifting public attitudes toward interracial relationships, regional Asian immigration and reception, and persistent gender and sexual stereotypes of Asian women. By illuminating linkages between respondents' individual perceptions and larger social patterns, this chapter maps a macro context within which to situate multiracial respondents' divergent conclusions about the role of race in their personal relationships in the following chapters.

"Personal Troubles" as "Public Issues"

In his classic treatise on the promise of sociology, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), C. Wright Mills identified a problem that often plagues the everyday individual: "[people] do not

usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional

contradiction" (1). To remedy this disconnect, Mills offered the "sociological imagination."

According to Mills, the sociological imagination "enables its possessor to understand the larger

historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of

individuals" (1959:5). A central feature of this interconnected world view is the distinction

between what Mills called the "personal troubles of the milieu" and the "public issues of social

structure" (1959:8). Whereas personal troubles "have to do with [the] self and with those limited

areas of social life of which [the self] is directly and personally aware," public issues "have to do

with the organization of many such milieu into the institutions of an historical society as whole"

(1959:8). The sociological imagination illuminates linkages between the two and, as such,

provides a useful analytical tool to reframe multiracial respondents' key "personal troubles"

around interracial relationships as indicative of larger "public issues" in U.S. race relations.

Next, I will discuss three general themes or "public issues" related to interracial

relationships that arose in respondents' accounts: 1) changing attitudes toward interracial

relationships, 2) regional difference and Asian immigration, and 3) gender and sexual stereotypes

of Asian women. To illustrate how respondents' perceptions reflect these larger social trends, I

complement examples from respondents' accounts with secondary survey data.

Changing Attitudes toward Interracial Relationships

In recalling how she came to view being mixed-race as an asset in her personal relations,

respondent Allison Rudkus, the daughter of a Filipina mother and white father in the Detroit

suburbs, noted a growing acceptance of interracial relationships: "People are more apt to what's

going on, and [being mixed is] more frequent now." Such statements were common among

many multiracial respondents, especially those who, like Allison, came to view racial difference

as an asset in their personal relationships. However, applying Mills' concept of sociological imagination, their observations of the increased acceptance of interracial relationships can be seen as not only aiding respondents' positive conclusions about race's role in their personal relations but also as shedding light on changing public attitudes toward interracial relationships in the U.S. more generally.

Although infrequently mentioned in respondents' accounts, the most dramatic change in public attitudes toward interracial relationships over the course of the twentieth century has been opposition to "anti-miscegenation laws" or laws that banned interracial intimate relationships, most especially marriage. Sociologists have found that popular support for these laws have decreased steadily since the 1960s, with approximately 40 percent opposing anti-miscegenation laws in the early 1960s to nearly 90 percent opposing these laws by the mid-1990s (Schuman et al. 1997:118). Again, although referenced by only a few respondents, in the few cases that respondents did explicitly mention these laws, it was to emphasize the hostility toward interracial relationships in the past. In the process, they implicitly conveyed a similar message of growing disapproval for anti-miscegenation laws. For instance, respondent Naomi Wilson, the one respondent who was born before such laws were found unconstitutional in 1967 (*Loving v. Virginia*), referenced anti-miscegenation laws to highlight how "taboo" it was for her Filipina mother to be married to her African American father in 1960s Detroit:

> My mom's Filipina, but she has real white skin, so during that time, during like anti-miscegenation laws and things like that-, I don't think we had anti-miscegenation laws in Michigan at the time, but, it was like a taboo thing for, you know, bi-racial couples to be together.

Because the disapproval of anti-miscegenation laws has become near universal in recent decades, many researchers have even questioned the continued utility of questions on the subject

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in survey research (Schuman et al. 1997; Herman and Campbell 2012). Respondents' accounts also reflected growing public approval of interracial relationships in general.

Like with the disapproval of anti-miscegenation laws, there has been a steady rise in approval of interracial relationships across types (e.g. marriage, dating, friendship) over the course of the twentieth century. For instance, in 1958, 40 percent of whites disapproved of anti-miscegenation laws but only 10 percent approved of interracial marriage (Krysan and Faison 2009; Schuman et al. 1997). However, by 2004, approval of interracial marriage and dating rose to 76 percent (Bobo 2004). As illustrated in this section's opening quote from Allison, many multiracial respondents made similar observations. Although many of these respondents often cited incidents in their past where they felt their interracial families and friendships were not accepted by others, ultimately many described the U.S. today as more open to interracial relationships, whether dating or friendships. For example, Josh Bautista, who was born in the late 1970s to a Filipino father and white mother in California's East Bay, exclaimed: "What's great about today's world is it's much more meshed together. There's a lot of blurred lines. When I went to high school, it was still very segregated." However, despite the positive sentiments shown in respondents' accounts and in general public opinion, all interracial relationships are still not uniformly embraced.[13] For instance, white men tend to report more willingness to engage in interracial relationships with Asian women, and white women are more willing to engage in interracial relationships with black men (Herman and Campbell 2012).[14] The former

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[13] There has been comparatively little research conducted, especially longitudinal studies, on attitudes toward interracial friendships. The research done has shown that negative attitudes toward cross-race friendships do persist. For example, using "trust" as a proxy for willingness to engage in interracial friendships, according to a 2006 national survey 40 percent of Americans said that almost all the people they trust are the same race as them, whereas only 20 percent said that those they trusted were evenly divided between same and different races (GSS 2006).

[14] Scholars have attributed these discrepancies to gender and sexual stereotypes that hyper-feminize Asian men and women, making the former less attractive to white women and the latter more attractive to white men, and hyper-masculinize black women and men, making the former less attractive to white men and the latter more attractive to white women (Feliciano, Robnett, and Komaie 2009; Robnett and Feliciano 2011).

trend was frequently cited by multiracial respondents, especially female respondents, and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Nevertheless, public approval of interracial relationships has steadily increased, and many multiracial respondents' perceptions reflect these larger social trends. However, it is in actual rates of interracial relationships that persistent racial divisions are most apparent.

In describing more accepting attitudes toward interracial relationships, many multiracial respondents pointed to higher rates of interracial relationships, especially marriage, today. For instance, Hanna Wright, the daughter of a Filipina mother and white father from San Francisco, attributed her unease with being mixed-race during her elementary school years to the lower incidence of interracial marriages:

> At the time, it was still kind of-, it wasn't as prevalent as it is now where most kids' parents married within their race, so it was just, you know, anything that you feel that sets you apart from your peers, you automatically feel weird about.

Indeed, as Hannah asserts, rates of interracial marriage as well as dating have increased in the U.S. over the past few decades. In 2010, approximately 15 percent of all new marriages in the U.S. were interracial or interethnic, more than double than in 1980 (6.7 percent) (Wang 2012). Further, about half of Americans have dated someone from a different racial group, with recent cohorts of younger adults increasingly more likely to date interracially (Joyner and Kao 2005; Poulin and Rutter 2011). However, despite these increases, rates of interracial relationships have been far outpaced by attitudes toward interracial relationships and anti-miscegenation laws. For instance, shown in Figure 2.1, by the 1990s, opposition to anti-miscegenation laws and approval of intermarriage rose significantly to over 75 percent, whereas actual rates of intermarriage remained at just over 10 percent.

Figure 2.1. Attitudes Toward vs. Rates of Intermarriage
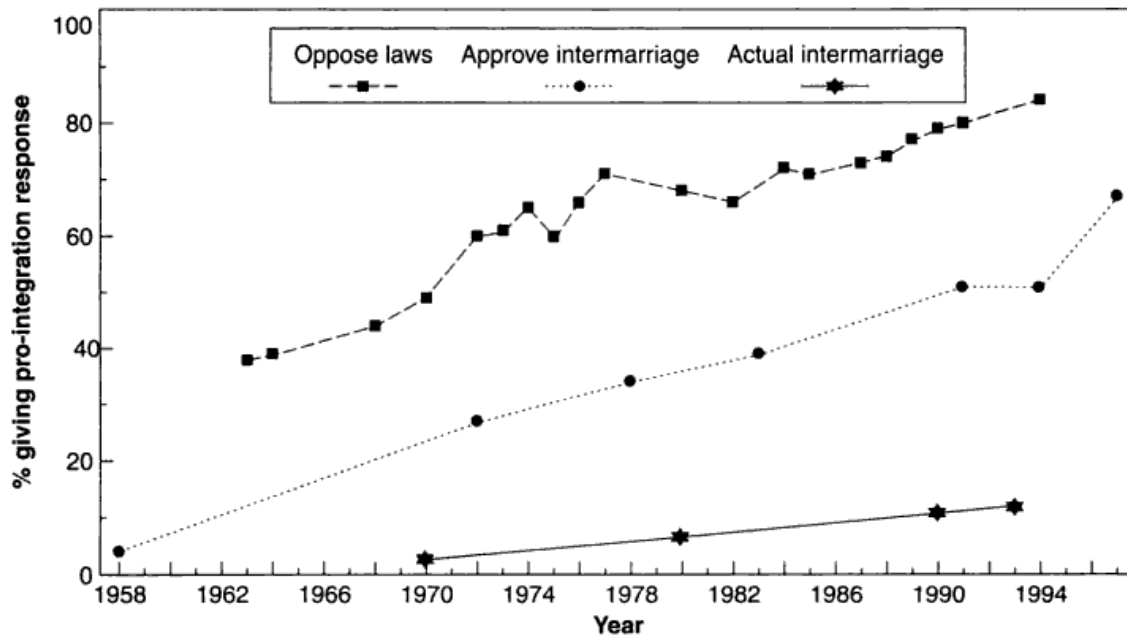
Source: Schuman et al. 1997:313

The slower ascendance in rates of interracial relationships has been attributed to several

factors, especially residential segregation that continues to limit interracial interaction (Massey

and Denton 1993; Charles 2000). A number of multiracial respondents' accounts reflected these

public trends. However, when respondents described persistent obstacles to interracial

relationships, it was often continued racial and ethnic prejudices toward interracial marriage and

dating. For instance, Dennis Reed, who was born to a Filipina mother and African American

father in San Francisco, recalled how his Filipino family disapproved of his parents' marriage,

explaining that out-marriage with blacks is still "a taboo thing in a lot of Asian, Filipino

families."[15] Further, respondent Noah Fischer, who was born to a Filipina mother and white

father in southeastern Michigan, recalled experiencing inter-ethnic prejudice when the family of

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[15] In 2008, of the new Asian American out-marriages only 7 percent were with blacks compared to 75 with whites (Passel, Wang, and Taylor 2010).

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his Korean American ex-girlfriend refused to accept their relationship: "Her parents completely hated me mainly 'cause I was Filipino. They said that Filipinos are lazy and like to party a lot, and they wanted to have nothing to do with me."[16] Thus, while multiracial respondents' perceptions of interracial relationships generally reflected more accepting public attitudes toward interracial relationships in the U.S., they also illuminated some of the racial divisions that continue to impede actual rates of interracial relationships.

Regional Difference and Asian Immigration

To aid her assertion that being mixed-race is "more frequent now," Allison Rudkus, quoted in the preceding section, added: "In California [being mixed] is probably everywhere, but around here, it's becoming more, not more of a norm, but you see it more, and you know." Many multiracial respondents made similar regional distinctions in their accounts, no matter their views of interracial relationships. That is, irrespective of their region of origin, many respondents saw the West Coast, especially California, as a place where interracial relationships and Asian Americans, especially Filipinos, were, in Allison's words, "everywhere." In contrast, they saw regions like the Midwest and the South as places where interracial relationships and being of Asian descent were not "the norm" and were more susceptible to racial discrimination. While at first glance, respondents' distinctions might seem only to perpetuate regional stereotypes, upon closer examination they reflect larger regional trends in interracial relationships (i.e. attitudes and rates) and local histories of Asian immigration and reception.

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[16] I was unable to find data on rates of Asian American interethnic marriage by Asian ethnic group. Further, in addition to anti-Filipino prejudice within Asian American communities, Filipino inclusion in the category of "Asian" has long been a contentious issue. Due to a range of factors, including generally darker phenotypes and a history of both Spanish and U.S. colonialism, Filipinos have formed separate political organizations, such as the "Brown Caucus" during the Asian American Movement of the 1960s (Espiritu 1992), and even dispensed with identification with the category "Asian" altogether, instead claiming "Filipino," "Pacific Islander," or "Latino" (Espiritu and Omi 2000; Ocampo 2011).

Attitudes toward and actual rates of interracial relationships vary by U.S. region, whether it is marriage, dating, or friendship. For instance, studies have found that people outside of the South (Schuman et al. 1997) and particularly in the West (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1990; Yancey 2001) tend to be more accepting of interracial marriage. Further, while disapproval of anti-miscegenation laws has risen steadily over the last half-century, these laws still maintain a higher level of support in the South (Altman and Klinker 2006). Multiracial respondents' regional distinctions reflect these geographic trends. Respondents, like Lauren Brooks, who was born to a Filipina mother and white father in Michigan, saw the South as less accepting of interracial relationships and being mixed race. Lauren recalled feeling most conscious of being mixed-race during trips to Georgia to visit her father's family:

> I just remember becoming more conflicted as I started to notice more of the sort of engrained racism that's there. Like, there was always that sort of connotation or walking in the supermarket with my dad and calling out his name and having people look at us differently, getting strange looks because I look so different from my dad and actually one woman asked if I was adopted.

Respondents expressed similar sentiments about the Midwest. For example, Jacob Ramirez, who was born to a Filipino father and white mother in southeastern Michigan, criticized what he called "the Midwestern lifestyle," which he described as racially "homogenous" and "ignorant." In fact, after recalling an anti-Asian remark recently made by a white peer, Jacob brashly asserted: "When I'm older, I know for a fact that I don't want to live in the Midwest." These negative perceptions of the Midwest and the South greatly contrasted respondents' perceptions of the West.

For many multiracial respondents the Western U.S., especially California, was more accepting of interracial relationships and being mixed-race. They attributed this largely to the regions' greater racial diversity. For instance, Shannon Hart, who was born to a Filipina mother

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and white father, recalled being around many other mixed-race individuals in high school not only because the school was located near a military base, where interracial families are common, but also simply because it was in California: "You had a lot of military kids, and so there were a number of biracial, multiracial children from that, and you know, just generally too. It is California after all." Respondents who had never been to the West Coast made similar claims. They assumed that due to the region's racial diversity, interracial relationships and mixed-race individuals are, to quote Allison again, "probably everywhere." However, regional trends show that respondents were not far off in their assumptions.

Interracial dating, marriage, and friendships are all associated with growing up in more racially diverse communities or attending more diverse schools (Fujino 1997; Hwang, Saenz, and Aguirre 1997; Harris and Ono 2000; Quillian and Campbell 2003). Nearly half of the Western U.S.'s population is "minority" (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011), and studies have found that those living in the West are less likely to restrict their dating to same-race partners (Yancey 2002). Further, according to the 2010 Census, a significant proportion of the U.S.'s multiracial population resides in the West, with California containing approximately 20 percent, whereas, for instance, Michigan contains only 2.5 percent (Jones and Bullock 2012). Respondents made similar geographic distinctions in their perceptions of regions' levels of Asian immigration and settlement, and like their perceptions of interracial relationships, respondents' personal observations often reflected larger public trends.

Because all multiracial respondents were of Asian descent, it was not a surprise that their perceptions of the regional acceptance of interracial relationships were accompanied by observations of regions' levels of Asian immigration and reception. Many respondents saw the West as having larger Asian populations and as more receptive to Asian immigration. In

contrast, many perceived the Midwest in particular as having smaller Asian populations and as

less receptive to Asian immigration (e.g. anti-Asian/immigrant sentiment). For instance, Mark

MacDonald, who was born to a Filipina mother and white father in southeastern Michigan,

recalled almost enviously the large number of Filipinos in California compared to Michigan: "I

have relatives that are in California that are from my mom's side. They're all over. It's like,

'Dang! I've never seen so many [Filipinos] in my life!'" Mark's observations, like several

other respondents', reflect regional trends in Filipino and Asian population concentrations. For

instance, as shown in Table 2.1, California has been the primary destination for Filipino

immigrants for the past half century.[17] In addition, the West, in general, contains 46 percent of

the U.S.'s entire Asian population, whereas the Midwest contains only 12 percent, the lowest of

all U.S. regions (Hoeffel et al. 2012). Respondents made more explicit connections between

perceptions of Asian immigration and the acceptance of interracial relationships in their

reflections on the regional reception of Asian immigrants.

Table 2.1. U.S. Destinations of Filipino Immigrants in Selected Years

Year	Percentage in Top Three Destinations	Most Common U.S. Destinations		
		First	*Second*	*Third*
1967	25.6	San Francisco	Honolulu	New York
1975	20.1	San Francisco	Los Angeles	Honolulu
1979	17.8	San Francisco	Los Angeles	Honolulu
1984	28.1	Los Angeles	San Francisco	Honolulu
1987	30.0	Los Angeles	San Francisco	San Diego
1993	26.0	Los Angeles	New York	San Diego
1997	24.8	Los Angeles	Honolulu	San Diego
2002	20.9	Los Angeles	San Diego	Chicago

Source: Portes and Rumbaut [1990] 2006:57.

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[17] This has been due not only to the presence of large established Filipino communities in Los Angeles and the San Francisco-Bay Area but also to historical relations between the U.S. and the Philippines. For instance, the recruitment of Filipino nationals to serve as subordinate personnel in the U.S. Navy accounts for the sizeable concentration of Filipinos in Pacific fleet ports, like San Diego (Portes and Rumbaut [1990] 2006:52).

In addition to population size, some multiracial respondents made regional distinctions in Asian immigrant reception, more specifically whether or not anti-Asian sentiment was likely in the region. Although the Western U.S. has had a long history of anti-Asian racism, including laws banning Asian immigration and Asian-white intermarriage (Takaki 1989), for some respondents the Midwest's more recent and publicized history of anti-Asian sentiment led them to perceive the region as having greater "racial tensions" and, by extension, as less accepting of interracial relationships. This is exemplified in the account of one respondent, Christopher Schulman, who was born in the mid-1970s to a Filipina mother and white father in Detroit. In recalling how both his Filipina mother and grandmother have been victims of anti-Asian discrimination (e.g. racial epithets) in southeastern Michigan, Christopher pointed to Michigan's history of anti-Asian sentiment:

> In the 80s Detroit was kind of like a weird place to be Asian 'cause as the auto industry was going through a decline, there was like a huge backlash through the auto industry. All these workers were being laid off. There was like a backlash against Japanese cars and Japanese people, and there were like campaigns on the radio. Like you could come down to a parking lot and smash a Toyota with like sledgehammers and stuff. I can't imagine that that did too much to like ease racial tensions, you know…I think in Detroit there's like this sort of thing where all sorts of Asian Americans get lumped together, oppressed together. Like, with the Vincent Chin case…

Christopher went on to describe the 1982 murder of Chinese American autoworker Vincent Chin. Chin was killed by two white autoworkers who were recently laid off and blamed the rising Japanese auto-industry (Zia 2000). While considered a significant event in Asian American history (Chan 1991), for Christopher, Chin's murder also represented the same anti-Asian sentiment behind his mother and grandmother's negative experiences in the region. In other words, Christopher understood his "personal troubles" (i.e. family experiences of racism) were indicative of larger "public issues" (i.e. regional history of anti-Asian sentiment). As such, Christopher's example illustrates further how region played a significant role in respondents'

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perceptions of the relative acceptance of interracial relationships today as well as how these perceptions often reflect larger public trends in interracial relations in the U.S.

Gender and Sexual Stereotypes of Asian Women

When I asked Grace Myers, who was born to a Filipina mother and African American father in Oakland, how her parents met, she quickly replied: "Not the military! People always assume just because my father's black that they met through the military." For respondent, Nora Evans, who was born to a Filipina mother and white father in southeastern Michigan, the assumption was that her mother was a mail-order-bride: "My dad was like thirty years older than [my mom], so I always felt that people were thinking that when people saw her with him." Both of these responses were relatively common among interviewees with Filipina mothers, especially female respondents. As with the previous themes discussed, these respondents' reactions are more than mere "personal troubles" but are indicative of larger "public issues." Specifically, they reflect enduring gender and sexual stereotypes of Asian, especially Filipina, women as "good wives" and "military brides," stereotypes that are steeped in historical asymmetrical relations between the U.S. and Asia.

Several multiracial respondents, like Nora Evans above, complained that many people assume that their Filipina mothers met their black or white American fathers through mail-order-bride or correspondence (pen pal) services. These services, geared toward connecting men in the U.S. and other Western countries with women mostly in Asia, are often driven by stereotypes that Asian women make "good wives" who are subservient, loyal, and family-oriented (Constable 2003; Nemoto 2009). Some have argued that these hyper-feminized images of Asian women rose in popularity in the U.S. after World War II with the increased visibility of intermarriage between Asian women and white men (Nemoto 2009:39). However, the Asian

"good wife" gained greater circulation through increased globalization in the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly the rise of internet-based mail-order-bride and pen pal services. Respondents often referenced these services when expressing their troubles with the "good wife" stereotype.

Mail-order-bride and correspondence service internet sites often utilize the image of the docile, traditional Asian woman to attract Western, largely white, men seeking wives (Constable 2003; Ignacio 2005). On these websites, Asian women are advertised as "upstanding and gentle" and as valuing "tradition, home, family, and fidelity" (Constable 2003:96). Filipina women are even distinguished as "by nature and culture, very devoted, caring, old fashioned, loving and unselfish" (Constable 2003:97). For many female respondents, like Anna-Marie Charles who was born to a Filipina mother and white father, their displeasure with these images were their presentation of Filipina women as objects of sexual desire. Anna-Marie recalled the first time she saw a mail-order-bride site:

> You'd literally have a shopping cart icon, and they would market it as, "Oh, Filipinas do everything for you. They don't complain. They don't do this. They don't do that. They make the perfect wife," like totally feeding into all these awful stereotypes that make these men think, "Oh, they are just subservient women that will do whatever I say." That really affected me.

Several respondents also explained that these stereotypes led many, sometimes even themselves, to question the propriety of interracial relationships between Asian women and non-Asian men. Specifically, they wondered if these relationships were driven by "romance" or by more "pragmatic" interests (e.g. racialized desire). For example, Anna-Marie recalled this struggle when she learned that her parents met through a pen pal service:

> My mom married my dad because she needed to get out of the ghetto…Then my dad just needed a wife, so it was very much like marriage for convenience, and I just couldn't really deal with that fact. I always wanted to believe that my parents were like madly in

love like you saw in the movies, and I was like going through it I remember trying to come to terms with that, that my parents were more just like friends.

This struggle also surfaced in respondents' discussions of negative images of Asian "military brides."

Several multiracial respondents explained that people often assumed that their Filipina mothers met their black or white American fathers through the military. Because, as mentioned in Chapter 1, over half of respondents had familial links to the U.S. military, a sizeable number of multiracial respondents' parents did meet through the U.S. military. However, what troubled these respondents, especially those whose parents did not meet through the military, were the negative stereotypes associated with Asian "military brides." For example, Naomi Wilson, mentioned earlier in this chapter, decried other's assumptions that her mother was a "G.I. bride":

> I get tired of having to explain myself, explain my family, explain to people, you know, that my mother did not marry during the war. She is not a G.I. bride. She is not any of the stereotypes associated with Asian women during war time, you know, coming to America. She did not come here for citizenship, and things like that.

Another negative stereotype associated with Asian military brides is that they met their American husbands working as sex workers around U.S. military bases throughout Asia. Similar to stereotypes of the Asian "good wife," these negative images of Asian military brides reflect larger public issues, in this case the long history of U.S. militarization in Asia.

The aforementioned rise in visibility of intermarriages between Asian women and white men in the U.S. after World War II was due in large part to the U.S. military presence in Asia. The War Brides Act of 1945 allowed exceptions to existing anti-miscegenation laws and permitted approximately 150,000 Asian military brides to immigrate to the U.S. between 1947 and 1975, many of whom were Filipina (Glenn 1988; Saenz, Hwang, and Aguirre 1994). In the case of Filipinos, military brides extend as far back as 1899 with the onset of the Philippine-

American War. However, for many multiracial respondents, "military bride" referred to women (i.e. respondents' Filipina mothers) who met American servicemen (i.e. respondent's fathers) in the economies that proliferated around U.S. military bases in the Philippines in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Although the Philippines gained "formal" independence from the U.S. in 1946, a series of legal agreements between the U.S. and the Philippines, beginning with the 1947 Military Bases Agreement – the terms of which were set during the colonial period – enabled the military to be equally if not more a part of the daily lives of Filipinos. The presence of the U.S.'s two largest overseas military installations – Clark Air Force Base in Angeles City and Subic Bay Naval Base in Olongapo City – drew a constant influx of U.S. servicemen, like several respondents' fathers, through the islands. Further, often reliant on civilian labor, military bases and the surrounding areas attracted many Filipinos, like several respondents' mothers, looking for job opportunities. Negative stereotypes of Asian military brides arise largely from their association with one occupation common around these U.S. military bases: female prostitution.

