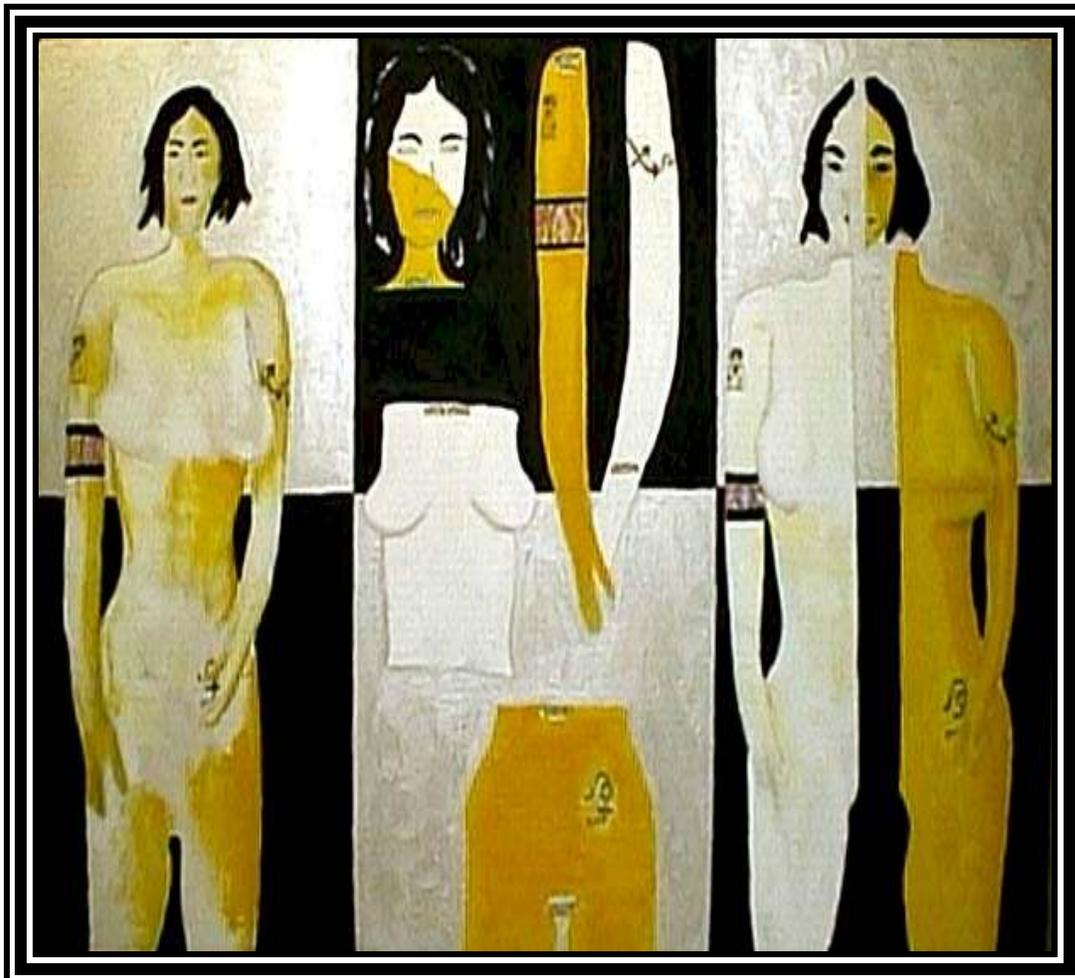


**THE POLITICS OF BISEXUAL/BIRACIAL IDENTITY:
A STUDY OF BISEXUAL AND MIXED RACE WOMEN
OF ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER DESCENT**



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The construction of certain behaviors and physical characteristics into an acceptable and recognized "identity" is a phenomenon that is meaningful to the specific location and historical moment. "Identities" may not travel well across certain places and historical epochs because of the intricate cultural meanings associated with them. The United States in the late twentieth century is one location in which certain identities are constructed and understood in relation to national history and to political and social issues of the historical era that created such locations. "Identities" in the U.S. have largely been based on membership in groups and classes in which people experience oppression or are denied opportunity because of that membership. For an identity to be understood as such, two factors are typically present: (1) the identity is forced upon the group in a manner which often reduces the group to stereotype and homogeneity for certain reasons such as to justify their (marginal) position in society; (2) the group members more or less accept the identity or label as significant to their self-understanding (and their position in society), although they may or may not accept the meanings that come along with the identity. Identities, therefore, are understood by both group members and non-group members as a legitimate self-label, though the ways in which either view the identity may diverge. Identities based on hegemonic cultural membership, such as white, male, heterosexual, or middle class, are often not employed as self-descriptive terms unless one is differentiating one's self from members of oppressed groups. Identities have largely been constructed in American society based on membership in recognized oppressed groups.

Identities also have been constructed in a dichotomous relation to the hegemonic center. Mary Eaton describes the use of dichotomy and the function it serves in the language of identity politics when she suggests that "reduction is inherent in any dichotomy: unless the domain of the relevant is confined to two mutually exclusive and opposed categories, a dichotomy, by definition, does not exist" (67). The dichotomous identity construction in the U.S. is evidenced by the racialization and sexualization of the nation into mutually exclusive categories: black and white / gay and straight. It is apparent that these four categorizations do not describe the racial and sexual diversity of society, yet they form the basis of our conceptions of racial and sexual identity. Moreover, the language employed in discussions of racial and sexual identity rest upon dichotomous language and comparative analogies to these primary groupings. Therefore identities that do not rely on clearly demarcated boundaries and a dichotomous relation to the hegemonic

center are often marginalized or redefined. Bisexuality and biraciality are two such identities that are often excluded from discussions of racial and sexual identity.

Bisexuality (also known as pansexuality or ambisexuality), broadly defined, refers to a desire, need, or possibility of having actual or fantasized sexual relationships with both men and women. These may occur over a lifetime or during a specific segment of one's life; the term implies a sexual and romantic continuum within which an individual's sexual and intimate desires, longings, or interests may not be directed toward a single gender object choice. Bisexual *identity* refers to those who believe that bisexuality is a defining characteristic of their personal self-understanding and express this by using this label to describe themselves (either openly or discretely) or their sexual orientation. This definition challenges the rigid binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality by positioning itself outside of these categories.

Biracial identity challenges the construction of mutually exclusive racial categorizations by incorporating an understanding of miscegenation and racial mixing that produces individuals who have a diverse background of racial and ethnic characteristics. This racial mixing may stem from parents or grandparents from different racial and/or ethnic groups or from a cultural history in which racial intermixing was a common occurrence, such as the Caribbean or Hawaii. Biracial *identity* implies that individuals have an understanding of their diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and believe that this is an important aspect of their identity and use this concept to describe their racial makeup.

Bisexuality and biraciality as occurrences and concepts involve more than our current construction and indeed it has been argued that they have been present throughout human history (e.g., Stonequist; Haeberle & Gindorf). However, our understanding of bisexuality and multiraciality is relatively recent and the construction of them as *identities* is arguably quite unique. In order to understand bisexual and biracial *identities* in their present construction, it is crucial to review briefly the historical, legal, political, economic and social processes that influenced their treatment and embodiment. Therefore in the remainder of this introduction I will review the historical construction of Asian American experiences within the U.S. I will also give an overview of the treatment of bisexuality and homosexuality in relation to the socio-political context of placing bisexuality and homosexuality together based on the premise that it was under "homosexuality" that bisexuals were persecuted. I will then compare and contrast the historical process in the creation of biracial and bisexual identities and the issues that arise when both these identities reside in the same subject.

Historical Review of Homosexuality and Asian Americans

Since its inception, the United States has never been free from imperialist and racist tactics in regards to acquiring the actual land, clearing "undesirable" people from it, and creating a nation-state. The underhanded tactics of obtaining the land from the Native population and the eventual removal of them to "reservations" has

been widely understood. Since then, the relationship between the white European immigrants, the Native population, and future immigrants from across the globe has been fraught with great tension often ending in wars, violent domination, and the construction of laws and politics to uphold the newly created power structure of white and patriarchal hegemony. European-Americans have an obsessive history of racial construction that aims to "prove" their superiority to all other races. In a similar argument about Canadian politics, Roxana Ng states:

The framework I put forward enables us to put together a picture of the formation of Canada as a nation-state with strong racist and sexist assumptions and policies- out of the seemingly separate pieces of history which are in fact pieces of the same jigsaw. It is thus that we come to see racism and sexism as the very foundation of Canadian nationhood (238-9).

History, law, politics, science, and psychology are interlinking tools of hegemonic power that form the basis of the construction and continuation of the system which works to justify the domination of those in power over those disenfranchised. The methods that this system employed to control different racial and ethnic groups have varied greatly depending on the specific racial group and the relationship to hegemonic society, yet the impact has been similar in the devaluation and marginalization of these groups. However, it is important to comprehend the differing treatments that certain racial groups have experienced without an attempt to quantify and rank hierarchically their experiences.

Asian Americans

Asian Americans have a long and varied history in the United States. As early as 1848, ten years after the war against Mexico, an American policymaker called for the importation of Chinese laborers for railroad work. In 1852, 195 contract laborers landed in Hawaii and only two years later the court decision, *People v. Hall*, decided that Chinese cannot testify in court.

These events set the trend for continual imperialist relationships with the Pacific Islands and the importation of cheap Asian labor in the actual building of this new nation. With the increasing presence of "foreigners" in the country there was an almost immediate panic over possible racial intermixing and thus, the development of rigid demarcation of racial boundaries. Hawaii and the West Coast (especially California) became home to most of the Asian laborers from China and later, Japan. The California constitutional convention of 1878 was one arena where this fear of racial intermixing was proclaimed and disseminated as represented by one hysterical John F. Miller:

Were the Chinese to amalgamate at all with our people, it would be the lowest, most vile, and degraded of our race, and the result of that amalgamation would be a hybrid of the most despicable, a mongrel of the most detestable that has ever afflicted the earth (Williams 197).

This was only the beginning of the panic over racial mixing that was to strike the white American public, and the issue was addressed subsequently in the realms of politics, law, and religion. Only four years later the U.S. government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, barring Chinese immigration and naturalization for a ten year period, which was subsequently renewed. In 1884 anti-miscegenation laws were officially established preventing whites from marrying non-whites. However, the laws continued to be challenged by mixed race couples. In 1896 a judge decided against an interracial marriage, his argument resting largely upon pseudoscientific biological reasoning:

The amalgamation of the races is not only unnatural, but is always productive of deplorable results. Our daily observation shows us, that the offspring of these unnatural connections are generally sickly and effeminate, and that they are inferior in physical development and strength, to the full blood of either race (Nakashima 166).

In 1910, Angel Island was opened, an immigration port where persons coming from China were detained for up to years, thus serving as a prison for hundreds of Chinese immigrants. Throughout this time period a hostile environment toward Asian immigrants continued through numerous court decisions, immigration bars, and general social hostility towards racial intermixing. At the height of the anti-Japanese movement in 1913, which culminated in the U.S. government passage of the Alien Land Law preventing Japanese immigrants from owning land, a white minister Ralph Newman reflected the pervasive hostility:

Near my house is an eighty-acre tract of as fine land as there is in California. On that tract lives a Japanese. With that Japanese lives a white woman. In that woman's arms is a baby. What is that baby? It isn't white. It isn't Japanese. It is a germ of the mightiest problem that ever faced this state; a problem that will make the black problem in the South look white (quoted in Williams 198).

The laws and social climate that excluded Asian immigrants and intermarriage continued until WWII when it reached a frenzied peak, resulting in Executive Order Number 9066, authorizing the internment of 110,000 Japanese and the deportation of others, some of whom had never before been to Japan. Some Japanese had managed to marry Caucasians (by marrying in states with more lenient miscegenation laws), which presented problems in the decision over who should be interned. Generally, the decision rested on the gendered assumption of male head of household control of the

family; families with a Caucasian father were not interned and those with a Caucasian mother were interned (Sattris 55). However, laws barring Chinese were symbolically loosened to reflect the China-U.S. war alliance. In 1943 with the Magnuson Act, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed and a token 100 Chinese were allowed annual entry. In 1945, the War Brides Act allowed for spouses and children of U.S. armed forces members to immigrate. Then in 1952 with the McCarran-Walter Act, the ban on Chinese immigration was lifted, although national origins quotas were left in place until 1965. That year the Immigration and Naturalization Act eliminated national origins quotas and allowed 20,000 people per country into the U.S., with priority going to those with skills and family in the U.S.. This act has significantly altered the Asian American community: before 1965, it was made up of American-born Asians; since then, the population has become overwhelmingly foreign born.

On June 12, 1967, the landmark Supreme Court case, ironically named *Loving v. State of Virginia*, ruled that anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional and overturned all remaining state laws. And still later, at the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, 30,000 Amerasian children of U.S. servicemen and Vietnamese women, were left in Vietnam without legal or social equality. However it was not until 1989, with the passage of the Amerasian Homecoming Act, that thousands of Amerasians began to immigrate to the U.S. as they have continued to do (Valverde 144).

As we can see in this abbreviated timeline, Asians have consistently been controlled and persecuted through the legal and immigration systems. I point to these laws in order to create an understanding of the history of Asians in America and how this history continues to influence their treatment and representation. The situation of Asian Americans and biracial Asian Americans' position within the United States continues to be influenced by the history of contract laborers, immigration exclusion laws, and anti-miscegenation laws and the eventual removal of them.

Currently, the status of biracial Asian Americans has shifted a great deal since the 1967 Supreme Court decision ending anti-miscegenation laws. In the 1990 census, the "other" racial category grew more than any other category- by 45% to 9.8 million people, more than the Asian American population of the same year. In 1997, the Asian and Pacific Islander population within the U.S. was estimated at 10.1 million, which represents 3.8 percent of the total population. Since 1990, the API community grew 4.5% and immigration accounted for 85% of the growth. In 1992 it was estimated that all interracial marriages made up 2.2 percent of the total married population of the U.S. However it is impossible to know the true makeup of Asian/Other race interracial marriages because these statistics are not included within the census, although they do attempt to calculate the Asian/White ratio of marriages. It is also impossible to know exactly what percentage of the population is multiracial because this category is not included on the census and one would have to choose between the official five exclusively monoracial categories that are offered. Currently there is a multiracial movement which struggles for the inclusion of a multiracial category on the census so that the population can be more accurately recorded.

Homosexuality

The history of bisexuality and homosexuality is quite different from that of legal/racial oppression because of the different construction of the "problem" considered. Whereas Asians were largely controlled through the immigration system, homosexuality and bisexuality were largely controlled through medical and religious institutions. I now turn to a discussion of bisexuality and homosexuality within the United States and Europe, from which much of our understanding and laws were derived.

There is not a specific moment or global location in which "homosexuality" was discovered, considered, produced, manifested, or originated. Rather, we can only look at how it has been treated as a subject in discourse. There have been numerous examples throughout history of homosexuality existing as a practice that manifested in a great variety of ways, some acceptable and some unacceptable (*for example, see* Wong; De Cecco; Herdt; Leong; Eng and Hom). That homosexuality was mentioned in the Judeo-Christian bible demonstrates that the concept was understood at that time period, and that it was condemned as a sin points to the early construction of homosexuality as "unacceptable" in the Western world.

Some of the earliest known European writers on the topic of homosexuality were Heinrich Hösli (1784-1864) in Switzerland, J. L. Casper in Germany (ca.1852), and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who wrote on the topic as early as 1864 (Haeberle 16-17). These authors wrote in defense of homosexuality, endeavoring to challenge the existing laws which criminalized the act. They conceptualized homosexuality as feminine and masculine souls trapped within the wrong body, thus inadvertently upholding heterosexuality as the norm. Ulrich believed that a man who loved other men contained a feminine soul and therefore was not truly a man. This conceptualization gave way to the latter known "invert", which was described around 1870 by the Berlin psychiatrist Carl Westphal who coined the term "contrary sexual feeling" (Haeberle 19). In 1869 the Austro-Hungarian writer and journalist Karoly Maria Kertbeny, coined the Greco-Latin hybrid word *de Homosexuelle* (the substantive "homosexual") and, within a few years, the correlate *der Heterosexuelle* ("heterosexual") also found wide acceptance. Studies on homosexuality continued in Europe and largely rested on the concept of the "invert" which was continually complicated by the addition of a variety of levels of feminine and masculine souls and of bisexual behavior. Other issues developed within these models which included the gradual separation of gender orientation, sexual orientation, and hermaphrodites from each other.

In 1941, the American biologist and zoologist Alfred C. Kinsey began his research which aimed to prove that homosexual activity was present in a much larger percentage of the population than previously suspected. Kinsey and his associates wrote their first "Report" in 1948 which consisted of more than 11,000 interviews. Based on their findings on homosexual behavior they developed a seven point scale with homosexuality on one extreme end and heterosexuality on the other end with

bisexual behavior making up the middle (Haeberle 30). Kinsey believed that a significant portion of society was able to engage or had engaged in both homosexual and heterosexual behavior over a life span, and therefore he was able to bring bisexuality into the discussion on sexuality. Kinsey himself stated:

Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental law of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separate pigeonholes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behavior the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex (quoted in Haeberle 30).

Kinsey's words also influenced the growing gay and lesbian movement that was becoming more visible and active in the U.S., and was co-opting some of his terms for political slogans. The movement was engaged in struggles against laws and medical diagnoses which branded homosexuality as "sick", "deviant", "immoral", and "criminal". It was not until 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality as a diagnostic category and moved toward a more affirmative approach (Fox 6). With the growth of the gay and lesbian community, a gay and lesbian "identity" was more formally structured:

At first, the postulate of a "gay or lesbian identity" led to a dichotomization that was useful for the gay movement. One either belonged or one didn't. One was either gay or not, and if one was, even in secret, then one had the moral duty to strengthen the ranks of the oppressed brothers and sisters by "coming out" openly, i.e., by admitting to "being gay" (Haeberle 32).

With the rise of success of the gay and lesbian movement, came fragmentation on several fronts, including the challenge of the place of bisexuals and people of color within it. The gay and lesbian movement necessarily prioritized specific issues which were deemed necessary to their liberty. With the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy in place, which helped to create lines of demarcation between those in the group versus those outside, bisexuals were challenged on their loyalties. The gay and lesbian movement, including its leaders and goals, was predominantly white in its perspective which led to the marginalization of bisexuals, gays, and lesbians of color.

Homosexuality continues to be criminalized within the nation through sodomy laws and the exclusion of gays and lesbians as an oppressed class which allows discriminations against this group to take place. Overwhelmingly these laws have targeted male homosexuals throughout history. Lesbianism has remained somewhat

incomprehensible to the patriarchal judiciary system based on gender stereotypes which has relegated female sexuality to passivity whereas male sexuality is viewed as aggressive and excessive (Flynn 34).

In 1999, there are sodomy laws remaining on the books of eighteen states: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Utah, and Virginia. In 1986, in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of sodomy and anti-gay legislation. There have been several court decisions on homosexuality; however, it has remained legal to discriminate against homosexuals. Immigrants who were suspected of being gay, lesbian or bisexual were barred entry into the U.S. until 1990 when Congress repealed the exclusion; they had been considered to have a "psychopathic personality, sexual deviation or mental defect" (Bau 60). Statistics cannot be provided for the percentage of the population that is gay, lesbian or bisexual because of the stigmatization of this identity and the lack of statistical gathering upon this population in national counts.

Hapa¹ and Bisexual Identities

Many similarities and differences exist between the construction of hapa identity and bisexual identity. Most of the differences are based on the concept of "visible minorities" in which certain groups are understood to be visibly marked in contrast to other groups that can hide their oppressed group membership. However, in the instance of hapa identity there is such a diversity of physical appearance that oftentimes one is not immediately and visually marked as Asian or hapa. Some hapas may pass as Asian, others as White, (or as the other racial group from which they are descended) while still others may appear "racially ambiguous". Some who are bisexual or lesbian may visibly mark themselves as such. Therefore we cannot easily conclude that racial groups will always have a visible marker and that bisexuals and lesbians do not. Another proposed difference between bisexual and biracial identity rests on the assumption that bisexual identity is based on an act, whereas biracial identity rests on biology. However, it is generally understood that membership in a specific racial group often requires more than one's appearance, that there are cues that influence things such as behavior, knowledge of the group, cultural customs, and food. And bisexual and lesbian identities often require more than same-sex sexual behavior, including "cultural cues" similar to those of racial groups.

As we can see in the historical timelines, bisexual (grouped under homosexual) and biracial (grouped under Asian) identities have been outlawed and stigmatized. Those who were caught engaging in homosexual acts were legally punished, regardless of whether the individual had a bisexual, homosexual, or even

¹ Hapa is a Hawaiian word that literally means "half". In the past it was used as an insult towards those who were half white and half Hawaiian or Asian, *hapa haole* means half outsider or foreigner, *haole*, means white. Now it is currently being reclaimed as a label for those who are mixed of API descent, the word is gaining popularity on the main land also.

straight *identity*. Similarly, biracial identity was stigmatized specifically because miscegenation was criminalized and therefore those who appear biracial were marked and stigmatized as originating from the illegal and immoral union of their parents. Laws against miscegenation and homosexual unions rest upon the assumption that there is an acceptable norm when it comes to marriage and partnership. Therefore, to transgress the acceptable borders of race and gender object choice in marriages and partnerships is a similar social stigma because both homosexual relationships and mixed race relationships have been considered immoral. However with the 1967 Supreme Court decision, it is no longer illegal to form mixed race relationships but these may still bear social stigma. Similarly, the American Psychology Association removed homosexuality as a diagnosis in 1973, which sent a similar message about the growing systematic tolerance of these unions; however a Supreme Court decision to decriminalize these relationships is still lacking.

Bisexuality and biraciality are considered to occupy the middle ground in racial and sexual societal divisions between two dichotomous and recognized identities. They are alternately viewed as “the best of both worlds” and as “marginal in both worlds”. Lacking an “identity” that is based upon *socially* recognized and clearly demarcated boundaries, places one in a position that invites confusion and demands justification from others who have difficulty *seeing* fluid identity as it contradicts *their* reality. Oftentimes those who are bisexual and biracial feel forced to choose between binary categories. Those who are bisexual and biracial may find themselves being renamed and reconfigured by others as "really" one or the other. Having a bisexual and biracial identity places one in a new position from which to view the world and the socially constructed categories of political identities.

Bisexual and biracial identities are important to study because of their unique position within racial and sexual groups. These identities have a different history and process of construction that can give insight into current understandings and debates on the social construction of racial and sexual identity. Joan W. Scott discusses the importance not only of exposing different groups or identities and "the repressive mechanisms" that produced them, but of critically examining the "ideological system itself, its categories of representation (homosexual/ heterosexual, man/woman, black/white, as fixed immutable identities), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, its notions of subjects, origins and cause" (Scott 25). A study of bisexual and biracial identities and their historical construction not only points to the existence of a new set of "repressive mechanisms" but also to the constructed nature of the ideological system which places individuals into oppositional categories. Only by studying a diverse variety of identities and subject locations can we more fully understand the repressive mechanisms that enforce an unspoken norm and devalue those that do not uphold this norm.

A study of bisexuality and biraciality challenges "fixed immutable identities" and points to the diversity of nature, as the above quotation from Alfred Kinsey testifies. These identities also point to new ideological faultlines within the system and incorporate new histories to explore. It is also important to justify bisexual and/or biracial identities because of their relative invisibility and demeaned position

in order to discuss the social, historical and political circumstances that constructed them.

Having both a bisexual and a biracial identity has the potential of creating an alternate world view that may not necessarily be contained by social boundaries but rather may illuminate complications and contradictions in the existing order. Because identities are dichotomously based and often segregated, there are underlying assumptions of a unitary subject identity.

Women who are both bisexual and hapa, may experience other “identity conflicts” that are not discussed within the theories because of these theories ideological foundation based on a unitary identity model. Within this model, there is a focus on a single identity and only occasional references to other groups that may fall into this category. However, these other groups are not included to the point where the focus identity is altered or submerged by other issues. Instead, there is a current development of the “multiple identity subject” that rests on an additive model, inadvertently upholding the hegemonic norm as central, which “manages” difference instead of responsibly exploring issues raised.

Using the bisexual and biracial woman, or the “bi-bi girl”² as a central organizing subject, I will explore in the next chapter the current models put forth in the literature and critique the use of the unitary identity subject. The final chapter is based upon interviews with “bi-bi girls”, exploring the connections between the theoretical framework and their lived experiences. I hope to demonstrate the limits of current theoretical models as they relate to women who possess identities that overlap and exist outside of the dichotomous and hierarchical order of racial and sexual identity.

² Term quoted from Erin O’Brien, personal acquaintance.

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS A MULTIRACIAL/BISEXUAL THEORY

He has told me he likes men as well as he likes women, which seems only natural, he says, since he is the offspring of two sexes as well as two races. No one is surprised he is biracial; why should they be surprised he is bisexual? This is an explanation I have never heard and cannot entirely grasp; it seems too logical for my brain.

--*Alice Walker*, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*

To develop a theoretical analysis of a subject position that integrates both a multiracial and bisexual identity, there must first be an interrogation of the development of multiracial theory and bisexual theory. Then an exploration can begin with the aim of understanding how these identities have come to be perceived as mutually exclusive.

In the above quote, Alice Walker captures one possible logic of a multiracial/biracial theory, if one can be a mix of several races, then one could also be a blend of “differing” sexualities. This chapter will examine how racial and sexual theories have not only excluded this specific subject, but have created theories that cannot incorporate the multiracial/bisexual without dissecting the individual into segregated pieces. I will first discuss some key issues within bisexual theory and explore its potential to include, combine and “confuse” other identity politics sites, namely race. However, this excursion through bisexual theory will highlight the fact that race is alarmingly lacking in representation- monolithic whiteness has become the foundation of these identity models. Therefore, it is necessary to critique this “erasure of race” and discuss methods of “adding race” to our understanding of bisexual theory. In order to integrate race, I will review multiracial theory and Queer Asian American theory as the theoretical foundation for a multiracial/bisexual identity politic. Within this chapter I intend to develop a theory that incorporates complexity, diversity and fluidity so that “bi-bi girls” and others of multiple identities can begin to be viewed and understood in their entirety.

