Black/Irish: How do Americans understand their multiracial ancestry?

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Introduction

Although the United States has been home to a significant multiracial population since its founding, American scholarly interest in the racial identity of mixed-race people is a fairly new phenomenon.[1] This development is due in large part to the federal government's recent change in its official classification system to allow individuals to identify with more than one race (see Office of Management and Budget 1997). With multiple-race statistical data now available, especially after Census 2000, it became clear that millions of Americans would choose to "mark one or more" races when given the opportunity. This observation entailed new relevance for existing social scientific research on identity formation. In particular, Mary Water's (1990) description of "ethnic options" for white Americans offered a template for thinking about the "racial options" that mixed-race people might confront.[2]

In this article, we seek to explain patterns of racial self-identification by multiracial people in the United States. Do they prefer to select one race or several to describe themselves, and why? Using census data from 1990 and 2000, we identify a mixed-race population by targeting adults who report having ancestry in more than one racial group. This approach offers several advantages over the more common method of equating the multiracial population with the children of interracial unions. First, it allows us to analyze the self-reported identity of adults rather than the parent-proxied identity of children. Second, this approach captures a multiracial population that is broader and potentially more historical in its understanding of multiraciality than the post-*Loving* "biracial baby boom" often identified by researchers.

The racial affiliations of mixed-race people offer insights into both macro-level historical trends in racial ideology, and micro-level mechanisms of contemporary social stratification. As we will see, the identity choices that individuals make today continue to be shaped by concepts of race that formed centuries ago: ideas (or their absence) of the properties of races and the nature of hybridity still dictate to a considerable extent how people conceive of their racial membership. Perhaps more important, some observers see in multiracial identity choices a harbinger of the future, either as the vanguard of an imminently miscegenated U.S.A., or as a "swing" faction that might eventually be incorporated in the white population (Gans 1979; Lind 1998; Sanjek 1994; Yancey 2003). On a more prosaic yet no less significant level, the ways that multiracial people

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[1] Despite such early well-known studies as Park's (1928) essay on the "marginal man" and Everett Stonequist's (1961[1937]) book of the same title, the figure of the mulatto that plays a prominent role in their work was widely understood at the time as essentially a Negro, rather than a person with different identity options from which to choose.

[2] Although, as Kimberly McClain DaCosta (2007) notes, Waters believed that such identity choice did not extend to racial minorities, especially African Americans.

identify themselves reveal a great deal about the continuing impact of class and gender in shaping the opportunity set of race labels that are available to them.

Multiracial Identity

The burgeoning academic literature on multiracial identity, published mostly since 1997 (Thompson 2006), can be roughly divided into two schools or approaches.[3] On one hand are historical explorations of the social structures that shaped racial classification systems and practices. F. James Davis' (1991) monograph on the evolution of mulattoes' social status is one widely-read example; other researchers have investigated the categorization of American Indian "mixed bloods" (Garroutte 2003; Nagel 1996; Unrau 1989; Wilson 1992), "red-black" peoples (Forbes 1988; 1993), people of partial Asian ancestry (King-O'Riain 2006; Spickard 1989), and "tripartite racial isolates" of putative African, European, and native American origin (Berry 1963). Studies that compare the racial classification of different mixed-race groups include Hollinger (2003), Morning (2003), and Wolfe (2001). In addition, Randall Kennedy (2003) and Ian Haney-López (1996) provide comprehensive examinations of the historical role of law in assigning race to racially indeterminate people. Scholars are also beginning to place the contemporary multiracial movement in social and political context (Brunsma 2006; DaCosta 2007; Dalmage 2004; Daniel 2002; DeBose and Winters 2003; Parker and Song 2001; Spencer 1997; Spencer 1999; 2006; Williams 2006). Together, these works demonstrate how much the historical moment determines whether multiracial people are recognized as such or are automatically grouped in monoracial populations. They reveal how much particular types of mixed racial ancestry have traditionally been afforded the latitude to select from various possible racial identities.

The second branch of "multiracial studies" (Thompson 2006) focuses on contemporary, individual-level decisions about how to identify one's self or children in racial terms. Research in this realm has often involved qualitative ethnographic or interview studies (Korgen 1998; Renn 2004; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002; Twine 1996), with a liberal dose of autobiography (see Root 1992; 1996). With the advent of "mark one or more race" data collection, however, quantitative analyses of racial identification on census forms and large-scale surveys are steadily increasing in number. The project described here fits most closely in this last body of research, and so we turn now to a more detailed description of its findings and the hypotheses they suggest for this study. However, in interpreting our results we will return to both the sociohistorical and qualitative literature on mixed-race identity for a fuller understanding of the patterns to emerge.

Researchers who want to investigate the identity choices of multiracial people all face a common problem: How to define and measure the mixed-race population to be studied? As Harris and Sim (2002: 625) put it, surveys (including the decennial census) each capture "a multiracial population, not the multiracial population." Morning (2000) shows how flexible the boundaries might be by calculating that a definition of "multiracial" that included individuals with genealogically-distant mixture would put the

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[3] See Brunsma (2005) for an alternative description of the field.

share of mixed-race Americans around 40 percent of the total population, instead of the roughly 2 percent figure to emerge from the 2000 census.

To identify mixed-race people in large statistical databases, researchers have primarily used three strategies. The most direct is simply to rely on self-reports, that is, individuals' responses indicating they are multiracial (whether in response to preset options or through fill-in blanks); see for example Tafoya, Johnson, and Hill's (2004) description of Census 2000 results. Such data, however, are not appropriate for exploring the varied racial labels that mixed-race people choose, since they include only those who have selected a multiracial identity. In other words, if these responses were to be used to analyze the race options taken by individuals then the analysis would be guilty of sampling on the dependent variable.