In military bases throughout Asia, "servicing the social and sexual needs of American military men" became a means out of poverty for many women (Enloe [1989] 2000:86). Consequently, many military brides are popularly assumed to have participated in sex work (Yu 2000). The Philippines is no exception. Well aware of these realities, respondents whose parents did not meet through the military, like Grace Myers quoted earlier, often made this clear to their inquirers. However, for respondents whose parents did meet on or near military bases, the topic was often approached with cautious suspicion. For example, Jessica Adler, who was born to a Filipina mother and white American servicemen father, admitted being skeptical about the exact circumstances in which her parents met:

The initial story was that [my father] just happened to come into this bakery where [my mother] was working. Lots of servicemen happened to go through there. Years later it has changed into a club, but nobody talks about what that club really was, so I don't know if that's a restaurant, a bar, a discotheque or whatever…My dad kind of stayed tight-lipped on it, so that always made me a bit skeptical about what the circumstances were under which they met.

Thus, more often than with the "good wife" stereotype, negative images of Asian military brides led a number of multiracial respondents, like Jessica, to question the romantic propriety of their parents' interracial relationships. Nevertheless, both the image of the Asian "good wife" and Asian "military bride" were the source of personal troubles for several multiracial interviewees. Through illustrating how these images reflect enduring sexual and gender stereotypes of Asian women, respondents' troubles reveal not to be idiosyncratic reactions but rather responses to persistent racial and gender inequalities that can hinder interracial relationships from being seen as acceptable.

Conclusion

In its formulation of people's "personal troubles" as "public issues," C. Wright Mills' concept of the sociological imagination provides a useful analytical tool to contextualize multiracial respondents' varied perceptions of interracial relationships in the U.S. today. Through applying this framework, this chapter has illustrated three general themes or "public issues" that emerged from respondents' personal accounts.

First, the perceptions of a majority of multiracial respondents that interracial relationships and being mixed race have become more acceptable can be seen as reflecting positive shifts in public attitudes toward interracial relationships over the last half century. On the other hand, respondents' recollections of persistent obstacles to interracial relationships in their personal lives, especially persistent racial and ethnic prejudice, highlight factors that have led to the comparatively slower increase in actual rates of interracial relationships. Second, respondents'

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regional distinctions reflect geographic trends in attitudes toward and rates of interracial relationships as well as regional histories of Asian immigration. Specifically, respondents' perceptions of the West as more racially diverse, and thus more accepting of interracial relationships, are indicative of the region's higher rates of interracial relationships and Asian immigration. In contrast, respondents' perceptions of the South and Midwest as less diverse and less receptive to Asian immigration reflect the regions' lower rates of interracial relationships and more recent histories of anti-Asian sentiment. Finally, some respondents' personal troubles with negative images of Asian women as "good wives" and "military brides" illuminate enduring gender and sexual stereotypes of Asian women. These negative images not only reflect entrenched asymmetrical relations between the U.S. and Asia, especially the Philippines, but also persistent obstacles that can hinder multiracial respondents from perceiving interracial relationships as fully acceptable today.

By illuminating linkages between respondents' individual perceptions and larger social patterns, this chapter has mapped a macro context that can influence respondents' varied conclusions about racial difference's role in their personal relationships. For instance, the increasing acceptance of interracial relationships across the U.S. could provide a more hospitable environment to respondents who claim that racial difference serves a valuable, compatible role in their personal relationships. Regional differences in racial diversity and Asian immigration might lead these same respondents to see their claims as more acceptable in more "diverse" settings, like California, than in more "homogenous" settings, like the Midwest. Likewise, persistent gender and sexual stereotypes of Asian women might temper these claims, leading some respondents, especially women, to take more complicated stances toward interracial relationships.

In the next chapter, I examine the most common conclusion multiracial respondents reached. Specifically, I explore the symbolic processes by which a majority of respondents transformed racial difference from a liability into an asset in their closest relations.

Chapter 3

From a Liability to an Asset:
Reconciling Racial Differences in Personal Relationships

"I got all kinds of ethnicities in my family and my friends, and I'd like to keep it that way. I don't like going to places where it's only one, only white folk here and only black folk here. I want it to be a diverse group of people. I like it to be a mixture." (Cathryn Mahoney, early 30s, Filipina mother-white father, California)

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I discussed how popular beliefs that racial difference is an impediment to the formation of close, personal relationships (e.g. family, friendships, romantic relations) posed a dilemma for many multiracial respondents. First, respondents recalled being made to feel that their families were abnormal and even unstable because they were interracial. Second, as mixed-race, they expressed difficulty forming close friendships in public settings, like school, where same-race friendships were the norm. This chapter explores how in the face of these obstacles approximately three-quarters of these respondents, across demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, parentage, region), eventually came to see racial difference as not an impediment but a compatible, integral part to forming close, personal relationships. Interviewees presented this seemingly counterintuitive claim through telling a common story, a *reconciliation narrative*, in which racial difference transformed from something negative, a liability, into something positive, an asset. Through exemplar cases, I illustrate how reconciliation narratives were told through three *narrative strategies*: 1) legitimization, 2) naturalization, and 3) disassociation. The narrative strategy employed depended on two factors: 1) the *time of crisis*, that is, whether the

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aforementioned dilemma occurred early in respondents' lives (e.g. elementary or middle school) or late (e.g. college) and 2) the *source of conflict*, that is, whether respondents' struggles to resolve this dilemma occurred primarily within or outside their families (e.g. school).

From a Liability to an Asset

In an age in which the current U.S. president was born to a black father and white mother, viewpoints such as the one expressed by the multiracial respondent in the opening epigraph may not seem, at first glance, altogether groundbreaking. However, they go against conventional wisdom in the social sciences about the role of racial difference in personal relationships. That is, as mentioned earlier, in sociology racial difference traditionally has been seen as a liability to the formation of close, sustained relations between social groups (Park and Burgess 1921). Accordingly, scholars have long examined rates of interracial marriage and friendship to determine whether race endures or ceases as an obstacle in social relations (e.g. Gordon 1964; Lieberson and Waters 1988; Quillian and Campbell 2003; Lee and Bean 2004). Although this scholarship has provided valuable insight into U.S. race relations, it does less to explain how multiracial individuals can view racial difference as neither impeding nor fading but an asset in their personal relationships.

In contrast, in the study of multiraciality, positive revaluations of racial difference are not uncommon. Early multiracial scholarship sought to disprove age-old, negative images of mixed-race individuals as "maladjusted" products of "conflicting cultures" (Park 1928; Stonequist 1937) and recuperate "multiracial" as a positive and viable form of identification (e.g. Root 1992; Root 1996). Since, scholars have explored how multiracial identity can serve as a positive source of self-affirmation, a rallying point for political mobilization, and even an effective

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marketing tool (Wijeyasinghe 2001; Daniel 2001; DaCosta 2007). However, little concerted attention has been paid to similar phenomena in multiracial individuals' personal relationships.

This chapter explores these gaps through illustrating the symbolic processes by which multiracial respondents "presented" (Goffman 1959) racial difference as an asset or, at the very least, a compatible part of their familial, friendship, and romantic relations.

Reconciliation Narratives

In recalling how they came to see racial difference as an asset, multiracial respondents told a common story, what I term, a *reconciliation narrative*. Just as "reconcile" means "to make or show to be compatible" (Oxford 2008:1225), reconciliation narratives enabled respondents to "show" how racial difference is not a liability but an integral part of their most personal relationships. The basic goal of reconciliation narratives mirrors what Margaret Somers and Fred Block (2005) have called "conversion narratives." That is, like conversion narratives, reconciliation narratives convert from one perception of reality to another by telling a causal story (Somers and Block 2005:274).

Reconciliation narratives' causal story entails a basic *narrative arc* (see Figure 3.1) (see Somers 2008:261). It begins with a "crisis" to be solved: the aforementioned dilemma, in which multiracial respondents felt a heightened sense that racial difference impeded personal relationships (e.g., their interracial families as unstable, interracial friendships as abnormal). This is followed by "conflict": repeated recollected attempts to reconcile racial difference in their personal relationships. This struggle is made sense through distinctions between what constitutes a "close" vs. "not close" relationship (outlined in Chapter 1) that transform into character relations between protagonists and antagonists, the former serving as the narrative's "heroes" and the latter as its proverbial and often one-dimensional "villains." Finally, informed

by these events, reconciliation narratives end with a (proposed) "resolution": the view that racial difference is an asset or, at the very least, compatible with close, personal relationships.

Figure 3.1. Basic Arc of Reconciliation Narrative

(+)
Close

(+)
"Crisis" ——————— **vs.** ——————→ **"Resolution"**
(-)
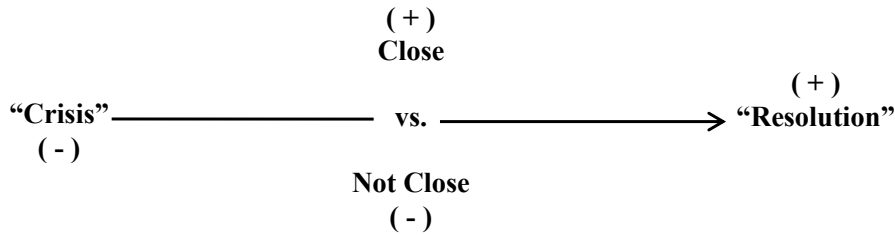
Not Close
(-)

Together with the close vs. not close distinctions, this transformation is enabled by added temporal and spatial distinctions (see Figure 3.2). Instances in which respondents felt racial difference was an impediment to forming personal relations were not only described as "not close" (e.g. uncomfortable, superficial) but cast temporally as "backward" and "of the past" and spatially of places deemed "homogenous" and "divided." In contrast, instances in which respondents felt racial difference was an asset or compatible to forming personal relations were, in addition to being described as "close" (e.g. comfortable, genuine), cast temporally as "progressive" and "of the future" and spatially of places deemed "diverse" and "open." These places varied in scale, ranging from school settings to whole geographic regions and often were invoked in conjunction with temporal distinctions (e.g. Midwest and South = backward, California = progressive).

Figure 3.2. Reconciliation Narrative

As discussed in Chapter 1, it bears emphasizing that reconciliation narratives are indeed *stories* and should not be read as representative, developmental maps of interviewees' lives. Thus, it is not their verisimilitude that interests me but rather their structural similarities that enable respondents to transform racial difference from a liability to an asset in their personal relationships.[18]

Interviewees told reconciliation narratives through three analytically distinct *narrative strategies*: 1) legitimization, 2) naturalization, and 3) disassociation. The narrative strategy employed depended on two factors: 1) the *time of crisis*, that is, whether the crisis of respondents' narratives occurred early in their lives (e.g. elementary or middle school) or late (e.g. college) and 2) the *source of conflict*, that is, whether the subsequent conflict was experienced primarily within the respondents' families or outside their families (e.g. school) (see Figure 3.3).[19] Next, I will illustrate each narrative strategy, in turn, through exemplar cases.

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[18] For a more thorough discussion of this distinction see Margaret Somers' differentiation between "representational narrativity" and "ontological narrativity" (1994:613-4).

[19] "Time" (e.g. early vs. late) is used here to refer to the temporal arrangement of events in a respondent's narrated account. In almost all cases, the time at which a respondent narrated an event in his or her account corresponded with traditional life course chronology (e.g. crisis recollected early in interview = crisis occurred early in respondent's life, like elementary school). However, in exceptional cases, such as that of Allison Rudkus discussed later in this chapter, the time at which an event was narrated did not correspond with the time of its occurrence in the respondent's life (e.g. crisis recollected "late" in interview but occurred early in respondent's life). In these

Although at times respondents employed more than one strategy in telling reconciliation narratives, in the interest of clarity, I will discuss each separately.

Figure 3.3. Time of Crisis and Source of Conflict

Source of Conflict

	Within Family	**Outside Family**
Early	*Disassociation* Zach Bell and Dennis Reed	*Legitimization* Danise James and Josh Bautista
Late		*Naturalization* Shannon Hart and Allison Rudkus

Time of Crisis (vertical axis label)

Legitimization (Crisis: Early; Conflict: Outside Family)

The first narrative strategy, *legitimization*, was the most common way respondents told reconciliation narratives. In this strategy, the crisis typically occurred early in respondents' lives (e.g. elementary and middle school) and the conflict outside their families (e.g. school). To resolve this dilemma, respondents spent a majority of their narratives rendering the interracial relationships (i.e. both being born to them and being in them) outside their families as just as legitimate as those within them. They did so through casting these interracial relationships as close (e.g., comfortable, genuine), progressive, and of diverse and open places and any insistence on same-race relationships as not close (e.g. awkward, superficial), backward/ignorant, of

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exceptional cases, this mismatch between "life course/chronological time" and "narrative time" proved to serve an important narrative function, in Allison's case, to naturalize racial difference in her family upbringing. For a more in-depth discussion of chronology and time, more generally, in narrative see Ricoeur 1980.

homogenous or divided places. To illustrate this narrative strategy, I focus on the stories of two interviewees: Danise James and Josh Bautista.

Danise James (late teens, Filipino mother-African American father, Michigan)

I interviewed Danise on a humid August afternoon at her family's home in Detroit, Michigan. At the time, Danise was almost twenty and entering her third year of college at a nearby university. Although racially misrecognized as anything from Middle Eastern to Hawaiian, Danise's mother is first-generation Filipina and her father African American. According to Danise, her mother met Danise's father in the mid-1970s while working on the same assembly line at a Detroit automobile factory.   Throughout our interview Danise displayed a vibrant personality that, although ultimately triumphant, was tested as she recounted her struggles as a biracial individual in monoracial settings outside of her diverse family.

Time of Crisis: Early

Like others who employed the narrative strategy of legitimization, the crisis of Danise's narrative occurred early, during the impressionable years of elementary and middle school. Danise described growing up in a "colorful, really colorful" interracial family. Although she joked that she and her siblings were "like the mediators" between her Filipino and African American sides "'cause we're the black *and* Filipino kids [laughing]," for Danise being biracial and interracial relationships, in general, were a legitimate part of familial life that did not impede close relations. However, this was not the case whenever Danise went to school.   Danise explained that through her first year of high school she attended both private and public schools in Detroit, all of which were majority African American. In these monoracially black settings, Danise explained that she and her siblings felt like racial outsiders: "There was one white kid. Everybody else was black, and there's me and my brother." Further, because same-race

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relationships were the   primary mode of socialization, Danise felt any form of racial difference, including being biracial, was a liability to forming the relationships she sought: "good friendships." As such, Danise spent a majority of the rest of her narrative recalling her attempts to seek out spaces outside her family in which being biracial and having interracial friendships were legitimate and racial difference was not an impediment to close personal relationships.

Source of Conflict: Outside Family

Because Danise felt racial difference was a compatible part of her close, "colorful" family, the conflict and ultimate resolution of her reconciliation narrative occurred outside her family, specifically in school. Danise concentrated most on her time in middle school and the early part of high school in Detroit. She termed it her "long awkward stage." Although she acknowledged that this awkwardness was due, in part, to the pangs of puberty and desires to "fit in" like many of her pre-teen female friends, she most often attributed it to her being biracial and seeking to form "good friendships" in what she saw as a monoracially black setting. This manifested most prominently in Danise's reflections on her struggles with how she spoke.

Danise explained that throughout much of her time in middle school on through her first year of high school she was teased, particularly by her black female peers, for what her classmates called "talking white." She recalled one incident in particular, what she called her "awkward speaking story":

> I was in ninth grade, and in my English class, we had to memorize Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I A Woman." We had to recite it in front of the classroom…I'm up there saying this speech, and I went up there, you know, fine, and then I hear those snickers, and then, you know, the way it's written, it has Southern dialect, you know, written into it. I'm just trying to say it the way I can, and I end up getting laughed off of it. Oh my God, it was the worst. People were laughing at me. I left. I was crying. It was so bad. *It was so awkward.* People were saying how I talked white. It was really, really like scarring.

Sociologists in both the U.S. and U.K. have explored how speech and behavior are popular ways people evaluate "racial authenticity" (e.g. Alexander 1996; Lewis 2003). However, in Danise's reflections, she spoke about these accusations more as reminders from her peers of her racial difference as biracial and how they often left her feeling "awkward" and "lonely." Danise reinforced these sentiments in her immediate comparison to the brief but significant relationship she formed with two substitute teachers at the same school, who were "mixed as well," one "Czechoslovakian and Korean" and the other "Black and Korean":

> They (the two teachers) called us the mixed club [laughing]…They just made me feel a lot better about myself, just because, you know, I didn't meet any girl-, any other like mixed people 'cause I just felt weird, just *awkward* because I really didn't fit in, and I always thought, you know, *it's because I was biracial*, but you know, they *made me feel a lot more comfortable in my skin*.

Whereas Danise described her relations in the monoracial setting of her classmates as not close (i.e. awkward), she effusively recalls unprecedented feelings of closeness (i.e. comfortable) in the small but multiracial environment she was able to create with her similarly "mixed" teachers. Although brief, this latter experience marked a significant turn in Danise's narrative, for there forward Danise began to narratively map a terrain in which being biracial and close, interracial friendships were not only possible but just as acceptable as same-race relationships and being monoracial.

Eager to leave her high school in Detroit, Danise explained that she transferred her sophomore year to an all girls Catholic high school in the suburbs. She described the change as a "culture shock." Whereas her previous school was almost all black, the new school was far more "mixed" ("maybe 50 percent white, 25 percent black, 25 percent Chaldean"). Danise recalled feeling initially hesitant in this new setting but went on to credit the school's diverse makeup for

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showing her that, unlike her previous schools, racial difference could foster "good friendships." Danise "presented" this transition through the pages of her high school scrapbook.

In her ethnography of white birth mothers of African descent children in Britain, sociologist France Winddance Twine illustrates how, to negotiate opposition to interracial intimacy, some mothers used family photographs to project "respectable" images of their family lives (2010:173). Danise used her high school scrapbook similarly to project the newfound legitimacy of her biraciality and interracial friendships in her new school setting. In presenting her scrapbook, Danise paused at each page and spiritedly recalled the stories attached to each photograph. For instance, one was of Danise and three female classmates, who appeared to be of East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African descent. All with bright smiles and their arms around each other's shoulders, Danise explained they were three of her "good friends" and used to jokingly call each other "the diverse club," similar to the "mixed club" Danise felt comfortable within at her previous school. She also stopped at a photograph of her and a young man in formal attire at a school dance. She explained he too was mixed (African American father and white mother) and recalled how they used to have "mixy talks," where they would share similar experiences of not "fitting in" among their African American peers. Laughing to herself, Danise finally stopped at a photograph of her singing on a stage and explained that in high school she was part of a youth theatre. Citing its diversity, she recalled how she found the space to be a "safe haven":

> Anybody is *welcome* there. It's a *safe haven* for white people, for black people, a safe haven for gay people, just anybody, anybody who loves to sing or do art…It's just such *an open and embracing environment*. Yea, we were *very, very, very close*. We all went on tour, and we traveled different places…So much fun!

These reflections propelled Danise's narrative toward its resolution. That is, upon closing her scrapbook, Danise spoke broadly about what she had learned from her high school

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years about race and personal relationships. She reflected first on the close friendships she formed and then returned to her family. In her reflections on the latter, Danise forwarded the moral of her narrative that day. That is, unprompted, Danise explained that when she starts a family of her own she intends to adopt one Asian, one black, and one white child. She reasoned:

> I want a very, very diverse family. I think that's the only way to be...And that's not for superficial reasons either, but it's just to broaden peoples' perspective, like my children's perspective…I think to raise a whole bunch of different race kids in one household, and everybody treats each other equally and loves each other. That's the only way. That's the right way. That's the only way it should be.

Thus, through her ideal future family structure, Danise projects racial difference as an asset in forming personal relationships and interracial relationships as a legitimate form of family formation. In this vision, much like her family, racial difference neither impedes nor fades but is an integral component. Ultimately, through symbolically mapping both where and how her biraciality and interracial friendships were accepted outside her family, Danise's reconciliation narrative not only legitimizes racial difference as a compatible part of her personal relationships but even makes the case that interracial relationships are "the only way it should be."

Another interviewee, Josh Bautista, differed from Danise in that he was born to a Filipino father and white mother and grew up in a region with larger Filipino and multiracial populations. Yet, because his crisis occurred early in his life and the conflict outside his family, Josh also employed the narrative strategy of legitimization ultimately to render racial differences an asset in his personal relationships.

Josh Bautista (mid-30s, Filipino father-white mother, California)

I interviewed Josh in the summer of 2010 at his workplace in the California East Bay city of Dublin. In his mid-30s, Josh joked that despite his light complexioned skin and hazel eyes many assume he is not white because of his "flat nose, slanted eyes, and thick lips." He

explained that his father was first-generation Filipino and his mother white, specifically of Irish and French descent. According to Josh, his parents met in Oakland in the mid-1950s when they were just 13-years-old, not long after Josh's father had emigrated from the Philippines. Like Danise, the crisis of Josh's narrative occurred early in his life.

Time of Crisis: Early

Josh recalled that at an early age he was made aware of a disjuncture between his "diverse, close knit" family and the "non-diverse" setting of his hometown. Josh explained that, when he was a child, Dublin was "90 percent white," and in this homogenous racial setting, he and his family were made to feel different because they were interracial. When I asked if this difference was explicit, Josh responded: "Oh, absolutely. Strange looks, double takes, the up and down look, head shaking…It was pretty irritating." Although Josh explained his parents were often "coy and quiet" in the face of these reactions, they took active measures to make sure Josh and his two older sisters did not experience similar feelings of abnormality in their schooling. As a result, Josh explained, his parents sent him and his sisters to attend schools 20 miles away in Oakland, where his parents worked, his maternal grandmother still lived, and most especially where they felt Josh and his family would be accepted: "[My parents] were not comfortable sending us to an all white school in an area where multicultural relationships, marriages were non-existent at the time…[Our mother] didn't want us to ever feel inept or that anyone was superior to us." However, despite the preventative measures taken by Josh's parents, school was the source of most conflict in Josh's account.

Source of Conflict: Outside Family

Like Danise, since Josh felt racial difference was a compatible part of his "diverse, close knit" family, the conflict of his narrative on through its resolution took place outside his familial

relations and, also like Danise, in the context of school. This conflict was predominated by comparisons, in which Josh symbolically mapped spaces where interracial relationships (i.e. both being in them and born to them) were acceptable, like in his family, and unacceptable. The most prominent comparison was that between the cities he commuted daily, Oakland and Dublin:

> Growing up in the dynamic of going to Oakland and coming back to Dublin back and forth, Dublin was like a town, literally, small, not very developed, not very diverse…I would leave a world of school [in Oakland] that was majority black, Mexican, and Filipino in a city that was majority black at the time and come back to a city that is a town, white, and you know, very small, very isolated.

Here, Josh compares the two cities through spatial and temporal distinctions. He distinguishes Dublin from Oakland through describing the former as homogenous (e.g. "not very diverse," "white") and backward (e.g. "not very developed," "town," "isolated") and the latter contrastingly, and like his family, as more diverse (e.g. "majority black, Mexican, and Filipino") and implicitly more progressive and developed (e.g. "city"). Such polarized characterizations continued to inform the conflict of Josh's narrative, reaching their apex when Josh recalled having to return to Dublin to attend middle school.

As the daily commute across the East Bay began to take its toll on Josh's family both physically and emotionally, Josh explained that his parents decided to enroll him in middle school in Dublin. Although Josh recalled that his interracial family was the recipient of stares of confusion and disapproval growing up in Dublin, it was in his return to the city in middle school that Josh felt most that racial difference was a liability to forming close relations, particularly friendships. Josh recalled: "I never really noticed race until I went back to Dublin. In Dublin, it was 'What are you?' 'Who are you?' It was much different." He added: "That's probably when I became more racially aware of the isolation, small town, and a majority white city, kind of their outlook and comments and ignorance." Thus, for Josh, being mixed-race, specifically his racial

ambiguity (e.g. "What are you?"), became an issue in forming friendships, where it had not before in his "more diverse" school in Oakland. In the face of these newfound obstacles, Josh explained that he tried to form friendships similar in racial make-up to those he had in elementary school, where he felt racial difference was a compatible component. However, although Josh recalled some successes forming "pretty diverse" friendship groups in high school (e.g. "It'd be black and Filipino, and then probably Mexican and white."), it was not until his recollections of college, with its more diverse racial demographic, that Josh described feeling a "comfort" similar to that within his family.