Bisexual Theory

“Bisexual theory” may appear as an oxymoronic statement. What indeed is theoretical about bisexuality, how can theory *be* bisexual, or is bisexual assumed to

be *just* a theory with no practical application? “Bisexuality” has appeared elusive and mystical in some ways, it has been considered to be both everywhere and nowhere, from popular culture to academic interpretation. “Confusion” and “bisexuality” appear together frequently and almost synonymously, though the question of who is actually confused is debated heatedly. Bisexuals are called “confused” because they cannot choose between lesbian and straight. Bisexuals call non-bisexuals confused because of their inability to understand it. But where does this confusion come from and how does it relate to bisexual theory? In a context where most participants agree on only two options, lesbian and straight, bisexuality is outside of the binary. It is not an option, but is instead a confusion of the game rules. Those who uphold the legitimization of the two primary categories have nothing at stake in the demise of the third option except the proof of their own authentic position. Therefore bisexual theory has emerged within the debate of lesbian/straight in order to challenge the rigidity of the opposition, and to create a place for itself.

As we saw in the previous chapter, bisexuality was often subsumed under homosexuality. However with the rise of the gay and lesbian movement after Stonewall (1969), as well as the feminist movement in the late 1960’s and 1970’s, there was increased desire to create an “identity” and with it, a structured definition (Namaste 81). Bisexual activism developed in response to the growing exclusion within the gay/lesbian movement and aimed to develop its own identity and position, while creating an alliance with the gay and lesbian community.

However, it was not until the 1990’s that a significant amount of writing on bisexual identity was produced by bisexuals themselves, challenging the stereotyping of bisexuality by both the gay/lesbian community as well as hegemonic society. Bisexuals were positioned between these two opposites and told to choose one over the other, either choice being considered a betrayal of the one not chosen. And to “confuse” matters further, many bisexuals had identified themselves before as either lesbian or straight, conforming to the pressure or recognizing the non-static nature of identity over time for some. Therefore bisexuality has become negatively stereotyped as a denial of *authentic* identity, choosing to betray or to pass, in order to retain heterosexual privilege or to be fashionable, as in “bisexual chic” (Wilkinson 293).

Because of this positioning of bisexuality against lesbian/gay and hegemonic society, as evidenced by the use of the terms “monosexual”, creating a binary with bisexuality, much of bisexual theory is concerned with its relationship to these opposites. This is demonstrated in current debates over the inclusion of the word “bisexual” in pride marches or lesbian and gay conference titles. There is also continued conflict over the reclamation of historic figures and arguments over representational images in the media as either “really” bisexual or lesbian. The gay and lesbian communities often views these conflicts as a “bisexual invasion” aiming to steal something that was theirs, and the bisexual communities are often resentful over the lesbian/gay co-option of bisexuality without recognition of difference.

Michael du Plessis argues the “task that is crucial to bisexual politics: understanding how we have come to be unthought, made invisible, trivial, insubstantial, irrelevant” in order that we may “assume bisexuality as a point of

departure rather than as an afterthought” which, he argues, happens in gay and lesbian theory (26). Therefore, should bisexual theory and lesbian/gay theory form separate subfields or is it possible to speak of a queer theory that incorporates all oppressed sexual minorities as important theoretical locations within hegemonic culture? Beth A. Firestein proposes that bisexual invisibility is directly related to the "prevalence and unquestioned acceptance of models of sexual orientation that view human sexual desire and identity as 'either-or'" (270). Therefore one barrier between lesbian/ gay theory and bisexual theory rests upon the presumption that lesbian and gay theory is based upon this 'either-or' model, which apparently, bisexual theory is not. She furthers this argument by elaborating, in the process of creating bisexual theoretical models "our very understandings of identity, gender, and sexuality are profoundly altered and irrevocably changed"(284). She calls this profound change a paradigm shift which she believes is required in order to recognize bisexuality (263). Naomi Tucker agrees that "the greatest battle bisexual people have had to face is our invisibility and the pernicious invalidating of our identity" the first line of her introduction to Bisexual Politics: Theories, Queries, and Visions (1).

Therefore, once a space has been created for bisexuality to emerge, or once the paradigm has shifted to allow bisexuality to become recognizable, what form will this visibility take? Tucker longs to see bisexuality visible within the political activist arena, arguing that out bisexuals should "formulate new bisexual political theory, document our activism in print, analyze our different organizing strategies, and provide a vision of future directions" and to move "beyond the 'bisexuality 101' level of discourse" (xxiii), as represented in anthologies of personal narratives. Indeed, most of the books on bisexuality within the U.S. have been those anthologies : Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out, Closer to Home: Bisexuality and Feminism, and Plural Desires: Writing Bisexual Women's Realities (Hutchins and Kaahumanu, Weise, The Bisexual Anthology Collective).

Visibility is a central concern to the Bi Academic Intervention, a group of bisexual researchers that came together in order to fill the void of bisexual theory. In The Bisexual Imaginary: Representation, Identity and Desire, they state this concern right away:

What all the contributions have in common is a central concern with representation. We see representation as a key issue within emergent bisexual theory for a number of reasons. First...one goal is to carve a space for bisexual theory, we want to produce work which will impact upon and redirect an existing and important field. Second, it is important because of the debates about bisexual invisibility...But third, another goal of Bi Academic Intervention is to intervene *within* bisexual communities. We are uncomfortable with the assertion that bisexual visibility has been a constant absence, and is therefore now an unproblematic good... (1-2).

Visibility and representation are generally problematic within areas of identity politics precisely because they are always a shorthand for a diverse reality, and the means of representation are controlled by hegemonic society that relegates minority groups to one dimensional stereotypes. However, this discussion of representation mainly centers around the critique of characters in movies and books and how this imagery uses bisexuality as a vehicle, and to see bisexuality where it has previously gone unnoticed. How bisexuality is to be represented in a “bi-positive” way, remains a question. The Bi Academic Intervention tentatively answers that "there is an impetus to make visible a stable bi identity" (10). Yet this "stable bi identity" will be represented through a body that is engendered, racialized, and placed within a social context with a complex psychology that incorporates more than sexual identity alone.

Erasure of Race

It is central to bisexual theory to pose the question: what race is bisexuality? The obvious response is that bisexuality spans all races because bisexuals are within every race and every country. However, this assumption is not always realized within current research which is alarmingly lacking in non-white racial representation and focus. If we may assume that bisexuality is present within all races, then how does race reconstruct bisexuality? What does this interplay look like? How can race reconfigure the debates on visibility and representation?

In a review of bisexual literature, Ronald C. Fox devotes only three sentences of his lengthy essay to the topic of race, beginning: "most of our scientific knowledge about sexual behavior and relationships about sexual orientation and sexual identity has been based on research that has not typically included people of color" (30). The bisexual activist community is also strikingly white in racial makeup and ideologies and therefore may not appear attractive to bisexuals of color. This is comparable to the lesbian/gay community which has received similar criticism for being monolithically white in community and activist goals. This has created factions based on difference which developed segregated group of lesbians/gays of color. Racial issues have been slow to challenge or be integrated within the “bisexual community”, perhaps due in part to its relative instability and lack of visibility as a community. Bisexuals of color may face difficulty in finding a community that can validate their multiple identities, perhaps seeking lesbian and gay organizations of color that are not bi-inclusive or residing in the bisexual community and leaving their racial identity at the door. As Paula C. Rust points out:

Euro-American bisexuals might have difficulty developing a positive bisexual identity in a monosexist culture, but unlike Bisexuals of Color, they have no particular problem integrating their sexual identity with their racial identity, because these identities are already integrated in the LesBiGay community. Being Euro-American gives them the luxury of not dealing with racial identity. Not surprisingly, when asked

how their racial-ethnic background has affected their sexuality, Euro-Americans did not mention their race at all ("Managing Multiple Identities" 71).

Why did this erasure of race take place within the marginalized bisexual, lesbian and gay communities? Erasure may appear a problematic word, partially implying that originally there was a racial component that was later erased. Erasure of race could also signify a continuation of action that seeks to neutralize difference within the small and unstable development of a bisexual community. A recurring problem within identity politics communities is their single focus on "the main problem" and their inability to integrate multiple points of identity and oppression. Mary Eaton suggests a possible reason:

...We might understand the erasure of race from the discourse of homosexuality as in keeping with the preservation of the neat divide between straight inside and queer outside. If the creation and maintenance of homosexuality requires that it be set firmly apart from its normal counterpart heterosexuality, the stability of that bipolarity would be threatened by the admission of other identifications, like race, that openly traverse it (66).

According to Eaton's supposition, the queer community is reacting to hegemonic norms and oppositionally positioning themselves on a single axis of difference. We can see this example materialize in the mainstreaming of some lesbians and gays who argue that they are "like everyone else", i.e., aspiring to middle class values, desiring marriage and children, and claiming "respectability", except for their one difference of being lesbian or gay. Eaton's "normal counterpart heterosexuality", or hegemonic society, is understood as monolithically white and exclusive which the lesbian and gay community merely mirrors back. Eaton concludes, "if the very notion of homosexuality as an outsider class requires the erasure of race, then to attempt to re-racialize homosexuality is to call into question homosexuality's own conception of itself in perhaps the most productive of ways" (69). Yet Eaton does not speculate what will happen once homosexuality, and let us add bisexuality, is re-racialized and how this productive outcome would manifest itself.

However building upon Rust's and Eaton's comments, we may view the "LesBiGay" community in ideological opposition along a single axis of difference to a hegemonic society which is represented as white, as is the LesBiGay community. Race would be seen as a distraction from the "real issue", i.e., *their* issue. Perhaps for a majority of white bisexuals, bisexuality is their only instance of marginalization from the hegemonic center, and therefore it is in this area that they are compelled to become politicized and active. Bisexuals of color may have others areas of political activism that draw them more forcefully than that of bisexual organizing. This issue is best summarized by Indigo Chih-Lien Som:

I am reluctant to express my priorities in theoretical terms, though, because for the moment, this year, this decade maybe, I *am* more pissed (and scared) about anti-Asian hatred and violence than I am about almost anything else. Later, though, after Asians and other people of color take over the world as haoles are so scared we're going to, maybe then I will become a full-time bisexual activist. Who knows? Maybe if I were white I wouldn't think bi is tired. Maybe it's because I don't feel a part of that vague white monolith, "The Bisexual Movement/Community" ("Open Letter" 96).

Therefore, though oppressions cannot be ranked, the importance of certain issues to certain individuals may be ranked, based upon time and energy limitations. For Som, she may personally face more discrimination for being Asian, and find more comfort in a racial community, than she does in the "vague white monolith" of the Bisexual Movement/ Community. She surmises that "if I were white I wouldn't think bi is tired"; if she were white, she would be free from the sapping of her energy that racism entails, and she would be free of racism from the bisexual community. Yet, the bisexual community does have to deal with race, racism and white skin privilege--after all, whiteness is a race. It is imperative that organizations and theoretical models take a proactive stance on race and racism in order to avoid further conflict and alienating tendencies.

The importance if this was brought home to me in October of 1998 when I attended the Biwest/SoCal Bisexuality Conference in San Diego, California. During one panel, a roomful of (mostly) white bisexual activists discussed the issue of race and their presumptions as to why people of color were not present at these conferences and organizations. One older white woman announced that she was an activist in New Mexico, a state with a large percentage of Native Americans and Latino/Chicanos, yet their bisexual organization was completely white. She concluded that "they" were not active because of their religious background (read: backward culture), but did not mention that many white people subscribe to these same religions and manage to "come out". Others in the room agreed, and not once was it mentioned that bisexuals of color may be put off by the white monolithism and pervasive racism. This racism manifests itself in elementary discussions grappling with race and the inability to understand bisexual people of color's issues.

Finally the only man of color in the room announced that he had organized a cross-cultural workshop that would be added to this day's events, squeezed into the hour reserved for dinner. No workshops had appeared on the conference schedule that dealt with race. I attended this ad-hoc panel, expecting to find all the people of color at the conference in attendance, as well as a discussion of racism within bisexual organizing and a hashing out of issues pertaining to bisexuals of color. However when I arrived I found the room occupied with approximately eleven people, six of whom were white. The people of color consisted of the panel organizer, one Asian woman (with her white girlfriend), one black man, one Chinese man, and myself, a Chinese and white hapa. Almost immediately one of the older white men in

attendance could no longer hold his anger back on the issue of "reverse discrimination". From that moment on, this workshop consisted of him spewing horrible racist remarks and arguments that captured all attention. Everyone seemed unable to stop his diatribe, the only one taking issue with him being the black man, an ethnic studies professor. With such limited time, the workshop was soon over and the older white man continued his tirade out into the hall and down the elevator, arguing with and following the panel organizer. I recognize that this man as an individual does not necessarily represent the conference or the bisexual organization in which he is active, in San Diego. However, I felt perplexed about this event and observed that only the black man (I believe the only black man at the conference) resisted the white man's racism; no one else in the room opposed verbally, which thus, inadvertently set up a hostile environment.

During the first panel, I had spoken up to say I was disappointed there were no workshops on race and racism. After the panel ended, one of the conference organizers with whom I was familiar, approached me and said that she felt personally hurt by my words since she had been in charge of selecting the panels. She said that I should have mentioned something to her before (or to have remained silent?), and that if I had wanted to see a workshop on race, then I should have put one together myself. Judit Moschkovich summarizes my feelings about this interaction:

We've all heard it before: *it is not the duty of the oppressed to educate the oppressor*. And yet, I often do feel pressured to become an instructor, not merely a "resource person". I don't usually hear "Hay, what do you think of the work of such and such Latin American feminist author", but rather, "Teach me everything you know". Latin American women write books, music, etc. A great deal of information about Latin American is readily available in most libraries and bookstores. I say: *read and listen*. We may, then, have something to share (79-80).

The erasure of race within the queer community takes on a more subtle aspect as well. A great deal of the lesbian and gay liberation rhetoric is based on a civil rights model of racial equality, as are many liberation movements, such as the feminist movement. Within this rhetoric gay and lesbian identity is constructed almost as a white ethnicity: innate, fixed, unchosen, and in need of protection as an oppressed class. Bisexual theory is quick to adopt this model, especially in its theory of relation to the gay/lesbian community. Therefore, if lesbians and gays are similar to an oppressed racial class such as blacks, Asians, Native Americans, or Chicanos/Latinos, then bisexuals would be the mixed bloods, multiracials and biracials of the group. "Fluidity" is a claim of bisexual as well as multiracial theory against the supposed static nature of lesbian/gay and monoracial identity. For example:

Just as the existence of biracial and multiracial individuals blurs and ultimately eliminates the possibility of generating meaningful hierarchies of distinction between individuals of different racial backgrounds, bisexual people blur distinctions between apparently differing sexual orientations, rendering the hierarchies of value attached to such orientations increasingly meaningless. (Firestein 283).

And in RePresenting Bisexualities this comparison shows up throughout the book:

Race and sexuality function in structurally similar ways- both are cultural continua pressed into a socially constructed pair of opposites. In the context, the idea of passing (acquiring the signifiers of the normative category) of claiming "Black is beautiful" or "Gay is good", and the increased visibility of "racially mixed" persons and "bisexuals" constantly function to call into question the lines of demarcation between socially constructed opposites (du Plessis 37).

The debate around the use of racial identity models in theories of sexuality can be controversial at times. Often, it is presented in such a way that communities of color disagree with comparisons and stress differences between racial identity and sexual identity, such as the assumption that race cannot be hidden whereas sexuality can. And queer communities stress similarities along the lines of oppression and the inability to change one's sexuality and the pain that accompanies hiding it. Bisexuals consider the use of multiracial identity comparable because it signifies one who is a member of two races, perhaps one dominant and one marginalized, while bisexuality represents the same multiplicity within the arena of sexuality. However, race is overwhelmingly used as an analogy, with white lesbians and gays compared against straight people of color. Race and sexuality are still segregated within this model, ignoring the individuals who may be both black *and* lesbian, nor does it discuss those who are bisexual *and* biracial.

If we consider that the queer community is overarchingly white in makeup, leadership and agenda, and has been slow to adopt racial analysis, then it may seem this adoption of racial identity as a comparison model has been co-opted for whites to advance their purpose without an actual inclusion of *people* of color. Bisexual theories almost never speak of race except for their comparison to multiracial identity, which they consistently adopt for their own analysis of their sexuality. Therefore perhaps, it is the racial identity model that is useful to queer theorists and not the actual people of that racial identity. Consistently within bisexual theory, white theorists who use this model rarely quote multiracial people about their experiences- though there are several books on the topic.

How then, can this erasure of race within the bisexual community be counteracted? It is imperative that race be added to theory not only as a model of comparison for sexual identity but as an integrated position. The first step towards adding race, as Moschkovich suggested above, is to "read and listen", for theorists to

seek out the issues of bisexuals of color and to create new theoretical models that incorporates gender, race and sexuality.

Adding Race

Though I have argued that the queer community disregards race and upholds a white monolithism, there is constant resistance to this erasure of race. Since the 1981 publication of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*, there has been a continual growth of writing by lesbian and bisexual women of color. Furthermore, the areas of Queer Asian theory and multiracial theory have developed since 1990, with the emergence of several narrative anthologies and theoretical books. Yet, within Queer Asian theory there is a heavy reliance on a monoracial and monosexual position of analysis (Okiihiro et.al, Leong, Eng and Hom, Lim-Hing,), whereas multiracial theory largely ignores sexuality. But these books create new theoretical analyses that challenge existing white models, and consider different issues that have previously been overlooked.

Multiracial Theory

Since the 1967 Supreme Court decision that deemed anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional, there has been a considerable increase in interracial couples and mixed race kids, which Maria Root calls “the biracial baby boom” (“Multiracial Experience” xv). The position of multiracials within racial/ethnic and white hegemonic society has generally been arbitrary and inconsistent. “Until a change in policy in 1989, biracial babies with a white parents were assigned the racial status of the nonwhite parent. Otherwise, multiracial babies of two parents of color, whether the same or different races, were assigned the race of the father (Root, *Multiracial Experience* xviii).” This monoracially based assignment of multiracial children enforced a single race identity that erased mixed race existence and promoted cultural denial of miscegenation. Before 1989 biracial children faced hypodescent laws that positioned them in the non-white racial group, thus barring their entrance into the white race, though they may not necessarily have been welcomed within the other racial/ethnic group with open arms. These laws and social forces denied multiracials their right to embrace their racial heritage and denied them the right to construct their own identity.

With the rise a of the civil rights movements, many multiracials became active and politicized around the issues of racism, identity, and community. Mixed race issues were a point of contention within the movement as they continue to be. Many multiracials want the right to self identify as they choose, without that identity necessarily representing their loyalty or disloyalty to specific races. Maria P.P. Root states that “self designations are important vehicles for self-empowerment for oppressed people,” and therefore it is crucial that multiracials are able to define themselves, their loyalties and agendas as they see fit (*Multiracial Experience* xxiii).

However, many monoracials do view a multiracial identity as a choice that denies loyalty to the oppressed racial group. We can see this issue enacted currently over the debate of the U.S. census to include a multiracial category- some oppressed monoracial groups believe this category would decrease their numbers and “benefits” within the system. It is within this context that multiracial theory and activism arises.

Everett V. Stonequist was one of the first credited authors to theorize the topic of racial mixing with his book The Marginal Man: A Study In Personality and Culture Conflict, first published in 1937. Much of the theory that followed, especially in the area of psychology, was based upon his concept of the marginal man. To his credit, he was able to discuss the cultural and political circumstances of imperialism and racism that forced the “marginal man” into a marginalized and disenfranchised position- one that he examined in the context of several countries. However it was central to his argument that the “marginal man” would remain “torn between two cultures” and essentially conflicted and unhealthy.

The marginal man is a personality type that arises at a time and place where, out of conflict of races and cultures, new societies, new peoples and cultures are coming into existence. The fate which condemns him to live, at the same time, in two worlds is the same which compels him to assume, in relation to the worlds in which he lives, the role of cosmopolitan and a stranger (Stonequist xvii).

Cynthia L. Nakashima calls these types of theories “hybrid degeneracy ideology” which serves the primary function of “keeping the White race ‘pure’ and in power, separate and superior,” and to discourage whites from marrying or intermixing with people of color, and deny children of mixed parentage from claiming “any privilege for their European ancestry” (“An Invisible Monster” 166). A great deal of these “hybrid degeneracy ideology” theories were developed within the academy to brand multiracials as deviant, criminal, troubled, and immoral. “The repeal of the last antimiscegenatist legislation in the United States in 1967 is an approximate line of demarcation between ‘old’ and ‘new’ bodies of research and analysis” (Root, “Back to the Drawing Board” 181). Before 1967, “hybrid degeneracy ideology” writings were positioned as the theoretical and academic enforcement of the law and social mores against racial intermixing.

Within current multiracial theory there are three main goals and/or approaches that have come to dominate, (1) inclusion within “traditional” racial/ethnic groups, (2) creation of an multiracial ethnic group, and (3) “to dismantle dominant racial ideologies and group boundaries” (Nakashima, “Voices” 81).

The first issue of inclusion within a traditional racial/ethnic group is complex for API biracials. Multiracials of Asian/Pacific Islander descent span the spectrum of physical appearance and racial mixture to such an extent that their membership in a specific API community faces several challenges. The specific racial makeup (and physical appearance) may create difficulty in accessing the community. For example, Afroasians, those of mixed Asian and African American blood, may face racism

within the API community and may therefore seek out an African American community that is more inclusive. Mixed race Asians may also face “ethnicity tests”, where API’s question them about their knowledge of API culture, language, and history, in order to see if they “are really” Asian American. The multiracial movement goals that are discussed within these theories promotes inclusion within the API community. They generally argue for specific recognition of mixed race issues within that community and an inclusion which recognizes difference without erasure of it.

Second, creating an identity, community or agenda for multiracials of Asian descent, or hapas, is also a difficult endeavor. First, there is very little that brings mixed race people together besides their racial identity. Because of the diverse histories of different racial groups and the circumstances surrounding their miscegenation, the issues may or may not overlap harmoniously and there might develop a new insider/outsider line of demarcation. Second, other identity politic issues around gender, sexuality, age, immigration, language, or class, may divide the group further. Difficulty may arise in the attempt to define exactly what “multiracial issues” are. However, attempts are being made at bridging and addressing these differences. Mixed races organizations are developing throughout the country to address the needs and concerns of interracial couples, mixed race kids and adults. Hapa Issues Forum in Berkeley, California is one such group that strives to create a community by sponsoring social events, e-mail lists, and conferences. There are several magazines on interracial issues and mixed race people that desire to create a forum in which these issues can be explored and discussed.

The third issue of “dismantling dominant racial ideologies and group boundaries”, poses new challenges and issues to the multiracial movement and its relationship to other (mono)-races. Ultimately a great deal of multiracial theory challenges the construction of mutually exclusive racial groups and the hierarchies that accompany them. Naomi Zack argues that “because race means pure race, the opposite of race is not racelessness but racial impurity, or what I have here called microdiversity. The next step after microdiversity is racelessness” (301). Zack’s concept of “microdiversity” directly challenges dominant racial ideologies and group boundaries in that it strives to eliminate clear racial demarcation lines and criticize the ideologies that erase mixed race while at the same time fighting racism and white supremacy. Accepting multiraciality as a legitimate identity within hegemonic society is a crucial step towards “racelessness” in that it challenges the social construction of race to the point where we must question the definition of monoracial groups. For example, Zack also argues that “the visual and cultural markers for membership in the black race differ too greatly for there to be any physical traits shared by all black individuals, and likewise for whites” (Zack 303). And Abby L. Ferber concurs in that “when researchers fail to discuss what actually constitutes a racial group, they reproduce race as a naturally existing category” (157). Therefore, “race labels are not objective configurations, but are political in nature” since the categorizations and terms used to designate a specific group are necessarily arbitrary and serve a purpose for the hegemonic society that created these specific group boundaries (Thornton,

323). We can see this clearly when we understand the incredible diversity within any specific racial label in aspects to the cultures, countries of origin, language, etc. Take, for example, Asian Pacific Islander- what do people from such diverse backgrounds and countries such as Hawaii, Japan, Sri Lanka, Laos, Guam, and Singapore have in common that should collapse them all within the same racial/ ethnic category? One aspect of cultural “othering” is to define the “other” as homogeneous, while members of the hegemonic center are seen as individualistic, heterogeneous, and unique. Therefore racial labels could be seen as a hegemonic tool to cast racial/ethnic groups as an “other” and collapses all their diversity and complexity into a singular and monotonous stereo-type.

Another challenge that multiracialism poses is that the “multiracial experience” does not fit well within established psychological models of identity development based upon monoracial groups. At first, this deviation was considered a “problem,” for which multiracials were the cause, instead of the models that were established.

Many Eriksonian and social theories of development speak of the process in linear terms, assuming an end state. Particularly for the multiracial individual, the identification process may be far from linear. While some multiracial people may select a single identity that is invariant with social context, it is probable that many have fluid identities that adjust to their immediate surroundings (Miller 33).

Multiracial theory also focuses attention on the development of psychological models that are based upon that specific experience. As Margaret Mihee Choe suggests, “it is a matter of starting with the being and describing it, rather than starting with a description and tailoring the being to fit the description” (23). This was an important step to assume a healthier approach to theorizing mixed race experiences.