Perhaps the most common strategy to date has been to identify multiracial individuals based on the racial identities that their parents report; examples can be found in Brunsma (2005), Chew, Eggebeen, and Uhlenberg (1989), Eschbach (1995), Herman (2004), Qian (2004), Roth (2005), Saenz, Hwang, Aguirre, and Anderson (1995), and Xie and Goyette (1997). The advantage of this approach is that it seems to be fairly comprehensive; assuming that parental race is reasonably accurately reported in large data collection efforts like the census or the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, this method should include most biracial children without undue bias. However, even if this assumption holds, there are still three notable drawbacks to face. First, parental information is frequently only recorded for parents within the child's household. Therefore, biracial children living in single parent and stepparent families are excluded from analysis. Second, information on parental race is usually gathered only for minors, so such analyses are normally limited to children younger than 18 years of age. As a result, they often do not report their race themselves, but rather it is filled in by their parents. The resulting data then does not represent individuals' racial self-identification, but rather, the labeling choices their parents make on their behalf. While such information is certainly valuable as an indicator of the broad understandings of race that obtain in the United States, it tells us more about older generations than it does about younger ones, and it says nothing about the identification that mixed-race individuals choose for themselves.

The final shortcoming to this approach, at least in our view, is that it limits the definition of "multiracial" to first-generation children of interracial couples, also known as "biracial" offspring. This reduction, while embraced by some,[4] reinforces the erroneous notion that multiraciality is a new, post-*Loving* phenomenon in the United States (Spencer 2006).[5] More importantly for the attempts of scholars to use attitudes toward multiracial ancestry as a window onto broader race thinking, it eliminates from study a crucial element of analysis: the major role that historical period plays in shaping the range of racial identities—if any—from which people feel they can choose.

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[4] See Nobles (2000) for discussion of the multiracial movement's emphasis on biracial people.
[5] *Loving v. Virginia* was the 1967 Supreme Court decision that struck down all state laws prohibiting interracial marriage (Davis 1991).

The third approach for identifying multiracial people is really a loose collection of strategies that rely on comparing multiple responses to the race question in different contexts. For example, Harris and Sim (2002) take advantage of the fact that the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health ("Add Health") asked respondents for their race in different ways (permitting multiple responses and forcing single-race choices) and contexts (asking at home and at school), and recorded parental race as well. As a result, students who reported one race at home and another at school might be considered multiracial. Hitlin, Brown, and Elder (2006) also use Add Health data, but they search for race-reporting inconsistencies over time by comparing the Wave 1 (1994-95) results to those of Wave 3 (2001-02). Campbell (2007) uses the 1995 Current Population Survey supplement on Race and Ethnicity that queried respondents about multiple races after asking the standard single race question.

This method has the appeal of relying on individual's self-reports, rather than their racial identification by others. In the case of relying upon discrepancies in reporting, however, it is somewhat unclear whether response inconsistency can truly be classified as a respondent selecting a multiracial identification, as opposed to a vacillation between two competing single-race identifications. Furthermore, given the small size of many multiracial populations, the "true" population of interest could easily be swamped by a small amount of reporting error. Comparing two different race questions on the same instrument with different wording, as in Campbell (2007) avoids these problems, but as we note below, the very fact that both questions use "race" as the prompt still limits the multiracial population to one in which the relevant attachment to an ancestral group is strong enough for it to become a racial identity.

The method that we use to identify a multiracial population avoids many of the drawbacks described above. Based on the work of Goldstein and Morning (2000),[6] we turn to adults' self-reported ancestry for evidence of multiracial heritage, regardless of generation. Specifically, we use U.S. census data to identify individuals who reported ancestral descent from two or more groups that are traditionally considered racially distinct. We believe that ancestry responses offer a special advantage over methods that ultimately rely on racial identification. Race is a basic cognitive dimension of social interaction in the United States that individuals use to interpret and organize their social world. Ancestry, on the other hand, is a far more fluid concept that has far less salience in daily life. Furthermore, the routinized nature of race reporting for most Americans often yields preset, single-race answers, rather than detailed descriptions of one's origins. Due to its open-ended nature and rarity, the ancestry question is more likely to generate spontaneous and novel responses.

Some might argue that the lack of salience and routinization weakens the value of the ancestry question as a form of self-identification. We would argue, rather, that the ancestry question provides important information on individuals' self-identification that is not captured when they are forced into highly salient, pre-determined categories. Given the overlap in the way concepts such as race, ancestry, origins, and heritage are understood in the United States, ancestral identity typically carries with it some form of

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[6] See also Eschbach, Supple, and Snipp (1998) and Lieberson and Waters (1988).

implicit racial identification. By probing these responses for a multiracial ancestry that is distinct from the more salient and routinized race question itself, we are able to address several of the shortcomings of other methods.

First, unlike studies that work directly with self-reported race, we have access to adults' self-reported identity information without having to limit our target group to those who explicitly select a mixed-race label, avoiding the problem of "selecting on the dependent variable."

Second, unlike studies of biracial children, we are able to identify an adult multiracial population. By restricting this population to heads of household, we can limit our analysis to individuals who are likely to be self-reporting, rather than relying on the proxy identification of parents or other relatives.

Third, unlike studies of biracial children, we do not seek objective criteria in order to identify multiracial individuals. Instead, we compare two subjective self-evaluations of an individual's identity. This approach allows us to identify a broader population that includes both individuals whose multiracial pedigree is generationally close and individuals whose multiracial pedigree is generationally distant.