According to Josh, upon graduating high school he attended community college in a nearby city that he found to be a similar environment racially as the schools he attended in Oakland as a child:

> The diversity level absolutely went up, so it was more balanced, which was totally *comfortable* with me. I thought it was really cool…The relationships, the people you run into were very mixed, a hoj-a-paj of people from all likes at that point.

Here, Josh describes feeling a sense of "comfort," a popular characteristic among interviewees for close relations, that was both absent in his descriptions of Dublin and remnant of the closeness Josh evoked in his earlier descriptions of his "diverse, close knit" family. Further, although Josh presented Oakland, in contrast to Dublin, as diverse and progressive, his descriptions of his "very mixed" community college reflect a significant shift in Josh's narrative, for it marks his most explicit recognition of a space outside of his family where he felt racial difference could be a compatible part of his closest relations. This shift also sparked a more general reflection in Josh's account on race and personal relationships. For instance, employing temporal distinctions, Josh explained he felt U.S. society – even Dublin – was progressing by becoming less like his experience in high school, where he felt racial difference was a liability,

and more like college, where it was compatible in his social relations: "What's great about today's world is it's much more meshed together. There's a lot of blurred lines. When I went to high school, it was still *very segregated*."

Propelled by these newfound insights, Josh forwarded the moral of his reconciliation narrative. He explained that he has come to see being mixed-race as an asset in his personal relationships:

> [Being mixed-race] is the ultimate open-ness and diverse way of thinking. I mean to me it's living the life of non-judgment. It's just hard for me to judge anyone else or hard for my parents-. I've never lived that life where I've heard [from my family], 'Well, you shouldn't date this person 'cause of that.' It's never computed in my mind 'cause it's like my family is just shear visually-, my mom and dad could never tell me that.

Here, in stark contrast to how he was often made to feel growing up in the homogenous settings of Dublin, Josh has come to see being mixed-race as a compatible and integral part of personal relations outside his family. Josh conveys this transformation by describing being mixed-race as embodying a key characteristic many other interviewees attributed to close relationships: "non-judgment" (i.e. "genuine" interaction). Thus, against the repeated examples of the "isolation" and "ignorance" of Dublin, Josh's reconciliation narrative, like Danise's, not only legitimizes interracial relationships – both being born to them and in them – but also in the end implicitly casts them as on the side of progress. Josh fittingly ended his narrative reiterating this point: "the best thing [being mixed] has ever done for me is probably, in my eyes, made me the most open and diverse person I know."

Naturalization (Crisis: Late; Conflict: Outside Family)

The second narrative strategy, *naturalization*, was less often employed by respondents. Like legitimization, conflict took place outside respondents' families. However, due to sustained immersion in environments in which interracial relationships and being mixed-race were

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common, the crisis occurred late in respondents' lives (e.g. college). As a result, in this strategy interracial relationships were presented not only as just as acceptable as same-race relationships but also as a natural part of social life, the rule as opposed to the exception. This was accomplished through the temporal sequencing of events, in which the reconciliation narrative began with recollections of a "pre-crisis," "natural" state where racial difference was a compatible part of respondents' personal relationships, most often familial relations. These images then served as recurring reference points throughout the narrative that, along with the narratives' standard temporal and spatial distinctions, ultimately casted any insistence on same-race relationships or monoraciality as abnormal and even unnatural. To illustrate this narrative strategy, I present the stories of two interviewees: Shannon Hart and Allison Rudkus.

Shannon Hart (early 30s, Filipina mother-white father, California)

I met Shannon at her apartment on an overcast autumn morning in San Francisco's Sunset District, a neighborhood known for its sizeable Asian American population. In her early 30s, Shannon's straight dark hair, freckled and light-complexioned skin, and almond-shaped eyes have elicited a wide range of assumptions from strangers about her racial and ethnic background, including Thai, Turkish, and once even Filipino. However, Shannon explained, she was born to a first-generation Filipina mother and white American father, who met in the late 1960s near Clark Air Base in the Philippines, where Shannon's father was stationed as a serviceman in the U.S. Air Force, where her mother worked, and eventually where Shannon was born.[20] According to Shannon, as a member of a military family she spent most of her childhood moving

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[20] Shannon was unsure exactly what her mother's occupation was at the time, but she said she "always got the impression she did all kinds of different things." However, like many other interviewees whose Filipina mothers met interviewees' American (black or white) fathers on or near U.S. military bases in the Philippines, these were largely service sector jobs.

from U.S. military base to U.S. military base worldwide, and it was life in these base communities that provided the pre-crisis setting for Shannon's naturalization strategy.

Pre-Crisis State

According to Shannon, growing up on U.S. military bases she felt racial difference was a naturally compatible part of her closet relationships. That is, although she conceded that the frequent movement from base to base was "one of the roughest parts about growing up," Shannon explained that she formed close relationships with many other mixed-race children (mostly Filipino-white) and their interracial families. These recollections were marked not only by a positive tone in Shannon's voice but also by her frequent use of words such as "same" and "common" to connote the closeness of these relationships. For instance, Shannon recalled:

> A lot of my friends were the same as me, were half Filipino half white because, you know, they were all my mom's friends' kids, so and, you know, in the military there's tons of mixed children, and so yea, it was just like most my friends were like the same ethnicity as me!

According to Shannon, these similarities in her friendships were a mainstay amid her family's constant movement, which brought her from the Philippines to Illinois, California's San Francisco-Bay Area, Germany, Guam, and finally back to the Bay Area, where her family eventually settled when Shannon was in high school. Further, because her family settled near a military base, Shannon explained that she remained around many other mixed-race individuals from military families. In fact, Shannon's high school best friend and boyfriend were not only both born to Asian mothers (her friend Filipina and boyfriend Chinese) and white fathers, like her, but also grew up in military families that were stationed at some point in the Philippines.

However, Shannon's nostalgic recollections of her immersion in multiracial base communities for the first eighteen years of her life also served an important narrative function in her account. That is, in recalling fond memories of "close" relations (e.g. similarity) in which

racial differences were normal, these recollections present racial difference as a "natural" and compatible part of the personal relationships of Shannon's upbringing. Further, their anterior positioning in her narrative also serves to "establish normative authority" against which subsequent narrated events are to be evaluated (Somers 2008:274). Altogether, these memories would act as repeated reference points throughout the rest of Shannon's narrative, as she dealt with the disruption of these feelings of sameness (and naturalness) in college.

Time of Crisis: Late

Because Shannon grew up in environments in which interracial relationships were natural, her first experience outside this environment, college, marked the formative crisis of her narrative. She recalled that when she attended nearby U.C. Davis she felt out of place because, unlike her upbringing, she found being mixed-race was not common:

> When I started college that was the first time that I wasn't going to school with a bunch of children of military families. That's when I became more aware of how few of us there were and how few people I could relate to for once. You know, [before] my friends were the same way, and I go to this huge school, and there just wasn't as many of us and for the first time feeling, developing my identity as a mixed person when I was removed from that environment where there were more biracial children.

Shannon continued that she felt U.C. Davis' divided racial setting made being biracial feel like a liability to forming close friendships:

> I really didn't make too many friends [in college]…I came from a place, a high school where there were a lot of mixed kids, and it wasn't a big deal. All of my life really I was basically always in an environment-, 'cause of the military, they were just everywhere, and it was never like an issue, and at Davis I think is where I first felt out of place because of it 'cause it seemed to me like people were *dividing* themselves amongst racial lines. African Americans went out with African Americans. Asians were hanging out with Asians, and I just didn't have a place.

Characteristic of strategies of naturalization, in these two excerpts Shannon uses her memories of her upbringing as repeated reference points. Further, combined with spatial and implicit temporal distinctions (e.g. "people were [backwardly] dividing themselves"), these

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memories cast Shannon's new setting and its modes of socialization as unnatural not only for her but for her narrative's audience as well. Shannon employed these strategies in the conflict on through the resolution of her narrative.

Source of Conflict: Outside Family

The conflict of Shannon's narrative was a continuation of comparisons between her positive family upbringing and her negative college experience. Because Shannon's trials and tribulations occurred almost exclusively in the latter, outside of her family, these two experiences were presented as worlds apart. In her diverse family Shannon felt "the same" (i.e. a sameness in difference) and found it easy to form close relations. In contrast, the racially divided setting of college presented, in Shannon's words, a "paradox," in which she felt "both but neither" and consequently had difficulty forming close friendships. As a result, Shannon explained that she "just kept to like my friends that I already had," all of whom were from high school and also mixed-race. Further, based on her negative experiences in college, Shannon concluded that her friends' shared experience of being biracial (i.e. "both but neither") not only drew them together but also bound all people born to interracial relationships:

> People's experiences, like biracial, multiracial people's experiences are more similar to each other's than they are to the groups that they are comprised. I mean my experience and [my best friend's] experiences are much more similar than mine would be to a full white person or a full Filipino person, you know, kind of thing.

Informed by her trials and tribulations in college, Shannon forwarded the moral of her reconciliation narrative. She explained she has come to see being mixed-race as an asset:

> [Being mixed] means feeling lucky. That's how I feel because for so many reasons. Just having, you know, a different perspective kind of like a new perspective on the world. It's definitely *a wave of the future kind of thing*. I think we're the first or one of the first generations where we're finally starting to be heard and forging an identity for ourselves and *kind of like pioneers*.

For Shannon, being mixed-race is not only a collective experience but one that enables an advantageous perspective on race relations. She furthers her point by employing temporal distinctions that cast her and other mixed-race individuals as not abnormal or out of place, as she was made to feel in college, but as on the side of progress (i.e. "pioneers") and of the future (i.e. "wave of the future kind of thing"). However, characteristic of her narrative strategy, Shannon not only legitimizes interracial relationships – whether being in them or born to them – but naturalizes them as well. As she ended her narrative, Shannon highlighted this important distinction by pointing out the closeness (here: open communication) she felt she was able to momentarily achieve with me as also a mixed-race person:

> I really appreciate this opportunity to share the thoughts I've had over [this] and the conclusions I've come to about myself and 'cause it's only been me and [my best friend], who've been able to talk to each other about that kind of stuff and 'cause when we like try to talk to other friends, who are not mixed, it's just kind of like they don't get it. They SO don't get it.

Thus, in closing, Shannon emphasizes that the close relations she is able to achieve with other mixed-race individuals, like her best friend, is rooted in an already known, a priori, understanding of the normalcy of interracial relationships. As such, Shannon ultimately conveys the naturalness of interracial relationships through an almost nostalgic appreciation for the relationships that were the rule as opposed to an exception in the military communities of her upbringing and, as she anticipates, will become less exceptional for others in coming generations.

Although most multiracial respondents who employed strategies of naturalization were like Shannon and experienced their crises late in their lives (e.g. college), respondent Allison

Rudkus experienced her crisis *chronologically* early (e.g. elementary school) but, characteristic of this strategy, presented it as *narratively* late.[21]

Allison Rudkus (mid-20s, Filipina mother-white father, Michigan)

Allison and I met on a warm summer evening at her workplace in a largely white suburb northwest of Detroit, Michigan. In her mid-20s, Allison is more or less racially ambiguous, with olive complexioned skin, light brown eyes, and matching hair, which she later revealed was naturally a dark brown. Allison explained that she was born to a first-generation Filipina mother and white American father of Lithuanian descent. Her parents met in the early 1980s while both working at the Detroit Red Cross, where her mother was a lab technician and her father a mailroom clerk. Much like Shannon, Allison spent a significant portion of her narrative recalling a pre-crisis state, in which racial difference was a natural part of her close family upbringing.

Pre-Crisis State

Allison spent a considerable amount of her narration on the first ten years of her life, recalling her "happy childhood" growing up in a large interracial family. She blissfully recollected the many weekends and holidays she spent at her maternal grandparents' home in western Michigan with her eight cousins, all of whom were, in her words, "like me, half Filipino, half white." She described a household filled with laughter and dancing, relatives – both Filipino and white – conversing and joking in Tagalog and English, and tables covered in a mix of Filipino and "American" cuisines. For Allison, what stood out most about her "very very close" family was how comfortable she was with them: "We really had no boundaries in terms of, you know, we never felt stupid acting a certain way or, you know, they were always just very open with [us]." As with others who employed the strategy of naturalization, introducing her narrative with these images served an important role in Allison's reconciliation narrative. That is, like

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[21] For further specification of the use of "time" in this dissertation's narrative analysis, see footnote 19 on pp. 46-7.

Shannon, in harkening images of a normal, happy childhood seamlessly alongside racial and cultural difference, Allison presents racial difference as a natural and compatible part of her early family upbringing while simultaneously establishing normative authority for the rest of her story. Further, although in life course terms these reflections remained within a fairly early portion of Allison's life, in narrative terms they occupied a considerable portion of Allison's account. Consequently, this along with her repeated references to these early years throughout her narrative enable Allison to present the subsequent crisis in elementary school as quite "late," similar to others who employed naturalization strategies.

Time of Crisis: "Late"

After lengthy reflection on her family upbringing, Allison recalled that her "happy childhood" was disrupted by her racially homogenous elementary schools, marking the formative crisis of her narrative. Allison explained that she attended schools where, unlike her family, "everyone was fair skinned," and she was one of the only of Asian descent and of mixed parentage. Allison recalled that her phenotypic difference, specifically her racial ambiguity, often led to incessant and unsolicited inquiries about "what" she was:

> It was kind of difficult. There were so many blonde haired girls and fair skinned girls, and everyone's like, "Are you Chinese?" [in mocking voice] And, I'm like, "No!" Or, "Are you Hawaiian?" [in mocking voice]. I'm like, "No!"…I'm like, "Do I really look that different? I never thought that I really did." "I never had this problem before, what's up now?"

Allison described feeling frustrated, however, less with the inaccuracy of her peers' questions than with what she saw them as not seeking: close personal relations, accepting her for "who" she was. She explained:

> I would kind of be hurt, and not because, you know, Chinese people aren't cool or because Hawaiian people aren't cool…I think I was just hurt that they didn't just accept me for, "Hey, you know, this girl looks like this. She doesn't have, you know, fair skin, or she looks a little bit different. You know, her eyes aren't round or blue, you know."

To make sense of her frustration, Allison, like Shannon, referred back to her upbringing, where racial difference was not a liability to close relations:

> The way [my family] raised us was very open. Like, "You act the way you want to act. You be the way you want to be"…It never occurred to me that, you know, you should just set them straight. Be like, "Damn it, I'm half Filipino and half white! What are you?!"…I think it was just growing up, we were never *judged* like that.

Consequently, Allison recalled feeling as if she was left with only one option: "just not be friends with those people, who are *ignorant*, who want to ask me [what I am]."[22] Here, Allison makes sense of her crisis through distinctions in both closeness and time. First, she casts the questions of her inquirers as not close, describing them as judgmental and not accepting her for "who" she is and then contrasts this with the close relations of her upbringing, in which she could be both racially different and "comfortable," "open," freely "who" she was. Further, in calling her inquirers "ignorant," Allison bolsters this distinction temporally, priming the audience not only to view the inquirers' questions as backward but, implicitly, Allison's position as on the side of progress.

Source of Conflict: Outside Family

Like others who employed strategies of naturalization, Allison viewed her familial upbringing as a world apart from her relations outside her family, in her case, in school. As such, similar to Shannon, the conflict of Allison's narrative revolved primarily around her efforts to reconcile these worlds. According to Allison, the prospects of this reconciliation improved in junior high through high school, where "there was a little bit more of a mix of people" and "[I] blended in a little bit more." This improvement was best captured in her description of her

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[22] Allison interpreted most of her interactions as being due to her being "mixed" and less simply because she was of Filipino descent in an area where there were few Asian Americans, let alone many Filipinos. Further, it bears noting that Allison did not see her "mixedness" as a mere extension of a long-known history of "race mixture" among Filipinos (see Chu 2002). This was the case for a majority of interviewees, who often could cite a Spanish, Chinese, and even American (black or white) lineage on the Filipino sides of their families yet saw their parents' interracial relationships as something separate from this history, in a sense, "newer."

closest friends in high school, two other women of Asian descent, one Filipina and the other

Korean who was adopted by white American parents. In an upbeat tone similar to how she

began her story, Allison humorously recalled how they used to call themselves "two and a half

Asians," the latter half referring to Allison. However, in reasoning the closeness of this

friendship, Allison did not cite her (qualified) racial similarity but, rather, the capacity to be

"comfortable" with racial difference. For instance, she recalled feeling particularly "inspired" by

her adopted friend, Grace, who was "so comfortable" with having parents of a different race.

For Allison, Grace's outlook mirrored that of her familial upbringing, in which her racial

difference was not the subject of "judgment" and did not lead to questions of "what" she was but,

rather, was "comfortable." This renewed comfort marked a significant turning point in Allison's

narrative and its movement toward a resolution.

That is, in college, which she described as even "more diverse," Allison recalled that

some of her closest friends were actually white women, many of whom were fair skinned and

blonde, the very same demographic at the source of her troubles in elementary school. However,

with her renewed comfort, she recalled beginning to see her biraciality as not only compatible

with these friendships but an asset. For instance, in the face of the inevitable "what are you?"

questions, rather than, like before, feeling "hurt" by them because they signaled a lack of really

"knowing" her, Allison recalled starting to "play a game with them," making her inquirers guess.

She even described developing playful nicknames, like "Filiuanian" and Lithipino," to refer to

her particular mixed heritage. She concluded: "It's a huge difference, like night and day, of how

I react." Allison, like before, attributed these changes to progressions in both time (i.e., people's

mindsets) and place (i.e., increasingly "mixed" surroundings), reasoning "people are more apt to

what's going on, and [being mixed is] more frequent now."

However, remember for Allison, interracial relationships and comfort in her biraciality are not altogether "new" experiences but were natural parts of her family upbringing. Fittingly, Allison ended her narrative emphasizing this point:

> Be who you are! It sounds so cheesy, but I think that's a major theme in anything that I've been saying. Our parents raised us in such a safe environment that it was okay to be dumb or to act silly or goofy…[We] were comfortable with who we [were] and how we acted…So, I may not be blonde hair[ed], blue eyed, or I might not be, you know, fully Caucasian, but you know, I'm different, and I love it…And *although it hasn't been a long journey*, it's been learning how to have that confidence and to be who you are and to not hide it.

Rather than being seen as simply acts of self-exotification, for Allison, her playful responses to her inquirers reflect a "comfort" and even "safety" akin to those weekends and holidays spent at her grandparents' home in western Michigan, where she could be *both* racially different and "who" she really is. Thus, through foregrounding memories of a "normal" and "happy childhood" in which racial difference was an integral component, Allison's narrative, much like Shannon's, naturalizes interracial relationships. The constant reference to these memories throughout her story along with added temporal and spatial distinctions ultimately enable her to present her "rough" school years as just a momentary blip in what for her has been long-held understanding that racial difference is not a liability but an asset in forming close, personal relationships.

Both Shannon and Allison are exemplar cases of how naturalization strategies were employed throughout the entirety of single accounts. However, this strategy was not always invoked alone in telling reconciliation narratives nor were all those who utilized this strategy female and born to white-Filipino relationships. Respondents across demographic characteristics employed naturalization and, at times, did so in combination with other narrative strategies. For example, Ben Campbell, who was born to a second-generation Filipina mother and African

American father and quoted in the opening epigraphs in Chapter 1, utilized naturalization to accentuate his narrative's general strategy of legitimization. This is shown in his featured quote: "I can pretty much get along with anybody. Being different races, I can identify with someone, you know. It has worked to my advantage." To legitimize interracial relationships, in this case being mixed-race, Ben does not simply assert that racial difference is an asset in his personal relations but claims that "being different races" enables him (naturally) to "get along with anybody." This subtle but effective suggestion of "natural" virtue in being mixed-race resembles Shannon's assertion that mixed-race individuals, *a priori*, share a unique perspective on race relations that non-mixed-race people "so don't get." Thus, although employed in different contexts and by respondents differing in parentage, gender, and region, both of these respondents employ naturalization toward similar ends, to recast the role of racial difference from a liability to an asset in personal relationships.

Disassociation (Crisis: Early; Conflict: Within Family)

The final narrative strategy, *disassociation*, was the least commonly employed. Similar to legitimization, the crisis occurred early in respondents' lives, but unlike other strategies, the source of conflict was within their families. As a result, in this strategy respondents employed reconciliation narratives' temporal and spatial distinctions to distance themselves from instances in their past, particularly in their families, in which racial difference was a liability to forming close relations. Through disassociating from these familial tensions respondents were ultimately able to project, often more subtly, the moral that racial difference, at the very least, can be a compatible part of forming personal relationships. To illustrate this narrative strategy, I focus on the stories of two interviewees: Zach Bell and Dennis Reed.

Zach Bell (mid-20s, Filipina mother-white father, California)

I interviewed Zach on a fall afternoon at a coffee shop in San Francisco's Financial District, near where he was working at the time. I was first introduced to him, along with his Asian Indian partner, a few months earlier through a mutual acquaintance at a largely gay and ethnically diverse function in the city. In his mid-20s, Zach was thin in build with dark hair and light complexioned skin. Zach explained that he was born in San Jose to a first-generation Filipina mother and white American father, who met through mutual friends in the early 1980s after migrating to the Bay Area in search for work, Zach's father from Alabama and Zach's mother from Manila. Like many who employed disassociation strategies, Zach expressed apprehension upon the discussion of his parents' interracial relationship. Specifically, he confessed he sometimes questions the romantic foundations of his parents' marriage: "Apparently it was very fast. Like I don't really know the whole story, like if my mom married him to get the citizenship or if she was in the process of becoming a citizen…" This familial tension proved a driving force in Zach's reconciliation narrative, from its formative crisis on through its resolution.

Time of Crisis: Early

Because the locus of racial tension was within his family, the formative crisis of Zach's narrative occurred early in his life. Zach recalled that since a child he felt as if racial difference was a liability to close relations within his interracial family. For instance, according to Zach, both his parents were the first in their families to marry outside their races. Although Zach assured me that his father's family "liked" Zach's mother and her family "liked" Zach's father, he noted, "they kind of keep to their own families." Zach explained:

> Like Thanksgiving and Christmas, for example, me and my sister will have to choose.
> "Are we going to our dad's side or our mom's side?," and it's weird because my parents

aren't divorced. Like, you know, you normally do that if your parents are separated…It's always been very separated.

These feelings of abnormality were reinforced by Zach's friends, all of whom came from monoracial families: "I just thought it was weird because when I talked to other kids and their families, like, they always thought it was strange that my parents are together [because] our families are so segregated." These familial tensions did not recede as Zach's narration progressed.

Source of Conflict: Within Family

Zach's family remained the primary source of conflict in his narrative. It was something from which he sought to disassociate as well as the impetus for him to look elsewhere for close relations in which racial difference was not a liability. Although Zach explained that he felt he could never talk "openly" with either of his parents, whether it was about family divisions or his sexuality, Zach primarily cited his troubled relationship with his father. Zach often attributed this lack of closeness to his father's racial difference, specifically his racism. In these reflections, Zach often would both temporally and spatially distance himself from his father by attributing his father's racist views to his upbringing in a racially "backward" South. Zach recalled one incident in particular that exemplified this process of disassociation.

As Zach began to recall the event, he prefaced: "I think [my dad's] really weird. His tendencies are just so close-minded." Zach then proceeded to recollect an incident a few years prior, in which his sister got into a car accident while driving with one of her college classmates, who was African American. When Zach's father arrived at the crash scene, Zach recalled, "my dad was so upset because he was black." According to Zach, his father assumed Zach's sister and her classmate were romantically involved and, unabashedly against such a relationship, his father's "close-mindedness" escalated to a point Zach had never seen before:

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He never drinks, and like I guess he drank like a whole bottle of whiskey or something that night. He was just crying, and he like called my sister a whore and just really intense and dramatic when it really didn't need to be. [For me] it was like, "I don't get where you're coming from."

Zach explained that when he tells his closest friends this story, they are often confused: "They have a really hard time believing it because they're like, 'Wait a minute. He married a Filipina girl. Like, he can't be totally racist.'" Skeptical of this reasoning, Zach resolved this seeming contradiction by associating his father's anti-black racism with where his father and his father's family are originally from, the South: "My theory is because, you know, like they grew up in Alabama, where like slavery and stuff and all that." Thus, by employing temporal and spatial distinctions, Zach is able to disassociate from his father's racism. For example, Zach prefaces his reflection by denoting how he feels his father's views are backward (i.e. "close-minded"). This enables Zach to recall his father's actions with a sense of detachment (e.g. "I don't get where you're coming from"). Further, by attributing his father's ignorance to another place, the South, Zach is able to further distance himself from his father's views by associating them with the past (e.g. "where like slavery and stuff and all that"). Propelled by these familial divisions, Zach explained he began to look elsewhere for close relationships, specifically at school, where he hoped racial difference could at least be a compatible part of his personal relationships.