For multiracials of Asian/Pacific Islander descent, the choice of racial identification is based upon complex factors and social influences. Parental influences are key to early self-understanding and development of a healthy biracial identity. For monoracial minorities, their racial makeup and identity will often be the same as both their parents and therefore the parents have an important part of forming the child’s identity and defining the meaning for it. However, for multiracials, their racial makeup is necessarily different from their parents, and within their family alone, each person may have a different racial identity. Therefore, what the parents tell their children about who they are and how they should identify will be important influences. “Although some gradually begin using an interracial label because their parents gave it to them, most refer to being interracial by listing their parents’ heritages” (Kich, “Developmental Process” 310). For example, one hapa expresses how this practice affects him, “I replied by saying that my dad is Filipino and my mom is Swedish and German. I feel like I don’t have my own racial identity. I have a racial identity through my parents” (Williams 206). For most multiracials who are questioned about their racial makeup, there is not a socially recognized one-word

label that fits them. Generally, most will necessarily describe their identity instead of attaching a ready-made label to it. This conflict between mixed race identity and society's relative inability to understand it is most dramatically reflected when one is faced with the U.S. census form where "individuals are expected to locate themselves 'accurately' within established racial structures" (Thornton 323).

Another complication for hapas is the fact that their racial identity and understanding is rarely reflected within the larger culture. Therefore, for mixed race individuals, part of their identity and self-understanding may also be challenged or misunderstood by outsiders, and one must deal with the possibility that others may label them differently than they label themselves. H. Rika Houston expresses how her self-understanding is often discounted by others who desire to reduce her rich ethnic heritage to a single label that they feel comfortable understanding:

The point is that I am neither completely Asian nor non-Asian, I am *Amerasian*. More specifically, I am *Afroasian*. These concepts seem to be the source of discomfort for those who are accustomed to categorizing people in monoracial terms. Categorizing me as Asian is a rational form of racial denial that avoids the discomfort of coping with my differences (151).

"The outsider's confusion rests in their reality that resides upon a monoracial model of race relations" and either they will reconfigure those multiracials they meet into their mental categorizations, or will be confronted with the fact that their categories are deficient and adjust them accordingly (Root, "Multiracial Asians" 33). Because of this clash between multiracials and monoracial templates for understanding, we can begin to see how "the multi-racial dialogue inserts the confusion that may be necessary to accomplish flexibility and complexity for deeper structural change" (Root, "Multiracial Experience" xxiv).

Multiracials exist within a unique location; they are able to view different aspects of the repressive mechanisms of racism that have not yet been seen or deeply understood from the positions of monoracial groups. One aspect is that multiracial and miscegenation existence is largely denied and/or denounced by hegemonic society in order to uphold the myth of racial purity and segregation. One example of this denial is the "typical vocabulary and dialect for race hardly accommodates the biracial person" (Root, *Multiracial Experience* xxiii). Because of this denial many multiracials must fight in order to simply have the right to self identify. Racial mixing creates difficulty for immediate mental categorization because racial signifiers may or may not be readily apparent. Therefore, multiracialism is one challenge to hegemonic racial classification and contains the ability to challenge and reconfigure our current understandings of race, in order to begin the task of reflecting the true complexity and diversity of society.

Queer Asian/Pacific Islander Theory

“To recognize that Asian Americans are never purely, or merely, racial subjects is crucial task in the rapidly shifting 1990s political terrain of (post) identity politics and multicultural and diversity management” (Eng & Hom 3). Because of this, it is important to dissolve any ridged or monolithic definition, and instead, to examine the complexity, contradictory and overlap of multiple identities and recognize the “different sexual practices and identities that also claim the label *Asian American*” (Takagi 2). Within the project of recognizing and examining sexuality diversity within Asian America, it is also crucial for queer studies and women’s studies to include Asian Americans within their theories in order to break their white monolithism and create a more complex understanding of the dynamics of multiple identity interplay (Eng & Hom 10-11).

We can no longer accept the notion that considering race and homosexuality together drains the lesbian/gay and queer movements of its political energies or social efficacies. We can no longer believe that a desirably queer world is one in which we remain perpetual aliens-queer houseguests- in a queer nation (Eng & Hom 14).

Several queer Asian/Pacific Islander theorists found it necessary to fill this void by putting together books that would address the issues of those who were consistently alienated within the existing theoretical writings. The Very Inside was one such book that sought to answer this call, as the editor states:

...It became clear to me that Asian and Pacific Islander lesbians should have our own book, apart from just a few of us representing all of us in the larger spectrum of women of color anthologies...Early on, I expanded the idea of the book to include bisexual women...and it was important to do so, I felt, in light of persistent biphobia. If it is true that bisexuals bring ambiguity to our midst, let us welcome this questioning in all of us, for rigidity often results in sickness or death (Lim-Hing).

The Very Inside published in 1994, was one of the first anthologies for queer Asian/Pacific Islanders, and the first for women exclusively. A year before, in 1993, A Lotus of Another Color was first published, an anthology by South Asian lesbian and gays. Also in 1994, Amerasia Journal published its special issue, “Dimensions of Desire”, on the topic of minority sexualities. One of the first academic collections on this topic, the articles ranged from Asian parents of gays/lesbians, lesbians in Thailand, and gay Filipino men in New York City, and included academic articles, short stories, and book reviews. The latest addition is the book Q&A: Queer in Asian America, published in 1998, which contains twenty six academic articles. The rapidly growing area of API sexualities has received a significant amount of attention within Asian American studies in the last five years and continues to increase.

Many of these authors consider race and queerness together in a variety of permutations and develop understandings of what it means to be queer in Asian America. The writers also discuss experiencing “the worlds of Asian America and gay America as separate places- emotionally, physically, intellectually” (Takagi 6). A crucial task then, of queer API theory, is to integrate these identity sites in order to create a space in which they can be experienced and discussed together, and to further understand this interactive relationship between identities “whose dialectic combination often yields unrecognized, unacknowledged, and understudied configurations” (Eng & Hom 12). As Leong argues:

Asian, Pacific, and biracial lesbians see *multiple* community needs that may include language and generational issues within specific groups, e.g. Vietnamese, Chinese, or South Asian, and women’s struggles in relation to immigration, family relations, and the white lesbian movement (7).

Asian/Pacific Islander women have diverse backgrounds in relation to their cultures of origin, immigration status, language, position within family and community, and their perspective on what are important feminist and/or lesbian issues. Their goals may necessarily diverge from established (white) communities, including the ways in which these struggles should be forged.

For queer API immigrants, crucial issues may be tied to the homophobia and racism within existing U.S. laws that barred homosexuals from entering the country until the 1990 policy change (Bau 60). Since it is illegal to marry a same sex partner, queer API’s may face the prospect of becoming or being illegal in residence, and face the fear of deportation. For those who are able to stay within the country without immigration problems, they still may deal with culture shock and alienation within the Western, white queer community. Queer API’s who are children of immigrants, will also have unique issues to deal with in regards to their relation to their parents, ethnic community, hegemonic society, transnationalism, and the white Western feminist and lesbian movements.

Within queer API studies, transnationalism plays an important role because of the impact the U.S. has had on the globe in relation to transnational corporations, imperialist aggressions, the globalization of Western ideals and symbolisms, and the current exportation/ importation of a “queer diaspora” which may conflict with the ways in which queers live their lives within Asia and the Pacific:

“Recuperating a queer diasporic history can run the danger of applying Western notions of homosexuality and queerness to non-Western contexts. Same-Sex behavior may exist everywhere and in all cultures, but to categorize it as part of a global queer identity formation is arrogantly imperialist” (Lee 198).

Western concepts of homosexuality and individuality and the historical use of liberalism extracted from a European history may not only conflict with the ways in which homosexuality is conceptualized and dealt with, but may turn out to be a harmful import for those in Asia and the Pacific.

The description of queer transnational subjectivity as a liberation from the limits of the nation reinscribes Enlightenment narratives of universal history and hierarchies of development...These proclamations of an “international” lesbian and gay movement risk subsuming heterogeneous forms of sexuality under a gay identity that is implicated in a specifically Western and bourgeois construction of subjectivity, with its themata of voice, visibility and coming out (Chiang 386).

Many Asian societies, place a great deal of importance upon the family (and its extensions) and the micro social community, which is often the site where identity and status are derived, and where a great deal of interpersonal bonding and/or conflicts are enacted. Emphasis is placed upon the family in such a way as to be theoretically at odds with the Western centrality of self and individuality above all. Whereas in the West, one is encouraged to act in a manner that accounts only for the self, Asian culture emphasizes that individual actions reflect upon the family (and ancestors). For example, marriage is perceived as a union not only of individuals, but of the families. Therefore, Asian cultures may view the West as a selfish and individualist society which erodes personal ties and communities and values money over human life. It has been argue that some Asian cultures view homosexuality as a “Western thing”, perceiving a rise of homosexuality within their own nation as “Western domination that enters from without and disrupts the communities’ ability to reproduce the structure of social relations” (Chiang 378). Homosexuality is not a Western concept but the way in which homosexuality is enacted is heavily reliant on Enlightenment models of individuality and the queer movements’ emphasis “voice, visibility, and coming out”. Another concern of this queer diaspora is that it often “resituates nationalist centerings of the West as the site of sexual liberation, freedom and visibility” (Puar 406).

Western gay culture's emphasis on making homosexuality part of one's *public* identity may directly violate Asian norms and 'shame' the family. The reliance on the family identity and family esteem rather than the individual identity and self-esteem has implications for the study of sexual behaviors...Among Asian American bisexuals, therefore, resistance to adopting a public bisexual identity might simply be a reflection of the normal privatization of sexuality in Asian culture and an expression of respect for one's family and one's ethnic culture (Matteson 60,94).

The use of homosexuality as a personal *identity* and a public statement is a specifically Western concept that conflicts with Asian norms that privatize sex and discussions of sexuality. Many Asian Americans therefore, regardless of whether they are “out”, may specifically face difficulty in “coming out” or discussing these topics with their parents. And in the face of hegemonic and gay/lesbian racism and white monolithism, the family and ethnic community may be extremely valued as a retreat. Whereas white gays and lesbians may come out to their parents and distance themselves from them in the event of homophobia, and retreat to their gay/lesbian “home” where they can create a new queer family, API queers generally do not face this same level of comfort within that community.

The creation of a queer API community is an important step in which discussions of multiple issues around sexuality, gender, and racial identity can be conducted and developed. Then, the project of coalition building can begin in earnest, a two way exchange, in which the gay/lesbian community can begin to address the concerns and needs of people of color.

“Queering Multiracial Theory and Racializing Queer Theory”

Our search for authenticity of voice- whether in gay/lesbian Asian American writing or in some other identity string- will be tempered by the realization that in spite of our impulse to clearly (de)limit them, there is perpetual uncertainty and flux governing the construction and expression of identities (Takagi 15).

Just as soon as an identity has been defined, there come additional complications from inside or outside that challenge it and send it back to the drawing board for either a narrower parameter, or an expansion. Bisexuality and biraciality are two such identities that have often been accused of “muddying the waters” of racial and sexual identities, with their built in ability to transgress such creations. Once a group becomes established, it gains the power of instituting norms of behavior and identity such that “difference is then perceived as a deficit, or as a failure to meet the standards of the majority” (Kich, “Margins” 266). For racial and sexual identity, purity, or perceived purity, has become an important element of the identity. Lesbian and gay identity has come to mean, not only attraction for members of the same sex, but a lack of desire for the opposite sex, and therefore bisexuals find themselves on the margins of the definition. Similarly, for racial identity, to be Asian/Pacific Islander comes to mean also, not being a member of another race, and multiracials must deny a part of their heritage or find themselves on the margins. We have come to depend on binary oppositions as a foundation in identity politics and this dichotomy infuses all aspects of our cultural logic; therefore multiplicity is difficult to comprehend for hegemonic society and other groups that rely on binaries.

The difference, *otherness*, marginality, and ambiguity of the lives of people who are biracial and/or bisexual powerfully reflect back to the dominant majority groups a mixture of mystery, fear, and/or enlightenment. However, to biracial and/or bisexual people, the task is to see past the distorted and cloudy mirror of the majorities, through the crucibles of the struggles, experiences, and relatedness of the chorus of the marginalized (Kich, “Margins” 276).

Hegemonic society and those minority groups that position themselves dichotomously against this center are threatened by the addition of “unclear identities” that appear to impose upon their position, yet do not follow the rules of either group. This intolerance that these groups assume, is “derived from projections of fear and dread, from an inability to expand rigid categories, and from the unconscious hope that demonizing the *other* will contain their dread” (Kich, “Margins” 274). Bisexual-biracials encounter fear from others, and are stereotyped accordingly: biracials have often been considered both “idealized and disturbed”, while bisexuals have been called “indecisive, untrustworthy, and irresponsible” (Kich, “Margins” 271). Bisexual-biracials are then cast out of the group, told that they don’t belong, and face the possibility of internalizing this intolerance and convincing themselves that their marginalization may be due to some fault of their own. One woman who is a bisexual-biracial expresses the reaction her identity has received:

In the precious first days of coming out- utter confusion, complete depression, and continual race confusion as well. I went to a lesbian for advice, and the conversation went this way and that way, and it eventually moved to an argument about bi-sexuality. And she said “bisexual women pose the same problems...” and she looked at me, like she had me pinned. “Bisexual women pose problems for lesbians the same way as women of mixed race do for women of colour.” She was a woman of color. Four months after, I finally started getting angry about it, at the time I was just so devastated. It felt like she was saying that, because of my racial background, I am fundamentally a problem (Gupta 284).

Bisexual-biracials know from their position the pain of exclusion on many axes, but from that, they gain a great deal of knowledge and experience and face “complex and conscious decisions about the expression of these *othered*” identities (Kich, “Margins” 264). Bisexual-biracials are presented with numerous opportunities to see past the binary logic of identity politics because they are constantly positioned to defend the validity of their identity from doubters on all sides. They necessarily will have developed a specific understanding of themselves based on the arguments they have participated in or observed. Karen Maeda Allman stresses the point that “mixed race lesbians...are simply provided with more opportunities to deal consciously with issues of race” (290). And, because bisexual-biracials have many opportunities to be

excluded, they also have the same opportunities to be included within several groups at once. Paula C. Rust interviewed several multiracial bisexuals and discusses the intersections of these specific identities. In discussing their identities, one stated that it makes her “rotate between feeling ‘left out’ of every group and feeling ‘secretly’ qualified for several” (69-70.) Another interviewee points out “I have always been outside of people’s categories” racially, and “it wasn’t such a big leap to come out as bi” (70).

Bisexual-biracials occupy the “ground on which the boundaries between groups are constantly contested and reconstructed”, the place where normative behaviors are projected upon those who are “in danger” of falling outside of the realms of the respectable (Allman 287). The normative behaviors, prescribed by hegemonic society, rely on a compulsory heterosexuality that always included an anti-miscegenation stance. If women are reproducers of the race and culture, then their sexuality must not only be contained and directed towards men, but the men of their racial group. Bisexuality, homosexuality and racial mixing all threaten the maintenance of the racial group, and threaten white supremacy. Hegemonic society enforces white racial purity, racial/ethnic minority groups promote in-race heterosexual unions in order to strengthen their community, and women are burdened with the task of gatekeeper for racial and sexual boundaries. Women’s sexuality belongs to the community, to the race, and not only is her loyalty expected to lay with the men of race, but her attachment to women may openly contest her responsibility. Crossing sexual boundaries is comparable to crossing racial lines; it is a betrayal of the race, defiling it or promoting its genocide. Bisexual-biracials are in a position to observe how women are used to maintain the community, how women’s sexuality is not her own, and how her position is often prescribed based upon the man she attaches herself. Biracials have observed the consequences of racial line crossing by example of their parents, and the lessons they learn from this will affect their understanding of border crossing.

Yet biracials, as well as bisexuals, are embodiments of border crossing, and do not have an established race within which to segregate themselves. Their bodies are marked with the signifiers of racial crossing, and their sexual feelings and actions are not contained within established and demarcated parameters. June Jordan describes this position as an embodiment of freedom, because “if you are free you are not predictable, and you are not controllable” and she believes that this is the “politicizing significance of bisexuality” which she compares to a “multiracial world view” (du Plessis 43). However, bisexual-biracials are not yet free to celebrate their diversity and explore their potential because we still remain in a time where sexism, racism, bi/homophobia, imperialism, and transnational corporation hegemony shape and rule lives and potential for self-expression. Bisexual-biracials are able to witness power and domination through the lenses of race, sexuality and gender. Because of this, they can begin to incorporate and envision a politics that fights against oppression, regardless of the mask it wears.

If there is to be an interconnectedness between different vantage points, we will need to establish an art of political conversation that allows for affirmation of difference without choking secularization. The construction of such a politics is based implicitly on our vision of what happens, or what ought to happen, when difference meets itself-queer meets Asian, black meets Korean, feminist meets Greens, etc., at times, all in one person (Takagi 12).

Biracial-bisexuals, from their different identity vantage points, are able to understand the diverse subtle and/or aggressive ways in which oppression enslaves people and holds them from achieving their potential. Allman argues that single-identity groups may make mixed race lesbians suspicious since “too many opportunities exist to exclude us, to declare us as suspect *others*” and therefore, they can be the vanguards of forging organizations of resistance that transcend single issue groups (287).

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have attempted to add to the ground work of developing a multiracial/bisexual theory by critiquing existing theoretical identity models of bisexuality, API queer sexuality, and multiraciality. We have seen that bisexual and lesbian/gay theories largely ignore race, API queer literature has a predominantly monoracial lens, and a great deal of mixed race theory lacks a sexuality analysis. Yet a bisexual-biracial identity model diverges from the others in such a way that identity perhaps is, exponentially exploded: imagine bi^2 . For many bi-bi women, single identity organizations, theories or arguments may appear completely inadequate, leading to distrust or alienation. Identities influence, affect and inform individuals in a multitude of ways and for the bi-bi identity in particular, linear models of identity development or statistical analysis may be an impossibility. Bi-bi identity is based on fluidity, flux, and ambiguity; one may not be as they are perceived, assumptions cannot be made on physical appearance or the gender of one’s partner. This fluidity antagonizes single identity politics and threatens those who guard the gates of insider/outsider. Bi-bi identity holds the potential of throwing the question of insider/outsider back at the questioner.

Yet identity still remains within the realms of society and is structured and understood by hegemonic ideologies that exist within that historical location. Though one may perceive themselves as radically different than current options allow, one will also run up against barriers that challenge their legitimacy and logic. This appears as a central antagonism between bi-bi identity and current identity theories. Bi-bi identity seeks to incorporate and accept all aspects of one’s racial history and one’s sexual potential in a world which reduces individuals to one dimensional shorthand. Individuals in marginalized groups are labeled as such, from either the outside, inside or both, in such a way that they are considered known and understood.

Identity politics have both benefits and drawbacks. Yet, one should have the “privilege” of choosing their own identity and be respected in their choice with the understanding that identity does not necessarily reflect the “group platform”. Unfortunately, for many who claim either a bisexual or mixed race identity or both, they are faced with constant ridicule or denial, told that their identity does not exist or that it should not. However bisexuality and multiraciality are not the problems; the system of mutually exclusive demarcated categories that erases these identities is the problem that these identities challenge and attempt to overcome.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

As we have seen in chapter two, much identity politics theory and research has assumed that individuals have a singular core identity that works in part as a world view filter, informing the individual's belief system. Because of this singular identity basis, individuals who do not conform to the models because of multiple identities are either viewed as maladjusted or as "hiding" a "true" core identity. Therefore, the fault is placed upon the individual instead of the theory or model. Yet this study argues that for women who are both bisexual and biracial, identity is not perceived as singular, rigid, additive or static but instead has a situational element; identity is fluid, in flux and sometimes ambiguous. Because this study critiques the models that have been used within the area of identity politics, the methodology employed must attempt to incorporate an alternate perspective of identity formation. Therefore, the qualitative method of in-depth interviewing was utilized in order to capture the ways in which the bisexual-biracial women perceived their own identities.

A significant of feminist research has come to rely on qualitative methodology over other possibilities in an attempt to access women's lives and create theory based upon their own words and logic (Reinharz 18). Social science theory often places the experiences of (heterosexual and white) males as a presumed norm from which women and racial/ethnic minorities deviate unless the study is specifically focused on them. While this norm may be applied subconsciously in social science research at times (e.g., through questions asked, recruitment, etc.), it is a reflection of the larger socio-political culture within which the research takes place. Because of this (sometimes unrecognized) norm, women and racial/ethnic minorities may be perceived as tainting the sample and the data may be either thrown out or minimized. Bisexuals and/or biracials are not likely to emerge within social science research unless they are the central focus. Chapter two shows that there is a virtual silencing of this specific population and therefore direct focus must be applied in order to generate meaningful information and theories.

Qualitative Methods and the Bisexual-Biracial Subject

Because of the marginalization of the bisexual-biracial identity it is important to employ in-depth interviews or ethnographic approaches in order to understand the experiences of the participants through their own words and based upon their own knowledge. As Maria Root explains:

The rigors of quantitative designs might be best utilized to explore group differences and to determine the contribution of different variables to construct such as identity- once norms have been established through qualitative methods. These methods are compatible; neither is intrinsically better than the other, but they are best suited for different purposes (“Back to the Drawing Board”, 189).

Because of this need to base identity politic theories on the experiences of the specific individuals, this study was based upon in-depth face to face and phone interviews with nine women who are bisexual-biracial. The interviews were based upon a set of open-ended questions that had been informed by the academic research outlined in chapter two. The questions themselves overlapped in order to focus on particular issues from a variety of angles. The process of the interview and the construction of the questions allowed the participants room to maneuver, interpret and respond in ways that they established, so that they were able to discuss issues that were significant to them within loosely established parameters. This process encouraged digression, repetition and fluidity recounting the life narrative which reflects the complex process of formulating a multiple identity standpoint in Western culture. This process has been defined as “interviewee guided” by Shulamit Reinharz:

One of the ways to get at these subtleties is to be interviewee-guided, which means focusing less on getting one’s questions answered and more on understanding the interviewee...Interviewee guided research requires great attentiveness on the part of the interviewer during an interview and a kind of trust that the interviewee will lead the interviewer into fruitful directions...Because of the interviewee-guided nature of much feminist research, there frequently are large variations in the duration of interviews within a single project (24-25).

By using an “interviewee guided” approach, the biracial-bisexual participants were able to recount their life narratives in ways that they found meaningful and applicable to identity politic questions, even while some negated the use and assumptions of identity politics. This process did manifest considerable variations from one interview to the other. The length of the interviews ranged from one to three hours; the significance of the set questions were more meaningful to some than others, and some participants took more control of the direction of the interview than others did.

The questionnaire³ covered areas such as the background of the participant, sexual and racial identity formation, participation in activist or identity based organizations, experiences of oppression and/or marginalization, etc. The background section explores early family experiences and general development. Questions were asked about where the participant was born and grew up, the races of their parents, what languages are spoken by both the parents and the participant, age, number of

³ See questionnaire in appendix

siblings, educational, class and religious background, whether the participant has been married and/or has children, etc. These questions establish an understanding of the circumstances and cultural location in which the interviewee was raised and how this has influenced later development. This section also establishes a connection between the past and the current life situation and the ways in which both influence and infuse the other.

Sections two and three, while divided into a “sexual identity” section and a “racial identity” section, do not actually segregate discussion of sexual and racial identity but rather question their interplay while emphasizing one and then the other. For example, two questions in particular that examine this interplay ask: “do you feel that your racial identity has made you more open to questioning your sexual identity?” and, “do you think racism has influenced your decisions about your sexual identity?” This first question is based upon Maria Root’s idea that “the racially mixed woman may be more open to exploring sexual orientation”; she explains that this may be based on an “openness (that) often reflects the lifetime experience of flexibility in living aspects of racial identity that may transfer over to viewing sexual orientation as flexible and sexual identity as mutable” (“Mixed Race Women”, 165). The second question is influenced by the idea expressed by some queer writers of color that because of the draining force of racism in their lives, they may be cautious of being “out” with their sexual identity in order to avoid oppression on yet another front.

Therefore, while the ideas behind this questionnaire are influenced by identity politics writings on race, gender, and sexuality, and also personal experiences that I wanted to compare and contrast against the interviewee’s experience, the interviewees themselves influenced and shaped the questions included. For example, in the last section of the questionnaire, the interviewees are asked “are there other questions that you think should be included in this interview?” Several participants commented on areas they felt would be significant and should be included, such as the questions on class and religious backgrounds. The questionnaire was also altered within the interview process itself, sometimes out of necessity and sometimes in order to elaborate on a topic that was not specifically questioned. While a set questionnaire was used during the interview it was also participant guided and topics were explored which may not have been included in the established questions. Several interviewees were more lengthy in their responses and needed little guidance whereas others responded directly to the question and were drawn into discussion by specificity.

Overall, the questionnaire that was established was very useful in eliciting a wealth of information on the participants’ lives. Similarities between the participants were drawn out to the extent that there was evidence of a “shared identity” that was meaningful to this group of women. Also, the experiences they related spoke to the inadequacy of current formulations of identity and pointed to possible ways in which identity could be reconstructed which will be discussed in more depth in chapter four.

Recruitment Methods for the Study

As the recruitment process began, it became evident that national advertising was necessary in order to cast a wide net and attract diverse participants. Therefore I chose to advertise through political organizations that were aimed at hapas, Asian American queer groups, bisexual and lesbian organizations, and Asian American groups. Based upon this recruitment decision the attracted participants were overwhelmingly politically active or politically aware individuals. The participants were largely connected to formal organizations either through the internet, conference attendance or as friends of people who were. In this way, the study was somewhat redefined with the heavy emphasis of activists or individuals who were connected to community networks. Therefore, the participants represent a selective group of politically minded and outspoken individuals who are open about their identity and willing to participate in a study.

For the required scale of this study, I began with calls for participation to organization where “bi-bi girls” would likely be included and where I could most immediately contact them. I first posted flyers for the study around the city of San Diego in progressive locations such as a gay and lesbian bookstore, a left wing bookstore, and the gay and lesbian community center. Then I mailed out nine flyers to queer Asian American organizations around the country. I also placed a call for participants in the San Diego gay and lesbian paper for two weeks. And finally, I posted a call for participants on two e-mail lists, one aimed at biracial Asian Americans and the other at queer Asian Americans. Although the search for participants was initiated in San Diego, this was not the location where any of the participants resided.