Because our approach relies upon a comparison of two different self-reports, it is most similar to the approach that compares two or more responses to the race question in different contexts. However, we believe that by divorcing our measure of multiracial identification from the race question entirely, we capture a broader conception of individuals who understand and acknowledge that their ancestry is multiracial in nature, yet might have responded differently when presented with the highly salient and socially weighted category of race, in any form.

Our approach is not without its own drawbacks and we are not advocating that other methods should be discarded in favor of our own. As we noted earlier, different approaches will capture different types of multiracial populations. For researchers particularly interested in the identity formation of the children of interracial parents, our approach is not particularly useful because we have no way to identify the reasons that an individual might consider themselves multiracial. On the other hand, for researchers interested in a more historical approach to understanding multiracial identification, our approach is superior because it incorporates individuals with a far more diffuse understanding of their identity than do other approaches. We discuss other technical limitations of our approach below. In the analysis that follows, we also compare some of our results to prior results using similar methods.

Data and Methods

Data come from the 5 percent sample of the 2000 U.S. Census available from the IPUMS project (Ruggles and Sobek, 1997). We also make use of a 5 percent sample of the 1990 Census in order to compare our 2000 results to the case where respondents were allowed to only check one box in response to the race question.

Typically, one member of the household fills out the Census form for the entire household. Although there is no definitive way to determine which person in the household responded for the entire household, the most likely candidate is the person reporting as the head of household (HH). Therefore, we limit our analysis to 4,593,663 heads of household from Census 1990 and 5,273,239 heads of household from Census 2000 in order to more accurately capture self-identification. This restriction likely limits our ability to generalize our results across gender because female heads of household are a not a random sample of all women.

Our analysis will compare HH responses to the race question and the ancestry question. The race question provides fifteen options to respondents. In essence, however, the specific categories used are expansions of a long-standing color-coded taxonomy of race: White, Black, Red (American Indian), Yellow (Asian), and Brown (Pacific Islander). In addition, respondents can check a "Some other race" (SOR) box. In both 1990 and 2000, the SOR option was primarily used by individuals identifying as Hispanic. Respondents could check only one race box in 1990 and multiple boxes in 2000. The Census Bureau imputes race in cases where this question is left blank. For our purposes, a non-entry is a valid response and so we re-classify imputed values as non-responses.

The ancestry question is an open-ended question only available on the long-form Census questionnaire. It asks "what is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?" The census form provides two lines for respondents to report their answers. In order to compare this response to the race response, we must "racialize" these ancestries. Because both the terms "ancestry" and "ethnic origins" imply some information about race, we do not believe that this approach misrepresents respondent's answers. However, because the ancestry question is an open-ended question, respondents are not restricted to an understanding of their racial ancestry that is necessarily consistent with Census racial categories. In fact, responses to the ancestry question are highly varied. The Census classified 225 unique responses to the ancestry question in Census 2000.

We seek to analyze the race reporting of individuals whose ancestry responses indicate a multiracial ancestry. In order to make such a comparison, however, we must first simplify the large number of responses to the ancestry question. Following Goldstein and Morning (2000), we collapse the 225 unique responses to the ancestry question into a smaller set of racial ancestries. These racial ancestries are the five different taxonomic categories used by the Census and the Office of Management and Budget (White, Black, American Indian, Asian, and Pacific Islander) and a set of ancestries that capture either non-taxonomic categories or racially uninterpretable ancestries. The non-taxonomic/racially uninterpretable categories are Hispanic, Caribbean and South American, Middle Eastern, Sub-Saharan African[7], South Asian[8], American[9], and Mixed[10]. Appendix A discusses our technique in detail.

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[7] Sub-Saharan African would seem to be fairly unambiguous but since this includes individuals who report being "South African", for example, it is difficult in some cases to know what racial ancestry is implied.

Table 1 shows the distribution of HH's racial ancestry responses for both our Census 1990 and Census 2000 samples. With the exception of racially uninterpretable ancestries, the results are similar for both Censuses, so we focus on the results for Census 2000.[11] About 19% of HH's did not report any ancestry, about 60% of HH's reported one ancestry, and 21% reported two ancestries. Among those HH's who reported one ancestry, about 72% reported a taxonomic racial ancestry, while 15% reported a non-taxonomic racial ancestry, and the remainder (13%) reported a racially uninterpretable ancestry. In about 87% of the cases where HH's reported two different ancestries, these ancestries came from the same taxonomic racial ancestry. This group is dominated by individuals reporting two different European ancestries. A very small fraction of individuals (0.2%) with two ancestries reported the same non-taxonomic race. The final three groups of HH's all reported two different racial ancestries. They make up 2.7% of the total and 13% of all those HH's reporting two ancestries. For this analysis our focus is on individuals who identified with two different taxonomic racial ancestries, a category that made up 1.77% of household heads in Census 2000 and totaled 106,758 respondents in our Census 1990 sample and 93,535 respondents in our Census 2000 sample.

[Table 1 about here]

By selecting only individuals who report taxonomic racial ancestries, we do not intend to reify the existing categories of racial distinction in the U.S. We choose these individuals because their responses to the ancestry question reveal recognition of a multiracial ancestry that could be reported using the standard racial categories available in the US Census. To put it another way, according to official governmental categories and lay understandings of race in the United States, these people *are* multiracial.