Because of its racially divided settings, school was not an immediate respite for Zach. Being mixed-race, Zach recalled feeling as if racial difference was often still a liability to forming close, personal relationships. For instance, recalling his middle school, Zach described it as "segregated": "It was like all the Filipinos staying together. All the Mexican people hanging together, and I feel it was almost segregated." This left Zach feeling abnormal and, much like his family, as if racial difference impeded the close relations he sought:

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I was weird 'cause I like floated between the groups…I had a lot of friends but no one I would consider a best friend, you know, 'cause I never really opened up to a lot of people. It was just people to hang out with to get by.

However, in high school, Zach recalled that a shift occurred, in which he began to feel that racial difference ceased as an obstacle in forming close friendships.

For Zach, high school on through college was marked by less racially divided settings that not only enabled Zach to form close relations in which racial difference was compatible but also move closer to full disassociation from his tension-filled past. For instance, Zach described his high school as "less cliquey" than his middle school: "I still talk to people that I was friends with in high school. I think it was in high school because people were less cliquey, and I felt I got to know people on a deeper level." Zach's descriptions of college were similar. Further, it was in these non-"segregated" settings that Zach recalled meeting his best friends, with whom he remains close to this day. Both of these friends are women, one Filipina and the other Mexican. Zach likened their closeness to that between kin: "I look at them like my sisters." He continued: "I can talk to them about anything, like, you know, boys or family," in essence, the type of closeness he felt he was unable to achieve with his own parents. With his newfound kin, Zach explained after college he made a more decisive and literal break from his parents and the divided settings of San Jose and moved with one of his best friends up the peninsula to San Francisco. In his description of this transition Zach drove his narrative toward its resolution.

Zach described his present life in San Francisco with an ease and sense of satisfaction absent throughout much of his reflections in the early part of our interview. He explained he enjoyed his current job downtown and was in the process of purchasing a home with his partner, who he met a few years prior not long after moving into the city. Zach described San Francisco as "so different" from San Jose, where "everyone is just very I don't want to say uncultured but

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just not as diverse." More importantly, in describing his current contentment, Zach pointed to his break from his father. In fact, Zach cited the earlier-mentioned incident surrounding his sister's car accident as a significant "turning point" in their relationship: "That's when I realized 'This is how my dad is, and how it's gonna be, stuck in this mindset of being a racist.'" Thus, in the "diverse" setting of San Francisco and with his partner (Asian Indian), two best friends (Mexican and Filipina), and sister (mixed-race), Zach was able to form the "family" he had always wanted, where racial difference was not "weird" or a liability but a normal, compatible part. However, as Zach reminds us at the end of his narrative, his presentation of this positive resolution was only possible through his temporal and spatial disassociation from the familial tensions and racially divided settings of his upbringing.

Unlike Zach, another interviewee, Dennis was born to an African American father and Filipina mother. However, because his crisis occurred early and conflict was within his family, Dennis also employed the narrative strategy of disassociation.

Dennis Reed (late 20s, Filipina mother-African American father, California)

I met Dennis on a warm, late-winter day at his home in the inner part of San Francisco's Sunset District. In his late 20s, Dennis had dark-brown complexioned skin and jet-black curly hair. Combined with his oval-shaped eyes, Dennis joked that, to many, he "looks Asian" but "just darker than most." However, Dennis explained, he is an only child of a first generation Filipina mother and African American father, who met in San Francisco in the early 1980s while in their late teens. When I asked Dennis how his parents met, Dennis replied with an air of indifference: "I never went into that story. It's weird 'cause, you know, usually kids have a curiosity like, 'How did you guys meet?' It's like, yea, I never really like worried about it

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because an established relationships wasn't quite there." Much like Zach, this sense of detachment toward his family figured centrally throughout Dennis' reconciliation narrative.

Time of Crisis: Early

With his family tensions occurring as far back as Dennis could remember, the crisis of his narrative occurred early in his life. For instance, when I asked Dennis to describe his family, he recalled a history of non-close relations, citing in particular their un-sustained interactions: "My parents divorced at an early age, so I had that separation and a lot of jumping around throughout family, and so it's hard to have that substantial foundation of what everyone calls family." He continued: "It's always been like that, just hopping around and having loose-end ties, strings with no attachments with family." Dennis explained that race played a significant role in this lack of closeness. Dennis recalled that, like Zach, while growing up he often felt racial difference was a liability within his interracial family. For example, Dennis described how family tensions arose when his mother introduced Dennis' black father to Dennis' Filipino side of the family: "My mother brought him to my grandfather, my lolo. It didn't go good because of the race ties." Dennis believed that his lolo's resistance – due to "race ties" – was not simply because Dennis' father was not Filipino or Asian but because he was black. Dennis explained out-marriage with blacks is a "taboo thing in a lot of Asian, Filipino families," and like other subjects considered taboo in many families, today his parents' relationship simply "doesn't come up," only further impeding close relations within Dennis' family (i.e. non-open communication). Unfortunately, these family tensions did not dissipate but, rather, persisted as Dennis' narrative progressed.

Source of Conflict: Within Family

Similar to Zach, Dennis' family figured centrally in the conflict of his narrative as something that he sought to disassociate from and also that propelled him to look elsewhere for

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close, interracial relations. According to Dennis, due to family tensions ("I couldn't stand living with my father. I couldn't stand living with my mother."), he spent much of his adolescence, as he mentioned earlier, "jumping around throughout family" in the Bay Area. As a result, Dennis attended multiple schools, all of which varied in their racial demographics. However, despite this variation, same-race friendships were the norm, and like Zach, Dennis explained he often found himself trying to find groups of friends "just to get by." Dennis recalled that this was especially the case when he attended high school in Oakland, where its strictly divided racial setting made group membership imperative:

> High school in Oakland was just like race wars between three races: the blacks, the Mexicans, and the Cambodians. And then you had the mixed Asians, and that's what I was a part of, pretty much like the Laos, the Hmong, the Filipinos. I just stuck with them. Pretty much there you had to cling to something. That was like your survival technique.

However, despite finding a group, Dennis added, because it was out of "survival," he felt they were not particularly close, specifically not "trustworthy": "Everyone was somewhat cool for the most part. I mean *nobody trustworthy*. It was basically protection just to get by unfortunately. What drew me to them was just protection and being in a group." Dennis' troubles extended into his first years of college.

Dennis recalled having similar difficulties forming close interracial friendships when he first attended college in San Francisco. Like high school, he also attributed these difficulties to the school's racial setting, but rather than it being racially divided, his college was racially homogenous. Dennis recalled: "Everyone was pretty much 90 percent or 80 percent white. It was definitely an eye-opener…You'd always get looked at like, 'Who are you?!'" Employing both temporal and spatial distinctions, Dennis likened these interactions to those he imagined he would have in the Midwest:

It was like middle America within the Bay Area…You know, you look like you're kinda Chinese, but you're dark-skinned and talk like, you know, you have an education, and you know, you just throw those people off. They're like, "What the fuck is that?!"

Here, Dennis casts the school's homogenous racial setting and largely white student body as of another place (i.e. "middle America") and implicitly as of another time (i.e. backward/ignorant), all of which work to prime the audience to sympathize with his perspective. However, despite his initial difficulties forming friendships, Dennis recalled that college served as a turning point for him: "During college, it was the point where everything was starting to have structure." By structure, Dennis was referring to both work and his personal life. Referring to the latter, Dennis explained: "I just wanted it in order." Dennis achieved this order through more explicitly distancing from the tensions of his familial upbringing. Dennis enacted this disassociation most prominently in his presentation of family photo albums toward the end of our interview.

Much like Danise James' high school scrapbook illustrated her efforts to project her biraciality and interracial friendships as legitimate, Dennis's family photo albums illuminated the extent to which he has distanced himself from the familial divisions of his youth. Unlike Danise, Dennis did not pause at each page and animatedly recall a story for every photo. Instead, Dennis flipped through the pages with an air of indifference similar to how he spoke of his parents' meeting at the beginning of his narrative. Dennis proceeded through pages upon pages of photographs of family members from both sides of his family, only every once and a while accompanying a photo with a fleeting comment, like "I haven't seen her since I was a kid" or "I couldn't tell you anything about them." As he closed the final album, Dennis fittingly described the sense of lack the albums evoked for him:

It makes you just realize all the empty sections in my life that I totally just 86'ed and just went on from. It's not a bad thing. I think it's interesting that I actually did conceal and pretty much deleted or forgot certain bad memories.

Dennis crystallized this detachment in the resolution of his narrative.

At the end of our interview, Dennis described his present personal relationships as completely separate from those of his past. Invoking the same expression as Allison Rudkus, Dennis explained, "It feels like night and day to be honest." However, as Dennis mentioned earlier, he did not see this break as a "bad thing." Rather, the tone of his voice was the most upbeat of his entire narrative. He explained that since college he has formed a close group of friends, the type of close relations that eluded him throughout much of his upbringing. Similar to Zach, Dennis described his closest friends in kin-like terms: "Since I barely or I don't talk to my family, pretty much my family is my friendships." Further and again like Zach, Dennis described his close group of friends as a "a nice mix" from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, including black, white, and Filipino. Thus, characteristic of disassociation strategies, Dennis in the end does not provide a lively statement describing his interracial relations, like Danise James, as "the way it should be" or being mixed-race, like Shannon Hart, as "a wave of the future." Rather, through matter-of-fact descriptions of his new "family," Dennis forwards a more subtle message that racial difference is a compatible component of his closest, personal relations. However, as Dennis openly acknowledges, he presents this more upbeat message through a less subtle disassociation from his familial upbringing, in which racial difference felt like a hindrance to forming such relations.

Before proceeding further, it bears noting that although both Zach and Dennis are men, strategies of disassociation were employed by female respondents as well. As in the cases of Allison and Shannon in the previous section, Zach's and Dennis' accounts simply represent

exemplar cases of how one narrative strategy could be employed throughout a single account. In the next chapter, Chapter 4, I illustrate how disassociation, even if only momentary, was a common immediate response among many female respondents when they were forced to confront narratives that questioned the propriety of their parents' interracial relationships.

Conclusion

In sociology, racial difference traditionally has been seen as a liability to the formation of close personal relationships that either ceases or endures as an obstacle (Park and Burgess 1921). While the growing scholarship on multiraciality has illustrated how racial difference can serve a positive role in multiracial individuals' racial identities (e.g. Root 1996; Daniel 2001), this chapter demonstrates how, against conventional sociological wisdom, racial difference can also serve a positive role in multiracial individuals' personal relationships (e.g. family, friends, romantic partners).

This chapter has illustrated how three-quarters of multiracial respondents, across demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, parentage, region), recast racial difference from a liability to an asset by telling a common story, a *reconciliation narrative*. It also has shown how the different *narrative strategies* respondents employed to tell this story depended on two factors: 1) whether racial difference was a liability early or late in their lives and 2) whether this was within or outside their families. In the case of Danise and Josh, racial difference was a liability early in their lives and outside their families. As a result, they spent a majority of their accounts drawing on elements of reconciliation narratives to *legitimize* interracial relationships outside their families, rendering them just as acceptable as those within their families. In contrast, in the narratives of Shannon and Allison, sustained immersion in environments in which interracial relationships and being mixed-race were common led them to recount

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experiencing racial difference as a liability also outside their families but later in their lives. Consequently, they drew on these early memories to *naturalize* interracial relationships as the rule as opposed to an exception in social life. Lastly, in the cases of Zach and Dennis, racial difference was also a liability early in their lives but within their families. Therefore, they drew on elements of the reconciliation narrative to *disassociate* from their upbringings and ultimately render racial difference a compatible part of their current close relations. Thus, while respondents' accounts illustrate how narrative structures shape perceptions of reality (Somers 1995; 2008), their varied, situation-based narrations elucidate how this was *in conjunction with*, and not in spite of, enduring realities of race in the U.S.

Finally, as much as multiracial respondents' reconciliation narratives are testaments of the rhetorical appeal of the narrative form, they are also illustrations of how narratives are, as Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey have argued, "strategic" tales told "in order to achieve some goal or advance some interest" (1995:208). That is, it is important to note that in their attempt to persuade, reconciliation narratives can privilege the perspectives of their narrators and those sympathetic to their message. The narratives' protagonists/heroes tend to be "round" (i.e., more complex and experience change over the course of the story) and their antagonists/villains relatively "flat" (i.e. often stereotypes and stable) (Bal [1985] 2009:115). Consequently, the motivations of antagonists, such as Danise's African American female classmates who tease her for "talking white," are rendered simple (e.g. impeding Danise's formation of close friendships) and without greater complexity (e.g. responding to Danise's perceived racial and/or class privileges). Even so, however limiting, in the end these omissions prove integral to reconciliation narratives' success, strategically creating a form of tunnel vision that directs their audiences toward a normative conclusion.

In the next chapter, I illustrate how some respondents' similar efforts to present racial difference as a compatible part of close personal relationships were complicated when they were exposed to counter-narratives, in which "antagonists/villains" took on more than one dimension. These competing perspectives led these respondents to present more ambivalent viewpoints on interracial relationships.

Chapter 4

"It's more complicated":
Narrating Ambivalence toward Interracial Relationships

Introduction

In Chapter 3, I illustrated the symbolic processes by which a majority of multiracial respondents transformed racial difference from a liability into an asset in forming close personal relationships and, in effect, rendered interracial relationships (i.e. being in them or born to them) just as acceptable – if not more – as same-race relationships. This chapter explores how approximately one-quarter of multiracial respondents "presented" more ambivalent positions on interracial relationships.

Multiple respondents' efforts to reconcile racial differences in their personal relations were tempered by their exposure to "counter-narratives" that highlighted racial and gender inequalities (e.g. racialized desire, white male privilege) that can impede close relations, especially among family and romantic partners. Respondents were exposed to these stories through participation in *counter-narrative sites* during college (e.g. courses, organizations) that took two forms: 1) *moderately intensive*, which were not sought out but ultimately proved revelatory (e.g. course requirement), and 2) *highly intensive*, which entailed a more active pursuit and initial emotional ties (e.g. courses plus activist organizations and/or study abroad programs). In the latter, respondents were exposed to *gender exploitation narratives* that highlighted inequalities facing Filipina women that can impede close, interracial relationships, such as the mail-order-bride industry and sex tourism in the Philippines. Caught between, on the one hand, a

desire for racial difference to be a compatible component of their personal relations and, on the other, greater awareness that it can also impede them, these respondents told *discordant narratives*, in which they could neither wholly embrace nor completely reject each perspective.

Ambivalence toward Interracial Relationships

While a majority of multiracial respondents forwarded a clear message that racial difference can be an asset or, at the very least, a compatible part in forming close, personal relationships, about one-quarter of respondents were not entirely sure. They often explained that their understandings of the subject were "evolving," "constantly changing," or put simply, "more complicated." As mentioned earlier, the sociological literature on race and personal relationships has traditionally conceived of racial difference as an obstacle to the formation of close, personal relationships that either ceases or endures. The literature has acknowledged that racial difference's role as an obstacle is not uniform but complicated. For instance, studies have shown variation in rates of interracial marriage (e.g. Yancey 2003; Lee and Bean 2004) and friendship (e.g. Quillian and Campbell 2003) between social groups, with lower rates between whites and blacks and higher rates between whites and Asians.[23] Even so, these studies cannot fully account for these multiracial respondents' ambivalent positions, for respondents' ambivalence lies not in whether racial difference ceases or endures as an obstacle (in both cases a liability) but, rather, in whether or not racial difference is a liability at all.

In contrast, in the growing social scientific literature on multiraciality ambivalence has been a more consistent theme. Many studies have shown that, like these respondents'

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[23] These differential rates reveal to be more complicated, for instance, varying by gender, with rates of intermarriage higher between black men and white women and between Asian women and white men (Wang 2012). Scholars also have provided more complex interpretations of these differential rates. For instance, some have argued that the higher rates of intermarriage between Asian women and white men may not indicate racial difference ceasing as an obstacle but, rather, persisting, for these intermarriages may be driven by stereotypes of Asian women as "good wives" and occur via asymmetrical relations (e.g. mail-order-bride industry) (Kim 2007; Omi 2008; Nemoto 2009).

ambivalent positions, racial identification among multiracial individuals can "evolve" and "change," especially from context to context (Stephan and Stephan 1989; Root 1999; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2001; Harris and Sim 2002). However, although these studies have illuminated the dynamic character of multiracial individuals' racial identities, as with last chapter, these studies' emphasis on racial identity provides less insight into how ambivalence can also manifest around issues of race in multiracial individuals' personal relationships.

The recent work of sociologist France Winddance Twine (2010) has come the closest to addressing ambivalences similar to those expressed by multiracial respondents. In her ethnographic study of white birth mothers of African descent children in Britain, Twine illustrates the "troubled terrain" many of these racially conscious mothers found themselves in their attempts to "cultivate cultural and political allegiances to the black community among their children of multiracial heritage," such as promoting racial identification as "Black" among their children because society sees them as such, "while not denying their biological ties to their children" (2010:135). Although Twine focuses on the struggles of the mothers of multiracial children, it is precisely this "troubled terrain" – a felt tension between, on one the hand, recognizing persistent racial inequalities and, on the other, wanting to maintain close ties within one's interracial family – that ultimately led multiracial respondents to remain undecided on whether racial difference can indeed be a compatible component of close, personal relations.

Discordant Narratives

In recalling how they came to these more ambivalent positions, respondents told, what I term, *discordant narratives*. Discordant narratives are the uneasy product of opposing perspectives or stories within a single narrated account. More specifically, in discordant narratives, elements of two or more stories appeal to the narrator, but the "morals" of the stories

conflict (e.g. one reignites hope for "romantic love," one confirms lingering doubts of its possibility). This contrast produces discord. However, because elements of each story remain compelling, the narrator is unable to wholeheartedly embrace or reject either and therefore comes to an ambivalent conclusion. For these multiracial respondents, the discord lied in their inability to fully accept or reject the notion that racial difference can be, at least the very least, a compatible part of close, personal relations after their exposure to alternative perspectives that highlighted persistent racial and gender inequalities that can impede these relations.

Multiracial respondents' discordant narratives began, like respondents in Chapter 3, as reconciliation narratives (see Figure 3.1). They started with a formative "crisis," in which they were made to feel for the first time that racial difference impeded personal relationships (e.g. their interracial families as unstable, interracial friendships as abnormal). This was followed by "conflict," in which respondents employed close vs. not close distinctions and often spatially and temporally distanced themselves from instances in which they felt racial difference was an impediment to forming personal relations. However, during college, respondents were exposed to "counter-narratives" (Delgado 1995) that introduced them to enduring racial and gender inequalities, such as white male privilege and the exploitation of Filipina women in the sex industry, that not only can impede close, personal relations but also resonated with respondents' personal lives (e.g. their parents' interracial relationship).[24] Consequently, struggle ensued, in which respondents wrestled with this newfound knowledge of how racial difference can impede close relations and, due to personal ties, their desire for racial difference to still be a compatible component of their interracial relationships. As a result, respondents ultimately conceded an

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[24] Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey (1995) note that the effectiveness of counter-narratives (what they term "subversive stories") lies in their capacity to *emplot* connections between the personal/particular and the general: "[S]ubversive stories do not aggregate to the general, do not collect particulars as examples of a common phenomenon or rule; rather, subversive stories recount particular experiences as *rooted* in and part of an encompassing cultural, material, and political world that extends beyond the local" (219, emphasis in original).

ambivalent moral, in which they felt they could neither wholly embrace nor entirely reject that

possibility of *close*, interracial relations.

Figure 4.1. Basic Structure of Discordant Narrative

Discordant narratives differ from traditional narrative structures. As illustrated with

respondents' reconciliation narratives in the previous chapter, traditional narratives typically

entail a single perspective that propels a story toward a clear, coherent resolution (White 1980;

Somers 1994). In contrast, discordant narratives consist of not only multiple, contrasting

perspectives or storylines but also unresolved endings. Narrative analysts have identified non-

traditional narrative structures that draw several parallels with discordant narratives. For

instance, literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin ([1934] 1981) argued that in novels, unlike other

literary genres, different types of "speech" or "voice" (e.g. the characters', narrators', or

author's) coexist and even conflict within a single text, what he termed "heteroglossia." Further,

in her study of low-income African American youth's perceptions of social mobility, education

scholar Carla O'Connor (1997) found her respondents told "co-narratives," in which they neither

fully adopted "mainstream" ideologies of "making it" nor fully rejected them with counter-

narratives but, rather, modified these mainstream philosophies with a range of additional claims

(Young 2004:142). While these advances in narrative highlight important parallels with

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discordant narratives, the latter's departure from traditional narrative structures arguably is more drastic. That is, discordant narratives' analytical purchase lies not in the presence of multiple "voices" or the modification of an existing narrative but in the fractious co-existence of entirely different narratives within a single account, all of which force ambivalent "resolutions."

Counter-Narrative Sites

Multiracial respondents told discordant narratives due to their involvement in *counter-narrative sites* in college, such as in courses or study abroad programs, where they were exposed to counter-narratives that highlighted racial and gender inequalities that can impede close, interracial relationships.[25] Involvement in counter-narrative sites took two forms: 1) *moderately intensive* and 2) *highly intensive* (see Figure 4.2). The types of inequality highlighted by counter-narratives (e.g. gender exploitation) depended on the intensity of respondents' involvement in the counter-narrative site. Next, I will illustrate each counter-narrative site, in turn, through exemplar cases. Although at times interviewees recounted being exposed to counter-narratives in more than one of these sites, as in the previous chapter, I will discuss each separately in the interest of clarity.

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[25] Multiracial respondents' exposure to counter-narrative sites almost exclusively in college illustrates most explicitly the general upward mobility of most participants in this study.

Figure 4.2. Counter-Narrative Site and Gender Exploitation Narrative

Counter-Narrative Site

		Moderately Intensive (e.g. courses)	Highly Intensive (e.g. courses + activism)
Gender Exploitation Narrative	**No**	Noah Fischer and Tony Mendoza	
	Yes		Anna-Marie Charles, Cristina Berry, and Gwen Knight

Moderately Intensive

Moderately intensive was the most basic involvement in counter-narrative sites among multiracial respondents who told discordant narratives. These respondents were exposed to counter-narratives often in college courses (e.g. ethnic studies, history, sociology) that they did not actively seek out and toward which they initially felt little emotional ties. However, respondents' exposure to counter-narratives in these sites exposed them to enduring racial inequalities, such as white male privilege and anti-immigrant racism, that connected with respondents' personal lives but also challenged their efforts to reconcile racial differences in their closest relations. Ultimately, this tension led these respondents to forward ambivalent conclusions, eliciting more questions than answers. To illustrate this counter-narrative site, I present the cases of two interviewees: Noah Fischer and Tony Mendoza.

Noah Fischer (early 30s, Filipina mother-white father, Michigan)

I was first placed in contact with Noah when I began conducting interviews in southeastern Michigan. At the time, he was in graduate school out of state. It was not until I extended my interviews to the San Francisco-Bay Area, where Noah recently started a research

position at a local university, that we were able to finally meet. According to Noah, he grew up

in a largely white suburb of Detroit, where his dark hair and light brown complexioned skin led

many to assume he is Latino. However, Noah explained, he was born to a second-generation

Filipina mother and white father of German descent who met through mutual friends in Detroit

in the mid-1970s. Like other respondents who told discordant narratives, Noah's account began

as a reconciliation narrative.

Reconciliation Narrative

Noah began his narrative recalling how he grew up in, as Noah worded it, "very much a

white suburb." In this monoracial setting, Noah explained that he was at times made to feel that

his family was not "normal" because they were interracial and, thus, that racial difference was an

impediment to close relations. Marking the formative "crisis" of his narrative, Noah recalled that

his most salient memory of these feelings was in high school, prompted by a white classmate in a

freshman social studies course. He recalled:

> Someone was like, "What is it like growing up with parents of two different races?" It
> completely blew me away. I was like, "What?!," you know, 'cause in my head it was
> like, "Mom and Dad. Mom and Dad," and I didn't think anything of it, you know, or it
> never crossed my mind to think anything about it…I was like completely like blown
> away. I was like, "What?!"

Asked if he answered the question, Noah replied: "I don't think I had any answer. I was

just like, 'I don't know. It's like my mom and my dad. Seems *normal* to me.'" For Noah, this

moment was significant for the confusion and dismay it garnered. While for his classmate it was

likely an innocent, nonchalant question, for Noah, it was an abrupt realization that to many

interracial relationships were not, as he thought, "normal," and as the product of one, he was an

enigma. Noah's repetition of the phrase "Mom and Dad" only further illustrates that it was not

merely his racial difference that was at the source of this "crisis" but more so the racial difference *within* his familial relations.