From these postings and through the snowballing technique I was able to attract nine participants. Two participants reside in the Los Angeles area and face-to-face interviews were conducted with them in their own homes. All the other interviews, two thirds or six of the interviews, were conducted over the telephone. Face-to-face interviews and phone interviews both have drawbacks and advantages. Face-to-face interviews allow for more personal contact on many different levels; the interviewer is allowed into the participants life for a brief moment in which a great deal can be learned about the participant, especially if it is conducted within their home. Body language and other non-verbal cues can be included within the transcripts and used to understand the meanings of what the participant says. However, face-to-face interviews are limited by the distance the interviewer can travel. Some interviewees may be uncomfortable conducting an interview face-to-face, especially over sensitive issues, and may withdraw from participation in the study because of this level of contact. Telephone interviews provide more anonymity and may attract participants that might not otherwise participate. Telephone interviews are not limited by distance and decrease other interference. Yet they do not allow for the personal contact and connection that generally accompanies face-to-face interviews, and non-verbal cues are generally excluded.

The geographical locations of these (telephone interviewed) participants were New York, Boston, Hawaii, Washington State, and San Francisco. It can be seen that

the West Coast predominated with only two on the East Coast and one in Hawaii, a spread that reflects the larger geographical location of Asian/Pacific Islander people within the United States. The West Coast is home to a large API population and, further broken down, large cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego are the specific locations for the largest concentration of the community. One third of my participants resided in San Francisco, in which resides a large percentage of the national API community and in which exist numerous queer API groups.

Another issue arose as I recruited interviewees. All of my participants were Asian or Pacific Islander and white. Two of my participants were mestiza with mixed race parents themselves. Therefore, a drawback to my study was the lack of mixed hapas of non-white races and ethnicities.

What are the reasons for the lack of non-white mixed race women? I can only speculate why this study did not attract these women. I only posted in communities that were organized around hapa or Asian American racial identity. Women who are Asian-Latina, Asian-Native American, Asian-Black, or even mixed Asians of different ethnicities or any combination thereof; may identify more with a non-Asian racial/ethnic group. For example, Rhonda Carter, a hapa of Korean and African American descent, states “that she is usually more readily accepted by African Americans than by Koreans” (Tanner 5). She describes her relationship to the Korean and Black communities:

But if I choose between one or the other, I guess I would identify as Black because I always get the sense among Koreans that I’m only half Korean, whereas in the Black community I’m seen as simply Black, and not just half Black...Carter says that her older sister, on the other hand, has rejected the Korean community as a result of her experiences, and now chooses to identify solely with her African American heritage (Tanner 5).

This example demonstrates one obvious drawback to the study, the lack of outreach to other racial/ethnic groups and organizations. It would have been helpful and effective to recruit from other queer groups of Latina, Black, and Native American racial identity, as well as many others that are not immediately connected to Asian American. If this had been done, recruitment could have been aimed specifically at Latina-Asians, black-Asians, Native American- Asians, etc., which would have been more effective at gaining a diverse sample.

Background of the Participants

Other than the Asian-white predominance of the interviewees, there is considerable diversity in many aspects of their lives including ethnicity, class background, geographical location, and language. Most of these women have lived in an “international setting”. This was represented in the fact that several of them have

lived in other countries, and some had visited other countries for extended periods, most often their parents' home country. Others had lived and traveled all across the U.S. The participants were born in diverse locations ranging from Edmonton, in Alberta Canada, Hawaii, Virginia, Colorado, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Germany, and Singapore. Many had traveled a great deal while young, usually because of the parents' professions. Some of the places where the interviewees had lived include: the Bay Area, the Philippines, Chile, Guam, Washington State, New York City, Kentucky, Southern California, Borneo, England, Syria, Cameroon, Italy, Spain, St. Louis, Connecticut, etc. Two of the participants' fathers worked for the US government which necessitated travel.

All of them were connected to a diversity of people from different races, ethnicities and nationalities. For a number of them English was their primary language, though this was not necessarily the language they learned first, and several of them are comfortable in a "mixed language" that combines two or three languages. The majority are college educated although for a few this was or continues to be a struggle. And there is a predominance of activist involvement based on identity or issue based politics. Their ages span from 20 to 30 with one participant in her 50's. This youth dominance may in part reflect the fact that interracial marriages were not decriminalized in the U.S. until as late as 1967 by the Supreme Court decision *Loving v. State of Virginia*. In addition, the social stigma continued to be a real barrier. The youth predominance also results from the snowballing method utilized, such that the interviewees were likely to be connected with women of their similar age group.

All but two of the participants have Bachelor's Degrees. Of the two who do not, one is currently attending school and will soon receive her BA with a double major in psychology and philosophy, while the other holds a degree from a massage school which is her current profession and has also attended art school and community colleges. Two other participants are currently in graduate school, one is pursuing her MA in history and the other is pursuing her MD at an East Coast Ivy League school. Their current jobs and professions include activist, massage artist, labor organizer, consultant for non-profits, and student.

The racial heritages of the interviewees also show considerable diversity. Paunani's⁴ mother is of European descent: English, Irish, French, Welsh, Dutch, and German; while her father is Hawaiian, Spanish and Filipino. Lani's mother is Hawaiian, Japanese, Irish and Welsh; and her father is of Irish, Polish, Jewish and German descent. Eve's mother is Vietnamese and her father is Irish, Scottish, Welsh and German. Karin's mother is of the Burghers ethnic group from Sri Lanka and her father is Caucasian. Sabrina's mother is Filipino, Spanish, Chinese, Irish and Mexican; her father is Filipino with Chinese and Spanish ancestry. Steph's mother is Japanese, Chomorro (the native ethnicity of Guam), and Irish American; while her father is Spanish and Chomorro. Lucki's father is Chilean of German descent and was raised in Chile; her mother is Chinese American and she grew up in an area populated predominantly by Americans in Argentina. Sharon's mother is Filipina and her father

⁴ All names chosen by participants.

is from New England and has an English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish ethnic background. Janet's biological father is Caucasian from New Zealand and her mother is Chinese. Janet was raised with two Chinese parents in Singapore.

As shown here, the interviewees' are diverse in numerous areas, only some of which have been listed here. Yet, there is also a great deal of similarities among them. Chapter four will examine the interviews in more depth and discuss the ways in which they understand and construct their communities, identities, politics and their relationship to language.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses some methodological philosophies that the interview process was based on, as well as recruitment methods, and some drawbacks to the study. In-depth interview methods were used in order to draw out a comprehensive understanding of the individual participants. From this broad based description of their lives, theories can begin to emerge and take shape. However, problems begin to arise in identity theories when lines of demarcation are drawn and homogeneity is demanded for the sake of the group. These bisexual and biracial women in the study do not represent an isolated and evanescent group that remains on the margin of all divisions. Rather, they represent diversity and the ability to transgress lines of demarcation and therefore travel within many groups, whether they are considered to be included within them or not.

The recruitment methods attracted women who were political active and/or aware, who had connections to political organizations and the desire to discuss their lives and identity formation process with a researcher. The recruitment process illuminated at least one glaring oversight, and that was the lack of mixed race women of non-white descent, i.e., Asian-black, Asian-Latina, Asian-Native American, or Asian-Asian of mixed ethnicities. This resulted from a lack of outreach conducted to organizations based on a non-Asian race or ethnicity. For example, in order to attract non-white hapa women advertisement could have aimed specifically at Asian-black women and therefore outreached to organization that were based on black identity, queer black groups, black women's groups, etc. A great deal of mixed race literature predominates a "white/other" model which consistently keeps whiteness central, and analyzes the antagonism of being both an "insider/outsider" within hegemonic society. However, it is imperative to centralize discussions of mixed race and ethnicity that are not based upon this model in order to explore other experiences that remain overlooked and understudied.

Because of the limited sample size of nine participants, this study is aimed at developing an analysis of a fairly specific and narrow range of individuals who are bisexual-biracial, "international", politically active or aware, college educated, and "public" about their identities. Therefore applying or generalizing these theories to other women of similar identity makeup may be somewhat problematic. However, there is a great deal of similarity between all of my participants and therefore,

bringing these women together based on shared bisexual and mixed race Asian/Pacific Islander descent proves to provide some basis for further research.

CHAPTER IV

LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND COMMUNITY

An approach that permits us to understand how the subject is constructed through different discourses and subject positions is certainly more adequate than one that reduces our identity to one single position- be it class, race or gender (382).

Chantal Mouffe in this quote summarizes the most central concern for a theory on the biracial-bisexual women's subject position. As shown in chapter two, the currently available identity politics theories are segregated along single-identity lines, sometimes additive, sometimes token inclusions of "difference," but overwhelmingly, a centralized norm is inherent. Chapter two's literature review of identity politics shows that the bi-bi girls must piece themselves together from mutually exclusive parts; however, the whole and the parts do not then become a unified and organic whole. For these theories do not explain the interplay, mutual reconfiguration, and exponential dynamics that accompany the creation of a multiple identity site based upon complexity, fluidity, and change, such as the bi-bi girls' identity. In order to understand the position of the bisexual-biracial women, it is not enough to add together divergent theories of feminism, bisexuality, multiracial, and queer API theory, and compute a total. Rather, we must look to the biracial-bisexual women themselves to create such a theory and explain the mutuality and interplay of the whole, which cannot be analyzed in parts.

This chapter is based upon the interviews of nine bisexual and mixed race women of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. It has been organized around three themes: language, identity, and community. The language section looks at the relationship between the interviewees and the languages that they are connected to through their parents, their cultures, and their histories. This relationship is complex and historical, inherently marked by distance, longing, comfort, barriers, change, understanding and communication. It is a discussion of language acquisition and language loss, the processes that accompany that journey, and the emotions tied to these paths. The discussion on identity outlines they how the participants understand themselves and how they understand, interpret and construct their identities. In contrast to the theories discussed in chapter two, the interviewees view their identities as solidly tied together and mutually integrated. They discuss how their identities have created and influenced their lives and their position within the social framework. The community section points out the conflicts between the interviewees' self-

understanding and their relationship to identity based communities. Like the theories outlined in chapter two, established identity based communities are also regulated by norms, single identities or additive identity models that promote further fragmentation and narrowness. Therefore, the community discussion looks at the ways that the bi-bi girls have participated within these communities and then incorporates a discussion on how the interviewees have constructed their own personal communities in which they can relate with others on more than a fractionalized existence.

The purpose of this chapter is to interject the biracial-bisexual women's perspectives and voices into the ongoing debate in identity politics. By examining multiple identity positions that have previously been marginalized a space may open in which other marginalized identities can be exposed and discussed. This can only strengthen and elaborate our understanding of identity, community, and politics. It is my hope that the issues and concerns discussed in this work can contribute some input towards the future directions of identity based politics.

Language

So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic Identity is twin skin to linguistic identity- I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue- my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence.

--*Gloria Anzaldúa*, *Borderlands/ La Frontera*

In this passage, Gloria Anzaldúa, a mixed race Latina lesbian, expresses her intricate relationship to her languages. These relations are shaped by the socio-historical context in which she resides, both a geographical borderland as well as an intimately personal borderland rooted in her identity and psychology. In *Borderlands/La Frontera* Anzaldúa expresses the numerous ways in which she transgresses socially constructed boundaries, artificial constructions imposed from the outside that require the internal segregation of herself, most notably apparent within linguistic constructions and borders.

Hybrid languages, bilingualism, code switching, multilingualism and the construction of languages of identity are some ways in which those of multiracial or cultural descent might navigate the terrain of their personal history and identity makeup. Personal histories of language acquisition and language identity reflect the global relations of colonialization, cultural intermixing, resistance and (dis)placement. Through language Anzaldúa expresses the ability to survive and transgress many fronts; she can survive in Spanish, in English, in Spanglish, in her sexual voice and her poet's voice and all at once.

One of the issues around which debates, hopes and hostilities often crystallize is language. And not surprisingly. For, at once carrier of national and familial traditions and emblem of cultural and personal identity, language functions equally as an identity-grounding home under conditions of displacement and a means of intervention into identity-fixing cultural agendas (xvi).

As Angelika Bammer explains here, the process of identity formation and the development of cultural relationships takes place through language. Linguistic identity creates a home and/or a (dis)comfort zone which exists both in the material and psychological world. The ways in which linguistic influences infuse identity are complex and speak to the process of transgressing culturally imposed boundaries, not only of ethnic identity, but also of numerous other identities, including sexuality.

These linguistic identities are intimately tied to and reflexive of the participants racial and sexual identification, and express the socio-cultural history from which they descend. Therefore, this section will examine the interviewees' relationship to languages, how this has influenced their identity formation, and how these relations fit within their socio-historical position. This section attempts to explore the ways in which language has constructed their relationship to their parents, their cultures, their selves, and their histories. Alice Yaeger Kaplan explains that "language is the place where our bodies and minds collide, where our groundedness in place and time and our capacity for fantasy and intervention must come to terms" (64). The linguistic identities of the participants reflects the larger global relationships between Asia, the Pacific Islands and the Western countries, particularly the United States. A popular immigrant rights rallying cry states "we are here because you were there!", which speaks to the lives of these bisexual-biracial interviewees.

The background of the participants reveal a diverse range of language abilities and relationships to language. While all of them consider English their dominant language, their histories are more complex. Sharon's parents spoke several Filipino languages, her mother being Filipina and her father white. Her mother spoke Tagalog, Visayan, and English. Her father spoke English, French, Tagalog and Visayan also, as well as several other unspecified Filipino dialects. Sharon herself speaks predominantly English with very little Tagalog and Visayan. Sabrina's parents were both from the Philippines; her mother speaks English, Ilongto and Tagalog, while her father speaks Tagalog and English. Sabrina states that she herself is fairly fluent in Tagalog and speaks very little Ilongto, while her predominant language is English.

Steph's parents are both from Guam and both speak Chomorro, German, and English. Steph can speak a very limited amount of Chomorro and her main language is English. Lani's mother spoke some Japanese, but mostly English, her father spoke English only and Lani herself speaks only English. Puanani's parents both have spent the majority of their lives in Hawaii; her mother speaks English and Pidgin, and her father knows a limited amount of Hawaiian and speaks English and Pidgin. Puanani herself speaks Hawaiian, Pidgin and English.

Lucki's parents, both raised in Latin America, speak Spanish, English, and Spanglish, while Lucki's grandmother speaks English and Chinese. Lucki herself speaks Spanish, Spanglish, and English. Karin's father speaks only English while her mother speaks English and some Singhala (Sri Lanka). Karin herself speaks English and has learned Spanish fluently.

Eve's mother speaks Vietnamese, English, and French, while Eve's father speaks English, some French, and fragments of numerous languages because of his job-related world travel. Eve can understand some Vietnamese but her dominant language is English. Finally, Janet's parents in Singapore both speak English, Cantonese, and Mandarin, all of which were spoken in the home. Janet speaks all three languages fluently; however, her English skills are a bit more developed.

Four out of nine of the participants parents, all white men with API women, met in Asia or the Pacific. Eve's and Karin's fathers work for the U.S. government and met their wives while on duty in Vietnam and Sri Lanka respectively; both fathers spoke only English.

Sharon's father was working on a Ph.D. which entailed travel to the Philippines and intensive language learning; he spoke English, French, Tagalog, Visayan, as well as other Filipino dialects; Sharon points out "he spoke more dialects than my mom". Sharon's mother spoke English, Tagalog and Visayan. For Sharon, Eve and Karin, English was the language spoken in the home. However for Eve, Vietnamese was her first language while English became her predominant one:

My mom spoke only to me in Vietnamese --Vietnamese was my first language, really. Cause she was home all the time and it was just me and her. So we would only speak Vietnamese, when I started speaking, I started speaking in Vietnamese. And then, cause of my father, I spoke a mix of Vietnamese and English. When I started school I only spoke English, at school. And especially when we were overseas, English wasn't the predominant language in a lot of the countries we were in...so it was hard and we just spoke English at home. I lost most of my Vietnamese, I of course, understand when I'm in trouble and some of the finer things, like how to eat...It was more that I stopped speaking Vietnamese and she continued to speak Vietnamese to me for several years and then it became more and more English and less and less Vietnamese. To the point where she doesn't speak Vietnamese to me anymore unless I'm in trouble (*laughs*). When I'm in trouble, she yells at me in Vietnamese, or she mutters under her breath. You know

you're in serious trouble when my mom busts out in Vietnamese, you're like, "oh no, what did I do!"...

Vietnamese represents an intimate childhood bond between Eve and her mother, something they shared alone, for with the presence of Eve's father in the home, language quickly reverted to English which became the "official" language of the family. Kaplan points out that "it is mothers, traditionally, who teach language, who listen and correct, it is mothers who are the first to hear new words. It is mothers who break or heal a child's tongue" (67). Eve and her mother's primary bond was conducted in Vietnamese; her mother continued speaking this language to Eve as Eve began to reply in English, representing her movement into the world outside her mother's home. At that point, her relationship to Vietnamese and her mother took on a different context. Vietnamese became the language of punishment, the sign of her mother's anger, something to fear. Eve's family traveled and lived around the world because of her father's profession and, while in a foreign country English became the household language in order to unify the family into a "tight unit," a language of cohesion which subconsciously, speaking Vietnamese to her mother undermined.

Karin's mother worked in the US embassy in Sri Lanka where she met her white American husband. Therefore, her mother was raised under British colonialism, worked within the US embassy, and married a white American with whom she moved to the US. She had four children with him, all were raised in English. Once she married, her family disowned her for marrying an American which further excluded her from Sri Lankan culture and language. Karin says:

I mean the unusual thing about my mom being from Sri Lanka is that it was an Asian country that was colonized by the British, so we've always just spoken English at home. My mom has an accent but, no, not really. I mean, on one level I wanted to learn another language cause my mom kinda knew another one and I always wanted to. And growing up in (Southern California) is like, a lot of Latinos so...

Although Karin wanted to emulate her mother by learning another language, she did not choose her mother's language, but instead chose Spanish which further solidified her relationship to her geographic location. Her biracial and bilingual identities grant her the ability to relate to several groups, both chosen and biological. She also states that the times she experiences racism "it's almost always because someone thinks I'm Latina or Mexican". Her racial and cultural identification crosses expected boundaries. She speaks Spanish and feels very comfortable with Latinos, but she is unable to speak Sinhala nor does she know many Sri Lankans. Karin is often mistaken for a member of several other ethnic groups by outsiders, yet when she identifies as Sri Lankan, most people do not know what that means.

Of the participants whose parents met in the mother's land, Sharon's father is the only one who spoken the native languages and dialects of the Philippines. Yet within their household only English was spoken. Sharon speaks "English and I barely

speak Tagalog and Visayan”. However, Sharon’s family spent almost a year in the Philippines when she was five years old at which time she was able to learn some Tagalog and Visayan. When asked why her parents did not teach her Tagalog or Visayan in the home, she responds:

Well, I think there were a lot of reasons. One was when I came here, (back to the US) when I was five and a half years old and I started off in kindergarten for one semester, the second semester of that year. And then I ended up, going to a different school but I had a lot of difficulties when I first arrived. I spoke English probably fairly well but with a pretty severe accent. At the time I also spoke some Visayan and Tagalog, because we had been in the Philippines. And I received a lot of teasing, practically harassment from other little kids at this school that I moved into, making me feel much more like an immigrant and teasing me about being an immigrant. So I’m sure that it was only partially up to my parents whether or not I spoke English. I’m sure that I decided to try to perfect my English so that I could blend in a lot more easily. Just because it was hard to deal with the other kids. And then with my brother, as much as any two year old speaks, he was speaking very much a mix of languages but he was so young when he came here he just naturally adapted to being in an English speaking environment.

Like Eve, Sharon’s English predominance was rigidly enforced by both school-children’s harassment and her parents’ lessons once she entered the US public school system. Facing harassment at school for “being an immigrant,” Sharon attempted to erase that which exaggerated her perceived difference, her language and “severe accent.” Unlike skin color or physical features, language can be changed and manipulated and Sharon felt pressure from many directions to do just that. Yet the erasure of accents or other languages does not guarantee acceptance as many of the interviews reveal.

The role of Western hegemony is a salient feature of this English predominance faced by the interviewees, not only within the U.S. but also in colonized countries. In many colonized countries, English has been established as the “official” language, which establishes a hierarchy of power through language. Janet demonstrates how this is played out in her home country of Singapore:

Everybody’s bilingual because they have English as a first language and then they have whatever language you want as a second language but you have to have two languages to get through school...in my parents generation, people were separated into two categories, there were those who went to English schools and there were those who went to either Chinese or Malay or Indian schools. Those who went to English schools, they made it and they became really professionals and

so there's that little distinction, those who can speak English, my parent's generation, were the people who had a lot more privileges and all that. And when it came down to my generation, it's like, if you spoke English it was if you were kinda, more Western quote unquote, and people who speak Mandarin more tend to not like me, because of the way that I look. You can see a bit of white in me so they don't really like it. But when I do speak Chinese they're like, "oh you speak it well", and I say, "yeah". So that's the way it is.

Colonialization imposes the hegemonic culture onto the colonized country and establishes hierarchies that places them at the top through such institutions as religion, economic domination, segregation, and language. Janet points out that "people who speak Mandarin more tend to not like me", which reflects Western hegemony within Singapore. In Singapore Janet identifies as "Eurasian and when I came here (the U.S.) I identify as Chinese". She observes that by identifying as Eurasian in Singapore she is granted immediate privileges, and people speak to her in English. Yet, as she crosses national boundaries, her identity also changes within the different contexts. She points out that since labels and identities are for the convenience of other people, she describes herself in terms that outsiders will understand:

Over here (U.S.) I'm Chinese, back home I'm Eurasian. Over here it saves me a lot of trouble. I just tell them I'm Chinese and they believe me. Back home I have no choice. They see the whiteness. So I guess I have no choice but to say that I'm Eurasian. Is it political? I guess back home if I tell them I'm Eurasian I do get a little more privilege. Over here, I'd rather identify as Chinese. Because it makes more sense to people. That I should come from Asia, and I'm Chinese. It saves people a lot of trouble. They don't have to be curious about how I ended up being part white, da, da, da. They don't have to think about it. So sometimes I just like saying things for people's convenience, like I tell them I'm bisexual because it's the only way they can understand me...

When asked if race was important in constructing relationships in her life Janet responded "um, no, not really. Language has". In Singapore many people spoke to her in English because of the perception of "whiteness" in her, yet in the U.S. it was difficult for her to connect with Americans or Caucasians at first because of her accent. She states:

I think I used to have a stronger accent. So I guess there are people who were from Asia, who have strong accents too so it was easier for them to identify with me. So it was easiest to build a relationship with them. As it became less apparent, I found that it didn't really matter anymore

because I could talk to anybody I wanted without feeling like I had an accent. So that changed.

The dominance of the English language, erasure of “native” languages, and the harassment or marginalization because of accents were common themes in the interviews. All of them felt pressured to speak “proper” English, often to the detriment of learning another language, and those who had accents at any time face intense harassment.

English hegemony is not only at work within Western countries but colonized lands as well. The Pacific Islands share gruesome histories of genocide and cultural erasure at the hands of Western forces, most devastatingly at the hands of the U.S. which had stolen large expanses of the Pacific Islands for military use. One writer in Daughters of the Pacific describe these effects:

At the age of five or six, when we entered school, we were immediately taught to memorize the Pledge of Allegiance to the US; we were taught to identify the four seasons (which we don't have in Guam); we were taught American history. The US methodically set out to destroy our culture, our language, our identity (Dé Ishtar 81).

Approximately half of the interviewees had Pacific Islander heritage and several of them had lived in their parents' native country for some amount of time. Steph recounts her stay on Guam, her parents native land, and how she was able to learn some of the Chomorro language, and then how she learned to lose the language and her accent once again, upon her return to the U.S.:

...it was weird how I picked up what Chomorro I know from my year living on Guam. People speak it fluently there, they teach it in classrooms. I think up to the 70's or 80's they weren't allowed to speak their language in the classroom. And they weren't allowed to speak anything but English in the classroom, and so, I think it was the '70's actually, when they were finally allowed to begin teaching. But by then so many people had lost the language, and I know bits and pieces, and it's weird cause I must have known it at one point. Cause I'll go visit home and be helping my mom cook or something and she'll tell me to do something in Chomorro and I'll start doing it. But if you ask me what she said I couldn't tell you...It's kind of weird not to be able to have that language...We moved to Washington (State) from Guam, and I was starting to pick up the language more, I had a Chomorro accent, I mean, I still have it once in a while when I go home...And I just got it bad. I learned to drop it real quick. I mean, I got it really bad, a lot of kids didn't understand. They would ask stupid questions...

Steph's parents did not teach her Chomorro so that she and her sisters would have an easier time "fitting in" to American culture. Nevertheless, Steph faced harassment from the school kids in Washington State, and she was teased by Chomorros while in Guam. Her relationship to her parents and their culture is dramatized through her relationship to the Chomorro language:

Cause my parents know that their daughters do not speak Chomorro. So my parents will have conversations in front of us and not worry about us understanding. And it's been a very key thing with my relationship to my parents. And it's been the same thing with my relationship with who I am, with my culture. Because the thing was when I went back to Guam to live for a year, I got it bad over there too. Because I'm state side raised, you know. I'm raised on the main land, for all practical purposes. And it's different from living on the island. It's a different consciousness, everything's different. And I got called haole a lot when I was there. I'm so light they're like, "oh you haole child", da da da. By my cousins, by everybody. And so...once I was in Guam, I was like, this is my culture, and they're calling me haole and da da da. And I was just traumatized, and I did everything I could to start learning the language and everything. And then a year later I'm in Washington and I got to drop it all, and I'm like, oh god, you know. It was kind of weird. Those couple years when I went from New York, to Guam, to Washington, were a little bit traumatic.