Our coding of racial ancestry certainly leads to some measurement error because some individuals who we believe are providing a multiracial ancestry are not intending to do so. For example, an African-ancestry British immigrant to the United States might report both an "English" and an "African American" ancestry. According to our approach, this individual would be coded as reporting a multiracial ancestry, when they are actually using the ancestry response to report both a racial identity (African-American) and their national origins (English). While these sorts of measurement errors are unavoidable, we believe they are likely to be small. Furthermore, the bias that is generated with such measurement errors is fairly clear. They will reduce the proportion of

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[8] Although "Asian Indian" is technically a racial category on the U.S. Census, there is ample evidence that the racial identification of South Asians in the U.S. is quite ambiguous and that, for most Americans, "Asian" means East Asian (Kibria 1996; Morning 2001; Shankar and Srikanth 1998).

[9] This includes individuals who reported a U.S. State as an ancestry (i.e. "Texan") and individuals who report "Canadian" as an ancestry (but not "French Canadian").

[10] This category might seem to capture our interest in multiracial individuals, but given that most people who report this ancestry reported being white-alone in Census 2000, it is more likely that this response is primarily used by White individuals whose European ancestry is so fragmented that they refuse to reduce it down to two ancestries.

[11] This discrepancy was largely a result of a change in policy regarding how to record state responses (i.e. "Texan", "Californian").

individuals with a multiracial ancestry who report more than one race and increase the proportion of the same individuals who will report single races.

It might seem unusual that we exclude individuals who report a Hispanic ancestry from our sample given the growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S. and the increasing academic and popular interest in Hispanic groups. This exclusion is largely driven by a data limitation inherent in the way Hispanicity is recorded in the U.S. Census. Because Hispanicity is asked as a separate question on the U.S. Census, part Hispanic-ancestry respondents were never forced to make a single-race/multiple race decision in completing their Census forms. They did not face the same limitations in confronting the Census form itself as other respondents who indicate a multiracial ancestry. The appropriate parallel to our methodology here would be to compare the answers to the Hispanicity question among those individuals who report at least one Hispanic ancestry. Space constraints preclude such an analysis here.

However, apart from the methodological issues, there is also substantive reason to be cautious of this approach for Hispanic-ancestry individuals. First, the concepts of ancestry, race, and mixed race are well-developed in Latin American, but significantly different from those same concepts in the United States. For that reason, we believe that questions of Hispanic racial identity must be considered separately from the groups analyzed here. It is worth noting that the methodological and substantive issues outlined here are not unrelated. A different conception of race among the Hispanic population is at least partly responsible for the decision to treat Hispanicity separately from the race question on the U.S. Census.

Unlike many studies of racial identification, however, we do not exclude Hispanics entirely from our sample. Rather we use reported Hispanicity as a control variable in our multivariate analysis. However, because the only Hispanic respondents we have in our sample are those respondents who reported a Hispanic ethnicity and two non-Hispanic ancestries, we caution against the generalizability of our results for this variable.

Within our sample of multiracial ancestry respondents, we have ten different multiracial ancestry groups. Table 2 shows the number of HH's within each group. Although the overall totals for each Census are around 100,000 respondents, the White/American Indian group alone accounts for about 90% of the total sample in 1990 and 85% of the total sample in 2000. The sample sizes for the remaining groups are considerably smaller.

[Table 2 about here]

For purposes of our analysis we exclude part-Pacific Islander ancestry individuals and American Indian/Asian ancestry individuals, leaving us with five multiracial ancestry groups (White/Black, White/American Indian, White/Asian, Black/American Indian, Black/Asian). In two cases, the part-Pacific Islander ancestry groups are too small to produce reliable statistics. Furthermore, the results for Pacific Islander-ancestry

individuals overwhelmingly reflect the distinc racial atmosphere of Hawaii.[12] While we think further analysis of this understudied group would be beneficial in future studies, due to space constraints we limit our discussion here to the multiracial ancestry groups formed by the unambiguous racial boundaries of the mainland United States. The American Indian/Asian group is excluded due to a small sample size and heterogeneous and inconclusive results.[13]

Our analysis proceeds in two steps. First, we analyze the distribution of race responses for these multiracial ancestry groups and compare our results to prior results using other methods. Second, we use multinomial logit models for each group to analyze the covariates that predict which racial group each individual will choose. The covariates analyzed include birth cohort, sex, Hispanicity, education, income, and nativity. We pay particular attention to the results by birth cohort, education, and income because these covariates tell us about potential changes over time and variation in racial identification as a result of class/socioeconomic status, respectively.

Results

We present our preliminary results below. Full results, including the multinomial logit models, and conclusions will be completed for the PAA.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of race reporting for each of our multiracial ancestry groups in Census 2000. The most obvious feature of these distributions is how different they are from each other. First, let us address the results for the three groups involving white ancestry. Each of these groups displays a distinct pattern. For white/black individuals, the modal category is black, consistent with the "one-drop rule", although a substantial number of white/black HH's also chose multiracial, while very few chose white. The exact opposite pattern holds for white/American Indian ancestry individuals. The vast majority of the sample chose white, and only a very small fraction chose American Indian alone. For, white/Asian ancestry individuals, a third pattern holds. The modal category here is a multiracial response.

We believe that these three distinct patterns reflect a different history of racialization for the three groups. Although the "one-drop rule" is sometimes used to describe white/minority relations in general, the only strong historical evidence for its use applies specifically to white/black relations. The exact opposite strategy was employed by whites in managing the boundary with American Indians (Wolfe 2001). In that case, the general tactic was one of assimilation, often forced through the use of native schools or relocation off of the reservation. Those differences are reflected in the different racial identification patterns of individuals who recognize multiracial ancestry from these

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[12] There is also a potentially methodological problem with identifying individuals of native Hawaiian ancestry. Individuals who report "Hawaiian" as their ancestry may in some cases have been indicating a native Hawaiian ancestry. However, state names were also used reported as ancestries for other states without any implicit ethnic identification. For example, 342 people identified themselves as "Texan" in Census 2000.