The subsequent conflict of Noah's narrative proceeded as a reconciliation narrative. For instance, Noah explained that, while he did not recall being asked that same specific question again, he was often the subject of similar lines of inquiry by his largely white peers. This was most often in the form of the infamous "what are you?" question. Although Noah used characteristics like "uncomfortable" and "different" to imply a lack of closeness in these interactions, Noah reflected on these incidents with a light-hearted annoyance as if they were of a different time and place past. However, before Noah could fully "reconcile" racial differences in his personal relations, Noah recalled how he was exposed to alternative perspectives in a college course that complicated his understandings of race, especially in his closest relationships. It was here that Noah's account began to take the form of a discordant narrative.

Counter-Narrative

For college, Noah attended a local public university, where in one course he was introduced to counter-narratives that challenged his belief that racial difference could be a compatible part of personal relationships. Although pursuing a degree in the sciences, Noah explained that the university required all students to take at least one course on race and ethnicity in the U.S. before graduation. According to Noah, he reluctantly enrolled in a course on Asian American literature. However, to Noah's surprise, this course ended up being, in Noah's words, "the best class I took there" and an influential counter-narrative site that provided a "new" outlook on race. Noah explained that these works of Asian American literature not only introduced him to histories of racial inequalities of which he was previously unaware but, more importantly, illuminated connections with his personal life:

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I think that was probably one of the first times I really took time to think about race as an issue or as a factor. I mean I've thought about it, but I've never really taken time to read and actually think about it…We read a lot of Asian American literature, and the books, a lot of them, were about their personal experiences, and a lot of that kind of like *struck home*, you know, either directly with myself or just kind of putting myself in my grandma or grandpa's shoes or my mom's shoes, you know, depending on what we're reading, and a lot of it I found to be, you know, *related to me personally*…It was like *something completely new* that I had no idea and never thought about.

Noah cited one book he read in the course as particularly memorable, Carlos Bulosan's

1946 classic, semi-autobiographical novel, *America Is in the Heart*, which tells the story of a

Filipino migrant laborer's struggles with racism (e.g. racial segregation, violence, anti-

miscegenation laws) in the 1930's western U.S. In Noah's subsequent narration, he drew on

insights he gained from this counter-narrative site to make sense of life incidents in which he felt

racial difference hindered close relations, the most prominent of which involved his father.

According to Noah, toward the end of college he received a highly competitive grant for

minorities to pursue a graduate degree in the sciences. Elated, Noah remembered he was

shocked to find that his father did not share his enthusiasm. He recalled:

I was really excited to win a grant, and it was competitive. It wasn't like they just gave it to me, but it was a diversity based grant, and my dad was like not happy at all. He didn't understand. He was like, "You shouldn't be getting this grant." He was just like totally like downing my happiness, but it like made me feel really uncomfortable…Talking to him made me really upset, you know, 'cause I feel like he wasn't even trying to understand where I am coming from or what my experience is, you know. He just said, you know, "I'll be proud of you when you get a *normal* grant."

Here, Noah conveys his frustration with his father through distinctions in closeness,

recalling that he felt "uncomfortable" and that his father was not trying to "understand" where he

was coming from (i.e. not "knowing" someone/familiarity). To make sense of this lack of

closeness, Noah drew on the "new" outlook he gained from his college course:

 I think my dad just thinks we should just like, you know, discount color and be colorblind or racial-blind. I think that's the way a lot of people view society, but it just

isn't that way, and some things have gotten better, but it's still not that way, and we can't treat it that way just 'cause we want it to be that way.

Noah went on to explain that, although his relationship with his father is "really good now," the incident remains a sore spot in their relationship: "even now, I'm pretty upset about it." For Noah, the counter-narratives he was exposed to in college enable him to identify how his white father's colorblindness impedes him from not only recognizing the necessity of these grants (i.e. "I'll be proud of you when you get a *normal* grant.") but also from "understanding" his biracial son's experience. Even so, in maintaining his relationship with his father, Noah illustrates a continued desire for racial difference to be a compatible part of his closest relations. For instance, Noah does not, like Zach Bell and Dennis Reed in the previous chapter, simply disassociate from his father. Rather, he describes a more complicated scenario, in which he has strived to build close relations with his father (i.e. reconciliation) while remaining well aware that these racial divisions still linger (i.e. "even now, I'm pretty upset about it"). This dual-appeal of elements from both reconciliation narratives and the counter-narratives he was exposed to in college led Noah to come to an ambivalent conclusion.

Like others who told discordant narratives, Noah concluded his account with more questions than answers. For instance, Noah reflected further on the formative incident in high school that marked the "crisis" of his narrative, conceding: "I would say that question is still hard to answer, right? You know, what is it like growing up with parents of two different races? It's like, 'Well…' It's always kind of difficult." Although Noah explained that he continues to look to the counter-narratives from his Asian American literature course and even the course professor to "understand what it means to be like biracial or minority in America," he confessed: "I still don't feel completely comfortable how I think about my identity or race…Those things are constantly changing. Those kinds of feelings are always like evolving." This ambivalence

toward interracial relationships, whether being in them or born to them, is the product of the co-existence of equally appealing yet conflicting narratives within Noah's account. Noah's exposure to counter-narratives in college that highlighted persistent racial inequalities challenged the tidy assertions of reconciliation narratives that racial difference is an asset in personal relationships. However, as suggested by his desire to maintain a "good" relationship with his white father, Noah's personal ties inhibited his full adherence to the opposing position that racial difference can only be an impediment in these relations. Rather, out of the tension of these opposing perspectives, Noah tells a discordant narrative, in which his views toward interracial relationships are not "resolved" but "constantly changing" and "always evolving," perhaps hoping that one day racial difference will not be a liability but always a compatible part of his most personal relations.

The narrative of another interviewee, Tony Mendoza, also illustrates how moderately intensive involvement in college courses can spark a discordant narrative that paints a more complicated portrait of interracial relationships.

Tony Mendoza (late 20s, white mother-Filipino father, California)

Tony and I met on a rainy February afternoon in San Francisco's South of Market or "SoMa" district at a local Filipino community center, where he was working at the time. Stocky in build with light complexioned skin, Tony explained that he is more or less racially ambiguous, but many end up assuming he is Latino because of his Hispanic surname. Nonetheless, Tony was born to a Filipino father and white (Welsh) mother in California's East Bay who met in the late 1970s while both working at a restaurant in San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square. Like Noah, Tony's discordant narrative began as a reconciliation narrative.

Reconciliation Narrative

While Tony noted how he grew up in a "very diverse" family, his opening reflections about race and personal relationships largely centered on his white mother. Just two years prior to our interview, Tony explained, his mother passed away from a sudden illness. One of his most prominent memories of her was her frequent recommendation that he, as mixed-race, "be a bridge" between different racial and ethnic groups, whether among family members or friends: "[My mother] really tried really hard and preached to me to be a bridge. Like, that's the one quote she would like [say]." Tony gave an example from his middle school years:

> I remember being on the basketball team, and there was like a lot of African Americans, and then the other probably half was like white, and when there would be some kind of conflict on the team, she would be like, you know, "People aren't seeing this issue clearly, but you can. You can see what's going on. You know, maybe it's not something racial, but just that's what's clouding the situation" or something.

Similar to reconciliation narratives, the advice of Tony's mother presents racial difference, in this case being mixed-race, as an asset in forming personal relationships. Even so, Tony explained that he was not always entirely convinced that being mixed-race brought such advantages and sometimes expressed his skepticism through humor: "I would give her a hard time about it. Like, if I would have a conflict with someone from another group, I would say, 'Well, I was just trying to be a bridge' [laughing]." However, despite his joke, Tony explained that in retrospect he has come to see this phrase as his mother's efforts to shine a positive light on being mixed-race where others might see it as something negative. Recalling this, Tony essentially outlines the basic structure of the reconciliation narrative:

> I think she like could kind of see already like, you know, "My son's gonna have a different experience and a different lens like growing up looking at things," and I think she tried to have me *use that in a positive way and not have me hate myself for being different from other people*.

Nevertheless, as Tony's aforementioned skepticism suggests, he did not fully embrace this narrative. He explained that in college he was exposed to counter-narratives that highlighted persistent racial inequalities that tempered his wholehearted belief in his mother's well-intentioned advice.

Counter-Narrative

Like Noah, Tony's discordant narrative was sparked by his participation in a moderately intensive counter-narrative site, a college course, where he was introduced to counter-narratives that ultimately led him to forward a less clear-cut position on interracial relationships. In Tony's case, the course was a class in Philippine studies offered at his local city college. Like Noah, Tony did not come to the course with strong emotional ties. In fact, it was one of a number of courses Tony was sampling at the time, including classes in accounting and broadcasting. However, also like Noah, the course ultimately proved revelatory and became a significant turning point for Tony:

> I think [the Philippine studies course] really started to open up doors to me…It was like, you know, just not really knowing about that side of my culture too much, you know…I learned about African American history somewhat in school [but] I didn't learn anything about the Philippines in school.

In the course, Tony learned, among many topics, about the historical relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines, particularly the impact of U.S. colonialism on Filipinos both in the Philippines and its diaspora. These illustrations of the impact of larger socio-historical relations, like war and U.S. militarization, on Filipino lives provided a counter-narrative to the more interpersonal message of "be a bridge." As such, the course, in Tony's words, "open[ed] up doors," providing a "new" outlook on inequality, including racial inequality. Further, like most respondents who told discordant narratives, the course also opened up doors to more intensive involvement in other counter-narrative sites. For instance, Tony

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explained that he began to take courses in ethnic studies, became involved in a social justice

campus organization geared toward the recruitment and retention of Filipino college students,

and participated in a study abroad program in the Philippines. In fact, in the latter, Tony was

exposed to narratives of gender exploitation, common among more highly intensive

involvement, in his interaction with "street children" in the Philippines, many of whom were

forced into prostitution. However, despite this increased intensity in involvement, like Noah's

case, Tony's introduction to these counter-narratives began in a more moderately intensive

counter-narrative site, a college course he sampled. Further, like Noah, for Tony these counter-

narratives, while highly influential, did not provide all the answers for him on race and personal

relations.

Although somewhat skeptical, Tony did not abandon his mother's recommendation to

"be a bridge" altogether. Even after his reflections on the counter-narratives he was exposed to

in college, Tony mentioned what he termed "bridge moments," in which he felt he was able to

use his experience as a mixed-race individual to "connect" people from "different experiences,"

most especially in his involvement in campus race-based organizations.   Therefore, while

formative in his education and activism, the counter-narratives Tony was introduced to in college

did not entirely diminish the appeal of his mother's advice, in which racial difference enabled

personal relations. Tony reiterated this less clearly-defined position at the end of his narrative

when he mentioned, unprompted, President Barack Obama's mixed racial heritage and, for Tony,

its simplistic depiction during his 2008 presidential campaign:

> [I remember] when like Obama was getting elected, he didn't say he's like white or
> black, and people not really giving him room to be both of those identities and like it just
> made me realize like, "Man, like people don't even know*." I don't want to put Obama
> on a pedestal*, but it's like people don't understand life if they just look at it through like,
> "He's just a black dude," you know, especially with him being raised by his [white]
> grandparents, you know.

Here, Tony presents a complicated stance on interracial relations that is the product of two contentious narratives. First, as a mixed-race individual, Tony expresses frustration with what, for him, were rigid depictions of President Obama as "just a black dude" that did not acknowledge his close white relatives. As in the moral of reconciliation narratives and his mother's advice to "be a bridge," Tony critiques a denial of racial difference as a compatible part of close, personal relations. However, likely tempered by counter-narratives in college, Tony's reflection falls short of a wholehearted embrace of this moral. That is, unlike a traditional reconciliation narrative (e.g. Shannon Hart in Chapter 3), Tony does not valorize the President as a progressive "bridge" between races or "the answer" to race relations (i.e. "I don't want to put Obama on a pedestal"). Thus, Tony's guarded critique typifies his discordant narrative's ambivalent conclusion toward interracial relations. Although more subtle than Noah, Tony ultimately also does not fully adhere to nor entirely reject the notion that racial difference can be a compatible part of close, personal relations.

Highly Intensive

Highly intensive counter-narrative sites entailed the greatest degree of involvement among multiracial respondents who told discordant narratives. These respondents were exposed to counter-narratives through not only taking college courses but also becoming involved in activist organizations that addressed social justice issues, such as sex trafficking, and/or enrolling in study abroad programs in the Philippines. In each, they were introduced to enduring racial and gender inequalities (e.g. racialized desire) that can impede close personal relations. Specifically, respondents were exposed to *gender exploitation narratives* that emphasized inequalities facing Filipina women, such as the mail-order-bride industry or sex tourism in the Philippines. These counter-narratives not only connected with respondents' personal lives but

also challenged their belief in close, interracial relationships. Ultimately, like moderately intensive counter-narrative sites, this tension led these respondents to tell discordant narratives with ambivalent conclusions about interracial relations. To illustrate these counter-narrative sites, I present the stories of three interviewees: Anna-Marie Charles, Cristina Berry, and Gwen Knight.

Anna-Marie Charles (mid-20s, Filipina mother-white father, California)

I interviewed Anna-Marie on a cool, late-winter day in a popular downtown San Francisco park. In her early 20s, Anna-Marie was, as she was quick to point out, "made in the Philippines" but born in San Francisco to a Filipina mother and white American father, who met in the mid-1980s through a pen-pal relationship. Like others who told discordant narratives, Anna-Marie's account began as a reconciliation narrative.

Reconciliation Narrative

From the outset of our interview, Anna-Marie sought to present racial difference as a compatible part of her closest relations, particularly her parents' interracial relationship. The formative "crisis" of her narrative illustrated the impetus for this desire. That is, although Anna-Marie's straight dark hair, brown eyes, and olive complexioned skin have led many to ask her "what" she is, what has troubled her the most has been the question that often follows:

> A lot of people when they ask me what I am, and I tell them, the second question they ask me is whether or not my parents are still together, and I always thought that was interesting. Like, "Wow. Is it because I'm mixed-race that [people ask] why are my parents together?''

The subsequent conflict of Anna-Marie's narrative centered on her efforts to project interracial relationships, like her parents', and being mixed-race as just as acceptable as same-race relationships and being monoracial.

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As in her narrative's crisis, Anna-Marie's parents' interracial relationship was central in her narrative's conflict. Anna-Marie explained that the circumstances in which her parents met have led many, including even herself, to question the romantic foundations of her parents' marriage:

> My dad's really good friend a few years ago told me, straight up, that my mom married my dad because she needed to get out of the ghetto, essentially. She's the only one out of her brother's and sister's who came to America, and so she needed to support them, which, you know, is common, but and then my dad just needed a wife, so it was very much like marriage for convenience, and I just couldn't really deal with that fact. I always wanted to believe that my parents were like madly in love like you saw in the movies, and I was like going through it I remember trying to come to terms with that, that my parents were more just like friends. I mean, they were pen pals or whatever and they would talk on the phone…When my dad went to go see her first in person, they were together for two weeks and then they got married. Like, it wasn't like a long courtship.

Just as in a reconciliation narrative, Anna-Marie makes sense of the "romance" of her parents' pen pal relationship – relationships often rooted in asymmetrical gender, racial, and national relations to begin with (Constable 2003) – through close vs. not close distinctions. Here, she does so through distinctions between romantic love (e.g. "madly in love like you saw in the movies") and pragmatic love (e.g. "marriage for convenience").[26] Further, while some male respondents did question the romantic foundations of their parents' interracial relationships (e.g. Zach Bell in Chapter 3), these concerns were more common among female respondents. This could be a product of what Francesca Cancian (1987) has termed "the feminization of love," in which love, like other "private" matters, is seen as "a feminine quality," emphasizing tenderness and the expression of emotion and, most importantly, a concern of women and not men (23). As such, societal anxieties over whether interracial relationships are driven by romance or more pragmatic means (e.g. gaining U.S. citizenship) would be placed

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[26] Further, in likening her parents' marriage to a friendship and dating, Anna-Marie illustrates a less common but notable occurrence in which different types of personal relationships (e.g. marriage vs. friendship) were employed like close vs. not close distinctions to signify the relative closeness of relations, in this case the lack thereof.

disproportionately on mixed-race daughters than sons.[27] The rest of the conflict of Anna-Marie's narrative proceeded, at least initially, as a reconciliation narrative.

In her reflection on her school years, Anna-Marie employed both spatial and temporal distinctions to map places and social circles in which she felt being mixed-race and interracial friendships were acceptable. For instance, although the schools Anna-Marie attended in San Francisco were "diverse," she described them as "divided," making it difficult for her, as mixed-race, to form close friendships. It was not until she formed a "pretty mixed" group of friends in high school (i.e. "It was like Latino, white, Filipino, black") that she felt racial difference was not a liability to forming close friendships. She sought out similar friendship circles in college, first at a community college in San Francisco and then at a public university in New York, where her closest friends were not only a diverse group of women of color (i.e. "one was half black half white, a couple Filipino, a couple Latino") but also shared Anna-Marie's increasing interest in issues around social justice. Anna-Marie's subsequent involvement in activist organizations exposed her to gender exploitation narratives that challenged her belief in close, interracial relationships and transformed her narrative into a more complicated discordant narrative.

Gender Exploitation Narrative

Characteristic of highly intensive involvement, Anna-Marie did not become involved in counter-narrative sites, in her case activist organizations, through a course requirement or through sampling classes but rather actively sought out participation, bringing strong emotional ties. In these organizations, Anna-Marie was exposed to gender exploitation narratives that highlighted inequalities facing Filipina women that can impede close personal relations.

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[27] Studies on interracial romantic relationships also have shown this gendered discrepancy, finding that white women anticipate more family disapproval if they engage in interracial relationships than white men because they expect their romantic/sexual behavior to receive more scrutiny (Miller, Olson, and Fazio 2004; Herman and Campbell 2012).

Specifically, while in college in New York, Anna-Marie became an active member of a U.S.-Philippines women's solidarity organization, which addresses a variety of social issues including globalization, militarism, and sex trafficking that affect Filipina women's lives both in the Philippines and its diaspora. Anna-Marie recalled how a news story about the organization's protest of a Wal-Mart mail-order-bride Halloween costume, which featured a Philippines stamp on the dress, prompted her involvement in the organization:

> [The story] was talking about things that I'd already knew about but in a way that I didn't think about it before. Like, with mail-order-brides, I really didn't see it as a bad thing before. I just accepted it. Like, "Okay, well, like, my mom went to a mail-order-bride agency before she met my dad," so I accepted it as, "Well, you know, the women are poor, and they want to get out of their situation, so they marry out of, you know, whatever their living in to better their situation." I didn't think it was a good thing, but I didn't think it was a bad thing and just accepted it as a normal thing, and then when I read this story, and they talked about how, like, the statistics with women being killed and beaten and just these different stories of what would happen to these women like totally isolated from everyone and everything and how these men would treat them, really affected me.

> Anna-Marie continued:

> I started reading and researching on how these women were sold on different internet websites. You'd literally have a shopping cart icon, and they would market it as, "Oh, Filipinas do everything for you. They don't complain. They don't do this. They don't do that. They make the perfect wife." Like, totally feeding into all these awful stereotypes that make these men think, "Oh, these are just subservient women that will do whatever I say"…That really really affected me.

Like Noah's and Tony's college courses, the activist organizations' literature on their protest of the mail-order-bride costumes served as a counter-narrative that connected larger social inequalities (i.e. an industry that exploits Filipina women) with Anna-Marie's personal life (i.e. her mother) and, in general, provided her with a new outlook on these interracial relationships (i.e. "in a way I didn't think about it before"). Further, through these stories Anna-Marie's perspective shifted on mail-order-brides, from a "common" means for Filipina women, like her mother, "to get out of their situation" to an industry that exploits them and, as discussed

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in Chapter 2, often relies on gender and sexual stereotypes of Asian, particularly Filipina, women as "good wives" that are especially subservient and loyal to their husbands (Ignacio 2005; Nemoto 2009). However, as much as Anna-Marie found the organization's stories empowering, she also confessed that, at times, their emphasis on the persistence of gender and racial inequalities made her feel as if interracial relationships, like her parents', could never be truly close. Anna-Marie recalled one incident in particular that illustrated this dilemma central to discordant narratives.

Anna-Marie recalled that one day while driving in New York City with two female friends involved in the organization, one of whom was also born to a Filipina mother and white American father, they passed an East Asian woman walking with a white man on the street. According to Anna-Marie, her friends remarked of the woman, "She needs to work on her white love!" and of the man, "He is exoticizing her and fetishizing her!"[28] Anna-Marie explained that during her activism similar sentiments were expressed before. She gave an example of a peer who ardently "didn't believe that in this society, a white person can love a person of color. That there was always some sort of degree of like exoticizing them or fetishizing them." Although Anna-Marie felt these remarks were attuned to how racism and sexism can operate in romantic relations, as a person born to an interracial relationship, she also felt she could not entirely embrace, what she saw as, their simplistic belief that interracial relationships can never be based on romance: "It assumes that a not-white with a white has self-hate. Maybe he was a huge anti-

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[28] Although Anna-Marie was not able to identify precisely where she first heard the term "white love" (she suspects in a book or workshop), the term is popularly associated with historian Vicente Rafael, who used the term to refer to the project of "benevolent assimilation" that informed the U.S.'s colonial relationship with the Philippines: "White love holds out the promise of fathering, as it were, a 'civilized people' capable in time of asserting its own character. But it also demands the indefinite submission to a program of discipline and reformation requiring the constant supervision of a sovereign master" (2000:23). Anna-Marie's and her friends' use of the term emphasized, in Rafael's words, "submission to a program of discipline." In a follow-up interview, Anna-Marie explained, for her white love means "internalized racial oppression" and being "blinded by racist institutions that benefit white men" and "work against one's interest." She gave the example of a person of color who is "anti-affirmative action" and "doesn't see the importance of ethnic studies."

racist academic. It assumed she was like a Michelle Malkin (conservative, Filipina American political commentator). *It's more complicated.*"[29]   Like others who told discordant narratives, this tension between two compelling yet contrasting narratives left Anna-Marie with more questions than answers.

Toward the end of our interview, I asked Anna-Marie if she were presented with the opportunity today to respond to her peer's claim that a white person cannot love a person of color, how she would reply. In her response, Anna-Marie forwarded the ambivalent moral of her discordant narrative:

> It would not be a short answer. I think it would be a discussion. To be honest, at this point, I understand where their coming from 'cause I'm understanding like the concepts that they realized, but at the same time…[As mixed-race] I understand the interconnectedness of everything, so I'm definitely not against interracial dating, but I understand why people are critical of it, and I think if you are in an interracial relationship, as long as you're understanding of those privileges and are willing to work that out and understand that, it's fine, but when you're not understanding of privileges…

Thus, for Anna-Marie, whether or not racial difference can be a compatible part of close personal relations, especially romantic relations, is not a clear-cut answer. Rather, like Noah and Tony, it is a subject matter that provokes hesitation and fluctuation because, in Anna-Marie's words, "it's more complicated." However, in Anna-Marie's case, this ambivalence is the product of her highly intensive involvement in activist organizations that exposed her to gender exploitation narratives that challenged but ultimately could not fully suppress her personally-steeped desire for the possibility of *close*, interracial relationships.

The account of another interviewee, Cristina Berry, illustrates how participation in another highly intensive counter-narrative site, study abroad programs, led her also to tell a discordant narrative.

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[29] This and the preceding quote are drawn from notes from a follow-up phone interview with Anna-Marie that was not audio-recorded.

Cristina Berry (mid-20s, Filipina mother-African American father, California)

I interviewed Cristina on a sunny, late-winter morning in the same downtown San Francisco park. Cristina was raised in a "military town" in southern California, and a year prior to our interview moved to the Bay Area to pursue a teaching credential at a local university. In her mid-20s, Cristina explained that, to many at first glance, she is seen as black and rarely as also Filipino. According to Cristina, her African American father and Filipina mother met in the late 1970s near Subic Naval Base in Olongapo City, Philippines, where her father was stationed as a serviceman in the U.S. Navy and where her mother worked. Similar to Anna-Marie, Cristina's narrative began as a reconciliation narrative.