Kaplan argues that "there is no language change without emotional consequences" (63) which is dramatized through Steph's experience. Just as Janet's ethnic identity changes as she travels between Singapore and the U.S., Steph learned to readjust to her position in Guam and then Olympia, Washington through the pressure to change her language, her mode of speech, and her consciousness. Yet in Janet's situation, her parents were instrumental in teaching her both Mandarin, Cantonese, and English, all of which were spoken in her home. However it is not coincidental that Janet's primary language became English, and that she had the opportunity of coming to the U.S. for her college education.

Behind the actual language acquiring process are complex socio-political influences that manipulate the ways in which families internalize cultural messages and alter what is passed on to the children. This is often framed as "what is best for the children", as seen in previous examples, when parents internalized the message that the erasure of the native language and the goal of "proper English" will help their children succeed. Lani ended up speaking only English because "both my parents did speak English, my mother did speak some Japanese but did not hand that down. Raised during assimilationist times. I only speak English. I'm sad about that." This same assimilationist mentality was internalized to different degrees by the parents of Sabrina and Puanani. Sabrina explained that her parents did not teach her Tagalog but "they spoke it to each other. They didn't speak it to me purposely because they

wanted me to assimilate.” Puanani expressed in her interview the ways in which language acquisition represented numerous and sometimes contradictory messages about personal connection, assimilation, and status. Growing up in Hawaii as mixed Hawaiian, Filipino, Spanish, and white, she was able to learn English, Hawaiian, and Pidgin and, therefore, was able to cross numerous racial/ethnic and linguistic boundaries, and travel in many circles. Puanani could easily transgress linguistic barriers yet she was still “encouraged” to learn “proper English” and the status that was attached to that.

My parents really urged me to speak proper English because they wanted me to do well and wanted to go to a private school, *I* wanted to go to a private school ...They knew that you couldn't get as far not speak-not using proper English, and so, I was forced to and I would. I wasn't the only kid, I don't think everyone was always, pushed so much. And in public school when you're just a kid you get teased because everybody speaks Pidgin and, I come home and if I was speaking Pidgin, you get yelled at, for speaking Pidgin. And it was kinda discouraged, and conflicting cause at home and with teachers and other places you use proper English, and then when you're with your friends you speak Pidgin. Some people if they can't speak Pidgin, like I had some friends in intermediate school, that you know, were from a different part of the island where it was more white, or more upper class or whatever, they never used Pidgin very much, they couldn't! They couldn't get the slang down, they couldn't get the rhythm, or whatever, and they would get teased. By that point it was more bearable because you were older, but when you're a kid and people go, "why do you talk funny?" And then when I was in high school I took Hawaiian language, which wasn't so hard because I grew up dancing hula and I was around the language anyway. But I took it and it's like anyone who takes French, or Spanish or anything. You kind of have a group of people that you can talk to and it's really fun.

Puanani describes the ways in which language reflects status and geographical location. She discusses the “friends in intermediate school” who could not speak Pidgin, could not “get the rhythm down,” and therefore were alienated from their classmates. Yet they also represent the linguistic standard forced upon the Pidgin speakers by authority figures who had internalized the primacy and hegemony of “proper English”.

Carolyn Lei-Lanilau, in *Ono Ono Girl's Hula*, illustrates the history of language in Hawaii through personal stories, cultural memories, and rants. Her account of being force fed “proper English” by her family and schools while using Pidgin as the language of relationship echoes Puanani's account.

All I knew was private school in the day, speaking good English at home after. As an example: nobody spoke pidgin in my father's house. Nobody spoke Chinese. If you said a word in English it was *de rigueur* to employ the first pronunciation because my mother always trailed with Correct on her hard drive. If you mispronounced a word, she nailed you...But as far as "correct speech" was concerned, nothing but logic and diagrams were acceptable to the family...It means so much to Hawaiians for our bodies to repeat the feelings and sounds of our ancestors that were nearly destroyed by missionaries and then tourists. We have a deep wound in our psyche that may take generations to heal and it can not be accomplished with the tool that we were taught to use, English (7-9).

The relationship between Hawaiian culture and the English language is a story of imperialism and genocide. The internalization of "proper English" that both Puanani and Lei-Lanilau describe by Hawaiians shows the depth of destruction that has taken place, not only of the actual stolen land, but the destruction of the Hawaiian psyche and linguistic history. Pidgin represents the hybrid language, the mixing ground between Hawaiian and haole that encompasses the majority of the people. Puanani describes Pidgin as "a collaboration of the two languages" and elaborates that a great deal of Pidgin "is exactly how it would be in Hawaiian if you translated it verbatim". Pidgin encompasses the complex history of "collaboration" between more than just two languages. Lei-Lanilau attacks the internalized oppression that criticizes Pidgin, arguing that "because THEY- the haole and the wannabe haole said You Hawaiian so 'stupid' 'lazy': backward. I bet you didn't know we were ashamed, huh?" (14). The pervasive mentality that calls Pidgin an "unproper" language, or denies its linguistic history, is a reflection of what one interviewee called the "colonial mentality". Or as Oliva M. Espín argues, one becomes "immersed in the power relations of the specific culture that speaks the specific language" (134).

Lucki describes another complex linguistic circumstance of multiculturalism and bilingualism. Her father, a Chilean of German descent, was raised in Chile and met Lucki's mother, who is Chinese American and raised in Argentina, at graduate school in the U.S. Both parents are fluent in Spanish and English, and Lucki's mother additionally speaks several other languages. Lucki was raised in the U.S., the oldest of three daughters, and the only one raised in Spanish. When Lucki entered preschool she spoke only Spanish; her parents began speaking English only within the household to aid her development and therefore raised her two sisters in English. She describes this situation:

I went to preschool not speaking any English and then by the time I hit kindergarten I could speak and read English and Spanish. And I got pushed into first grade, so by that time I was already fluent...I could already speak both languages really well. Cause both my parents were fluent in both languages so we could speak either around the

house...Yeah, they (her sisters) learned English first because by that time I was in preschool, so my parents were trying to get me to speak English, cause I didn't really speak very much English. So that's when they were learning to talk and so in the house we were speaking much more English. But, I mean now we sort of speak Spanglish around the house. We speak pretty fluent Spanglish (*laughs*).

Lucki also describes herself as speaking better Spanish than her sisters, although they did learn the language, especially on subsequent family trips to Chile. Lucki's linguistic abilities are important influences on her ethnic identity. While she is more familiar with Chilean culture and the Spanish language, her appearance is "more Asian", and she is able to strongly identify with her multicultural heritage. In Lucki's account, the public school system again becomes the agent of colonialization and homogenization. While the school system enforced English, Lucki's parents also switched her household education to reinforce the importance of learning English and subsequently raised her sisters primarily in English. However, unlike many of the other interviewees, Lucki and her sisters were able to maintain their Spanish speaking ability and connect this to their ethnic identity which was positively reinforced through their visits to Chile.

As shown in this section, "one of the primary places where issues of national culture and family coherence come together is the question of language" (Bammer, "Mother Tongues" 96). The interviewees expressed numerous ways in which their linguistic abilities and identities inform and influence their relationships with their parents, their cultures, their racial/ethnic identities, and most importantly, themselves. "Language plays a complex role, both binding and dividing family members" and constructing relationships between the family and the larger socio-political and historical backdrop against which the drama is conducted (Bammer, "Mother Tongues" 100). English has been shown to be a political tool which promotes colonialization and assimilation, often eradicating and degrading other languages. All of the interviewees faced the powerful force of learning "proper English" even to the detriment of learning other languages, and faced harassment when their language was not perfect and accent free. English became the primary language for all the interviewees, though several can speak other languages, and some were spoken to in their mother's native language during their infancy. With the hegemony of the English language comes the suppression of other languages to the extent that people internalize this message and stop teaching their children other languages, believing this is the only route to "success" in America. Only three of the interviewees said that their abilities in other languages were almost equal to their ability in English. All expressed regret at the loss of their ability to learn or speak fluently their parents' native languages. Racism manifests itself in many forms; English hegemony is yet another face of oppression. With each generation that is not taught their native language because of internalized racism, the death of the language becomes more and more of a reality. To quote Alice Yaeger Kaplan:

Language is not a machine you can break and fix with the right technique, it is a function of the whole person, an expression of culture, desire, need...Inside our language is our history, personal and political (66).

Summary

Linguistic identity is an important element of the participants' ethnic and racial identities because it expresses their relationship to their parents, culture, history, and selves. This section has examined the bi-bi girls' experiences with languages, both through languages they know and languages they were unable to obtain for diverse reasons. Their relationships to the languages of their parents' native lands fit within the larger global picture of immigration, assimilation, and colonialization. Many of the participants did not learn their parents' languages, other than English, which is an important element of their identity. It represents a distancing barrier between them and their ethnic cultures. It is as important to understand the loss of language as it is to understand how individuals acquire languages; it is equally crucial to investigate the reasons behind these losses or acquisitions.

While this section primarily describes the ways that the participants did not acquire their "native" languages, it also recounts their evaluations of the ideologies and forces behind this loss of language. Many who attempted to learn languages other than those their parents spoke, faced discrimination later on, and thus felt pressured to lose the language, lose their accents, and lose the mannerisms that made them a target. These pressures came from several directions, including other people, the larger social stereotypes of non-English speakers, and the school system.

This topic is integral to the fluid identities of the bi-bi girls. The languages they do and do not speak, and their relationships to their parents and their parents' cultures, are captured in their linguistic identities. The fact that most of them cannot speak to their parents in their parents' native tongue is a powerful influence on their self-understanding. All the interviewees expressed feelings of loss because they did not speak the languages attached to their heritage.

Language is not simply a machine-like tool of communication; every language has inherent differences of concept, feeling, object, mode of expression, and intricate cultural meaning and history. While the lives of the interviewees are not always visibly lacking because of their inability to speak the languages of the cultures from which they historically descend, their lives could be deeply enriched by the ability to communicate in numerous languages, and thus, cross other culturally demarcated lines.

Indigo Chih-Lien Som expresses the attachment she holds to Chinese, the language of her mother which she did not learn but to which she feels powerfully connected, in a poem with which I conclude (260-1).

*Just Once
Before I Die
I Want Someone
To Make Love To Me
In Cantonese*

*my mother
tongue not
in my mouth
no longer mine
my second tongue
now my only
one/mother
tongue some
where in me
deep/not
my own*

Just once
I want to remember
language I've never
known/Give me words
I never heard

at my grandmother's
kitchen table

Make the tones
fall from my
throat/like
fairytale flowers
& toads/until new
sentences snake
across your skin

*let me moan
mothertongue
in your mouth*

Identity

I became interested in Asian American politics, people of color politics, gay/lesbian/ bisexual politics and other struggles because of this exposure to feminism. But there is no excuse for this nearly complete exclusion of Asian/ Pacific American women from the class. Marginalization is not simply a politically correct buzzword, it is a material reality that affects people's lives- in this case, my own (Lee, "Beyond Bean Counting" 207).

JeeYeun Lee articulates here a reoccurring theme that the biracial-bisexual interviewees discussed when questioned about feminism. All the participants believed in the philosophies of feminism yet several of them chose other labels to describe their belief system and/or first defined what they meant before using any term. This reflects current conflicts around the issue of "difference" and how it is being co-opted and used within the feminist movement. Six of the interviewees answered yes without

hesitation when asked if they defined themselves as feminist. Puanani broadly defined “a feminist as someone who believes in the equal rights for women”, and Janet stated “it’s anybody who’s trying to fight or work towards getting rid of either physical or psychological or environmental kinds of oppression towards mostly women”. Sabrina described it as “anything that’s very relevant to creating a healthy outlook of what a real female is, a true female instead of limiting us and putting us in these limited definitions...How I look at my own feminism is like, don’t tell me what to do, don’t tell me I can only do this, don’t tell me I’m limited, respect my decisions”. Lani sees it as “a world view- for everybody.” Eve offers her view of feminism:

“Oh yeah, I’m a feminist, I’m a womanist, I’m a peopleist, I’m a queerist. Feminist (means) that women are the shit, basically (*laughs*). I mean it’s deconstructing patriarchy...and radically changing the way that society is structured so that women are treated equally. And not just white women, but women of all colors, women of all sexual orientations, and that all women, able-bodied or disabled you know, have equality. I don’t know if I’m an optimist but I believe that justice is possible and equality is possible. To do whatever you can on a daily basis to bring us closer to that, is what feminism is. And feminism stretches from the academic sort of definitions to just fuckin’ survival on a day to day basis as a woman in society, you know?”

Karin felt the term feminist is used by such a variety of people, including those who are politically right-wing, that its meaning is hard to grasp. She clarified her understanding of feminism: “analysis of gender and how power operates because of your gender...believing that women should run the world, pretty much” . Sharon, Steph and Lucki had some reservations about personally using or defining themselves as feminists. Sharon reasoned that she believes “in all the tenets of feminism but not necessarily in the technique” explaining “I was disappointed in how academic so much of it got”. She described herself as “much more civil rights oriented if anything, so the correct term would be humanist because I’m fighting for everybody’s rights...which includes women’s rights”. Lucki reasoned that “feminist means so many different things to me and a lot of things it means are kind of fucked up”. She explains:

It’s based on this whole identity politics thing, which I have a lot of issues with. Some of which comes from the fact that I am mixed race, and queer, and whatever and others just like intellectually, I have problems with it...I’m not a big label person to start with. So I think labels period, tend to be really bad, because what they do is they just tend to take away details that are really necessary. Because to me feminist doesn’t really say anything about my political beliefs on a certain level. Because there’s so many different kinds of feminist, there’s so many different ways to be a feminist. And the word itself

means something different to everyone so I guess for me in the end it becomes sort of meaningless.

Steph's problem with defining herself as a feminist comes from the historical position of U.S. feminism and its narrow scope on issues such as race:

I consider myself more of a womanist than a feminist. But I'm influenced by feminist ideas...Feminism to me signifies a mostly white women's movement, a movement that was made for basically, and benefited mostly middle class, middle-upper class white women...Womanist recognizes feminist ideals but I recognize I need to take my API brothers, and my ethnicity with me.

The interviewees express that feminism needs to be redefined in specific terms in order to be inclusive of them and the issues that they prioritize. A growing trend in feminist theory reflects the interviewees' charges. This trend, which Susan Bordo has labeled "gender-scepticism", attempts to deconstruct the category of "woman" because of the norms inherent in such a monolithic categorization (135). Christina Crosby argues that in 1990s feminism, no one is talking about "woman" as a constructed and unifying identity and instead, "everyone is talking about difference...I conclude that 'differences' work now more or less as 'identity' did before" (130). As the opening quotes expresses, the bisexual-biracial women's positions are intimately tied to these debates. JeeYeun Lee argues that "it is always the margins that push us farther in our politics" ("Beyond Bean Counting" 210). The interviewees' concepts of identity and their relationship to identity-based movements are very much affected by feminist movements, debates, and theories. Their reservations about feminism are linked to their continued absence within the literature that is constructed around issues of difference and diversity.

While I agree with Crosby that "difference" is being taken up as an analytical tool within feminist theory, actual examples, issues, and focus on specific instances of difference, such as that of the bi-bi girl, are lagging behind. It is popular to mention that women are divided along lines of race, class, and sexual orientation; however, the analysis of these specific instances of differences are often dropped after the disclaimer, as argued in chapter two, especially in relation to the bi-bi identity. Because of the consistent silence on the issues that shape their lives, the bi-bi girls have become adept at reconstructing concepts and labels in order that they be included within them.

This section analyzes the ways in which the bisexual-biracial participants construct their identity and re-create concepts in their own image while understanding that others may lack an understanding of their position and, therefore, conflicts may arise. Many of them remain skeptical of labels because of the misunderstandings and fragmentation that often accompany them. Denise Riley articulates this uneasiness:

My own feeling is that “identity”, is an acutely double-edged weapon-- not useless, but dependent on the context, sometimes risky-- and that the closeness between an identity and a derogatory identification may, again always in specific contexts, resemble that between being a subject and the process of subjectification (122).

The participants are familiar with others projecting their own insecurities, ignorances, and preconceived notions upon them and the expression of their identities--what Riley calls the “process of subjectification”. The participants face this from all directions, which produces a division between how they understand themselves and how they explain themselves to others. They discuss how labels exist for others’ convenience and understanding more so than for their own self-understanding. This section explores how the participants understand themselves and then how they relate this understanding to others. Difficulties and exclusions arise when the bi-bi girls attempt to relate or incorporate their identities in group platforms or connect with others, which will be explored more in-depth in the section on community. This section discusses how the interviewees understand their bisexuality, their racial identity, and the interplay between the two.

Bisexuality

Usually I would call myself queer, over bisexual, because it goes back to the whole labels thing, which is partially just a personal dislike and also on an intellectual level I think identity is something that’s much more complex than anything that can be summarized in one word. And I think identity politics are a political tool and nothing more, and I try to keep it really separate from my personal life. But I just like queer because it doesn’t really say a whole lot about your sexuality except that it’s not straight. In terms of bisexuality...it doesn’t have a lot of meaning for me personally, but it’s somebody who identifies as having attraction or strong relationships with people of both genders, or many genders.

As we can see in Lucki’s comment, this skepticism over labels that so many of the bi-bi girls adhere to makes them aware of the many ways that their identities may be labeled and understood from outside, which may misrepresent their own intentions. Therefore, many of them expressed caution using the term “bisexual” and several of them rejected this term and adopted others that they re-defined. When I asked Lucki whether she identified as bisexual, her first response was “it depends on who’s asking.” All the interviewees held this sentiment, that the labels and definitions they used to describe themselves altered in relation to the questioner. They overwhelmingly claimed that labels were constricting and thus they held a healthy amount of distrust for them. When Steph responded to the question of whether she

was bisexually identified, she also used a disclaimer before responding to the original question:

Lately I'm still trying to define myself. I mean, I know that I'm labeled and I know I have to accept that people are going to look at a label and label me, and try and understand me through labels. But lately I'm trying to not define myself, and trying not to define other people through definitions. Um, bisexuality for me is romantically falling in love with a man or a woman. And I guess that's kind of a simple definition.

Part of this skepticism stems from an understanding of identity that contrasts with commonly held assumptions. The bi-bi girls view identity as fluid, changeable, and multiple while the use of labels tends to counter this perspective and solidify identity. Sabrina says that she would chose a "bisexual" label to describe her sexuality because it's the closest term that describes her feels, though she has reservations about the term itself:

If I were to pick any of the terms it would be bisexual. It would be actually either bisexual or lesbian. Because, even though I'm married I consider myself lesbian but then I'm leading a bisexual life. So it's very fluid in terms of the definition for me. Because there would be a lot of queer women who would look at me and say, "well you're definitely straight because you're married to a guy", but I know that I'm not straight. That's definitely out of the question. But if they want to put me into categories, you could say I'm leading a bisexual lifestyle in terms of being married to a man but also knowing that I love women. But at the same time I consider myself a lesbian who's married.

Sabrina reveals the ways that the actual language or discourse around identity is problematic or limited itself, and therefore she is unable to find a language that could express her position more clearly. Aware of how others will view her, she shifts her language accordingly in order for her intention to be understood. Because of the cultural implications and loaded assumptions attached to any identity label, these women are very careful in the terms they use, and when the terms are inadequate, they rely on explanatory definitions. They are aware that how they understand their identity and how society understands their identity often differ dramatically. This leads Karin to qualify her definition of bisexuality by stating "I have a definition for how I operate within it, but I can't define it for the world, right."

Sharon and Lani alter the term "bisexual" in order to clarify their intention, approaching it in opposite directions, ironically enough. Lani feels "good about defining as bisexual" but is also "frustrated 'cause it's another binary concept." She argues that "bisexuality doesn't say it. I'm sexual, is what I feel like, but bisexuality

is important because we're not at a time when we can let go of that word". Therefore she would prefer to identify simply as "sexual". Sharon explains why she uses the term "bi" instead of "bisexual":

In my ideal world we don't need them (sexual labels). I'm ultimately working towards the situation where we don't have them. I mean, that's one reason I use bi instead of bisexual too, because it's not about sexual labeling. Or it doesn't have that word "sexual" in it, cause it's a lot more than that, it's also about attractions, emotions, and opportunity. I think that if we could start focusing on whether somebody actually is interested in us that would be a lot more important, ultimately.

Janet articulates a similar distinction to Sharon's, when she describes the Chinese word for homosexual:

I don't know if there's a word for bisexuality. I don't think it's really understood...They have a word for homosexual but they don't have the word "sexual" in there. The trans-lation would be "same gendered relations". It brings on a whole different feeling to it when you say it in Chinese...When you don't think of sexuality in the Western concept, sexuality becomes defined really differently, homosexuality in Chinese is like a completely different perspective. It's just such a Western thing to categorize people into three categories, there's definitely more to it than just three.

The power of discourse and cultural concepts upon identity is powerfully shown in these two examples. Homosexuality and bisexuality are constantly stereotyped and reduced to only sex in the larger cultural context, which is reinforced through the term used itself. Janet points out that these segregated and labeled (taxonomy) identity categories are based upon a Western mentality that does not translate over to Chinese. Finally, Puanani has decided to use a different term entirely in order to escape the binary behind bisexuality. She states "bisexual, the word "bi" kind of implies a duality, and popular belief is that you're into boys or into girls. And so I *am* bisexual because I am pansexual. But being pansexual does not make me bisexual."

As shown in these examples, the bi-bi girls tend to view identity labels as problematic because of the label's presumed static nature which contrasts to the view of their identity as fluid. Some found "bisexual" a useful term, while others stated that their sexuality might be defined differently in the future because of this fluidity. Eve, Puanani, Sabrina, and Karin all stated that since their sexuality was fluid, they may define themselves differently in the future. Puanani had previously identified as a lesbian, and Sabrina occasionally still identifies as a lesbian. Janet, Sharon, Lani, Steph, and Lucki all stated that their sexuality is fluid; therefore, they did *not* foresee changes in their sexuality because the definition of bisexuality allowed them

sufficient room. Of these five, Janet and Lani had previously identified as lesbian. There was almost a half and half split between those who thought their sexual identity might change and those who did not, with those previously defining as lesbian (4) also split equally. Presumably, of those who stated their identity might change in the future, it could change either way (homosexual or heterosexual), and continue to change once again. Whether they believed their sexuality would or would not change in the future, the interviewees used similar arguments:

I don't wed my identity with my actions, so there's no downside to identifying as bi. It's also to acknowledge what relationships I've had in the past and what attractions I've had in the past. I think I'll always be bi. I think it's a little more realistic for acknowledging the way that I feel. (Sharon)

I think sexuality is fluid, definitely. And it changes, you know? When I first came out I was like, "I'm bisexual, right down the middle! I love men as equally as I love women, I am right in the middle of that Kinsey scale". And then, as I dated women more and more, and men less and less, I was like, "well I do prefer women, and I definitely feel myself shifting". I don't think I could ever fully identify as a number six on the Kinsey scale. I believe identity is fluid, so if years from now I'm like "no, I don't date men anymore", then I don't, you know. Some things are choices and some things are not choices. The fact that I'm not straight, I don't necessarily believe is a choice. But I make the choice not to actively seek out men, and to actively seek out women. So, it's definitely fluid. (Eve)

This understanding of sexual identity as fluid, is at odds with the larger society that embraces the possibility of a "gay gene" or "gay brains", thus reducing sexuality to genetics and a static predetermined nature from birth. Hegemonic straight-defined society and segments of the lesbian and gay communities agree that sexuality is fixed, unchanging, and predetermined. This argument forms the basis of rights rhetoric for the lesbian and gay communities, an argument that may stem in part from the requirement of membership in a "suspect class" in order for legal institutions to recognize discrimination. Bisexuality, and the concept of fluidity of sexual identity, undermines and threatens these arguments and self-understanding that many lesbians and gay men hold, and thus they perceive this bisexual presence as threatening rather than comforting. In this way, the relationship between bisexuality and homosexuality rests on a foundation of tension, mistrust, and loose alliances.

The interviewees received offensive comments and treatment from both heterosexuals and lesbians and were thus "caught in the middle". Their understanding of and responses to these incidents depend upon the context and direction from which they came. Some interviewees expressed caution and/or fear about these incidents and

thus were less likely to be more outspoken; however, the majority felt they became more “out” because of the hostility directed at them. Lucki describes reactions from queer communities she has received:

I've gotten a lot of shit and it's really funny...I'm thinking of two other bisexual women and myself... who are really active in the queer community. We've all had major problems for dating men. From both, from everyone, people just really don't know what to do...I definitely know people who have dropped out of the queer community for a while because they don't feel like putting up with all the crap that you end up having to put up with.

Janet expresses a similar sentiment dealing with biphobia:

It made me not want to come out. But after thinking about it and reading more, just educating myself on what the real issues were, I felt better, because keeping quiet is like being conquered, being depressed...I don't know why but Chinese have this huge problem with bisexuality. I guess it's not just Chinese, it's everybody, but I seem to get more problems with Chinese people. They can't understand how someone could stay in the middle. I tell them, “go read, go to the library.”

Sabrina discusses how biphobia and homophobia makes her caution about revealing her identity to individuals she suspects will have difficulty understanding:

Because as much as I'm fully out to people, I don't want to give out too much of myself to make myself vulnerable to people who are stupid or ignorant about being bisexual or being fluid in my sexual identity.

Most of these comments were directed towards the gay and lesbian communities because of their stronger ties to and desire for acceptance within these communities rather than the more mainstream straight society. Several of the interviewees discussed how homophobic remarks from heterosexuals influenced them to become more outspoken. Karin describes one such situation:

There was this homophobic incident that happened at my job. Someone made some really fucked up homophobic comments and I called it out. And, I ended up getting raked over the coals because of it. People that I thought were my allied just kinda stepped away from me. And it was a really, really difficult time. At the same time, the fact that I went through that made my conviction a lot stronger, and my

ability to kinda navigate though a really homophobic world. I think you kinda have to go through that the first time and fall apart and then you're okay, and you can handle it pretty much, you know. And so in some ways it was positive because, that was when I really had to stand up for myself and say, "I am openly bi", and I was the only person at the time that was openly queer, in the whole union. And I think in some ways I kinda forced open a little space for myself.