[13] Results for these groups are available upon request.

groups. As we will show below, these patterns are only fully detectable when using a method such as ours that can capture historical acknowledgement of multiracial ancestry.

The results for white/Asian ancestry individuals are different from both the white/black and white/American Indian groups. We have less theoretical or historical understanding of this pattern, but it may be a form of early immigrant assimilation, in which both the dominant group's ethnic identity and the ancestry of the origin group are recognized.

The remaining two groups both involve part-black ancestry individuals. The results are consistent with the results for part-white ancestry individuals. Among black/American Indian ancestry individuals, black is by far the modal category, while among the black/Asian ancestry group, a multiracial response is the most likely.

What happens if the multiracial response is disallowed? Figure 2 shows similar results for Census 1990, which only allowed the respondent to identify with a single race. Overall, these results are consistent with the results for Census 2000. Each of the modal categories in Census 2000 are also the modal categories in Census 1990.

We now turn to a comparison of our results with results obtained by other authors using different techniques to identify a multiracial population. Both Roth (2005) and Brunsma (2005) use parental race to identify a multiracial population. Roth (2005) uses the Census 2000 data, while Brunsma (2005) uses data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS). Brunsma has the advantage of being able to identify the race of biological parents even when they are non-resident due to the survey design of the ECLS. The children in his sample are younger and in a narrower age range (4-6 years of age) than children in Roth's study.

Figures 3-5 compare our results for Census 2000 to these results for part-white ancestry individuals (white/black, white/American Indian, and white/Asian). Despite the differences in design noted above, the results of Brunsma (2005) and Roth (2005) are remarkably similar for all three groups. What is equally remarkable is just how different our results are from these two studies for both white/black and white/American Indian ancestry individuals. For white/black individuals we find far more "one-dropping." Significantly more of the white/black ancestry individuals in our sample reported being black only and far fewer reported being multiracial or white alone than in the other two studies. Although a significant number of respondents in our sample still reported being multiracial, we believe that these results should serve as a caution on declarations that the "one-drop rule" is no longer operative for individuals of part-black ancestry in the United States.

Our results for white/American Indian ancestry individuals are also very different. In this case, we find far more white/American Indian ancestry individuals who identify as white alone, and far fewer who identify as multiracial or American Indian alone. The reason for this discrepancy is straightforward. The biracial children of parents where one parent identifies as American Indian and the other as white are only a tiny fraction of all individuals who recognize a white/American Indian multiracial ancestry. The broader

population has much a different understanding of racial identity than do these children. Put simply, analyzing biracial children is a very poor method for understanding part-American Indian multiraciality.

Interestingly, our results for white/Asian ancestry individuals are similar to the results for the other two studies. We believe that unlike the other two groups, who have a long history in the United States, our method and the parental method are roughly congruent for this population. Most of the white/Asian ancestry individuals that we identify probably are the biracial children of a white/Asian union, given the recentness of most Asian migration to the United States.

We also can compare our results to the results for Campbell (2007). Campbell uses the Race and Ethnicity Supplement of the 1995 Current Population Survey to identify multiracial respondents. She compares respondent's single-race reporting to a subsequent set of questions that probed more thoroughly for multiracial identification. This approach allows Campbell to examine the self-identification choices of adults, which makes it more similar to our study. The difference between the two approaches however is that the CPS questions were still couched in terms of an explicit racial identity rather than ancestry.

Figures 6 and 7 compare our results for Census 1990 to Campbell's results for white/black and black/American Indian ancestry respondents, respectively.[14] Once again, our results for white/black individuals show significantly more "one-dropping" than Campbell's results. Campbell found that about the same number of respondents chose white as chose black, while we find that the vast majority chose black. Our results for black/American Indian ancestry respondents however, are similar.

Conclusions

Overall we believe that these results demonstrate that capturing a multiracial population whose sense of multiracial ancestry is broader and more diffuse reveals important patterns and characteristics that have not been accurately identified by other methods. We believe that this approach will help provide a more historically grounded approach for the analysis of racial identification among multiracial populations. In further work, before the PAA, we plan to extend this analysis using multivariate models and to discuss further the implications of our findings.

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[14] Campbell (2007) only analyzed results for a select group of part-Black ancestry individuals, so these are the only two comparisons we can make.

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Table 1. Distribution of racial ancestry reporting for heads of household, Census 1990 and 2000.

Response	1990		2000	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
No ancestry	637,867	13.9%	992,042	18.8%
One ancestry	2,718,066	59.2%	3,179,710	60.3%
Taxonomic race	2,412,398	88.8%	2,274,263	71.5%
Non-taxonomic race	285,976	10.5%	484,750	15.2%
Racially uninterpretable	19,692	0.7%	420,697	13.2%
Two ancestries	1,237,729	26.9%	1,102,246	20.9%
Same taxonomic race	1,100,168	88.9%	957,673	86.9%
Same non-taxonomic race	1,130	0.1%	1,852	0.2%
Different taxonomic races	106,758	8.6%	93,535	8.5%
Different non-taxonomic races	858	0.1%	2,950	0.3%
Taxonomic and non-taxonomic	28,815	2.3%	46,236	4.2%