Reconciliation Narrative

The formative crisis of Cristina's narrative occurred early in her life and outside her family in her largely Latino grade school. Cristina recalled that one of her classmates made her aware of her racial difference through pointing out the phenotypic discrepancy between her and her mother. She recalled:

> One of my earliest memories of [my mother] was in fourth grade when we had a thing called "All about Me," and every student was a VIP for the week, so the whole week we'd learn about the student…There was one time in the week, where a family member or a neighbor, someone that *knew them well*, would come in and talk about the student, and I remember that she came in, and she talked about me, and I just [was] really happy, but one of the earliest things I remember about that is that that's when a lot of my classmates saw that my mother was Filipina…I remember one student was like, "Why are you a different color than your mom?," and it was at that point that I realize[d] that we were different from each other at least in terms of color.

As her guest speaker, Cristina's mother represented someone with which she had a particularly close relationship (i.e. "knew them well"), and while it may have been less unusual for Cristina's peer if her mother was her neighbor or even a family friend, the fact that she was indeed Cristina's mother *and* "a different color" made Cristina aware for the first time that she,

vis-à-vis this relationship, was "different." The subsequent "conflict" of Cristina's story proceeded along similar lines as reconciliation narratives.

Characteristic of reconciliation narratives, Cristina spent the initial conflict of her narrative recalling her efforts to find social spaces in which interracial relationships and being mixed-race were acceptable. Although Cristina described her hometown as "pretty diverse" (i.e. Latino, black, white, and Filipino), she characterized her school settings, particularly high school, as "divided": "My high school was divided, and it was divided racially. Like, certain kids would hang out with certain kids. You know what I mean, like, the black kids with the [black kids]." She explained that in this setting, she felt her racial difference, here being mixed-race, was a liability to forming close friendships with both the black and Filipino student bodies. Nevertheless, Cristina recalled eventually forming a close and racially mixed group of friends, in which she felt racial differences were not a liability but an integral feature:

> My friends were mixed or Latino. Like, three of us were half Filipino, and two of them were Filipino and white. I was black and Filipino. Another was Latina and Dutch. Like, she was Mexican and Dutch, and then the others were Latina.

As Cristina's recollections proceeded into her college years at a public university in southern California, her narrative appeared, at first, to cohere toward a positive resolution akin to a reconciliation narrative. For instance, Cristina recalled that during her second year of college she became actively involved in her college's multiracial-identified student organization, the Hapa Club.[30] Participation in the student group aligned with Cristina's efforts to present interracial relationships and being mixed-race as just as acceptable as same-race relationships

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[30] "Hapa" is a Hawaiian word meaning "mixed, part, or half," and although traditionally applied to those of part European and Hawaiian descent (i.e. "hapa haole"), the term has been appropriated by many Asian Americans to refer to someone of mixed Asian ancestry, most often of Asian-white descent. As Cristina noted herself in the interview, this more expansive use of the term has come under increased scrutiny in recent years because it, as one scholar argues, "wrongfully appropriate[s] the term in a way that disenfranchises Native Hawaiians from their culture" (Dariotis 2008).

and being monoracial. Cristina recalled one organizational event, a discussion group on mixed-race led by a campus psychologist, that exemplified the "comfort" she felt in the group:

> I think I remember crying a lot. I did cry a lot 'cause I-, there was a lot of pain associated with me, um, coming to identify being Filipino and black. You know, just, it was very painful, and I was just emotional, so like it set me off, you know. I'm really embarrassed about it now, but I think I felt comfortable.

Here, Cristina retrospectively charts a transformative arc from "pain" to "comfort" in her mixed heritage akin to that at the foundation of reconciliation narratives. However, this arc toward a cohesive and positive resolution was tempered by Cristina's exposure to gender exploitation narratives through her participation in a study abroad program not long later.

Gender Exploitation Narrative

Cristina explained that in the summer between her third and fourth years of college she participated in a study abroad program in the Philippines. Like Anna-Marie, Cristina actively sought out participation in this counter-narrative site. Although her involvement would be highly intensive, Cristina explained that she did not anticipate the lasting effects the program would have on her: "Initially going into it I didn't know exactly what it was all about. I mean I knew it was studying Filipino history, language, culture, and all that stuff, but I didn't know how deeply it would impact me." Cristina added, "[the program] was the best experience I've had in my life, thus far." Like others involved in highly intensive counter-narrative sites, on this study abroad program, Cristina was exposed to gender exploitation narratives that highlighted enduring inequalities facing Filipina women that led her to ultimately forward a more ambivalent position on interracial relationships. In Cristina's case, she was exposed to the sex industry around former U.S. military bases in the Philippines.

Similar to Anna-Marie, the gender exploitation narratives Cristina was exposed to in her study abroad program challenged her belief in "romantic" interracial relationships, particularly

her parents'. For instance, during the program Cristina learned about the long history of sex

tourism in the Philippines, which has been a means out of poverty for thousands of poor Filipina

women and continues to thrive around former U.S. military bases in the islands (Ignacio 2005).

Knowing that her parents met on a U.S. military base but unsure about the exact circumstances,

Cristina explained that during a group trip to the red light districts surrounding the now-closed

Clark Air Base in Angeles City, she felt compelled to know the details of her parents' meeting:

> There was a point where we went to one of the red light districts in Angeles, I think it was, by Clark, but before that, upon entering Clark, I remember me not knowing anything about how my parents met, and that was really in my head, you know. And, so I remember in the van driving through Clark, and I was like, "I have to call my mom 'cause I-." It wasn't settled with me…So, I called her, and she was in the States. I asked my mom where my parents met, and she said that we met at a party through friends 'cause it was a Black and Filipino couple as well. I asked, "What were you doing in Olongapo." She said, "I was working." And, I said, "Where?" And, she said, "Oh, I was working at the Cuby Point," which is on base one of the store things. I was like, "Oh okay." [Sigh]

Cristina's pointed line of inquiry into "where" her parents met and "what" her mother

was doing, all followed by an ultimate sigh, convey suspicion on the part of Cristina into the

romantic propriety of her parents' interracial relationship. Like Anna-Marie, Cristina expresses

anxiety over whether her parents' meeting was "romantic" or driven, at least initially, by more

"pragmatic" means (e.g. sex work). This tension between, on the one hand, Cristina's desire for

racial difference to be a compatible part of her close relations and, on the other, gender

exploitation narratives that highlight how persistent inequalities can hinder such relations

reached its height in Cristina's reflections on the time she spent among Filipino Amerasians

during her trip.

"Filipino Amerasian" is a term that commonly refers to individuals born of Filipina

women and U.S. serviceman, who because many of their mothers worked in the sex industry are

often looked down upon in Philippine society (Enloe [1989] 2000:187).[31] Cristina recalled

meeting several Amerasian children during a group trip to Olongapo City, the location of the

now-closed Subic Naval Base and where her parents met. Initially, she recalled feeling a sense

of comfort among the city's relatively large Amerasian population:

> I think the place in the Philippines that I feel the most comfortable is actually Olongapo City, and that's because of all the Amerasians that are there, so when we were walking around, I felt like, you know, I saw all these Amerasians too, and I was like, "Oh, damn. Like, okay. I'm amongst people who look like me."

However, Cristina confessed that it was not long before anxieties around the romantic

propriety of her parents' interracial relationship resurfaced. She recalled one final event that

exemplified her continued anxiety and her growing ambivalence toward interracial relationships:

> I remember it was still sensitive with me when I was there because a couple months later when I was in Quezon City, Manila, one of the Amerasian's friends texted me and was like, "Oh, I'm in Manila too" and we were just talking or whatever, and he said, "My name is Anthony [Berry]," and my last name is [Berry]. So, I was like, "You're not related to me!" You know, I was really defensive. He's like, "I know I'm not. I'm just-." I was like, "Oh my God, what's wrong with me?" 'Cause when we were at [the Amerasian community], they asked me too if I knew if my father had any other children, and I was like, "I don't know." I don't know how to ask, and even now, I don't know how to ask. I don't know how to ask. I'm curious though, but I don't know if I would ask. I don't know.

Cristina's repeated utterance of "I don't know" and hesitance to ask her father if he

fathered other children while stationed in the Philippines illustrate, on the one hand, Cristina's

desire to maintain the romantic propriety of her parents' interracial relationship and, on the other,

her knowledge that, given where her father was stationed in the Philippines, this romantic image

may not be entirely the case. Thus, Cristina's exposure to gender exploitation narratives in her

study abroad program interrupted her once coherent reconciliation narrative and produced a more

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[31] In 2004, it was estimated that over 50,000 Filipino Amerasians lived in the Philippines (Pinaroc 2004:1). Often abandoned by their fathers and sometimes also by their mothers, many become street children, some even entering prostitution as well (Enloe [1989] 2000:187). According to the Philippine Children's Fund of America, a northern California organization that aids Filipino Amerasian populations, only 5 percent of Filipino Amerasians have the proper documentation to prove their legal status as U.S. citizens (Espinosa 2006:4).

fragmented discordant narrative, in which, like Anna-Marie, she feels she can neither wholly embrace nor entirely reject the possibility of close, interracial relations.

However, not all interviewees were exposed to counter-narratives during their college years. One multiracial respondent, Gwen Knight, grew up around counter-narratives, including gender exploitation narratives, due to her parents' active involvement in her local Filipino American community and social justice efforts in the Philippines. Even so, like other respondents, her exposure to alternative perspectives in college while participating in a study broad program in the Philippines complicated her views on interracial relationships and ultimately led her also to forward an ambivalent conclusion.

Gwen Knight (early 30s, Filipina mother-white father, Michigan/Midwest)

I met Gwen in a coffee shop on a warm summer afternoon in downtown Oakland. Gwen explained she had been living in the Bay Area for seven years but was raised in the suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota. In her early 30s, Gwen's olive complexioned skin and light brown eyes could lead many to assume she is of Latina or Mediterranean descent, but as Gwen explained, her mother is Filipina and her father white American. According to Gwen, her mother met her father in Minneapolis in the late 1960s in a graduate school physics course, where Gwen's mother was on scholarship from the Philippines. Gwen described her hometown as a "typical Midwest white suburb," in which her family was "among a very small subset of families of color." In this homogenous racial setting, Gwen explained that growing up she and her family were "very involved" in the small but "very tight" Filipino community in the greater Minneapolis area. In recalling this intensive involvement early in her life, Gwen's narrative began as a counter-narrative.

Growing up in a socially-conscious family and community, Gwen was raised in a highly intensive counter-narrative site, where she was made aware quite early of social inequalities in the U.S. and the Philippines. According to Gwen, this awareness began with her mother and father and then became a central component of her closest friendships. That is, Gwen explained that both of her parents were actively involved in organizations pertaining to the social and cultural needs of Filipinos both locally and abroad. Gwen's mother held a prominent leadership role in a local Filipino organization and led a campaign to build a Filipino community center in the Minneapolis area, and Gwen's father formed an organization over 30 years ago that addresses human rights issues in the Philippines, ranging from abuses in the 70s and 80s during martial law under Ferdinand Marcos to current U.S. military financing in the archipelago. However, while Gwen's parents' intense involvement provided the foundation for her awareness, it was in her recollections of the close friendships she formed in these settings that Gwen illustrated this involvement's effects on her perceptions of race in her personal relationships.

Gwen explained that although the schools she attended in her suburb were "really white," some of her closest friends growing up were also of Filipino descent and were part of the larger network of families actively involved in the local Filipino community. Gwen explained: "It wasn't just this core group of people, but our parents knew each other. They were all involved in the same organizations, so we were spending time with each other's families. We just had much more solid relationships." According to Gwen, although she is mixed-race, she felt being of the same racial and ethnic background facilitated these "solid relationships," especially vis-à-vis her largely white surroundings. She recalled:

> I think at the time it was providing each other support, so we could kind of, you know, relate, and a lot of it I think was in jest, like just joking about, um-. It was always white

people. You know, we'd joke about white people or we'd use the Tagalog "puti" when we wanted to talk about other white people…At the time, we were just kind of in high school and kind of reacting to our environment and bonding on that. I think I was really on this trajectory of like, "I'm Filipino. I want to seek out spaces that promote, support, nurture that."

Thus, in line with the sentiments of counter-narratives and unlike reconciliation narratives, here Gwen highlights the closeness enabled by same-race relations, and she does so through invoking characteristics popularly associated with close relations, such as noting a "similarity" that drew her friends together and emphasizing the "supportive" environment that sustained their relations.[32] However, Gwen explained that during college her views on race and personal relationships became, in her words, "more complicated" when she, like Cristina Berry, participated in a study abroad program in the Philippines.

Reconciliation Narrative

According to Gwen, she attended college at a local public university that, although "more diverse" than her hometown, was still predominately white. In this environment, she recalled still seeking out spaces and relationships that could cultivate her growing Filipino identity. This effort led her to participate in a study abroad program in the Philippines whose goal, Gwen recalled, "was really deepening your Tagalog as well as learning about the history and the culture." However, according to Gwen, incidentally it was precisely this effort to "dig into" her Filipino heritage that she gained more of an awareness about being mixed-race and developed a more complex understanding of interracial relations.

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[32] In reconciliation narratives, this perspective was often cast in a one-dimensional light, in which an insistence on same-race relations was seen as only impeding the narrator's friendship formations. However, here, Gwen presents the reliance on same-race relations with more complexity, illustrating how it can emerge as a response to/means of coping with one's racial context.

Because Gwen's narrative thus far had largely resembled a counter-narrative, her recollections of her time in her study abroad program served as a belated "crisis" for her narrative:

> I think that's where I first started to really, um, grapple with the fact that I was mixed race 'cause I think I was so trying to-, I felt like growing up in [my hometown], I was constantly bombarded by-, not bombarded but surrounded by white culture that I made this drastic shift to focus on Filipino culture that, it wasn't til later on that I realized, "Okay, no, this is a *little more complicated*. I'm mixed."

Thus, like others who told discordant narratives, Gwen's exposure to alternative perspectives during college "complicated" her understandings of race. Gwen recollection of one incident in particular during her study abroad program especially highlights how Gwen's participation in the program exposed her to contrasting yet compelling narratives about interracial relations.

Gwen recalled a confrontation that occurred while with three other women in her study abroad program, all of whom were also mixed-race Filipino Americans. She explained that this event especially influenced her formation of a more ambivalent position on interracial relations. She recalled:

> We were at a beach resort, and there was an older white man and what looked to be a younger Filipino woman, and that's always been something-, like every time I see that in Cebu, it always just angers me 'cause I always immediately assume it's this dirty old white man taking advantage of a young Filipino woman, so I remember we were at a beach resort, and I saw that and I made a comment, and the other woman who was mixed, one of the women who was mixed race really reacted to that. She's like, "How do you know their situation?!" And, she said, "That could very well have been my parents." You know, she's like, "You can't assume that this is just this or whatever," and I remember just being taken aback like, "Oh my God. Like, how could she not think that that situation is wrong?," um, without even thinking about "What do people think when they see my parents together?," and so I remember that instance being kind of shocking to me.

Gwen further reflected on the incident:

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[The other woman] just kind of related it to her parents of just like, "How do you know their situation?" 'Cause she was kind of saying, you know, my parents-, you know, her dad is white, and her mom's Filipina, and people could make that assumption about her parents. That's where she was coming from, and you know, now I feel she had a very valid point. Back then I was totally like "Psssh [makes annoyed/dismissive facial expression]. What does she know?" [laughing].

This recollection especially illustrates Gwen's struggle choosing between two compelling yet contrasting narratives on interracial relations. First, in her initial negative reaction to the interracial couple at the resort (i.e. "I always immediately assume it's this dirty old white man taking advantage of a young Filipino woman") Gwen applies a gender exploitation narrative, something she has "always" felt and likely informed by her upbringing among counter-narratives. However, Gwen's fellow mixed-race participant's retort to Gwen's comment introduces an alternative perspective which, much like reconciliation narrative, insists that interracial relationships can be built on "romance" and are not always "pragmatic" (e.g. racialized desire). This conflict of narratives and especially their connections to Gwen's personal life (e.g. "What do people think when they see my parents together?"), similar to Anna-Marie, leads Gwen to question her "assumptions" of interracial relationships and form a more complicated position.

Toward the end of our interview, Gwen underscored her more ambivalent view of race relations. Gwen explained that with the experiences she has gained over the years, especially her time in the study abroad program, her stance on race is less static and, more like Noah Fischer's, "evolving": "[As] I became an adult, I feel I am able to kind of look more-, develop my own race analysis. I think it's something that's constantly evolving." Thus, although Gwen was raised around counter-narratives that influenced her to prefer same-race relationships and be critical of interracial relations, Gwen's exposure to alternative perspectives during college prompted a

"crisis" in her narrative, and like others who told discordant narratives, led her ultimately also to see interracial relations as a "little more complicated."

Conclusion

The sociological literature has acknowledged that racial difference's role as an obstacle in personal relationships is not uniform but often complicated, impeding interracial marriages and friendships to varying degrees, for instance depending on the racial or ethnic group (Quillian and Campbell 2003; Yancey 2003; Lee and Bean 2004). This chapter has explored how roughly one-quarter of multiracial respondents also found interracial relationships to be complicated. However, these respondents' ambivalence was not over the extent to which racial difference impeded interracial relations but, rather, whether racial difference was an impediment at all.

This chapter has illustrated how multiracial respondents came to these more ambivalent positions on interracial relationships through telling *discordant narratives*. Unlike traditional narrative structures, discordant narratives do not project a single perspective and coherent resolution (White 1980; Somers 1994). Rather, they are the uneasy product of opposing narratives, in this case, on interracial relationships: 1) reconciliation narratives (Chapter 3), which present racial difference as compatible in close relationships, and 2) counter-narratives (Delgado 1995), which highlight persistent inequalities that can impede close, interracial relations.

This chapter also has shown that respondents were introduced to counter-narratives through their participation in different *counter-narrative sites* in college (e.g. courses, study abroad programs). The sites' different levels of intensity influenced the content of the counter-narratives. In the case of Noah and Tony, their *moderately intensive* involvement in college courses began with minimal initial interest but proved revelatory, introducing them to counter-

narratives of enduring racial inequalities (e.g. white male privilege) that can impede close

relations and ultimately complicated their idealized views of interracial relations. In contrast, in

the cases of Anna-Marie, Cristina, and Gwen, they actively sought out participation in *highly*

intensive activist organizations and study abroad programs. These sites exposed them to *gender*

exploitation narratives that highlighted how inequalities facing Filipina women (e.g. mail-order-

bride industry) can impede close interracial relations and ultimately led them to take more

ambivalent stances on interracial relationships.

In the next chapter, I examine the outlier cases of three male respondents whose "non-

narrative" presentations of their personal lives as stable and without change enabled them to

deny the role of racial difference altogether in their closest relations.

Chapter 5

Foils and Foreclosures:
Negating Racial Differences in Personal Relationships

Introduction

In Chapter 3 and 4, I examined the divergent ways in which multiracial respondents

confronted a shared crisis, in which they were made to feel, as mixed-race individuals, that racial

difference impeded close, personal relationships (e.g. their interracial families were seen as

unstable and their interracial friendships as abnormal). In Chapter 5, I explore the outlier cases

of three male respondents who did not recall experiencing any such crisis. These three men did

not come to see racial difference as a compatible part of their personal relationships (Chapter 3)

nor did they express ambivalence toward the subject (Chapter 4). Rather, they denied that racial

difference played a significant role in their closest relations. These multiracial respondents

"presented" this absence through two *negation strategies*: 1) foils and 2) foreclosures. The

strategy employed depended on whether respondents expressed a more individualistic or

collectivist approach to their personal relationships. Ultimately, through both strategies, these

male respondents were able to present their personal lives as comparatively more stable and

without change.

Absence of Crisis

When I asked multiracial respondent, Andrew Fowler, the general question: "How would

you describe your elementary school?," he replied with an air of defensiveness: "It's just school.

I have no like outstanding or memorable instances or issues that have happened, you know,

being part of an interracial family…Nothing, you know, *dramatic* where I was scarred for life."

Andrew's abrupt response mirrors those of the two other male respondents who recalled and, at times, insisted that racial difference did not play a significant role in their most personal relationships. As a result, unlike a majority of multiracial respondents, these three male respondents' narrations were without a formative "crisis." Like the sociological literature on race and personal relationships, these three male respondents saw racial difference as a liability to close, personal relations. However, as Andrew's curt reply illustrates, these respondents' presentation of this viewpoint cannot be fully explained by this literature. That is, although a liability, respondents presented racial difference neither as an impediment (as Andrew insists) nor as ceasing or fading. Rather, racial difference was an object of active denial or *negation*. These respondents, often unprompted, made a point to deny racial difference's significance in their closest personal relations, whether it was insisting that their interracial families were stable or reducing instances in which racial difference impeded close relations to "exceptions."[33] Empirical studies have explored how members of interracial couples (Childs 2005) and friendships (Korgen 2002) can espouse "color-blind" views and similarly deny race's significance in close, personal relationships.[34] In many ways the three male respondents' conclusions that race does not matter in their personal relations can be viewed as similarly color-blind. However, as illustrated in Andrew's quote, these color-blind conclusions are enabled by acts of negation that are quite conscious of race.

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[33] These acts of negation draw parallels with the narrative strategy of disassociation discussed in Chapter 3. While, like disassociation, negation can involve distancing from instances in which racial difference was an impediment to close relations, negation is not a means to resolve a crisis and ultimately present racial difference as a compatible part of one's personal relations but, rather, a means to present the absence of crisis altogether. See discussion of the case of Robert Lawson in this chapter for further discussion of this distinction.

[34] For a more in-depth discussion of "color-blindness" and its rise as an ideology in the U.S. see Bonilla-Silva 2003.

On the other hand, in the sociological literature on multiraciality, there has been a rise in scholarship exploring multiracial identity and color-blindness. This scholarship has been, in part, a response to the increased popularity of work on multiracial identity since the late 1990s and has warned of the ways in which the promotion of multiracial identities, whether on government forms or in day-to-day interactions, can deny the continuing significance of race by, for instance, prioritizing personal affirmations of identity (e.g. "multiracial" classification on government forms) over remedying enduring structural inequalities (e.g. allocation of government resources along racial lines) (Dalmage 2004; Brunsma 2006). Although this scholarship has shined light on how assertions of multiracial identity can promote color-blind thinking, it provides less direct insight into how these denials of racial difference can uniquely manifest in multiracial individual's personal relationships.

In this chapter, I address these gaps by exploring the symbolic processes by which three male multiracial respondents negated the significance of racial difference in their most personal relationships and, in effect, rendered crises absent in their accounts.

Narrative Stability

The three male respondents at the center of this chapter narrated their personal lives as without race-related crises and did so through presenting their personal relationships as coherent and stable (e.g. guided by the same enduring principles). Coherency is not an unusual feature of narratives. In fact, as narrative theorist Hayden White (1980) contended, coherence (however realistic) is central to narratives' rhetorical appeal:

> The value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary (27).

What distinguishes the narrations of these three male respondents is their coherency *combined with* a resilient stability. That is, even when a narrative is coherent it can still be rife with conflict and change, as the reconciliation narratives in Chapter 3 aptly illustrated. However, because these three male respondents did not present a crisis, their stories lacked significant change on the part of the narrator. Therefore, the rhetorical strength of these respondents' accounts lied less in a defined arc than, paradoxically, in the lack of one altogether, in a sense, in their "non-narrativeness."

Only a few studies have explored processes akin to this narrative stability. For instance, in her examination of narrative representations of the self among white women in the U.K., sociologist Bridget Byrne (2003) found that some women's ascriptions to normative ideals of the self as whole and agentic led them to suppress ruptures and contradictions brought by subjections in gender, race, and class. However, the work of cultural historian Luisa Passerini has examined symbolic processes that most closely resemble the narrative stability found in the three male respondents' accounts. Specifically, in her now classic study of memory among the working class in post-Fascist Italy, Passerini (1987) illustrated how many of her working class interviewees presented themselves as unchanging and timeless and, thus, unfettered by historical change (e.g. "always having been something from the start," "always like that"). Passerini noted that, while this enabled one to present "a spirit of intransigence that defies the given order of things," it also "does not allow one to see the 'mnemonic tension' or 'inner vibrations' but rather hides them" (1987:21, 59). The three male respondents' modes of narration worked to similar effects. That is, their presentations of their personal lives as timeless and unchanging – at least in respect to race – were also inextricably linked to "hiding," in this case to a process of negation that denied the significance of racial difference in their closest relations.

Negation Strategies

The three male respondents presented a lack of crisis in their personal lives through employing two *negation strategies*: 1) foils and 2) foreclosures. The negation strategy employed depended on whether the respondent espoused an individualistic or collectivist approach to his personal relationships (see Figure 5.1). Next, I will illustrate each negation strategy, in turn, through examining the outlier cases of the three multiracial respondents. Further, especially since all three of these respondents were men, I will also consider the gendered character of each respondent's negation strategy.