Eve and Sharon express similar feelings about dealing with bi/homophobia, Sharon states:

If people stop giving me a hard time about it I'll probably stop talking about it. But as long as they're having a problem with being bi that means that somebody who's less out than me, somebody who's less confident than me, somebody who's having a harder time than I am, will probably not be able to come out. And so I kinda have to come out louder. And that's a political choice undoubtedly.

And Eve adds:

If anything, it makes me stronger. I think a lot of biphobia makes me feel that I need to defend that identity. And to really push the reality of that existence and that identity. I don't have a choice but to be stronger about it, you know.

The interviewees face misunderstandings of and challenges toward their sexual identity from several different directions and are constantly pressured to defend their position and perhaps educate those who do not understand. Since these pressures come from both lesbians and heterosexuals, the interviewees use caution with all sides. Although the bi-bi girls express a clear understanding of their own sexuality and its fluid nature, they face difficulty when they have to express this to others. Therefore conflicts arise when their self-understanding is expressed to others who have a different perspective on these issues.

These conflicts are not limited to their sexual identity, but are paralleled in regards to their racial identity as well. The bi-bi girls face the challenge of constructing a positive self-understanding in a potentially hostile context; simply expressing their combined sexual and racial identities can exponentially compound misunderstandings.

Multiracial Identity

Multiracial identity differs from bisexual identity to the extent that racial and sexual identification is different. One is written on the skin, cannot be physically changed, and is a result of genetics. The other is based on internal feelings, is a

process that transpires sometime after birth, and is acted upon. The differences between sexuality and race can be debated *ad infinitum*, which is not the intention here. The importance of similarities between these two divergent identities are the ways in which they are conceptualized and utilized both within the larger social framework and within the psychological and material lives of the participants. The similarities between the two manifest themselves to a greater extent through this perspective.

While being mixed race is a biological fact, the ways that the participants understand and relate this as an *identity* can change over time, as with bisexuality. Moreover, how the participants understand their own racial identity and how they describe themselves to others differ. Multiraciality produces individuals with a diverse array of appearances, some of which are not easily identifiable, and thus most multiracials are questioned about “what they are”. Because of this diversity, they may describe their racial identity differently in different contexts. Therefore, there is a situational element to multiraciality similar to that of bisexuality. Others may focus on whatever is most obvious and make blanket assumptions based on their perceptions: if one appears Asian, if one appears holding her girlfriend’s hand.

The participants realize that their understanding of their racial identities, like their bisexual identities may not be understood or accepted by outsiders, and therefore they alter their story based upon the expectations of others. Steph’s situation exemplifies how her personal understanding of her racial identity differs from how she describes herself to others:

When people ask me what I am, I say I’m API, Asian/Pacific Islander...Because if I start going off that I’m also part Japanese, and I’m part Irish American, people get that glazed look over their eyes...

Yet, her own self understanding differs from the description she gives others:

I don’t say to myself that I’m just API, I say I am Chomorro, and I have the blood of the natives of Guam in me, but I also have Japanese blood in me. And I also have Irish American blood in me. I try and recognize all three components. And I somewhat recognize Spanish. And we probably have Filipino blood in there too because of the geographical location. But I don’t recognize the Filipino blood because I can’t go that far back.

Steph’s example shows how she simplifies her complex understanding of her racial identity when discussing it with others. Similarly, Karin operates from the assumption that others would not understand her if she described her full identity:

Sometimes I’ll say that I’m Asian, it depends on the context and who I’m talking to. It depends on how specific I have to be. Usually I’ll say South Asian as a broader term, right. Because if I say Sri Lankan, half the people

don't even know where that is. They'll think I'm from Africa or something. So I'll say South Asian, and then they think that means Vietnamese or Laotian, or South East Asian. So people get confused about that.

She, however, understands herself as “half Sri Lankan and half white.” Many participants described their racial identities as situational, possessing different concepts for themselves and for how they describe themselves to others. Sabrina stated that “I call myself all different kinds of things” in relation to her racial identity. When asked what their racial identity is, some would respond with a clarifying question such as, “you mean what do I check on the forms?” or “you mean when someone asks what I am?” The participants are aware that they have a largely misunderstood racial identity and are used to clarifying it through detailed description or simplifying it so that others can understand.

Some participants explain that their racial identity was a family process, which differentiated it from their sexual identity. Parents and family members have an important influence on their self understanding, such as how parents tell their children they should identify, how parents themselves identify, what racial labels parents give their children, and whether their given name reflects their multiracial heritage. Karin discussed how she shared her racial identity process with her mother and sister:

[Her mother] She'll say she's American first, in terms of the order of identities, and then she's Sri Lankan...When my sister and I took an Asian American studies class together is when it all came together. We had to do a research project on an Asian immigrant and so we did a paper on my mom. It was the first time we really sat down and grilled her about her life and what she thought about her life and how it went...After that she started being a lot more open. When I would come over and visit, she would take out like, treasures she had from Sri Lanka that she wanted to show me, and she would talk about it more. So I think in a lot of ways, the same way we got into our Sri Lankan identity she kinda got back in touch with it too. Cause no one really wanted to know anything about it until we did. No one ever really cared or was interested.

The participants differed in how their parents influenced their self concept, with some parents encouraging their children to appreciate their complete heritage and others subscribing to an assimilationist mentality which manifested in them telling their children they were “American” or sometimes “white”. This was the case for Karen and Steph. They both recounted instances in which their mothers told them they were white, while at other times they would contradict this message. Karin points out:

I still kinda thought that I was white because my dad was white and my mom kept trying to tell us that we were white...she said, these

children are white. And then in high school I started figuring out that I was a person of color, but I didn't really understand anything about the politics or how power and racism were.

Steph describes an instance when she and her mom went to get Steph's military I.D. and she witnessed her mother checking "white" on the racial categorization forms for her:

That was when I saw my mom put in the application that I'm white. And I looked at my mom and I'm like, "mom, I'm not white". And she's like, "yes you are. My father, my biological father is Irish American, therefore you are white". I said, "okay, alright". So I went home and I told my sisters this, and my sisters had a big discussion with me, trying to explain to me what we are and who we are. I don't remember too much of it, but I also remember it cause somewhat of a commotion between my sisters and my mom, I remember a lot of loud talking going on. The issue is that she put down that I was white, and especially my sister K., who I think felt it most when we moved to Washington, because she'd darker than all of us, she had a real problem with that. Because there's no way K. could ever be that, you know. We didn't talk about it after that, that was it. I let it go. I didn't think about it after that. It seemed like a minor incident in my twelve year old life.

Steph shows here how conflict or differences could arise over the question of racial identity within the family setting. Because of the situational factors, differences in appearance, and parental influences, their racial identities may change over time. Siblings may have different racial appearances and therefore different racial identities. Lucki describes the differences between her and her sisters: "I look really Asian, then the next one down looks really mixed, otherwise she could look more Latina. And then the youngest one could go either way- she could look either Asian or Latina."

All of the participants have a shifting relationship to their racial heritage and how they understand it. For some, this has come through their politicization around identity issues in general; for others the importance of their racial identity has become less pronounced within their life context. Lucki describes the shifts in her relationship to her ethnic identities:

For one I think it's a very fluid process. There are day I definitely feel South American. And there's other times I feel Asian American, I definitely have become much more Asian American in the past couple of years. I guess it's not a big important part of my life anymore. At one time it definitely was. Like, in college I was really trying to figure out what race meant to me in my life and how it fit into my life. And

what importance different racial communities had to me and to my life and that kind of thing. And so I don't put a lot of thought into what my race is anymore and it doesn't hold the same kind of importance that it once did. Um, and I just sort of feel comfortable with who I am and all the different things that I am and all the different things that make me, me. And I don't really agonize about what it is anymore. Like, I'm me and these are my experiences and um, they have like contributed and taken away different things from my life. I usually describe my family history more than any racial identity. I don't really have like a really politicized racial identity in the same way that I do sexual.

Lani also describes the way that her racial identity has changed over her lifetime:

I identified as everything I was when I was a little kid. I always said everything that I was and I was really proud of it. And the older I got- because I passed- people wouldn't let me claim that. And it got shut down, and I'm coming around to claim it all again...So my racial identity is- I say mixed- and I say my whole mix all the time. Because I think people are ashamed to say they're mixed. Or to name them all.

Outside influences strongly pressured Lani to identify with others' perception of her as "white". Her attempts to express her racial identity confused people or evoked skepticism, which made her uncomfortable and "shut down". Puanani also discusses how outside influence--specifically her father--changed her inclusive view of her Filipino heritage:

I use to be more inclusive of my Filipino heritage but I don't really acknowledge it a whole bunch. I just don't really know that much about it. When people ask me what I am, I list out my billion nationalities and I've done that since I was a child. It use to piss me off because my dad doesn't acknowledge his Filipino heritage at all. He always says "I am Hawaiian". And I say, dad, you're Filipino. Filipinos are kind of discriminated against in Hawaii. Even though everyone's friends with someone who's Filipino.

Puanani's father is half Filipino but because he does not claim this part of his heritage, it makes it difficult for Puanani to do so herself. Steph also changed her identification because of the environment in Washington State. Because she moved to Washington directly from Guam, she faced culture shock and felt pressure to drop her ethnic identity and its signifiers in order to fit into her new surroundings. She explains:

I use to call myself Chomorro when I was a kid. I called myself Chomorro because that's what I identified myself with, and I had just come from Guam. The culture of Guam was still with me 100 percent. At least until December, at least until I could drop my accent and you know, try and fit in more.

Erin provides a contrasting example; while her inclusion of her diverse ethnic identifications was not altered, her language and conception of it changed:

When I was younger it was very clear to me that I was mixed. And I identified strongly as American because we were always overseas. But I also identified as Vietnamese Irish American, and a lot of people didn't get that. But for the most part I've always identified as biracial. I never knew the language for it until the end of high school, beginning of college, when I actually put a label on it. Like, I'm biracial, in terms of racial identity.

These examples show how the mixed-race racial identity is situational and fluid. The influences of parents, environment, physical appearance, and self-awareness shift the participants' self-concept and how they label their identity to themselves as well as others. While most monoracial individuals possess a single label for their identity that is culturally understood, mixed race individuals face a more complex process. Standing outside of accepted racial categorizations impacts them in a multitude of ways. It can give them a sense of freedom to define themselves and create a unique self-understanding, or it can make individuals feel marginalized, misunderstood, and/or invisible.

While several of the interviewees felt that their identities came with some drawbacks, such as being misunderstood or other people being disrespectful towards them, most expressed appreciating being outside of the "racial box". Lani believes being multiracial has opened her to be accepting of diversity and complexity:

I think how being multiracial, multiheritage, has affected my life in that I feel it's made my life very rich and I'm really open to all different kinds of cultures, and it helps me see the world in a way. Complexity doesn't scare or confuse me- or diversity. It was just sort of my norm growing up so I can walk into a room and feel at home with people of all different ethnic and racial backgrounds. I just feel really comfortable.

Puanani is not concerned about fitting into a recognized racial category since she does not need such a classification in order to understand herself. She states that "I know what it looks like. I don't feel anything about it, it doesn't matter to me. It gives me a chance to explain myself if anyone asks. They get a two hour long speech". Being outside the "box" gave the participants a chance to understand themselves in their

complexity and explain that to others--if they chose. Lacking an easy single-label identification tag, opened a space for them to explore themselves more fully. Karin explains how she feels both resentful about her identity being misunderstood, and yet also thankful for the ability to define herself on her own terms:

Sometimes I feel resentful because people from the recognized categories don't even try to make space for it...But in a lot of ways it gives me the space to also sort of shape it myself. The same as with my sexual identity. It makes me mad sometimes because I feel really powerless and excluded and cast out. But also I can very righteously define it myself.

Lucki feels that her racial identity makes her more open to understanding complexity around how all aspects of people's lives come into play and define who they are. She feels that single racial identity categories become too narrowly defined:

At one point I really, really wanted to be recognized and I think that was back when I was first realizing that I was actually a person of color, and that actually had some historical, political and global significance...But you get outside of these narrowly defined circles and it does sort of empower you in a certain way because you can't sort of latch on to these easy things, it just doesn't work somehow...Cause there's other things that come into play, like social background, class, where you came from in this country. And so all of a sudden I think identities start to lose power after a certain time.

And Sharon stated she enjoys being multiracial and feels it is "a part of the future":

I rather enjoy it. I think it's unrealistic in this day and age with the number of moves that people make and the different kinds of relationships that people have, to think we are in some kind of monoracial society. We need to start to recognize that...So, I think that I'm just part of the future, you know, my parents just got a jump start on it, that's all.

Many similarities arise in the participants' descriptions of their multiracial identity and their bisexual identity. Being outside the box brought them freedom of self-definition, yet it was also accompanied by other people's uncertainty. However, the complexity inherent in their multiple identities worked for some as a way to weed out non-accepting or close-minded people. They were unlikely to become friends with individuals who could not accept or understand their identities. Instead, we will see in the section on community, the interviewees developed personal communities based upon acceptance and diversity.

The participants felt a familiar resonance between their sexual and racial identities because both were outside of established categories. While being both multiracial and bisexual was a complex factor in their lives, they felt one complimented the other in reciprocal ways. The next section discusses the effects of this interplay.

Racial and Sexual Identity Interplay

Well, my gender is a little queer, my sexuality is a little queer, and my race is a little queer, and I guess I'm just a little queer!

--Eve

I'm like the mixed girl, like mixed sexuality, mixed race, mixed countries, mixed cultures.

--Sharon

Eve and Sharon playfully bring the focus of their identities to the middle ground. They argue that they are outside of identity boxes, that they are identified by their position outside of socially constructed binaries, that they are not deducible to one component of themselves, that they are queer and mixed. This section analyzes the ways that the bi-bi girls understand the interplay of their sexual and racial identities, among others. Their conceptualization of the identity formation process split into three general themes. First, some of the women recounted that the processes of developing their identities were powerfully integrated: questioning their racial identity made them question all aspects of their lives, including their sexuality. Second, other women felt that the process of understanding their sexual and racial identities were parallel and similar, yet not necessarily integrated. Third, some felt that these two processes were very different and did not necessarily overlap in process, but they commented on the similar problems of being bisexual and biracial. There is also overlap between these three perspectives, none being mutually exclusive. Following this, I will discuss how all the participants identify themselves with all aspects of their identity, yet here the issue of multiple identity location becomes problematic, because they are trying to fit themselves into outside constructions such as established identity based organizations.

The first theme is expressed through the examples of Sharon, Eve, and Karin who all felt that the development of their racial and sexual identities were intertwined to the point that their racial identities opened to question their sexual identities. Their understanding of racial diversity and their mixed race status made them aware that individuals do not necessarily fit into established exclusive categories. Experiencing diversity in their surroundings, whether that be community or family, made them less

rigid in developing an understanding of the world around them. Sharon explains how her family influenced her non-dichotomous mentality:

My family never saw that there was any conflict with my being strongly identified as American and with being Filipino. Strongly identified with two very different families, and with two very different countries. So for me there was never any reason to draw lines, because that's the environment I was raised in. Which I think is very different from a lot of people who are mixed race and then raised to try and pass as one or the other. And those kinds of people I think, have a much more boxed in take on the world. So when I first started to figure out that I was bi, I think it was more "oh, okay, this makes sense". You know, it was not like, "on my god, I can only be one thing". Because I've never actually been only one thing. So I think it had a huge influence.

From early on in her childhood, Sharon was taught to be inclusive of her diverse history and therefore was not exposed to a conflicted choice between loyalties that some multiracials face. She did not "draw lines" between her different heritages, and when she came out as bi she recognized the similarity to her racial identity and did not perceive a conflict necessitating a choice between the two. Eve also discusses how she viewed on her racial identity as fluid, which helped her understand and accept bisexuality as a natural development for herself:

My view of race was fluid because my mother's Vietnamese and my dad's Irish American...I can't choose between the two, they're both a part of my life. And I can have both, that's okay. When it came to identifying as bisexual I was like, well that make sense too. They're both part of my life so it's okay, you know, it makes perfect sense. It totally fell in line with my politics. Cause I was very diehard about multiracial, biracial identity, and being bisexual was like, "oh duh". Like, it makes sense...I mean, I think because my identity politics racially were so strongly developed that it just made perfect sense in terms of taking on a queer identity, a natural part of my political fight of my daily life, It didn't seem outrageous at all...Before I got together with a woman I was beginning to strongly identify as Asian American and I strongly identified as bisexual. So if that was fluid then why wouldn't sexuality be fluid? And I recognized that I was heterosexized, like totally heterosexized, all the way up through high school, you know. And if I'd been exposed to queer women I think I would have figured it out a lot earlier.

While Sharon placed the development of bisexuality in the context of her open-mindedness about multiracial identity, Eve placed the two into a political context in

which they overlapped harmoniously. Karin discusses how one process of identity formation led to the other:

You feel in some ways like you have to be one race or the other, or you're split in half, and in trying to bring the two races together I was able at the same time to bring my sexual orientation together, to identify as bi. And I thought the two were complementary. The process of going through understanding my ethnic identity made me question so much about every aspect of my life that it also kinda forced me to question the way that I was dealing with relationships and sexual relationships and what made me happy and all that. I think dealing with my ethnic identity kinda brought me to dealing with my sexual identity. It kind of lead me to that. I definitely dealt with my ethnic identity first. Cause it was easier, I was surrounded by a lot of really, really down and progressive people of color, but they were all straight, so I definitely dealt with that first. And then as I got to know more queer people, that came into question.

Both Eve and Karin discuss the ways in which people undergoing a similar process influenced their identity formation. Karin was around progressive people of color, while Eve was active in Asian American organizations. Sharon, Eve, and Karin all describe how their identities were intertwined through the development process. In Karin's case there was a direct correlation, since it was through her process of understanding her racial identity that she questioned her sexual identity and thus came out as bisexual. Eve and Sharon state that their understanding of their racial identities were fairly developed, and when later they questioned their sexual identity they automatically related it to their racial identity and saw the two as compatible.

The second theme is exemplified in the cases of Lani, Sabrina, and Puanani, whose identity formation processes were parallel but not as integrated as were those of Eve, Karin and Sharon. Puanani and Sabrina both express that being multiracial made them more open-minded in general. However the formation of their sexual and racial identities were fairly separate. For Lani, sexual identity first politicized her, and later sparked more understanding of her racial identity.

Puanani discusses how being multiracial in Hawaii made her open to diverse people:

When I was a kid I had more discrimination towards me because I was also white rather than Hawaiian. I learned that I had to be more full of pride, and I wanted to acknowledge myself as whole...It opened my mind, people weren't just one thing, they were made up of a whole bunch of things that came from everywhere. And it's the same nationality wise...I realized that everything's not always one way and I knew gay people, and I had no judgement for them. They were just people too, being a different sexuality could be totally related to being

a different race. And I just didn't filter out anybody or anything regardless of race or sexuality, or religion, anything.

Because of her experiences of racial discrimination growing up, Puanani did not herself discriminate against others. She developed pride in her diverse ethnic heritage and related this to other ways in which people are diverse, such as sexuality or religion. Sabrina also believes her multiracial heritage made her more open-minded, yet since her sexuality did not come into play until later, they have become separate experiences in her life:

I think that it's made me more accepting of people and where they're coming from in general. Because I want them to also be non-ignorant and realized that I can be more than one race also, instead of just making assumptions about looks. I guess in that way it's made me a little bit more open minded about sexual identities, they're somewhat intertwined. But they definitely have their own space in my personality and my life.

Lani also experienced different processes of dealing with her sexual and racial identity and believes that her racial identity made her open-minded to being around diverse people. Her racial identity changed throughout her lifetime; as a child she was proud and pro-active about celebrating her diverse heritages, yet as she grew older it became less central in her life "cause I pass for white" and therefore "my sexual identity got me politicized in a personal way, way more than if I didn't pass, then racism would have been much more in my face as an issue". Race was not a central issue in her life after her childhood. Instead she displaced her ethnic identity upon her mother and sister, who did not pass for white. "I distanced myself from my mother and my sister, I started to hear what I was saying, my *mother* is Hawaiian, or my *sister* this, and when did I let go of that? Cause I use to be really proud growing up". However she does feel that her mixed heritage gave her the ability to see complexity:

I think my mixed heritage and being raised with so many different cultures, because I had really strong Hawaiian, Japanese, Irish cultural stuff going on at home, helped me see the world in a very complex, diverse way. In some ways I think it allowed me to be more open to the complexities of everything, including sexuality...But it was like, the sexual identity and gender, being a woman, that I got radicalized with feminism. And the racism piece came later when I really started working on (writing). I thought I was going to write a piece on lesbian chauvinism and I wrote instead about (racially) passing. That's what came up and I had no idea that was going to happen.

Sexual identity opened the door for Lani to once again deal with her racial identity as an adult. Indeed, she was working on a writing project about her bisexuality when she instead wrote about being mixed heritage. In this way she began to understand both identities as similar, and her sexual identity opened the path to becoming more inclusive and politicized about her ethnic heritage.

The third theme shows that for some interviewees, their identity developments were separate processes and did not directly overlap. This was the experience of Lucki, Steph and Janet. While their identity formation process did not overlap they could recognize similar problems. Lucki's racial identity was a family process developed along with her parents and siblings, through family trips to Chile, visits to her Chinese family in California, and learning Spanish from her parents and a few Chinese words from her grandmother. Her sexual identity, on the other hand was a personal process, and she came at both from different directions:

They were pretty different processes for me I guess. Like the racial thing had a lot to do with my family, and was much more a group process in terms of coming to terms with what we are. It was very much me and my sister. And even my mom to some degree, because she didn't really recognize herself as Asian...Whereas my sexuality was definitely much more of a personal thing and a much more individual thing. So I came to them from really different places.

Due to racism she experienced upon migrating from Guam to Washington, Steph did not want to come out as queer because she did not want to be discriminated against on yet another terrain:

If anything, when I started to consciously label myself bisexual, the first thing that I felt was, "god, not another one". You know, god, I'm a woman and I'm dealing with this crap and I'm API, but I'm not a hundred percent API, so I'm not really looked on as API by people who are up here who are API. But I'm not looked on as white. I didn't want to deny it, but I was like, "god". This is why I'm not really out to a lot of people, especially people of color, especially in my culture. Because I mean it's hindered me. Me being bisexual, it's hindered me being out and openly defining myself as bisexual. And openly questioning my sexuality because I have enough to deal with in being who I am. It's just easier if I like boys. But I take the hard road, I guess.

Steph's racial identity was also, a family event that she went through with her parents and three sisters, while her sexuality distanced her from her family.

Janet also had very different experiences in relation to her racial and sexual identities. Though strangers asked if she was mixed race throughout her childhood, her mother did not tell her so until she was sixteen, raising her to believe she was

Chinese until then. She came out as bisexual around eighteen or nineteen. But discovering that she was biracial and coming out as bisexual were very different because of the extreme circumstances. Therefore, she does not believe that her racial identity opened her to questioning her sexuality or that there is a direct link between the two. She does see similarities between them, however:

She (her mother) didn't tell me I was biracial. Not until I kept getting a lot of comments like, "oh you look really mixed"...Mostly I identify as Singaporean so that I don't have to deal with the biracial thing. I just say Singaporean over her (U.S.). I kind of have to handle the bisexual thing more over here.

While she identifies as Singaporean and as Chinese in the U.S., she identifies as Eurasian in Singapore. Her bisexuality becomes a private matter in Singapore, whereas in the U.S. she is most politically active around her sexual identity. Her identities "flip-flop" when she crosses national lines: in the U.S. she "closets" her biraciality and is out with her bisexuality; in Singapore she is out as biracial yet more reserved about her sexuality. She explains:

They're kind of the same. Cause in Singapore, when I identify as Eurasian I get more privilege immediately. My friend says I'm making use of my white side, but not that I'm making use of it, it just comes to me naturally. And then with my bisexuality I can easily hide behind my heterosexual side. Like in a way they're the same.

Regardless of whether their racial and sexual identity formation processes were similar or different, all of the participants understood or defined themselves in terms of both, or rather all, of their identities, though one may be prioritized in certain settings. While all understood their bisexual and biracial/multiracial identities as compatible, complementary, and/or overlapping, they felt that they were confusing to or "problematized" by outsiders. As Steph states:

I like to think they're compatible but I don't think everyone else agrees with me...It works for me but I think it confuses people...In my experience so far, being biracial, the term "sitting on the fence" has come up every now and then, people want you to choose a side...(They say) "Just choose API, don't confuse up with all the other breakdown". As for being bisexual, well yeah, there is a matter of "choose a side", you know, choose a way and go that way and don't confuse us about being bisexual. I think there are similarities. The only big difference is that one I choose to tell people and the other I have no choice.

Karin is also aware of how outsider influence shifts the focus of her “identity constellation” to either one or the other, without necessarily making her feel that she must “choose a side”, as Steph feels pressured to do. Her identities are compatible in her own mind, although she realizes this might contradict other people’s conceptualization:

I think being biracial and bisexual is compatible. Definitely. I identify with them together cause that’s what I am. But usually, I’m only ever questioned or having to deal with one or the other. Like someone wants to know what ethnicity I am, but they aren’t thinking about what my sexual orientation is. Or people will ask if I am bi, but they’re not really (thinking about my race). But this is the first time I’ve had to sit down and try and combine a discussion about the two of them. I’ve talked a lot about one, and I’ve talked a lot about the other. I’ve dealt with it. I feel fine with it. I think they’re complimentary. They work together just great for me. I don’t feel conflicted about it. I mean, I don’t know how the rest of the world see it...