Source: IPUMS 5% samples of the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses.
Notes: Taxonomic race refers to the five racial categories recognized by the U.S. Office of Management and the Budget (White, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Pacific Islander).
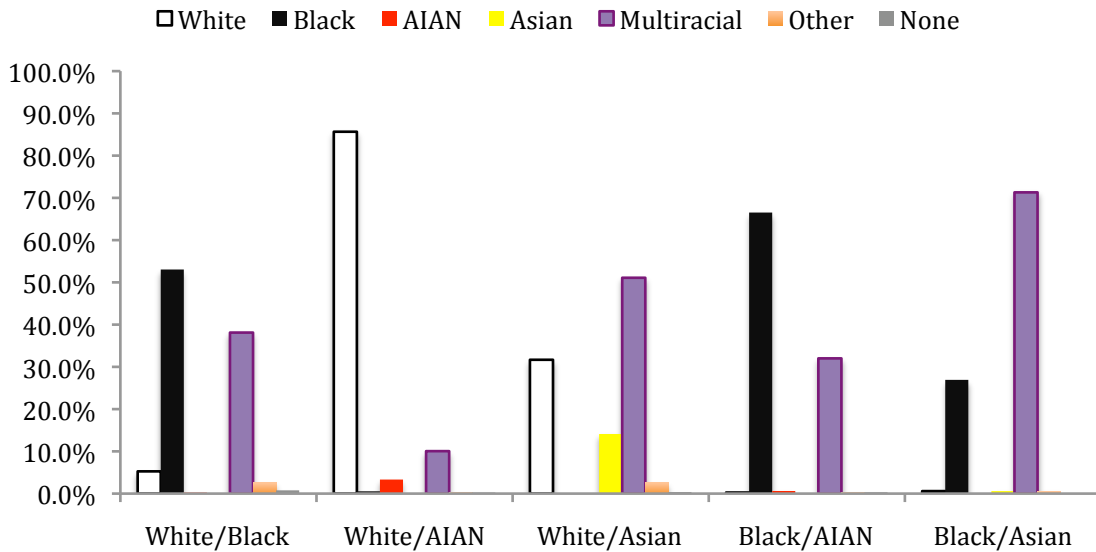

Table 2. Distribution of multiracial ancestry heads of household by type, Census 1990 and 2000

Combination	1990		2000	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
White/Black	1,833	1.7%	2,070	2.2%
White/American Indian	96,413	90.3%	80,133	85.7%
White/Asian	2,667	2.5%	4,362	4.7%
Black/American Indian	3,811	3.6%	4,357	4.7%
Black/Asian	197	0.2%	338	0.4%
American Indian/Asian	*121*	*0.1%*	*239*	*0.3%*
White/Pacific Islander	*766*	*0.7%*	*881*	*0.9%*
Black/Pacific Islander	*14*	*0.0%*	*21*	*0.0%*
American Indian/Pacific Islander	*51*	*0.0%*	*59*	*0.1%*
Asian/Pacific Islander	*885*	*0.8%*	*1075*	*1.1%*

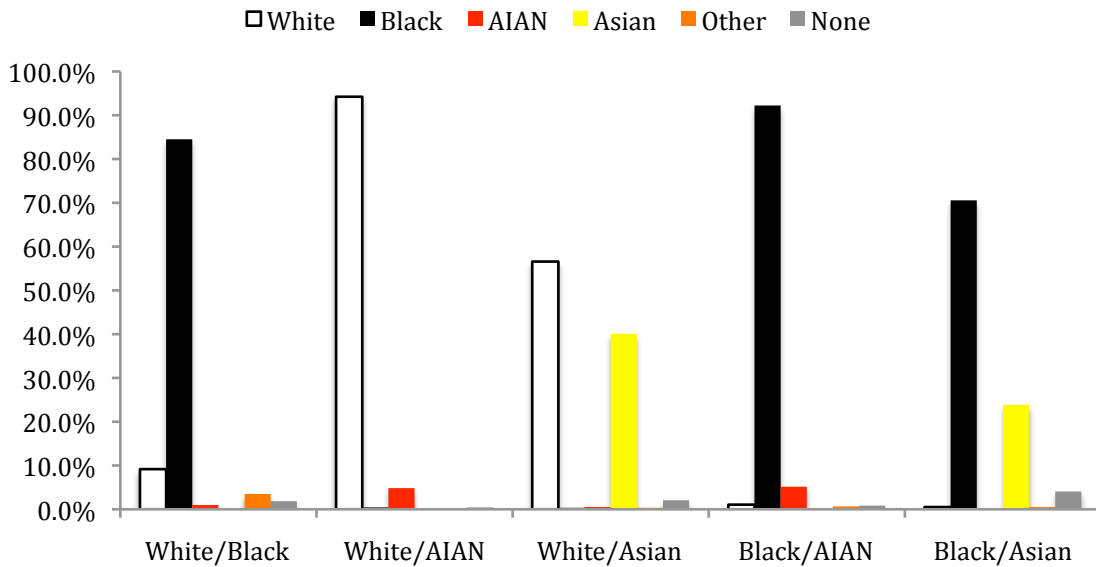*Source*: IPUMS 5% samples of the 1990 & 2000 U.S. Censuses.
Notes: References to "American Indian" incorporate Alaska Natives.