Figure 5.1. Negation Strategy and Relationship Approach

Relationship Approach

	Individualistic	**Collectivist**
Foil	Mark MacDonald and Robert Lawson	
Foreclosure		Andrew Fowler

(Row labels grouped under side heading **Negation Strategy**)

Foils and Individualism

In the first negation strategy, *foils*, respondents contrasted those in their closest personal relationships from individuals they deemed racially different and who were outside of or "exceptions" within their closest circles. This strategy enabled respondents to acknowledge the presence of racial difference in their personal lives but also, via contrast, de-emphasize its significance. Those who employed foils often held a more individualistic approach to their personal relationships, in which they tended to value independence, self-sufficiency, and

voluntary association (Bellah et al. 1985; Popenoe 1991; Stacey 1991; Pyke and Bengtson 1996).

To illustrate this negation strategy, I present the cases of two interviewees: Mark MacDonald and Robert Lawson.

Mark MacDonald (late 20s, Filipina mother-white father, Michigan)

Mark was one of my first interviewees. I met him on a warm summer day on a university campus in southeastern Michigan, where he was a graduate student at the time. In his late 20s, Mark was tall with short dark hair and, to many, could pass as white. However, as Mark explained, his mother was Filipina and father white, specifically of Scotch-Irish descent. According to Mark, his parents met in the Philippines in the late 1970s, where his father was a member of the U.S. Peace Corps and his mother a Filipino language instructor. Throughout our interview, Mark recalled events with an animation and poise that imbued his accounts with a sense of surety. This manner of narration proved integral to Mark's presentation of racial difference in his personal life.

Individualism: Achievement

Mark's recollections of his upbringing were predominated by two themes: 1) personal achievement and 2) friendships with those "similar" to him. Both of these characteristics are commonly associated with individualistic approaches to personal relationships (e.g. family, friendships) along with, as mentioned above, independence, self-sufficiency, and voluntary association. Traditionally, such individualistic orientations are associated with both whites and the middle class (Pyke and Bengtson 1996). Mark's invocation of these two themes fueled his presentation of an absence of a race-related crises in his personal life and, as I will later show, also facilitated his use of foils as a negation strategy.

According to Mark, he was raised in a majority white suburban town in southeastern Michigan. Growing up, most of his closest friends were white or Asian American males and, as he described, from the "same situation," that is, from "well-to-do, two income families, not super rich," in the school orchestras, and in advanced math and science classes. As such, the close vs. not close distinction of similar vs. dissimilar predominated Mark's descriptions of his close, personal relationships. Unlike a majority of multiracial respondents, Mark did not once recall that, as mixed-race, racial difference personally affected his formation of close relations. This absence of crisis was due in large part to Mark's repeated recollections of his achievements, which left little room for expressions of "crisis" akin to those recalled by other multiracial respondents. These accounts of achievement typically involved Mark, often alongside his friends, defying others' expectations and achieving the goals he desired. These achievements varied in scale, ranging from successfully challenging for the first chair position in his school orchestra to graduating a year early from high school. For example, Mark recalled that one of his most memorable moments in high school was forming an alternative newspaper with his friends after they were not chosen to be editors of the school's official newspaper. Evidenced in his grand arm gestures and animated fluctuations in speech, Mark reveled in recounting their defiance of the school's newspaper and administration:

> Our newspaper got in trouble because the back page was like really-, like trying to be humorous. We listed, like, cross jokes off the internet, like cross pick-up lines, alright, so our entire newspaper got in trouble for that. People were pulled from class to be talked to about the infamous back page. So the next issue, we devoted an editorial to bitching out the administration for bitching us out. You know, we were like "freedom of speech blah blah we should be able to curse" essentially, you know, uh, so that was kind of our newspaper [laughing].

Stories like these may seem, at first glance, unrelated to the Mark's presentation of race in his personal relationships. However, repeated tales like this, upon closer examination,

illustrate how significant crises, no matter the subject, would be absent in Mark's narrative. That is, Mark's stories of achievement resemble "heroic" narratives, in which autonomy and agency are emphasized often in spite of *external* social factors, in this case the official newspaper staff and the school administration (Ezzy 2000:123). As the "heroic" achievers, Mark and his friends are presented as defiantly stable and coherent throughout their tales. Thus, although the stories themselves are rife with conflict, as their central protagonists Mark and his friends *do not* experience a personal transformation. Such defiant stability would make any recollection of crisis, especially like those central to reconciliation narratives, highly uncharacteristic. Further, Mark's stories of achievement can be seen as gendered as well.[35] That is, Mark presents his achievements as like "quests" – often for quest's sake – that are "replete with competitive struggle," characteristics commonly attributed to men's accounts of achievement, whereas women's tend to be less individualizing and less about "the joy of the chase" (Gergen 1994:27-9). Thus, read from this angle, Mark's heroic tales accompanied by his "macho" bravado in recounting them can be seen as proto-masculine accounts of achievement.

Although in these accounts Mark presented his close circle of friends as "the same" as him, he did recall an instance of racial difference in these relations. However, in line with his individualistic approach to his personal relations, Mark maintained his narrative's stability through negating the ultimate significance of this racial difference and presenting it as a foil.

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[35] Mark's account can also be seen as gendered in the primacy he affords his friendships, for some scholars have contended that with time men are more inclined to see their friendships as the most significant relationships in their lives, whereas women are more inclined to see their families as most significant (Jamieson 1998). However, as I have shown in the previous chapters, Mark's account is somewhat of an outlier in this respect as well, for most multiracial respondents – both men and women – came to see their "families" (biological or not) as their most significant relationships.

Foil

In Mark's narration, racial difference manifested through his description of his friendship with a classmate named Michael, who differed in both race and class from Mark's typical friends. Michael first appeared in Mark's account of elementary school and was distinguished first only by his class differences. Mark recalled:

> The elementary school was situated such that there were a lot of-, it was a very diverse school. One of my best friends from second grade that I actually had through seventh, eighth grade came from low income housing, and he was bused to [school].

Mark then moved on quickly to another subject, and only returned to Michael upon my prompting. It was then that Mark revealed that Michael was not only from a low-income household but also African American. Like in his descriptions of his other close friends, Mark described how close Michael and him were through highlighting their commonalities, particularly their shared interests in sports and how they used to play on the same basketball team. However, for Mark, this was the extent of their similarities, for as Mark continued Michael's racial and class differences served as a foil that highlighted the similarities that bonded Mark's more "typical" friendships.

Mark did not describe Michael as an "achiever" as he described his other close friends, but rather due to his racial and class differences, Mark described Michael as "the exception." For instance, Mark recalled how Michael's life trajectory increasingly diverged as Mark began to take advanced placement classes and joined the school orchestra:

> [T]hat friend I had in middle school, he was raised by a single mom. His mom passed away I wanna say seventh grade, eighth grade. He went to live with his aunt on the other side of town, so I didn't really see him much after that…Once I got into the advanced math track and in orchestra, the people I spent most of my time with we had similar interests, so that's kind of who I spent most of my time with…[Michael] was *the exception*.

Mark continued, further emphasizing their divergent paths:

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I think that when [Michael] left, and he, you know, moved across town, we still kind of kept in touch, but, you know, his life started-, I don't know where he is now, but I know he did start dealing drugs maybe in high school or after high school…He was in a, you know, a better situation I think before [his mother died].

Although mentioned briefly, Michael's presentation as an "exception" served an important narrative function in Mark's account of his personal relationships. Michael's story, particularly its emphasis on dissimilarities, highlights racial (and class) differences that can impede close relations and, in other respondents' narratives, would likely have produced some form of a crisis. However, in Mark's case, this crisis is averted (however intentionally) by Mark's negation of these differences through Michael's depiction as a foil. As such, Mark acknowledges racial difference in his personal relationships and even illustrates how these differences eventually impeded long-term friendship formation. However, by describing Michael as the "exception," Mark was able to distance his relations and avert this dilemma altogether.

Thus, Mark's use of foils aligned with his individualistic approach to his personal relationships. That is, the negation strategy enabled him to tell stable, coherent tales of achievement that highlight the similarities that bond his "achiever" friends but also de-emphasize the impediments posed by racial (and class) differences.

Another male respondent, Robert Lawson, also espoused an individualistic approach to his personal relationships. However, instead of emphasizing personal achievement, he stressed another trait of this approach: personal responsibility. Nevertheless, ultimately like Mark, Robert employed foils as a negation strategy to minimize the role of racial difference in his closest personal relationships.

Robert Lawson (late 20s, Filipina mother-African American father, California)

I met Robert on a characteristically overcast autumn afternoon on a university campus in San Francisco, where he was an undergraduate student at the time. In his late 20s, Robert was heavy-set with dark curly hair and brown complexioned-skin. To many, Robert would be seen as black or, in an ethnically diverse setting like the Bay Area, Pacific Islander. However, Robert's mother is Filipina and his father African American. According to Robert, his parents met in the 1970s near Clark Air Force Base in Angeles City, the Philippines, where his father was stationed as a serviceman in the U.S. Air Force and where Robert's mother worked. Unlike Mark, Robert did not narrate his account with overt displays of bravado but, rather, did so in a more reserved and, at times, playfully sarcastic manner. Nevertheless, Robert held a similarly individualistic approach to his personal relationships and, accordingly, also employed foils as a negation strategy.

Individualism: Personal Responsibility

In recollecting his familial and friendship relations, Robert espoused an individualistic approach similar to that of Mark. Most especially, like Mark, Robert emphasized having close relations with "similar" others. However, Robert diverged in that instead of stressing personal achievement, Robert emphasized another characteristic associated with individualism: personal responsibility. Robert's repeated emphasis on taking ownership over one's actions and not being dependent on the support of others was central to his presentation of his personal life as stable and absent of race-related crises.

According to Robert, since he was young, he was an independent person. He explained: "I think I kind of grew up independent. Like, I learned to kind of just take care for myself. For my brothers [as well], we all just kind of learned to, you know, do things on our own." Robert

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attributed this independence, in part, to his upbringing in a military family. That is, like many other multiracial respondents who grew up in military families, for Robert, growing up was characterized above all by constant movement between U.S. military bases, in Robert's case between Japan and the U.S. According to Robert, this frequent movement was not conducive to forming close friendships: "It kind of always sucked to move 'cause you'd lose all your friends, and then you'd be stuck. [You'd] go to this new school, and there's like all these random people who'd have life-long friendships already." In addition, Robert explained that due to his father's military service, his father would be away for months at a time. Thus, in an environment that easily made personal ties more tenuous, Robert valued self-reliance in his personal relations, and throughout his account, he emphasized that he valued a variant of this individualism, personal responsibility, in those close to him.

Robert explained that one of his "best friends" growing up was his brother, Nick, and he attributed this closeness to the value they both placed on personal responsibility: "We're really similar. Like, we have the same like foundation of morals. It's you take responsibility of yourself." Robert continued:

> Like, our personalities really go good together. We both definitely take responsibility for our actions. We're both not reliant on other people, you know, I guess emotionally or financially. If we get into a financial bind, it's our problem. I'm not going to go to somebody else and try to figure it out. Emotionally, at least for me, if I have an emotional problem, it's like my problem. I'll deal with it. I don't want to burden somebody else with issues I'm having.

As his account proceeded, no matter the context Robert maintained a similar line in evaluating his closest relations.

According to Robert, when he was in middle school his family finally settled near a U.S. air base in Northern California, where they lived in a largely working-class and African American neighborhood. Robert explained that, like the base communities he was raised on,

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both his middle school and high school were "diverse," and he formed a close group of friends that were black, Latino, and Asian. However, unlike respondents in previous chapters, Robert did not cite these racial differences as assets or impediments but, rather, stated them matter-of-factly, instead emphasizing the values these friends possessed. Robert often conveyed these shared values through a moral short-hand, referring to his closest friends as "good" or as "upstanding citizens." For instance, he described one of his best friends from high school, Carlos, who is of Mexican descent. Robert explained that he and Carlos were not friends at first because Carlos was, in Robert's words, "bad." Robert cited Carlo's gang activity, multiple arrests, and Carlos getting his girlfriend pregnant in high school. However, Robert explained that with the pregnancy, Carlos' "morals" changed, more closely aligning with his own: "Once he had his kid, he turned around. He's really good now. He has good morals now." Thus, it is Carlos' ultimate willingness to take responsibility that marks his transition, for Robert, from "bad" to "good now."

Robert's description of Carlos and his general emphasis on personal responsibility illuminate both the stable and gendered character of Robert's account. First, while Robert describes Carlos as experiencing a transformative change in his personal life, Robert effectively presents himself as resolute in his morals since his youth. This is similar to Passerini's (1987) observations in her aforementioned study, in which narrators' location of changes external to themselves established an "externalizing tone" that projected the narrators "onto an unchanging present" (21). Robert's externalization of change works to a similar effect here by further enabling him to present *his* personal life as crisis-less. Second, much like Mark's accounts of personal achievement could be read as gendered, so too can Robert's repeated emphasis on personal responsibility. That is, Robert's ardent belief in taking responsibility for one's actions

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and self-reliance echoes the often gendered rhetoric of "racial uplift" emblematized in the 1995 Million Man March. That is, March leaders rallied African American men in Washington, D.C. to address enduring social inequalities in the African American community (e.g. poverty, black-on-black violence) under the banner of self-help, atonement, and taking responsibility for their families. This message became just as much a source of criticism among many African Americans for its patriarchal nature and intense individualism as it was a source of empowerment (see Harris 1999; Sullivan and Glaude 1999). Robert's espousal of a similar rhetoric, particularly what it can often omit, was most evident in his employment of foils as a negation strategy in his closest relationships.

Foil

In Robert's narration, his older brother Tyler served as a foil. Unlike Michael in Mark's account, Tyler is technically not racially different from Robert. However, Robert presented his brother as such. That is, for Robert, Tyler exemplified a type of racialized and classed difference from which Robert sought to distance his closest relations.

As a foil, Tyler served as a repeated point of contrast throughout Robert's narrations, often preceding or following Robert's descriptions of the "good morals" of those closest to him. For example, after Robert explained how he and his other brother, Nick, "both definitely take responsibility for our actions," Robert provided the counter-example of his other brother, Tyler:

> My brother Tyler has six kids, and they all have been taken away by the state. They now live with my parents. My parents adopted them. I'm kind of upset with my brother Tyler for doing that to my parents because, you know, they've done their job raising kids, and now they're starting over. Before they had the kids, they were talking about retiring, you know, and all that is on standstill…I blame it totally on [Tyler]."

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In contrast to Robert's other brother Nick, Tyler serves as an example of someone Robert

sees as not taking responsibility for his actions and consequently becoming a burden on those

around him.

Robert also employed a moral short-hand in his use of foils. He described people and

behavior he saw as lacking personal responsibility as "bad" or "ghetto." For instance, Robert

employed this short-hand in recalling his brother Tyler's descent from "good" to "bad" in high

school:

> [High school] was when Tyler started turning around and becoming, I guess, bad. 'Cause
> prior-, so when we were growing up, Tyler was kind of nerdy, was like always good in
> school. He never had any friends [though]…I think he admired the cool group, so Tyler
> started trying to be down and started wearing red bandanas, you know, claiming he was a
> Blood (a gang), starting doing drugs and stuff.

Both here and in the earlier example of Carlos, Robert associates being "bad" or "ghetto"

with certain activities, like gang involvement, drugs, and graffiti. Given that these activities are

popularly associated with low-income youth of color in U.S. cities, Robert's use of this abstract,

moral language is also highly racialized and classed. As such, their repeated application to

descriptions of Tyler can be seen as Robert casting not only Tyler outside Robert's closest

relations but these racialized and classed differences as well. Further, similar to Carlos, Robert's

description of Tyler's transformation, in this case his descent into "badness," serves an important

narrative function. That is, like Carlos, it enables Robert to externalize crises and conflict and

present himself and his personal life as comparatively stable and coherent.

As his account drew to a close, Robert stressed his "detachment" from his brother Tyler

and from the lack of personal responsibility he exemplifies:

> With Tyler, I've kind of, just, I like know he's there, but I kind of just learned to detach
> myself from him. I think his life is really sad, and I know he like regrets a lot of
> decisions he's made, but at the same time, I'm like, "You're an adult and you kind of

have to take responsibility for yourself," and he chooses to act like a child in my opinion, you know, and that annoys me big time.

Robert's narrated efforts to detach himself from his brother mirror the narrative strategy of disassociation discussed in Chapter 3, including Robert's use of temporal distinctions (e.g. "He chooses to act like a child"). However, unlike disassociation, Robert does not present this detachment as part of a significant personal transformation but rather as external to him and his personal relationships. As such, Robert's detachment from Tyler aids Robert's self-portrayal as a long-time believer in personal responsibility in his closest relations. Further, as a foil, Tyler is the object not simply of disassociation but of negation. Tyler's active denial is a means by which Robert de-emphasizes the ultimate significance of the racial (and class) differences Tyler signifies and, more importantly, enables Robert ultimately to project his personal life, much like Mark's, as stable and crisis-less.

Foreclosures and Collectivism

The second negation strategy, *foreclosures*, was often more abrupt than foils. That is, with foreclosures, respondents shut out or barred access to information that might suggest racial difference was an impediment in their personal relationships. This strategy can also entail a defensive insistence on "normalcy" against negative perceptions of interracial families (e.g. unstable) and mixed-race people (e.g. "scarred"). Further, those who employed foreclosures tended to hold a more collectivist approach to their personal relationships, in which interdependence and high attachment and commitment were guiding principles in their personal relationships (Bellah et al. 1985; Popenoe 1991; Segura and Pierce 1993; Pyke and Bengtson 1996). To illustrate this strategy, I will focus on the case of interviewee Andrew Fowler.

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Andrew Fowler (early 30s, Filipina mother-white father, Michigan)

I interviewed Andrew on a warm summer afternoon at his workplace in a southeastern Michigan suburb. In his early 30s, Andrew's olive complexioned skin, light brown eyes and matching hair could lead many to assume he is only white, but as Andrew explained, his mother is Filipina and his father white. Andrew's parents met in the late 1960s in Thailand, where Andrew's father was stationed as a serviceman in the U.S. Army and where Andrew's mother was a visiting teacher at a local school.[36] Andrew's family settled in a largely white and Middle Eastern suburb just outside Detroit, where Andrew and his siblings were born and raised. At the beginning of our interview, Andrew was somewhat guarded in recounting details about his personal life. At first, I attributed his hesitance to anxieties with being audio-recorded, but as the interview progressed, Andrew's guardedness appeared also to be an attempt to protect his interracial family from judgment.

Collectivism: "A Very Good, Strong Family"

The primary theme in Andrew's recollections of his upbringing was the importance of his family. Throughout his narration Andrew stressed the primacy of this relationship in his personal life, guiding not only whom he associated with but also his larger life decisions, like marriage. All of these characteristics are associated with collectivist approaches to personal relationships, which as mentioned above emphasize interdependence and high levels of commitment and attachment. Traditionally, collectivist orientations to personal relationships, especially families, are associated with the working-class and communities of color (Segura and Pierce 1993). Andrew displayed his collectivist orientation when I asked him to describe his family:

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[36] Information about the exact details of how Andrew's parents met was acquired through a supplementary interview I conducted with Andrew's mother.

My parents are still married. We're very close. Close with my brother, my sister, with their kids. My mom and dad both have a close relationship with them, so very, very tight knit, very supportive in everything, right or wrong, whatever. It's a very good, strong family upbringing.

Although Mark and Robert also described their families as important to them and that they were more or less close, Andrew's emphasis on how "tight knit" and "strong" his family is devoid of themes of individualism, such as independence and self-sufficiency, that were guiding principles in Mark's and Robert's personal relationships. Further, Andrew's opening statement that his parents are still married points to a theme that increased in importance as Andrew's account progressed. That is, although Andrew could very well simply be citing his parent's lasting marriage as indicative of his family's closeness, it also could be read as an insistence on normalcy, especially given popular perceptions of interracial romantic relations as non-lasting and unstable (Childs 2005).

Further, like in individualistic approaches, Andrew's espousal of a collectivist approach entailed an emphasis on "similarity" and, thus, the use of the close vs. not close distinction of similar vs. dissimilar. However, Andrew employed this less to highlight the voluntariness of his associations, as with Mark and Robert, and more to re-emphasize his high attachment and commitment to his family. For example, in recalling a failed marriage engagement due to dissimilarities between his and his ex-fiancé's families, Andrew highlighted how for him "family is a big thing":

> I was engaged when I was twenty-three to get married, and I broke it off…I really didn't like how her family like treated my family. Family is a big thing for me. So, I really didn't like how she treated my mom and dad and how her family treated my mom and dad, so it was really an eye-opener for me, and, again, my mom and dad and my brother and sister stood right by me through everything, supported me and everything. So, without them, it would have been-, you know, I would have gotten through it, but having the family backing made it that much easier.

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As with most of his account that day, Andrew remained racially nondescript in his recollection, not describing the race of his ex-fiancé and abstractly explaining how they mistreated his family: "They were just negative people, very close-minded." Instead, Andrew used this example to illustrate that his ideal partner must have similar values as him: "Just great family upbringing, closeness to the family." The closest Andrew came to explicitly citing a link between race or ethnicity and his personal relations was in his description of two of his closest friends in college, who were also of Filipino descent and had "strong family upbringings": "[My friends] were Filipino as well. Good guys. They seemed like they had strong family upbringings. They were close families whenever I was at their houses."[37] However, to maintain this stable, coherent portrayal of his "very good, strong family upbringing," Andrew, like Mark and Robert, negated the role of racial difference in his personal relations and did so through employing a strategy concordant with his collectivist approach, what I term, foreclosures.

Foreclosure

Multiple times throughout his recollection of his personal life Andrew employed foreclosures, barring access to information or shutting off further discussion on topics that might suggest that racial difference was an impediment in his familial life. This negation strategy was in line with Andrew's collectivist approach to his personal relations. That is, given racial difference's traditional perception as an impediment to close personal relations, for Andrew, it was a significant threat to his collectivist emphasis on high family attachment and commitment. Therefore, unlike Mark and Robert, Andrew could not merely de-emphasize racial difference by presenting it as a counter-example but, rather, had to shut it out altogether. Nevertheless, like foils, foreclosures ultimately worked to present Andrew's personal relations (i.e. his family) as

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[37] Although implicit here, attributing "strong family upbringings" to Filipino culture is in accordance with popular associations of collecitivism with "non-Western cultures" (Dion and Dion 1993).

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stable and coherent. One prominent example of Andrew's use of foreclosures was in a terse discussion of his paternal grandmother.

When I asked Andrew to describe his relationship with his paternal (white) grandparents, he focused on his relationship with his grandmother, recalling: "My grandma, we were pretty close even though she was set in her own ways, but we were still pretty close." Andrew continued: "*I don't want to say* she was racist, but she had strong views against like maybe a certain race." Under the impression that Andrew was open to discussing this topic, I asked if he could share an example of one of these views his grandmother held. However, perhaps realizing he had shared more than he initially wanted, Andrew shut off further discussion on the topic, abruptly replying: "I don't want to share anything." In her study of "interethnic" families in the U.K., Suki Ali (2002) found that children of these families were similarly reticent, even more so than their parents, in sharing scandals or secrets, race-related or not, that would render their families "dysfunctional in the language of 'family therapy'" (117). Given Andrew's aforementioned emphasis on family attachment and commitment, his abrupt ending of discussion about his grandmother's possibly racist sentiments can be interpreted similarly as Ali's respondents and an extension of Andrew's intense collectivism.

Further, Andrew's foreclosure of further discussion about his grandmother could also be read as a gendered act of protection in ways similar to what political theorist Iris Marion Young (2003) has called "masculinist protection." According to Young, masculinist protection is a "more benign image of masculinity, one more associated with ideas of chivalry," in which "*real men* are neither selfish nor do they seek to enslave or overpower others for the sake of enhancing themselves" but rather are "protectors" (often of women) that are "courageous, responsible, and

virtuous" (2003:4, emphasis added).[38] As such, Andrew's foreclosure of discussion can be seen

as his attempt to "chivalrously" protect *his* family, particularly his grandmother, from the

judgment of outsiders, like me, who might have negative perceptions of interracial families (e.g.

racist white grandparents). This eschewal of negative images is a facet of foreclosures that

permeated Andrew's narration, most especially in recalling his school years.