Eve also believes that her identities are perfectly compatible, and only on other people’s terms do conflicts arise:

Personally I feel they’re compatible cause it makes the most sense- biracial...bisexual! Are they at odds? Sure, within the straight community they’re at odds, within the queer community they’re at odds, within people of color communities they’re at odds, within the white community, so on somebody else’s terms they’re at odds, but I’m perfectly comfortable with it...So there’s this leave it at the door politics in every community.

Lani also sees the outside pressure either to choose between identities themselves or to pick a side within a bisexual or biracial identity. However, she values the similar complexity or fluidity between her racial and sexual identities because it challenges paradigms based upon either or models:

I actually think that the racial/sexual identities are not at odds but they’re totally compatible. And the whole bisexual piece- the complexity of both is very similar. It challenges that either-or of both and they really go hand in hand. The experience is really similar. Cause people want you to choose. They want you to simplify and you can’t. I can’t do that. Cause life isn’t simple...I define myself with both. Because of the complexity stuff I like to combine them because it challenges two paradigms. Two paradigms in one.

Puanani alludes to this outside pressure to conform to a more “acceptable” norm when she states that her identities “don’t change for anybody else, whatever I am”. She says “I don’t really feel like either of them confine me”, concluding with a slight contradiction, “regardless of what anyone tell me I am or what I should be, I’m gonna be me”. This outside pressure from individuals, identity-based organizations, or identity politics literature, is a very real factor in the lives of the participants, several of whom mention it as they discuss *their* identity.

From a different perspective, however, Sharon and Sabrina explain what they have gained by being inclusive and pro-active around their identities. Sharon states:

I think that they’re pretty perfect together...In terms of being mixed and bi, some people ask me about it and I explain that being mixed made me more open to figuring out that I am bi...I’ve not gained or lost anything by telling people I was mixed. I think I would have lost if I had decided that I had to choose one. I would have lost a lot. It would have been like saying that I’m not one of my parents child.

Sabrina believes that by being out and vocal about her multiple identities she can create an alternate history for herself and at the same time validate other women who may be in a similar position. She elaborates:

I’m like a hodge-podge of stuff so my sexual and racial identities are not apart from each other. It’s all a part of me, they just co-exist...I think they’re pretty compatible and in fact I think they’re kind of on the same level in terms of developing. Because I’m political with both of them. And in a way I’m trying to create an alternate history for myself and maybe for other women who also feel the same way, by validating the bisexuality, the fluidity of sexuality, by the multiraciality. I can be a whole person with both of these things that aren’t cut and dried like other people would like. And being very out about that and very vocal. So developing that is very similar on both sides of those spectrums.

Yet in this passage, Sabrina still mentions how “other people” view or expect identity to be “cut and dry”. She is therefore compelled to react against this pressured expectation in her own discussion about her identity. The cultural understanding of dichotomous single identities compels the interviewees to mention and react against that expectation or to describe how that perspective influences their own understanding of self. The ideologies that deem bisexuals and multiracials as “deviant” in some form or other act as a powerful force in their lives. Sabrina states “I can be a whole person with both of these things”, which apparently some people doubt if she is moved to make such a statement. How does bisexuality or multiraciality make one less than a whole person? Apparently the interviewees have

engaged in this discussion so extensively that this ideology has infused their own self-understanding.

The bi-bi girls find their identities compatible and integrated. They define themselves in relation to their position outside narrow categories as equally as they define themselves as bisexual-biracials. They use terms such as “hodge-podge”, “mixed” and “queer” to describe their complexity. They have difficulties with other people’s perceptions of them, their misunderstandings, and their demands for simplification or explanation. This conflict will be analyzed further in the next section in which the interviewees discuss their relationships to established and defined identity-based organizations, other individuals, and their own personal communities. Their position on the fluidity of identity challenges the established modernist paradigms based on single, core, and static identity, and holds the potential to create a new theory of identity and community.

Summary

The way that I feel about myself is that I do not have to be one or the other. I don’t think I’m made to be one or the other. I think that they way I’m made, whoever made me, and how many people up there made me, I don’t think intended me to have to be one or the other.

-- Steph

This section has looked at the concepts that the bi-bi girls use to understand their sexual and racial identities. The participants have constructed an alternate view of identity based upon their own subject position, one that integrates fluid, non-static, and evolutionary processes they employ in their own identity formation and self-understanding. This has infused many aspects of their lives including the ways that they understand identity, their use of identity labels, and their perspectives on identity based groups.

In this section, the participants relate their understanding of feminism, their bisexual and biracial identity, and the interplay between these two identities. Many expressed some reservations about feminist identity politics based on their continued absence within the literature that has been framed around the concept of diversity and difference. While feminist literature discusses the need to understand how different identity locations influence women’s material and psychological lives, the bi-bi girls rarely see their own reality included. Therefore some have claimed the feminist label with reservations, some have claimed different labels that they feel are more inclusive of their ethnicity and sexuality, and some continue to identify as feminist while advocating for a more diverse base.

The interviewees perceive themselves as remaining outside of established parameters of accepted identity categories. This gave them the freedom to define themselves based on their own understanding, by either adopting different labels to

describe their diversity, or to drop simple labels and explain themselves in other descriptive terms. Yet the ability to remain “out-side of the box” was also accompanied by other people’s misunderstandings which they felt the need to address. Outside opinions that categorized bisexual or multiracial identity as “deviant” and failed to understand fluid or complex identity deeply affected all participants. As they described themselves, they would discuss how outsiders perceived them and incorporate that analysis within their own definitions, if only to rebuff those perspectives.

The interviewees had different experiences in their identity formation process, yet general themes emerged such that their self-understanding were similar. For some, their sexual and racial identity processes were integrated, for others they were parallel, and for still others they were divergent experiences with conceptual similarities. All of the interviewees viewed their identities as complementary, overlapping, and integrated to the point where some identified as much with their position of being “outside the box”, or identified as being “the middle ground”. Their understanding of identity can certainly add to the ongoing discussions within identity politics and perhaps, create an opening in which their voice can emerge. To conclude, I quote Sabrina who discusses the need for bi-bi girl visibility:

We just really need to be visible. And that's the last thing that I want to mention. We need to be more vocal, we need to be more out there and more visible. Whether that be in writing or through speaking or whatever, just so that people start realizing that there are other groups out there besides just lesbian and straight, or lesbian and gay, or Chinese and white. There are mixes in between and not just one definition of what multiracial means, or what multiracial people look like. I mean that is so important because when people think of a multiracial person, they might think of just a half and half person. People also need to realize that there are a lot of different people out there who are different and who are multiracial but who are made up of different mixes than just half and half. And sexuality also needs to be seen as more fluid and that it can't be just categorized as just gay or straight. So it's very important for us to be really visible so that people can see that we exist.

Community

I know that I don't belong to “a” community. I belong to communities, because there are different communities that incorporate different parts of my identity and my being and there are some that incorporate more of those parts than others (Bisexual Anthology Collective 215).

I joined the people of color caucus and for the first time felt that there was something really wonderful about being bisexual. Finally there were people like me! People who understood me exactly as myself, instead of trying to relate to only a fragmented part of me (Som, "Queer Kitchen" 87).

"Community" is a word often connected to identity politics, such as the "lesbian community", the "African American community", the "women's community", and even the "bisexual community", to name a few examples. Yet what is meant by "community" is rarely discussed or defined within the realm of identity politics. It is disturbing that this word is in constant use yet never defined and that its implications are rarely understood. "Community" is used within identity politics writing to express the assumption that because a group shares an identity based upon race, sexuality, or gender, to give some examples, they share a community in which they can live and/or work together. This ideal works better for some more than others. When the words "identity" or "community" are evoked, a homogenizing process begins in which individuals are expected to forsake difference for the sake of the coherency of the community. Within an identity based community, those that differ from the "group platform" are silenced internally or externally, they are branded as a traitor of sorts, or they are given token status to speak for "difference," yet they remain unheard (Uttal 317-320). Trinh T. Minh-ha questions the use of "difference" within identity politics:

Many of us still hold on to the concept of difference not as a tool of creativity to question multiple forms of repression and dominance, but as a tool of segregation, to exert power on the basis of racial and sexual essences. The apartheid of difference...Furthermore, where should the dividing line between outsider and insider stop? How should it be defined? By skin color, by language, by geography, by nation or by political affinity? What about those, for example, with hyphenated identities and hybrid realities? (372-374).

Trinh argues that difference is generally used as "a tool of segregation"; however, she implies that it can instead be a "tool of creativity" if used "properly," which is a meaningful concept for the situation of bisexual-biracial women who aspire to join a "community". Identity based communities were complex and problematic for the interviewees in this study precisely because the concept of "community" was not based upon their realities but upon an "unspoken" norm incompatible with their position. The question is, why do identity based communities work so well for some and not for others? I argue that these communities were created for and by individuals with "single identities". Those who fit this model will be smoothly integrated into these communities, while those with multiple identities

will have a rougher transition and either “silence” their difference or exclude themselves to some degree. Those who transition smoothly into these communities will be hard pressed to understand why others have rougher transitions because that process will be invisible within *their* realities.

María Lugones contributes another useful concept, the “world”-traveler, for the bisexual-biracial women:

It seems to me that inhabiting more than one “world” at the same time and “traveling” between “worlds” is part and parcel of our experience and our situation...The shift from being one person to being a difference person is what I call “travel”. This shift may not be willful or even conscious, and one may be completely unaware of being different than one is in a different “world” (396).

For Lugones, “loving perception” is the key to “traveling” to another’s world, creating the ability to identify by perceiving them as they perceive themselves and understanding how one is perceived by them (394). Her third key concept is “playfulness”:

...an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight (400-1).

By employing Trinh’s and Lugones’ concepts, of the creative powers of difference, “world”-traveling, playfulness, and loving perception, we can begin to understand the relationship between identity-based communities and the bisexual-biracial women participants. By analyzing the ways in which “community” is constructed we can begin to envision new alternatives that are not only inclusive, but progressive and active.

This section discusses the relationships of the participants to different communities based upon identity politics and reformulates the concept of community in the ways mentioned above. I envision a move away from further segregation or additive models that appear to be the current way in which difference is “managed”. I argue that difference is not something to be “managed” or added on to an original base, but can act as a force that revolutionizes identity politics. This section analyzes the experiences of the bisexual-biracial women in identity-based communities which have been problematic because of the original “single identity” model upon which they are based. I will then explore the ways in which these women have formulated their own communities and investigate whether they can serve as a new model for “community”. I will conclude by arguing that the current models of community are insufficient for integrating and using difference creatively and discussing ways in which the concept of “community” can be redefined.

Bisexual-Biracial Women in Identity Based Communities

Paula C. Rust, in analyzing the position of people of color within the “bisexual community”, argues that painful decisions are often associated with the (perceived) necessity of choosing between an ethnic/racial community and the (white) queer community. She points out that of those bisexuals she surveyed the Euro-Americans drew no connection between their racial identity and their sexual identity nor did they feel their racial background was affected by their sexual identity (“Managing Multiple Identities” 71). However, bisexuals of color reported feelings of marginalization in both communities because they felt compelled to divide themselves along identity lines and leave part of themselves “at the door”. This feeling of division along identity lines was expressed by all nine of the interviewees. It was a rare and valued experience for the interviewees to discover an identity based community which they felt was a near perfect “fit”. Indeed, most communities they participated in could be described as “a bad fit”. Yet this did not deter most from attempting to find one that fit better, and most continued to be involved in identity based communities rather than dropping out entirely.

All participants expressed discontent with the “established” gay and lesbian community for being monolithically white in racial composition which made the participants feel excluded, marginalized, or hostile. Some were more willing to deal with this compared to others. The participants also experienced biphobia within the gay and lesbian community, also a disincentive for involvement. Lucki, who lives near a large and established lesbian community on the East Coast, stated that “it’s really white, it’s really lesbian and it’s really separatist. None of which really work for me.” She describes it as “not necessarily a welcoming place for me” both because she has “very little tolerance for people who are clueless about racial stuff” and because she values men as “a part of my life.” This discontent was also expressed by Sabrina who feels that the lesbian and gay community organization in which she has been involved “doesn’t address my needs if I were to support these white queer things, you know, like the white women groups.” She felt they were intolerant of her racial identity and her bisexuality:

They [white women] are the ones who are the most critical of people who are, you know, who are more fluid with their sexuality or maybe who are bi identified. Like they aren’t very tolerant of that and um, that’s just from my own experience, and it seems to me that the women of color, you know, whether they’re mixed, with white blood as well or um, whatever background they are, they’re a lot more tolerant...And so they seem to be more tolerant of people’s identities no matter what they want to identify as and also tolerant of their issues. You know, I mean it’s just such a turn off, like I’ve been so turned off with white women groups, a lot of groups have been

dominated by white women who say that they're speaking for us and they're just not.

Rust captures the tone of this conflict between lesbians and bisexual women in Bisexuality and the Challenge to Lesbian Politics: Sex, Loyalty and Revolution, which is based upon surveys of both lesbian and bisexual women. Yet for these interviewees, the lesbian/bisexual tension was simply one conflict among many. Rust was unable to capture the racial dimensions because her sample itself was ninety-two percent white, with only 3.4 percent African American, two percent "Indian," with the rest belonging to "other racial groups" (42).

It appears as if the "bi-bi girls" were guests rather than actual participants or members in "established" lesbian and gay community groups and organizations. Steph felt that "in the LGBA there's a lot of pressure for bisexuals to choose one side, you know. Just to make a choice and be simple. Because it's confusing people again." She connects this to being biracial and feeling pressured to make a choice. Lani's and Puanani's relationship to the lesbian community was somewhat different because each had previously identified as lesbian. Puanani encountered difficulty dealing with coming out as bisexual "because I was part of the lesbian community for so long":

It's the lesbian community, you know. They just- generally speaking they don't like, what they call, you know, fence-sitters. They hate it, I don't know why- what threatens, what intimidates them so much because they fight so much for their own rights for acceptance and diversity and yet when it happens in their own community all of a sudden they're not up for it, you know.

And Lani describes her feeling of being "pushed" out of the community after she came out as bi:

When they (lesbians) fall in love with men-they leave. And uh, I didn't want to leave cause it was my community, so...I didn't. I stayed out and became the professional bisexual in San Francisco, the professional bisexual in the lesbian community in San Francisco in the early '80's. Um, and it's hard, I think that the history of lesbian and bisexual women and why there is so much push pull mistrust hurtful stuff- a lot of it's internalized misogyny...I think that if I would have had bisexual role models in the '70's I may not come out as a lesbian. I would have called myself bisexual. But that wasn't like, an option in the circles I was in.

Lani somewhat forcefully retained her position within the lesbian community and became the "professional bisexual in the lesbian community"; Eve similarly "railroaded" her way into the community. She describes the process in detail:

I mean, I think, like it was very difficult when I was in school the organization was LGBA, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance, it was run by four white guys, right. And so a bunch of women of color came together and we kinda had a coup, basically, and we were like, "you need women representation in leadership, you need representation from women of color, you need representation by bisexuals in the leadership." So we created this four chair leadership position that would be, you know, so there was always gonna be at least one woman, one bisexual, and one person of color, and then, if the other one was a man, it was a man, but there would be at least those seats represented. Um, and it was horrible, all the men stopped coming, right, and then, my friend and I actually, the next year got dumped with the organization. They're like, "hey, anyone want to chair the organization? You're the only two here, alright, it's you guys." So we changed the name because of all the drama and the history behind it, and it was very clear that it was, they felt that it was an attack, right, these crazy women of color bitches that come out of nowhere throwing a coup, saying, "we need to be represented as bisexual, as women of color...". Like, um, so yeah, I mean, it's always been like, as a person of color or as biracial in the queer community, or as bisexual, you know, it's come up a lot. Just coming up against a wall. Like, I have all this queer literature but I don't feel represented. You don't read, like, erotica about some rad hapa woman, comes walking down the street and the girl's like, "ahh, yes, I want to fuck her." Like, it just doesn't happen. If anything, women of color, specifically Asian women in the queer community are totally exotified, and biraciality is just not understood. In terms of bisexuality, only super recently, has it been really difficult. Cause I predominately dated women for the last three and a half years. And I was dating a boy and I've been so strongly queer identified that folks were like, "oh my god, I didn't know you were bisexual". Or like, "I didn't know that you dated men." People were fucking shocked. Like folks that I hadn't talked to in like two or three years... "hey, what are you up to, what are you doing?" I'm like, "oh, well, I quit doing drugs and I'm dating a boy." (*Laughs*). They're like, "oh my god! Are you okay! Like, what happened?"

By actively demanding representation for women of color and bisexuals, Eve ultimately destroyed the LGBA at her college, which illustrates the tensions generated by the issue of representation within the gay and lesbian community. I quote her at length because of the way in which she incorporates the differing levels of marginalization she faces within such communities. She states that Asian women are exotified, biraciality is not understood, and bisexuality is overlooked. When she demands recognition for these identities she provokes shocked reactions or is labeled "crazy" because these issues have previously gone unrecognized.

Race and bisexuality represent the location of exclusion for the participants in their relation to lesbian and gay communities. They stress that their issues around their racial/ethnic and bisexual identities are often marginal to representation and to the central concerns of these established activist organizations. Therefore, it might be assumed that these women would either seek out additional communities based on their racial/ethnic and bisexual identities, or choose those communities over involvement within the lesbian and gay communities. In fact, the majority of the participants were involved in several organizations based upon their different identities over time. All of the interviewees stated that they themselves see their identities as connected, and yet the organizations in which they have participated are fragmented across demarcated lines of sexuality and race, which could lead to the internalization of this division. How does this contradiction affect the interviewees' participation within identity based organizations or their own self-understanding?

With the exception of Lani, who became "the professional bisexual in the lesbian community" as well as a prominent figure in the bisexual community, none of the participants related significant involvement in bisexual organizations. Most have gone back and forth between lesbian and gay organizations and race/ethnicity based groups, some of which have not been mutually exclusive and some of which have been. Janet, for example, got involved in a bisexual organization when she first came out but quickly moved on to other groups with which she felt more affinity:

When I first started coming out...I didn't know where to go. So I went to mostly mainstream bisexual meetings and stuff like that. It's mostly all very white American and ...some of them had more polygamous ways of living their lives and so I couldn't really identify with a lot of them. But as soon as I started moving towards other directions, like um, I started joining more Asian women's stuff. Then I saw it's different.

Finding an organization that was inclusive of both her racial and sexual identity was an improvement over "white American" bisexual organizations for Janet, and this is where she began to concentrate her energy. Karin's experience upon coming out was similar to Janet's, each of whom began to attend predominantly white queer groups to which they did not completely relate. Karin explains:

As I was trying to figure it all out, when I would go to gay and lesbian meetings, I would be the only person of color in the room sometimes. And that made me feel like, I don't know, it made me feel like I don't really identify with these people, you know. And not being able to identify with this quote unquote community made it harder for me to identify in some ways. So that's kinda a way that racism kinda helped keep me in the closet. Because there wasn't people around me who were of color and queer. At least earlier on, until I started meeting some more folks.

Since the white racial dominance of these meetings made “it harder for me to identify in some ways,” Karin was less willing to come out if that meant joining a predominantly white organization and remaining one of the few people of color in the room. The positive aspect of relating to individuals who shared a similar sexual orientation did not mitigate her frustration at being unable to share a similar racial identity, and she felt unable to participate to a more meaningful extent.

Steph relates a very similar story of involvement in her campus organization:

I’ve gone to a couple LGBA meetings...this quarter...It’s (Washington) and I can’t get away from the fact that I’m going to be the only, one of the few brown people in the room. But I can’t leave my ethnicity at the door, you know, I can’t stop being, I can’t wake up and be like, I’m going to be a woman today. I wake up and say, okay, I’m bisexual today.

B: Do you think you have to at these groups?

S: I think I do. At least I felt that way when I went to the meeting. I got the same kind of vibe that I get when I’m in a classroom full of European American students and then me. I become the representative for everybody. And I hate that feeling and I mean, god, isn’t there a place I can go and not get that feeling and not get the feeling that I’m the only person who’s bisexual?

Steph expresses the contradictions that exist between the ways in which she desires to relate to people on several levels and the ways in which this ability is hindered by the makeup of the organizations. In her experiences with identity based groups, she often experiences the “single identity focus” and therefore she feels as if she must leave a part of her “at the door”. Within the LGBA her ethnic and bisexual identity may be ignored or demeaned, and within racial groups she feels her biraciality and bisexuality are misunderstood or actively excluded. She explains how she feels unable to disclose her sexual identity to her friends of color:

...Especially within my cultures, and especially with people of color that I consider friends, and I mix with, I know that it would make them very uncomfortable and I can’t come out to them. A lot of my friends of color are very Christian, so there’s a definite aspect there, of homophobia...

She continues to describe the ways in which she consistently feels pressure to hide a part of her identity “in a suitcase”:

Bisexuality is more of an issue with my friends of color. Whereas my ethnicity is an issue with my bisexual friends. Because the majority of my gay friends and bisexual friends, and I don’t always separate them

but for this purpose, are white. And the majority of my friends who are biracial or of color, either aren't telling me anything or are straight. And so there's this weird flip flop that wherever I go there's just some part of me that I know I have to put in a suitcase or leave it at the door. It is a little frustrating.

Ironically, Janet expresses a "flip-flop" directly opposite to Steph's: "it's funny because since I've been working at the Asian community so much here that most of my queer friends are Asian and then all my straight friends are white." Though these two "flip-flops" are exact opposites, they are also mirror images. Geographical location may be the key element in this equation. Janet resides in the Bay Area where there are large percentages of Asian/ Pacific Islanders, racial/ethnic diversity and lesbian, gays and bisexuals; Steph on the other hand resides in Washington State where non-white racial/ethnic minorities represent approximately five percent of the entire state population and racial/ethnic communities are most pronounced in larger cities.

Several participants discuss feeling more affinity with and connection to racial/ ethnic based communities or organizations. This points to a key difference in the comparisons between racial identity and sexual identity. In identity politics theory, comparisons between these identities consistently draw upon the concept of "visibility". Visibility--of race, gender, sexuality, "class", individual mannerism, or self-decoration-- can be a fundamental identification marker for individuals and communities. However, there is no fast rule about which of these will take central importance. Steph gives an example of this indeterminacy:

"I think it depends who I'm with. If I'm with someone who doesn't know that I'm bisexual and is of color then I have to do that (remain silent). Um, obviously my friends who are bisexual or gay know I'm a person of color but it's not something we talk about".

Although sexual identity and racial identity are revealed in different ways, neither should be ranked nor given different levels of significance as they often are in debates around identity. The "appearance" of racial identity is written more obviously upon the body for most-- but, significantly, not all--of the participants. In contrast the "appearance" of sexual identity was more subdued for the interviewees; therefore, they retained more control over revealing or concealing that aspect. Nevertheless, several of the participants felt they could "pass as white," which challenged some to prove their ethnicity and (re)claim with difficulty their ethnic heritage. Overall, however, because of the heightened "visibility" of racial identity over sexual identity (to state it in a simplistic and generalizing manner), the interviewees felt more included within racial/ethnic organizations in which they "look like everybody else" than in gay and lesbian organizations where they share a more covert identity yet stand out physically.

This sentiment was expressed by many of the participants. Physical appearance is an important issue for mixed race individuals because of the array of assumptions and expectations they elicit from others. Karin explains:

I feel really comfortable around them because it's like, when you're Sri Lankan there's so few of you you're always stoked to meet another Sri Lankan...Because they want to have a tight knit community but there's really not much of a community so they always pull you in and totally embrace you...And I would say though, the community I'm around the most, that I'm probably most comfortable with, just because I'm most familiar with it is the Latino community...A lot of my friends are Latino and I speak the language, and usually they think I am (Latina) until I tell them otherwise. So I'm very embraced by that community too.

In this passage Karin discusses key points of identification based on racial identity: appearance, language, and ethnic heritage. She is embraced by Sri Lankans because of their shared ethnicity and she is "most comfortable" with Latinos because of a shared language and appearance. Whereas Karin is white and Sri Lankan yet "passes" as Latina, Lucki is Chilean and Chinese and "passes" as Asian which influences her relationship to different ethnic communities. As she states:

I mean a part of it is, I look Asian. I totally pass. People do not think I'm mixed when they meet me. So when I go somewhere new, people assume that I'm Asian and I get sucked into that group really fast...More of my friends out here (the East Coast) are Latino. Most the people in California are Chicano, which is really different from being South American. So I don't have a lot in common with those people. I mean I'm pretty tight with some people in the Latino community but I think I'm much more a part of the API community in San Francisco than I am in the Latino community there.

Though theoretically Lucki is equally able to identify with either an API or Latino community, her choice is altered by her physical appearance which dictates outsiders' expectations about her racial heritage and, thus, acceptance within specific communities. She describes being "sucked into" the API groups because of her appearance, and states that she doesn't have "a lot in common" with Chicanos because of her different ethnic heritage. Similarly, Sharon discusses how "ethnicity tests," that are often placed upon mixed race individuals, divide people and make building "a sense of community" difficult:

Some people have made me feel as if I kind of had to prove that I was half Asian for the way that I look. I mean there's a lot of stuff about passing and skin color and eye shape and cheek bone and height and

all that kind of stuff that plays into identification as a community. That is only half discussed. Sometimes I think that I've imposed the feeling that I need to prove it, and that it actually had nothing to do with the people that I was talking to...Where it got very bizarre was when I was talking to people who were fully Filipino ethnically and had never actually been back to the island. And so we got into these strange discussions about which would make you more Filipino. And like, what is "more Filipino"? Like whether you know what it smell like there or if you can speak Tagalog and whether you look Filipino while you're in the United States. You know, it's kind of been a constant discussion and it's one that I don't dismiss but it makes it hard when you're trying to build a sense of community.

The interviewees still faced difficulties with acceptance in monoracial organizations; as Eve points out: "people are already questioning my Asian American identity because I'm biracial...sometimes you don't even want to mention 'oh and I'm gay!'" Yet the majority of them expressed preference for racial/ethnic groups over the white queer community.