Figure 1. Distribution of race reporting by multiracial ancestry heads of household, Census 2000

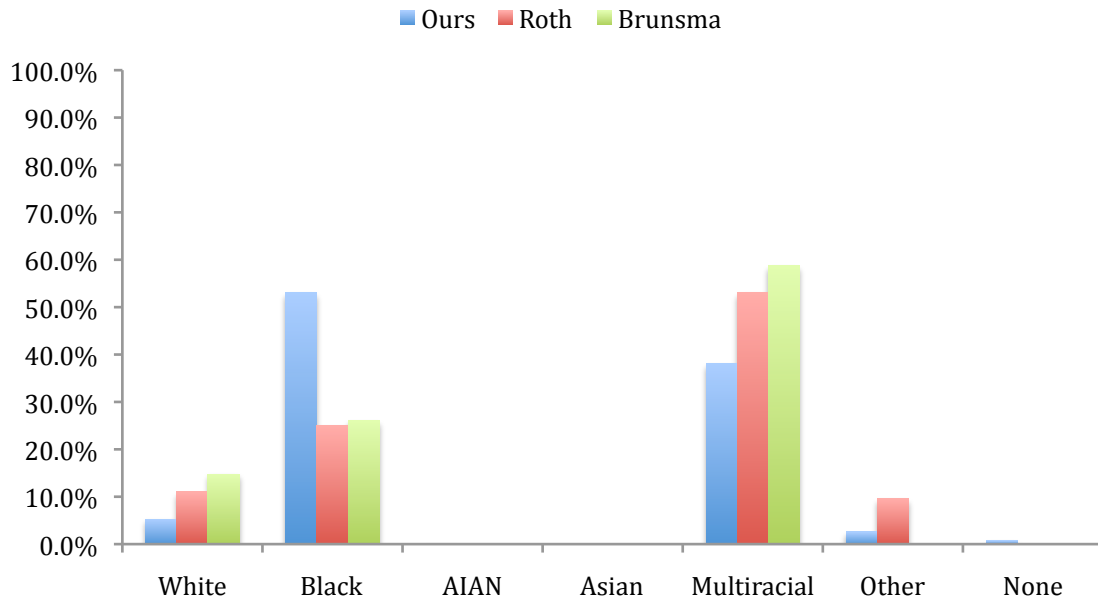*Source*: IPUMS 5% sample of the 2000 U.S. Census.

Figure 2: Distribution of race reporting by multiracial ancestry heads of household, Census 1990.

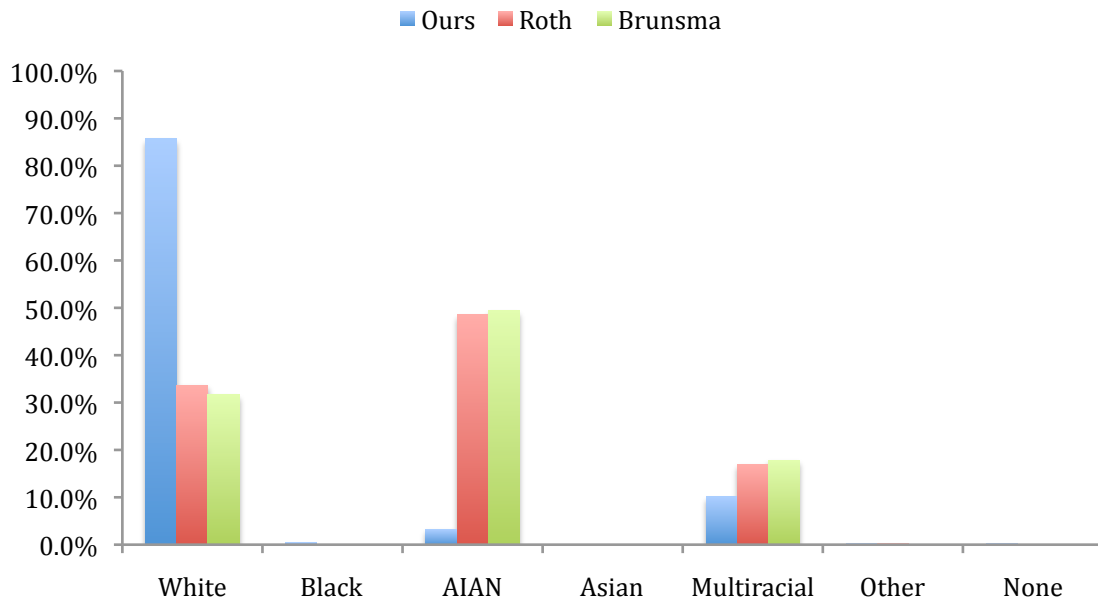*Source*: IPUMS 5% sample of the 1990 U.S. Census.