Throughout his account and most especially of his time in elementary through high

school, Andrew repeatedly used terms like "normal" and "basic" to present a lack of "drama" in

his personal life, particularly as a mixed-race person. Andrew's, at times, defensive insistence

on normalcy served as an additional means to foreclose discussion on instances in which racial

difference could be seen as an impediment in his personal relations.   One example of this, which

I briefly cited earlier, was in Andrew's recollection of his time in elementary school. When I

asked Andrew a general question about his most memorable moments of these school years, he

responded bluntly: "It's just school. I have no, like, outstanding or memorable instances or

issues that have happened, you know, being part of an interracial family…Nothing, you know,

dramatic where I was scarred for life." Andrew's defensive response is particularly notable

given that I did not specifically ask him about his experience, as he worded it, "being part of an

interracial family." Yet, he expressed a need to assert that being mixed-race did not play a

significant role, especially a negative one, in his time in elementary school. Further, Andrew's

insistence on a lack of "drama" illustrates how his assertion of normalcy is also one of stability,

in which racial difference did not prompt a significant change or crisis. As Andrew proceeded in

his narration, he continued to insist on the normalcy of his relations by uttering phrases, such as

"just *basic* growing up" and "like a *normal* high schooler," and even once restating "again, I

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[38] Although Young applies this term to discuss a very different situation, the security state, she points to it as part of
a larger manifestation of masculinity and, as such, can be extended to Andrew's case.

wasn't *scarred* for life."[39] Andrew maintained this portrayal of a drama-less upbringing on

through the end of his account, where he humorously remarked: "I've led a pretty *boring* life

[laughing]."

Thus, whether it was shutting off further discussion or defensively insisting on normalcy,

Andrew employed foreclosures to negate the significance of racial difference in his personal

relations. This is not to say that Andrew was indeed "scarred" as a mixed-race individual during

his school years or that his interracial family was dysfunctional. Such assertions are neither the

intent nor within the scope of this analysis. Rather, this examination of Andrew's narration has

provided insight into how his collectivist approach to his personal relationships (e.g.

interdependence, high attachment and commitment to family) rendered merely de-emphasizing

the significance of racial difference, as with foils, insufficient and instead required racial

difference to be shut out altogether. In this sense, Andrew's portrayal of his familial life can be

read as similar to the projections of the white mothers of African descent children in France

Winddance Twine's (2010) study mentioned in Chapter 3. That is, just as those mothers

presented "respectable" images of their interracial families in the face of opposition to interracial

intimacy, Andrew's use of foreclosures worked similarly to project his family and upbringing as

normal and un-dramatic in the face of negative images of interracial families as abnormal and

unstable.

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[39] I want to emphasize here that Andrew's defensiveness is not the product of my use of leading questions (e.g. "Was your high school normal?" or "Were you scarred for life as a mixed-race child?"). My interview with Andrew followed the same protocol as all my other interviews. Andrew's defensiveness was the product of what he alone was bringing to each question (e.g. assumptions that I had negative views of mixed-race individuals as scarred and interracial families as unstable). The significance of Andrew's case lies in his exceptional responses to the same questions I asked other interviewees.

Thus, foreclosures prove to serve similar narrative functions as the foils employed by Mark and Robert. For Andrew, this negation strategy enabled him to excise racial difference from his "strong, very good family" and present his personal life as stable and coherent.

Conclusion

Sociological studies have examined how members of interracial couples and friendships can espouse color-blind views that deny the significance of race in their intimate relations (Korgen 2002; Childs 2005). In addition, the growing sociological scholarship on multiraciality has illustrated how the promotion of multiracial identities, whether on government forms or in day-to-day interactions, can also advance color-blind thinking (Dalmage 2004; Brunsma 2006). However, this chapter illustrates how color-blind views toward interracial relationships can also be driven by a certain consciousness of race, an active and sometimes deeply personal denial of its significance in one's closest relations.

This chapter has focused on the outlier cases of three male respondents who felt racial difference did not play a significant role in their personal lives. It has shown how these respondents denied race's significance in their personal relationships through employing two *negation* strategies: 1) foils and 2) foreclosures. The deployment of these strategies depended on whether the respondent espoused individualistic or collectivist approaches to their personal relations. For Mark and Robert, employing foils enabled them to recognize the presence of racial differences in their closest relations but also ultimately to de-emphasize their significance through their presentation as counter-examples of Mark's and Robert's more cherished and typical relationships. This negation strategy aligned with these respondents' emphasis on individualism in their personal lives (e.g. achievement, personal responsibility). In contrast, Andrew employed foreclosures, barring access to personal information that might suggest racial

differences impeded his closest relations. This strategy aligned with Andrew's more collectivist approach to personal relationships, in which high attachment and commitment to family made the mere presence of racial differences more threatening.

Finally, through these gendered negation strategies, these male respondents presented their personal lives as the most coherent and stable of all the multiracial respondents. In doing so, they also expand understandings of narrative. That is, by effectively forwarding a moral without a formative crisis or a discernible story arc, their accounts illustrate how essentially non-narrative portrayals can serve important narrative functions.

Chapter 6

Conclusion:
Alternative Visions of the Intimate

In this dissertation, I have analyzed how multiracial individuals perceive and narrate the

role of racial difference in their familial, friendship, and romantic relations. More specifically, I

have examined whether multiracial individuals, from their unique vantage point as products of

interracial relations, perceive racial difference as an enduring or fading impediment in the most

racially segregated of social interactions. To do so, I have focused on the case of Filipinos in the

U.S., an ethnic group whose comparatively high rates of immigration and intermarriage

exemplify key characteristics attributed for the rise in the U.S.'s multiracial population (Le 2007;

Terrazas and Batalova 2010). Through focused, life story interviews, I found that many

multiracial respondents are challenging traditional conceptions of racial difference's role in their

personal relationships beyond only an obstacle that either impedes or fades. One more glimpse

into multiracial respondents' narratives elucidates this alternative vision of the intimate.

Born to a Filipino father and white mother in San Francisco, like many multiracial

respondents, Samantha Taylor came to view being raised in an interracial family as an asset.

Samantha explained that she and her siblings try to transfer this insight onto her mixed-race

niece and nephew, who were born to Filipino-white fathers (Samantha's brothers) and Peruvian

and African American-Mexican mothers:

> We make sure that they know who they are, you know, that it's okay that you look this
> way. It's okay that your grandpa's dark, and your grandma's light, and your mom's
> brown…We make sure they understand. They'll see my cousin, and he's Filipino, and

they know, 'Oh, that's my uncle. He's dark.' 'That's my grandma. She's white.' I just want to make sure that the little kids know that. I don't want them to have to go through what we've gone through, like me and my brothers and sisters.[40]

Samantha's quote typifies how most multiracial respondents recast racial difference's role in their intimate lives. For Samantha, racial difference is not an obstacle that impedes or fades. Rather, it is an integral, valuable component of her interracial family and part of an alternative worldview that she wishes to impart on her mixed-race niece and nephew, in a sense, the "next generation."

In this concluding chapter, I synthesize the varied ways multiracial respondents add to this alternative vision. First, I discuss this dissertation's main findings and illustrate their contributions to the sociological study of race and personal relationships and the growing scholarship on multiraciality as well as what they say about interracial relations in the U.S. today. Then, I elucidate what respondents' accounts contribute to narrative inquiry. Finally, I consider implications for future research.

Diversifying Race's Role in Personal Relationships

In this dissertation, I have shown how multiracial respondents came to divergent conclusions about racial difference's role in their personal relationships. Although respondents' narratives illustrated how racial difference still can serve its traditional role as an obstacle, their conclusions also reveal the myriad ways in which multiracial respondents attempted to diversify race's role in their personal relationships. In doing so, respondents' conclusions make important contributions to the sociological study of race and personal relationships and the growing

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[40] Taylor (a pseudonym) is an Anglo-Saxon surname, even though Samantha's father is Filipino. Like a few multiracial respondents, Samantha could trace lineage to an American, in this case white, great grandfather on her Filipino side who settled in the Philippines as a member of the U.S. military during the early American colonial period and started a family with a local Filipina woman, Samantha's Filipina great grandmother (see Andrews 2012). Like other respondents with this unique American-Filipino connection, Samantha acknowledged how her Filipino family tree illustrates the long history of "race mixing" in the Philippines but ultimately saw her parents' Filipino/non-Filipino interracial relationship as not a mere extension of this history but rather as something separate, in a sense, "newer."

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scholarship on multiraciality in the U.S. In addition, they provide valuable insight into interracial relations in an increasingly multiracial American landscape.

In Chapter 3, I examined the most common conclusion respondents reached about racial difference's role in their personal relationships. Specifically, I illustrated how, across demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, parentage, region), approximately three-quarters of multiracial respondents recast racial difference from a liability to an asset in their familial, friendship, and romantic relations through telling a common story, a *reconciliation narrative*. For instance, respondents' interracial families went from being "weird" to "the only way it should be" and being mixed-race transformed from the source of "loneliness" and "awkwardness" to an "advantage" that provided "a new perspective on the world." This transformation of racial difference defies conventional sociological wisdom, which has long held that racial difference is only an obstacle to close, personal relationships (Park and Burgess 1921). As such, this conclusion illustrates most explicitly how multiracial respondents are expanding racial difference's role in the study of race and personal relationships, that is, from not only an obstacle that impedes or fades but also something that can serve a compatible, integral role. In addition, it also fills a void in scholarship on multiraciality, which has examined positive revaluations of racial difference in multiracial individuals' racial identities but less so in their personal relationships (e.g. Root 1996; Wijeyasinghe 2001; Daniel 2002).

Further, respondents' positive revaluations of race in their personal relationships provide insight into larger trends in interracial relations in the U.S. For instance, as I illustrated in Chapter 3, respondents "presented" this more positive conclusion through various *narrative strategies* that depended on when and where racial difference was most often an obstacle and whether this was within or outside respondents' families. Although a majority of multiracial

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respondents recalled first experiencing racial difference as an obstacle outside their families, the fact that most of these experiences occurred early as opposed to late in their lives suggest increased public acceptance of interracial relationships and being mixed-race. This also concurs with general public approval of interracial relationships in the U.S. discussed in Chapter 2, which has seen a steady rise over the course of the last half century. Relatedly, respondents in both southeastern Michigan and the San Francisco-Bay Area felt that more "diverse" environments, like the latter, with larger multiracial and Asian populations are more welcoming of interracial relationships. However, even in the Midwest, with its relatively smaller multiracial population and more recent history of anti-Asian sentiment, interracial relationships and being mixed-race are becoming more common. As Michigan respondent Allison Rudkus attested, "around here, [being mixed] is becoming more, not more of a norm, but you see it more."

In Chapter 4, I examined how roughly one-quarter of respondents came to hold a more ambivalent stance toward interracial relationships. These respondents were exposed to alternative perspectives or "counter-narratives" in college, such as university courses and activist organizations, that highlighted enduring gender and racial inequalities, such as the mail-order-bride industry, that can impede close, interracial relationships. However, still with a desire for racial difference to be a compatible part of their personal relationships, these respondents could not fully commit to a single stance and consequently told *discordant narratives*, in which their views on interracial relationships were "evolving," "constantly changing," and "more complicated." Although these respondents' accounts illustrate how racial difference can still impede close relations, their ambivalent stances extend Chapter 3's expansion of racial difference's role in the sociological study of race and personal relationships. That is, while sociological studies have shown that interracial marriage and friendship is not uniform and often

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complicated, for instance varying across racial groups (e.g. Yancey 2003; Lee and Bean 2004; Quillian and Campbell 2003), unlike these studies the struggles of these respondents are not centered on the extent to which racial difference continues to be a liability in personal relationships but, in a similar vein as respondents in Chapter 3, are concerned with whether racial difference is a liability at all.

Further, these respondents' ambivalent conclusions also provide insight into larger trends on interracial relations in the U.S. Most notably, these respondents' accounts illustrate the ways in which racial (and gender) differences can continue to impede close relations. This is especially the case among respondents who were most intensively involved in *counter-narrative sites*, like activist organizations and study abroad programs in the Philippines. These respondents, most of whom were women, were exposed to *gender exploitation narratives* that highlighted inequalities facing Filipina women, like the mail-order-bride industry and sex tourism around U.S. military bases in the Philippines. These counter-narratives forced these respondents to confront enduring sexual and gender stereotypes of Asian women, discussed in Chapter 2 (e.g. submissive "good wives" and "military brides" with illicit pasts), that can impede close, interracial relationships. As such, similar to how exposure to these counter-narratives tempered respondents' whole-hearted embrace of close, interracial relationships, these gender and racial inequalities illuminate obstacles that persist despite the increasingly positive public attitudes toward interracial relationships in the U.S.[41]

Finally, in Chapter 5 I examined the least common conclusion reached by multiracial respondents. Specifically, I explored the outlier cases of three male respondents who saw racial

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[41] This is especially noteworthy given that the comparatively high rates of Asian American intermarriage with whites has often been interpreted by sociologists as a sign of the "blurring" of racial boundaries (Alba and Nee 2002; Lee and Bean 2004) when in fact these rates can indicate quite the opposite: the persistence of racial (and gender) inequalities (Omi 2008; Nemoto 2009).

difference as not playing a significant role in their closest relationships. I illustrated how these multiracial respondents presented their personal lives as stable and free of race-related crises through *negation strategies,* in which they disavowed any instance in which racial difference could be seen as impeding their familial, friendship, or romantic relations (e.g. negative images of interracial families as unstable). These respondents' negations of racial difference complicate traditional understandings of color-blindness, especially in respect to interracial relations. That is, while sociological studies have explored how members of interracial couples and friendships can espouse color-blind views (Korgen 2002; Childs 2005) and although growing multiracial scholarship has shown how multiracial identities can act in the service of color-blind discourse (Dalmage 2004; Brunsma 2006), these male respondents' conclusions illustrate how color-blind views can also be driven by a certain form of "race-consciousness," an active and sometimes deeply personal denial of racial difference as an obstacle in one's personal life (e.g. a desire for one's interracial family to be seen as "normal").

Although less obvious, like the other conclusions these male respondents' color-blind stances shine light on larger trends in interracial relations in the U.S. This is especially the case with the negation strategy of *foreclosures*. As illustrated in Chapter 5, foreclosures barred access to information that might suggest racial difference was an impediment in one's closest relations and coincided with the espousal of a *collectivist* approach to personal relationships (e.g. high attachment and commitment). However, most notably, this negation strategy often entailed a "chivalrous" protection of one's family from negative perceptions of interracial families (e.g. unstable) and mixed-race people (e.g. "scarred"). As exemplified in the case of respondent Andrew Fowler, this protection often manifested through a defensive insistence on the "normalcy" of one's interracial family. Thus, similar to Chapter 4, this strategy suggests that

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while public attitudes indicate a U.S. more accepting of interracial relationships, negative images of interracial families as "unstable" and their mixed-race children as "scarred" still linger today and remain a point of contention for some multiracial individuals (Childs 2005; Campbell and Eggerling-Boeck 2006). Further, this strategy also illustrates how even some respondents' denials of racial difference's significance entail alternative visions of the intimate, in this case, in which interracial families and being mixed-race are just as "normal" as same-race families and being monoracial.

Expanding Narrative Inquiry

To analyze how multiracial respondents came to their varied conclusions about racial difference's role in their personal relationships, I employed a narrative approach, in which *how* these individuals came to these outcomes is just as important as the outcomes themselves. As discussed in Chapter 1, narrative analysis provides a propitious analytical approach in this study for two primary reasons: 1) its attention to process or emplotment and 2) its propensity to capture the dynamic, non-static character of race. In analyzing how multiracial respondents were able to "successfully" present divergent conclusions about race in their personal lives, this dissertation both extends and expands the scope of narrative inquiry in the social sciences.

In Chapter 3, I illustrated how a majority of multiracial respondents transformed racial difference from a liability to an asset in their personal relationships through telling *reconciliation narratives*. Similar to Margaret Somers and Fred Block's (2005) concept of "conversion narratives," reconciliation narratives convert from one perception of reality to another by telling a causal story. Specifically, they utilize traditional features of narrative structures (see Somers 1994:616-7) to cast interracial relationships (i.e. being in them or born to them) as "close" (e.g. comfortable, genuine), progressive, and of diverse and open places and any insistence on same-

race relationships as "not close" (e.g. awkward, superficial), backward, of homogenous or divided places. As such, reconciliation narratives extend scholarship in cultural sociology over the past decade that has shown how narrative structures can shape social life, ranging from media representations to public policy (Jacobs 2000; Smith 2005; Polletta 2006; Jacobs and Sobieraj 2007). While reconciliation narratives extend the growing sociological scholarship in narrative inquiry, respondents' accounts in Chapter 4 and 5 expand it.

In Chapter 4, I examined how multiracial respondents presented more ambivalent stances toward interracial relationships through telling *discordant narratives*. As illustrated in the chapter, discordant narratives are the uneasy product of opposing narratives on interracial relationships: 1) reconciliation narratives, which as just discussed present racial difference as compatible in close relationships, and 2) "counter-narratives" (Delgado 1995), which highlight persistent inequalities that can impede close, interracial relations. While illuminating these respondents' inability to wholly embrace or entirely reject the possibility of close interracial relations, discordant narratives also broaden understandings of narrative. Specifically, in their possession of multiple storylines and unresolved endings, discordant narratives depart from the single perspectives and clear, coherent resolutions that are central characteristics of traditional narrative structures (White 1980; Somers 1994). Further, while narrative analysts have contended that multiple "voices" can coexist and conflict within a single text (Bakhtin [1934] 1981) and mainstream narratives can be neither fully adopted nor rejected by narrators (O'Connor 1997; Young 2004), discordant narratives illustrate that contradictory *narratives* can co-exist within a single account and, in their fractious interplay, force ambivalent "resolutions."

Finally, respondents' accounts in Chapter 5 expand narrative inquiry even further. In this chapter, I examined how three male respondents presented their personal lives as coherent,

stable, and free of race-related crises through employing *negation strategies* that denied the significance of racial difference in their closest relations. Although coherency has long been recognized as a key feature of narrative (White 1980), what sets these respondents' accounts apart is their stability. That is, unlike in traditional narratives where protagonists typically experience some kind of change (e.g. epiphany, resolution of crisis), these respondents projected their personal relationships as changeless and unfettered by obstacles posed by racial difference, whether it was a racially different friend or negative images of interracial families.[42] This resilient stability ultimately proved to be an effective narrative device in that, to quote Luisa Passerini, it "does not allow one to see the 'mnemonic tension' or 'inner vibrations' but rather hides them" (1987:21). Thus, these three respondents' accounts expand the scope of narrative inquiry by illustrating how essentially "non-narrative" portrayals can serve important narrative functions, enabling one to still effectively present a moral (i.e. racial difference is not significant) without either a formative crisis or a discernible story arc.

Implications for Future Research

This dissertation's main findings have implications for future research on race and personal relationships in an increasingly multiracial U.S.

First, as mentioned in Chapter 3, narratives are "strategic" and often are told "in order to achieve some goal or advance some interest" (Ewick and Silbey 1995:208). As such, respondents' accounts can privilege their perspectives to the detriment of others'. For instance, in Chapter 3, I gave the example of respondent Danise James who in telling her reconciliation narrative presented her African American female classmates' comments that she "talked white"

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[42] This change is especially apparent in reconciliation narratives as the narrators' perceptions of racial difference transform from a liability to an asset by its conclusion. However, this "arc" can also be seen in discordant narratives, as their narrators recall a formative crisis and amidst the conflict of opposing narratives ultimately still come to some form of a resolution, even if it is an ambivalent one.

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as an example of her biraciality impeding her formation of close friendships. However, from another perspective, these same jokes could be perceived as her peers' frustrations with Danise's racial and class privileges being born to a black/non-black relationship and from a strongly middle class background in a largely lower-income and African American school in Detroit. Although the intent of this study has been to capture the perspectives (however limited) of multiracial individuals on race in their personal relationships, future studies could incorporate ethnographic methods to explore multiracial individuals *within* various settings (e.g. family, school). This could provide access to more perspectives (e.g. family members, classmates) as well as the opportunity to achieve a more comprehensive, "closer approximation" of race's role in multiracial individuals' personal lives (Lofland et al. 2006:90).

Second, this study has been propelled by major demographic changes brought with the increased immigration from Asian and Latin America, particularly the rise in "new" intermarriages and a growing multiracial population (Perlmann and Waters 2004; Lee and Bean 2004). Resultantly, this dissertation has focused on one demographic group, Filipinos, that exemplifies these changes with comparatively high rates of immigration (Terrazas and Batalova 2010) and rates of intermarriage (Le 2007) and multi-race identification (Hoeffel et al. 2012). However, future studies could explore how multiracial individuals from other ethnic groups perceive the role of race in their personal relationships, most notably Mexicans and Asian Indians. For instance, Mexicans comprise the largest immigrant group in the U.S., by a significant margin (Terrazas 2010), and in 2010, Latinos in general constituted approximately 25 percent of all new intermarriages (43 percent of those with whites) (Wang 2012). Despite these numbers, with a few exceptions (e.g. Jiminez 2004), surprisingly few sociological studies have given focused attention to multiracial individuals of Mexican descent. As such, future studies

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could explore whether multiracial individuals from an ethnic group with similarly high rates of immigration and intermarriage also perceive racial difference as a compatible part of their personal relationships or if the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment and policies targeting people of Mexican descent in the U.S. are having an adverse effect and making racial difference appear more of an obstacle to close interracial relations. Further, Asian Indians could provide a propitious comparative case as well. That is, Asian Indians constitute the third largest immigrant group in the U.S. (Terrazas and Batog 2010). However, unlike Filipinos, Asian Indians tend to be more endogamous (over 90 percent) and consequently exhibit some of the lowest rates of out-marriage among U.S. Asian ethnic groups (Le 2012). Therefore, Asian Indians also provide an interesting comparative case, for future studies can examine how multiracial individuals from an ethnic group with similarly high rates of U.S. immigration perceive the role of racial difference in their personal relationships when same-race relationships are more often the norm.

Third, while this dissertation has focused on two geographic regions with disparate sizes in their Filipino and multiracial populations, southeastern Michigan and California's San Francisco-Bay Area (Terrazas and Batalova 2010; Jones and Bullock 2012), future studies can explore multiracial individuals' perceptions of race in their personal lives in other geographic regions, most notably the South. For example, although multiracial respondents made regional distinctions between the West and Midwest, seeing the former as more "diverse" and thus more accepting of respondents' interracial relationships and the latter as more racially "homogenous" and thus a less accepting, the South was almost universally seen as less accepting of interracial relationships by multiracial respondents. Respondents, like Lauren Brooks in Chapter 2 and Zach Bell in Chapter 3, often pointed to "engrained racism" in the region and its historical association with slavery. Although studies have examined the experiences of multiracial

individuals in the South, they have largely focused on those born to black-white relationships (e.g. Khanna and Johnson 2010). However, the South has been an increasingly popular destination for new immigration. For instance, even though one-third of all Asian immigrants reside in California (Batalova 2010), Southern states like Texas, Florida, and Virginia have seen an over 70 percent increase in their Asian populations, in general, since 2000 (Hoeffel et al. 2012). Thus, along with the region's popular perception, as several multiracial respondents attested, as "ignorant" and "backward" toward interracial relations, the South offers demographically a potentially rich site to examine how multiracial individuals from Asian and Latino immigrant groups perceive racial difference's role in their personal relationships.

Finally, although the focus of this dissertation has been on multiracial individuals' perceptions of race in their intimate lives, the focused, life story interviews with multiracial respondents also elicited findings about their family histories worthy of further inquiry. As mentioned in Chapter 1, for approximately 75 percent of respondents, their families' migration and settlement in the U.S. and often the very contexts in which their parents met were facilitated by family ties to the U.S. military (e.g. parents met near U.S. military base in the Philippines) or the health care industry (e.g. Filipina mother immigrated to U.S. as nurse), with the U.S. military comprising over 50 percent of these familial connections. Given that both of these channels of migration have well-documented origins in U.S.-Philippine colonial relations (Espiritu 2003; Choy 2003), these findings illustrate the importance of future studies to not only examine multiracial individuals' *perceptions* of their personal relationships but also explore the historical, in this case asymmetrical, relations that shaped their interracial families and, by extension, their very existences.

Thus, in this dissertation I have sought to explore whether multiracial individuals, from their unique vantage point as products of interracial relationships, perceive racial difference as a fading obstacle or as an enduring impediment in their familial, friendship, and romantic relations. Through focusing on the case of Filipinos in the U.S., I have found that for most multiracial respondents neither perception was entirely the case. Rather, against conventional sociological wisdom, racial difference was something they strove to incorporate as a compatible and even advantageous feature of their closest relationships. In this sense, these multiracial respondents exemplify Michael Omi and Howard Winant's contention that race is neither "an illusion we can somehow 'get beyond'" nor "something objective and fixed" (1994:55). Although multiracial respondents were aware that racial difference can still persist as an obstacle in close relations, their narratives illuminate how members of a growing subset of the U.S. multiracial population – those born to Filipino/non-Filipino relationships – are charting alternative visions of the intimate so that future generations of multiracial individuals, in the words of respondent Samantha Taylor, "[don't] have to go through what we've gone through."

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