Figure 3. Comparison of race reporting among White/Black respondents in our study, Roth (2005), and Brunsma (2005), Census 2000.
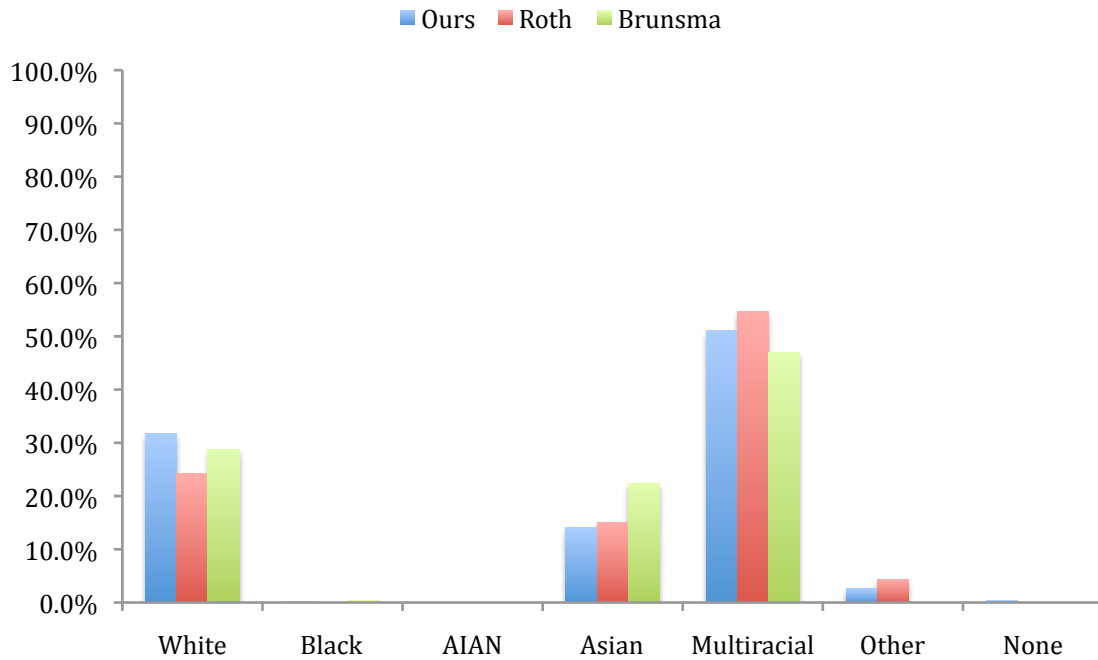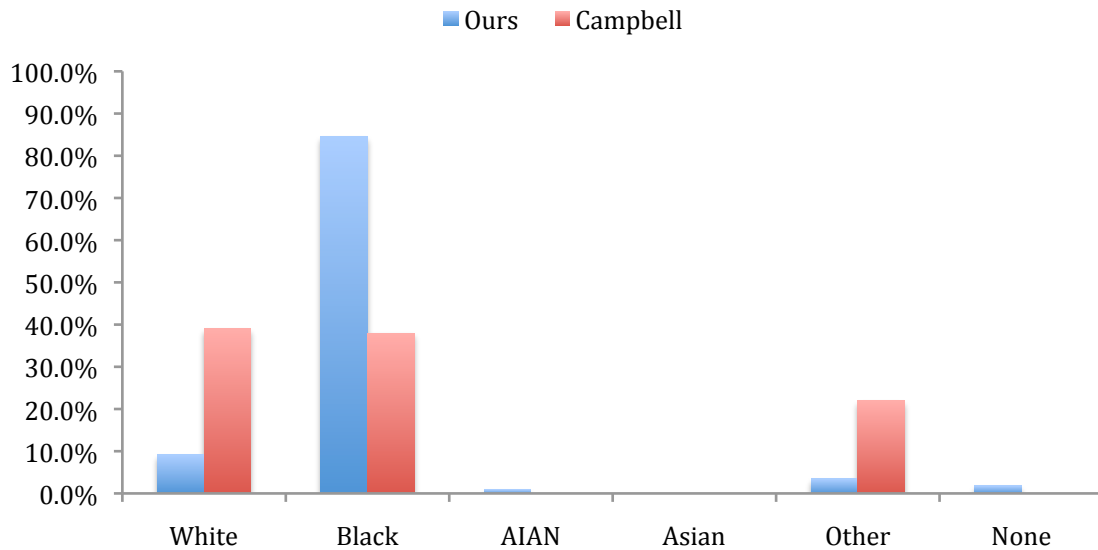

Source: IPUMS 5% sample of the 2000 U.S. Census, Roth (2005), Brunsma (2005)

Figure 4. Comparison of race reporting among White/AIAN respondents in our study, Roth (2005), and Brunsma (2005), Census 2000.

Source: IPUMS 5% sample of the 2000 U.S. Census, Roth (2005), Brunsma (2005)

Figure 5. Comparison of race reporting among White/Asian respondents in our study, Roth (2005), and Brunsma (2005), Census 2000.
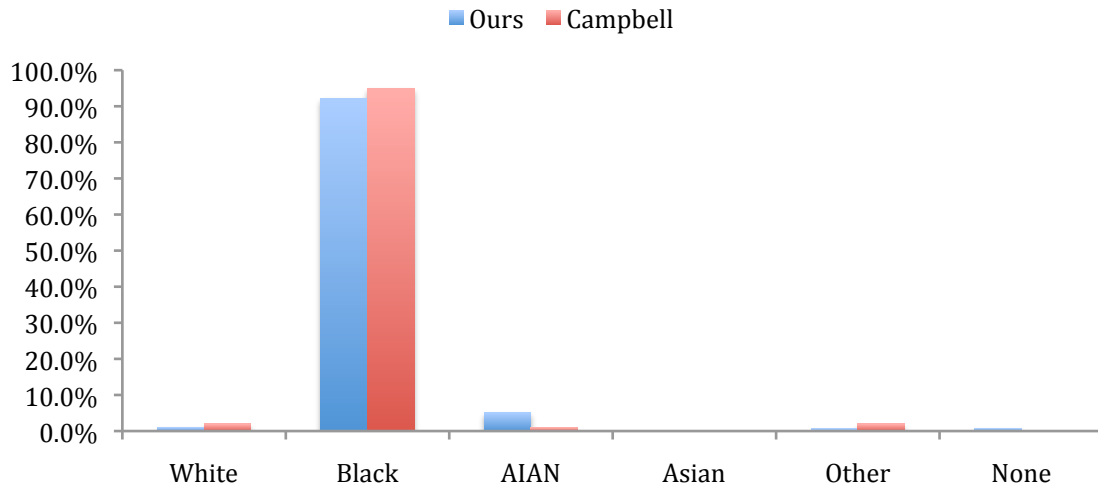

Source: IPUMS 5% sample of the 2000 U.S. Census, Roth (2005), Brunsma (2005)

Figure 6. Comparison of race reporting among White/Black respondents in our study, and Campbell (2007), Cenus 1990 and CPS 1995.

Source: IPUMS 5% sample of the 1990 U.S. Census, Campbell (2007)

Figure 7. Comparison of race reporting among Black/American Indian respondents in our study and Campbell (2007), Census 1990 and CPS 1995.

Source: IPUMS 5% sample of the 1990 U.S. Census, Campbell (2007)