Bisexual-biracial women face fragmentation along lines of identity within mono-identity based organizations and communities. Every participant desired communities that were accepting, responsible, and pro-active on all their issues. These organizations fell short of that requirement because of their foundation on single identities and issues. Therefore, the interviewees were compelled to foster communities on their own terms, based on their multiple-identity location and the politics that stem from it, often cutting across lines of gender, sexuality, race, and class.

Biracial-Bisexual Women Construct Their Communities

A "sisterhood" that I want to belong to allows me to be different and still be able to work together. To this sisterhood, I will bring my individual history, listen to others' stories and know that we are building a foundation together (Uttal 320).

As shown in the previous section, the bisexual-biracial interviewees reported varied complaints about their position within single identity based organizations. These identity based groups strive for homogeneity in both representation and perspective. This homogeneity is at odds with the position of the biracial-bisexual women because their own individual identities embody border crossing and hybrid existence. Therefore the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with established identity based organizations and desired communities build on different models.

This section explores the dynamics of how the bi-bi girls construct, understand, and participate in their own communities. The previous section has shown that most of the interviewees have belonged to single identity organizations. Some continued to work within them either marginally (or more integrated, becoming “world-travelers”) or continued to seek out organizations that more fully addressed their needs and concerns. Over half of the participants had been involved in queer Asian American women’s organizations, which represented the site at which they felt the least conflict and the most inclusion. Each constructed personal communities comprised of diverse arrays of individuals across race, sexuality, gender, and personal interests. These communities reflect a model based upon alliance, which as Papusa Molina states, “are about individuals, they are about love, they are about commitment and they are about responsibility” (329). I argue that this model should form the basis of identity politics because it connects people across socially constructed divisions while *responsibly* promoting difference and acceptance and establishing methods of fighting against oppression from all subject locations.

Seven of the participants had been involved with queer Asian/Pacific Islander groups and organizations to some degree. Only two of the participants did not have this connection, probably due to lack of access. Steph articulated her desire to find such a community: “when I heard about your project, I’m like, there’s bisexual-biracial women? Oh my god, where are they? I was like, could I move to somewhere they are, where are they? Is there a colony somewhere, cause it just blew me away. Totally blew me away.” She had no knowledge of the existence of queer Asian/Pacific Islander women’s organizations, and certainly desired them despite her geographical isolation. Puanani was the one other participant who had not been officially involved in such an organization, perhaps because she has spent the majority of her life in Hawaii where she has had access to others who are Hawaiian and/or API and queer.

When asked what communities she felt included within Janet responded that “I feel included in this Singaporean lesbian and bisexual association that I’m a part of”. Because of her involvement within the Asian American community she has made friends with queer API individuals. Karin expressed that attending the Asian Pacific Lesbian Bisexual Network conference was the first time that she “really started feeling a part of a community”. She elaborates:

There were so many biracial women there and there was actually a lot of South Asian women and even a couple that were biracial. And it was like the first time that I was around a lot of Asian queer women. So that was the first time I really felt like part of a community. But for me also to feel a part of a community, it’s not just the fact that we are of the same sexual identity or this identity or that, it also had to do with the politics of it. And the conference was very political and the women that were there were very politically active and conscious and doing different kinds of stuff. So it was the first time I guess, where I had some kind of a sense of community where I felt like there was all

these folks around that I could really identify with. I mean, that's what I see a community as, right? It's folks that you kinda deal with each other on different levels...Because I think the fact that all these Asian women...still had conflicting identities between their ethnic and sexual identities. And so I felt like people there were just a lot more open. They weren't as rigid about one identity or the other. It was like the only time I really felt like I could groove with this group of Asian American folks.

The umbrella queer API organizations were a welcoming space for the bi-bi girls since they were diverse in ethnicity, biraciality, and bisexuality, and yet represented a very specific "identity constellation" that naturally included them within. Sharon mentioned that she "worked for a really long time in an Asian Pacific Islander queer community. And definitely had a good experience there". Lucki was involved with women who later formed a queer API organization in Southern California. Only three women had been involved in queer women's groups that were based upon a single ethnicity and each had felt tension over inclusion. Eve mentioned that "there's this Vietnamese American queer women's group...And I don't feel as comfortable with them because I'm not all Vietnamese, I'm hapa, right?" Sabrina was involved in a New York City-based Filipina lesbian collective. However, her tension with this group stemmed from her recent marriage to a Filipino man. Overall, queer API women's organizations were the formal associations in which these women found the most acceptance for their multiple identities and discovered other like-minded and situated women with whom they could relate. These organizations are broadly inclusive of a vast array of ethnicities and multiracials, they are inclusive of lesbians and bisexuals, and they tend to have progressive politics unifying the group.

The biracial-bisexual women constructed additional, transgressive communities based upon political world views, an open-minded mentality, and personal interests. Even here, though, identity played a central role because identity does represent a similar subject position and therefore manifests similar (life) experiences and understandings. Identity remains an important consideration to them; however, it is less important that identities specifically match. Rather, they prefer to associate with other women of color who have similar politics. For example, one bi-bi girl explained:

I know I feel more at ease with women of color. And especially with women who might be also ethnically Asian-mixed. Just because they might come from a similar background is a little more comforting to me. So it doesn't feel like I have this massive pressure of having to get to know them totally from scratch. You have things you can talk about (Whang 232).

As we see, the interviewees did idealize the concept of meeting women who shared their same "constellation of identities," yet they were also aware that their ability to

connect with individuals crossed identity lines. Therefore, they gave primacy to an open minded mentality and progressive politics as their requirements for individuals with whom they could best connect. They established their circle of friends and made choices about who to date based upon these “requirements”. The logic of identity politics might assume that these women would prefer to seclude themselves within circles of shared identities and thus becoming a small and alienated group. Yet their ability to transgress several identity lines promoted the crossing of socially demarcated lines an open-minded ability to forge alliances and friendships with anyone. Molina points out that the feminist movement has discussed, analyzed, and deconstructed “difference,” yet remains unable to celebrate and accept it due to its emphasis on sameness. Her argument is central to understanding the construction of community for the bi-bi girls:

We have a hard time accepting and celebrating differences. Why? I think it is because we are immersed in a society where “sameness” is venerated as the most desirable quality. It is so internalized that even when we construct alternative organizations, we establish norms and regulations that create just another category of sameness- the politically correct person. We chastise each other if we do not speak the same language, look at society with the same eyes, or even dress and eat the same food. It takes an act of love, then, to recognize, and celebrate our differences (330).

Because of their experiences with single identity organizations, the bi-bi girls are strongly motivated to construct communities that are inclusive of diversity instead of ones rigidly segregated along multiple lines.

This diversity is represented by each interviewees’ history of dating partners. When asked “what races, genders and sexual orientations have your past partners been?” most responded with a joke or quick answer such as “everything! You name it.” Although this was not always the case upon further probing, their response indicates the open-mindedness apparent in their dating practices. As Ani DiFranco sings “I’ve got no criteria for sex or race, I just want to hear your voice, I just want to see your face”. Lucki describes some of her past partners ethnic identities:

I’ve dated Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese, couple of half breeds, one Filipino/white, my Chinese/Vietnamese boyfriend in high school, couple of white guys, one of the white guys was bi. Um, a couple of black guys, black/Latino, black/white mix, pretty much you name it, I’ve dated it. One of my most serious relationships was with one white guy, totally straight white guy, like super WASP, totally embarrassing, we’re actually really good friends still too, which is even more embarrassing. I’ve never dated a white woman. All the dykes have been Asian or black actually.

When asked whether they “prefer to date certain races or genders?” most responded with no preference although several suggested they may gravitate towards certain individuals over others. No one stated that they have “rules” for who they are willing to date. Puanani responded with a simple “no” when asked if she had a preference. Others were more descriptive in their answer; for example, Sharon chose to explain how circumstance influences her dating history:

Historically I’ve dated more men than women. I think that’s partially because it’s easier for me to meet men in a lot of the work that I do and that generally I have many more male friends than I have female friends. Some of that is work and some of it is my academic focus, or just chance, personality, I’m more wry than a lot of people. It’s generally easier to fall into a relationship with a guy than it is to fall into a relationship with a girl. When I was feeling like not having a long term relationship, it was definitely easier for me to have a short term relationship with a guy than with a girl.

While Sharon focused on gender in her answer, others focused on race or related issues. Janet focused on immigration because of her status as a foreign student from Singapore:

I tend to feel more comfortable dating people from Asia. Not people who are born here. Maybe because it’s easier, because they tend to understand me, I don’t have to go through so much effort. Not that I wouldn’t be willing to give it a try...

Steph stated that although she had no preference, she does seek out certain traits over others which alters with time:

I don’t prefer any kind of race, gender wise I haven’t. Sometimes when I go out, and I’m not consciously doing this,... but I’m looking for a woman, you know. Like I’ll go out and I’ll be looking around the room and just looking at the women, you know. And then other times I’ll be looking at men, so it’s not a kind of preference, I guess. I kind of have the feeling I’m going to end up with a woman. But I think that’s because right now I really want to date a woman. You know, I’m looking for a woman right now. But I’m also sleeping with a man, I don’t know how to reconcile that and I don’t think I’m going to try. I don’t think there’s any one I prefer more than the other. And as for race and ethnicity, I don’t care. Um, it’d be nice to find a woman of color who’s bi, or who’s a lesbian that I could date. But demographics. Not many of us up here.

Like Sharon, Steph explains how circumstance plays into her dating pattern.

Several of the women discussed their “ideal” partner, often a queer woman of color, although this is not a “rule”. They desired to date individuals who could relate to their identities and issues, who they concluded would likely be someone with a similar identity. As Karin says:

It’s rare that I find myself attracted to someone who’s white. I can’t really say that I have a strong preference one way or another. I’m probably most comfortable with Latinos for some reason. Because I’m surrounded by them all the time at work and also everyone’s always that I was Latina, and I always have had a lot of Latino friends. So probably I mean towards Latinos, but I don’t really have any hard and fast rules.

Eve has dated people of several races and genders and remains open to dating people regardless of their race and gender, yet she also would love to find a woman who is similar to herself:

Like ideally I would love to meet a revolutionary queer woman of color. But isn’t that all of our dreams (*laughs*). Like, where is she! I want to find her!...If I date anyone they’ve got to be political and I want to date a woman and I want to date a woman of color. And here I ended up dating this straight white guy and everyone’s like, you’re fucked man. I prefer women of color. I do...There’s something so much more exciting and appealing about queer women of color...I would love to meet a revolutionary queer Asian American hapa woman, just like me (*laughs*).

Lucki and Sabrina also expressed a desire to date people who could ultimately relate to their issues; while this does not necessarily require holding a similar identity, would be preferable. Sabrina tells me:

Well for me it just so happens that I always get attracted to people who I feel can relate to me and my issues. Because my issues to me are a very big deal, or not so much they’re a big deal but that they’re important to me. And so it’s been very easy to click with fellow Filipinos but at the same time there are some who are so traditional that I may not want to be with them at all, you know...It’s very attractive to me at first anyhow, to align with people who have similar issues. It would be ideal if it was like, similar backgrounds, similar sexual identities, but it doesn’t always happen that way...

And Lucki simply says “I think that’s also the people I choose to date. I kind of filter people out that I would have to educate”. This is the central theme running throughout all the participants’ discussion of their partner choices. Ultimately, they

“filter out” those they would have to “educate” about their identity issues, seeking instead open minded, educated, and progressive individuals as friends, partners, and comrades. They draw upon Molina’s definition of alliances, to imagine relationships based upon love, commitment and responsibility. They relate to people who take individual responsibility in educating themselves about identity and political issues, who are responsible in their treatment and understanding of others, and understand their own subject position and how that shapes their existence and perspective.

This discussion about who the bi-bi girls date or desire to date attempts to point to the ways that they construct their community. While they do not require specific identities for their partners, they do discuss requirements for specific progressive politics and/or open-mindedness. From this base they create and construct their desired communities. Because of their marginalization and alienation from several identity based organizations, they have realized that identity is only one element among many that are crucial and important when constructing their own personal communities.

New Models for Community Building

The bi-bi girls establish their personal communities based upon an integration of politics, identity based considerations, and open mindedness. However, this contrasts with current established communities based upon identity which leads Karin to state “there’s no group that I feel totally included in”. And Sabrina to ask “where am I suppose to find anything that addresses my sexuality and my ethnic identity?” The bi-bi girls have participated in many organizations based upon different identities, as Eve comments “I have so many different communities.” Therefore what are the ways in which these women have constructed their community? Lucki responds:

My community is something that I define personally...And it’s way more handpicked people who I have commonalities with of some kind or another, whether they be racial or sexual identity based or political or intellectual or artistic...To be perfectly honest I’ve never felt comfortable in a label identified community.

Eve agrees:

...About feeling like you have to choose between those communities...talking about what other communities to identify with, like the artist community, or the student community, or the disabled community, or you know, different political communities. Because I think those are all so integral to someone’s identity.

Lynet Uttal offers an explanation for the disillusionment expressed in these concerns. She points out that “we are limited when we organize women’s groups

around assumed and certain sets of shared experiences” (318). The interviewees are able to exist within the scope of many identity based organizations, yet are made invisible or marginal once inside. Facing the pressure to measure themselves against a lowest common denominator of identity politics, they are sometimes made to feel as if they must choose between the organization and their own dignity. María Lugones agrees that there are “ ‘worlds’ that construct me in ways that I do not even understand or I may not accept the construction as an account of myself, a construction of myself” (395-6). Once the interviewees’ enter one of these worlds/communities they may realize that they no longer recognize their own construction within the group context. Jodi Dean suggests that “with the realization that uttering ‘we’ does not presuppose the existence of a ‘they’, we can move away from rigid identity categories, the limits of which are established by the dualities of any opposition” (32). Indeed, Puanani and Sharon describe the ways their communities are not based upon identity nor a we-they model:

I don’t really feel like I’m in any community right now. I’m kinda on my own, kinda in my own community, more of a family community, I hang out with my family. Generally speaking my community is just the people around me rather than any big group of people. I use to feel more connected with the lesbian community, they were more my family. But then when I started having problems about dating boys and I started feeling more uncomfortable just being around people just because they were looking at me strange or, you know, whatever my issues were. I don’t feel bad in my life...and the people I started hanging out with were for the most part bisexual, you know, just happened to be...And they don’t really put boundaries on who or what. (Puanani)

Well my tightest group of friends outside of any of these political external definitions are artists. And you know, ridiculously heavy thinkers. The people that I’m drawn to the most are those people regardless of whatever their ethnic or sexual or class background. Um, that I feel included in, like people ask me to come and be part of their group, I think that’s it’s, you know, political activists, it’s people of color communities, it’s women’s communities, it’s techie communities, queer communities. I’m definitely somewhat a part of all those groups even though I’m not always actively doing something with them. (Sharon)

Dean offers a theory of “reflexive solidarity” that can “conceive of a ‘we’ without labels,” arguing that “the key to this overcoming can be found in the margins and spaces that mark the limits of our concepts, the boundaries of our discourses” (3). Bi-bi girls like Puanani and Sharon recreate their concepts of identity and community along these “margins and spaces”. Their complex constructions of identities and

communities provide concrete models for the future direction of identity politics, as Dean suggests:

One the one hand, the critique of identity politics has taught us that we can neither solve the problems of social and legal exclusion nor do justice to the complexity of multiple, shifting, and situated identities so long as we continue to struggle on the terrain of identity politics. Many of us have diverse and conflicting identifications that escape categorization yet remain in need of articulation. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the promise of identity politics, its ideals of security, belonging, and self-respect (177).

Biracial-bisexual women have first hand experience of how identities escape categorization upon the terrain of identity politics yet “remain in need of articulation”. This experience lead them to participate only marginally or sporadically within single identity based communities. The bi-bi girls seek out the “security, belonging, and self respect” promised by identity politics yet rarely see this manifested. They have been left to their own devices in constructing and understanding not only their own identities but the importance of the communities that they establish. They are able to retain the ideals identity politics seems to hold for single identity individuals, recreating it in such a way that they too can benefit from its promises.

Sabrina has actively constructed a community around herself that can serve as an example for this model I am proposing. She often struggled to find a “place” where her multiple identities would be recognized, addressed, and accepted, yet consistently these ideals failed to manifest themselves. Instead, she established a place for herself:

And so I said, well I want to write a little something, so I started to write and kind of gripe really. It was really just to vent things out on those issues. And it turned out that I started getting mail from all these hapa women also who were either straight or gay or in the middle or whatever they were, and they were like "well I'm glad you brought that up because I feel the same way". And I was like, oh my god, you know? And I didn't really realize that until I came out with my 'zine that other women felt that way. But I knew that they were out there somehow, you know. And so like, to me it was that my 'zine was a very validating tool for me to get in touch with other women who had similar interests.

Sabrina says that she didn't know “other women felt that way” until she self-published her ‘zine in which she discussed her multiple identities and her politics. She was able to find other women who related to her issues and interests, and who also had not secured the promises of identity politics themselves. She created a situated

community around herself, not necessarily upon a common identity but based upon a common progressive and inclusive mentality among many individuals. She continues:

I've also kinda made up my own little world with my 'zine. And that's also made me feel like I can validate myself, you know. And that's been very, very important to me because up until only recently I felt like I had no voice. And so I didn't really speak very much, I just wrote a lot and it's only recently that I've really found my voice and that I've been able to start developing it. And so I guess those who really include me in helping me to express my voice are kind of like a community for me. And that makes me feel very included.

Not only has identity politics failed in its promises, it has actively silenced her voice. She feels that her “ ‘zine more so than anything has helped me become more included and accepted”. Rather than fighting to be included within an established community, she creates her community by drawing close to those individuals who help her express her voice, rather than those who silence her for the benefit of the established organization and its desired homogeneity.

Rather than continuing the logic of identity politics and creating communities based upon shared identity--communities that can become more exclusive, oppressive, and restrictive upon the addition of multiple identities-- communities could be based upon a shared progressive, responsible, and pro-active ideas and actions. Sabrina has created such a community through her ‘zine, which brings diverse women together based upon progressive politics that challenge racism, sexism, and classism, include mixed race identities, and expand sexuality categorizations. This creates a broad based movement and community that does not exclude and segregate but explodes lines of demarcations and holds individuals responsible for their belief system regardless of their identity. She has achieved what Dean argues for:

Reflective solidarity urges that we replace ascribed identities with achieved ones and substitute an enforced commonality of oppression with communities of those who have chosen to work and fight together (179).

A bi-bi girl community recognizes the promises and ideals of identity politics despite the shortcomings in its logic and actively seeks to achieve them by connecting individuals who can “work and fight together”. Bi-bi girls seek out individuals who share similar experiences and issues, who do not necessarily reside in single identity based communities but can be found in a multitude of locations. The importance of organizing on the basis of identities is problematic yet imperative for bi-bi girls, but of equal importance are the movements taken after this understanding of their specific issues and the ways in which these tie into the larger global movements. To exponentially explode identity categories (bi^2) and connect with others on the basis

of progressive/ revolutionary politics allows them to develop their dignity and wholeness outside of the identity categories that cut them into pieces and to create a movement that recognizes their humanity and their potential.

Summary

In this section, I have demonstrated how the concept of community is put into practice within identity based communities as well as in the lives of the biracial-bisexual women. I have argued that identity politics and the communities that derive from it are overwhelmingly based upon a single-identity model and therefore homogenize and eradicate difference in order to present a united front. Because of these tactics the bisexual-biracial women are faced with either silencing their difference or removing themselves from the organizations. All of the participants have been involved within identity based organizations and their experiences within these establishments have been diverse and problematic.

This section also examined how the interviewees conceptualize and construct their own personal communities, which, I argue, can provide a future direction for identity politics. Because of their exclusion based upon their multiple identity status, the bi-bi girls were disinclined to form new groups that were further exclusionary, but instead, desired to expand and blur demarcating lines. They formed personal communities based upon diverse identities and focused more attention upon the progressive politics and open-mindedness of individuals who they would include within their lives and their communities. The participants' choices of who to date also highlights the theoretical underpinnings of their personal community formation. Activities such as Sabrina's zine also exemplifies the theoretical underpinning for a bi-bi girls community, one in which they receive central attention since it draws together individuals from diverse identities who are concerned with similar issues and representation. These communities are based upon alliances, responsibility, inclusion, and the ability to relate to others from diverse backgrounds.

The ideals of identity based organizations have only sporadically manifested themselves for the bi-bi girls who are otherwise marginalized, silenced, or excluded. Because their diverse needs and identities are not represented within these organizations, many of the participants felt they gave more than they received. Therefore many created more personal communities in which realize some of the ideals that identity politics promises. The desire for sameness that identity politics follow becomes problematic, and sometimes oppressive, for those with multiple identities. Similar identities do not necessarily guarantee similar mental outlooks and therefore disappointments are inevitable, and not only for those with multiple identities.

The bi-bi girls have revolutionized their personal concepts of community as they integrate the ideals of identity politics yet move to include individuals who share similar progressive politics, responsibility, and acceptance. Perhaps this will point to the future direction of identity-based communities as alliances are built upon common

commitment and struggles for solidarity against multiple forms of oppression and exclusion.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the three themes of language, identity, and community in nine interviews with bisexual-multiracial API women. Both acquisition and loss of language important are integral to the bi-bi girls' mixed race identity. They experience identity through concepts such as fluidity, situatedness, and mutability, which may generate conflicts between their self-understanding and how they are viewed by the outside world. These conflicts also influence their community involvement, which moves between identity-based groups and organizations, and personal communities, that grow from broadened understandings of identity and world view politics.

This chapter has argued that by analyzing the position of the bi-bi girl, new understandings can emerge within numerous areas that reveal perspectives previously invisible. This is an especially timely and crucial issue within an identity politics theory that consistently discusses multiple identities and difference yet has failed to pinpoint exact instances of differences and how these can add to and transform the debate.

This research developed out of personal interest based upon my own bisexual and multiracial (Chinese and white) identities and my concern that these identities and issues were marginalized and ignored within current theories. I was also concerned with the segregation of bisexuality and multiraciality into separate categories and desired to create a theory that brought these two position together in order to explore their interplay and similar dynamics. Through the process of this research I was able to meet nine other women who shared my same "identity constellation," which was a very exciting development, both personally and academically. By establishing this connection to these women, we mutually gained important sources of resources and information, personal connection and communication, and access to each other through which we could compare our similarities and differences. It was personally gratifying to find these women and learn more about myself, their situation, and the social context in which we all interact. In some ways I feel that this project provided one way to connect these women with each other, to connect myself with them, and to promote the sentiment that this is one more of many "communities" in which we play a part.

Through this research I also hope to inspire other bi-bi girls to address this topic in all their endeavors, including academics, creative writing, music, art, performance, and film. I hope this work forms the groundwork in creating larger and more diverse projects that explore additional topics as well as extending the arguments presented here. Numerous other issues and concepts around the bi-bi identity could be addressed in future research: the connection between bisexuality and language, other models for the construction of communities, the specific politics around the bi-bi identity, bi-bi girls in other countries and their experiences, and bi-bi

girls in other historical periods, to give a few examples. I hope this work will continue, and that I may experience the satisfaction of learning from and reading the work of other bi-bi girls, knowing that I was a part of something bigger than myself.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Background:

- Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Describe the area, & community makeup?
- Describe your family life? What were the races of your parents? What languages do your parents speak? What languages do you speak? How have languages constructed or influenced different relationships in your life?
- Do you have brothers or sisters?
- How old are you?
- Have you ever been "married"? If so, what race was your partner? How did this affect your relationship?
- Do you have any children? If so, describe your relationship with your children.
- Describe your educational background.
- Do you consider yourself a feminist? What does "feminist" mean to you?

2. Sexual Identity:

- Do you define yourself as a bisexual? What is your definition of bisexuality?
- Describe your first memory of questioning your sexuality. When was this?
- When did you begin to define yourself as bisexual? How did you feel about it?
- Did you know any other bisexuals or people who seemed bisexual? How did that affect you?
- Have you ever defined yourself as a lesbian?
If so, what circumstances or events led you to define yourself as bisexual?
- In the future, do you think you may define your sexuality differently?
- How do you feel about sexual labels such as bisexuality?
- Do you feel your sexuality is in any form political? Explain how.
- What influence do you believe your family, society and culture has on your sexual identity? Who are you out to in your life?
- Do you define yourself as part of the bisexual or lesbian community? What have your experiences been with this community? What are your feelings of inclusion or exclusion with this community?
- Do you think biphobia or homophobia have influenced your decisions about your sexual identity? If so, how? How have people reacted to your sexual identity and how did you respond?

- What have your experiences been with past partners? Have you been open to them about your sexual and racial orientation? What races and sexual orientations have your past partners been? Have they been accepting of your identities? Do you have a current partner?
- Do you prefer to date certain races or genders? What are those preferences? Why do you prefer certain groups?
- Do you feel that your racial identity has made you more open to questioning your sexual identity?

3. Racial Identity:

- Do you think racism has influenced your decisions about your sexual identity and vice versa? If so, how?
- What is your racial identity? Do you feel that this identity is in any way political?
- What are the racial identities of the people in your life, i.e. family, friends, partners? Do you have a preference? How has race constructed relationships in your life?
- Has your racial identity changed over your lifetime? For example, does your childhood racial identity differ from your current racial identity and understanding?
- Were you given a name that connotes your multiple racial heritages? Have you adopted a name that specifies your racial heritages? (*It is unnecessary to state your name.*)
- Do you feel that your racial and sexual identities are at odds or are they compatible? Do you view these identities separately or do you define yourself with both? How have these identities come together, overlapped or conflicted in your life?
- How do your parents feel about your racial identity? How do you feel about their racial identities?
- Do you include yourself in the term "Asian American", "mixed race" or another racial group? Do you want to be included in a racial group/ and are you accepted into this group? What racial groups do you feel included in? How has being multiracial affected your life?
- Do you feel included in a group based on racial identities that does not accept your sexual identity? That accepts your sexual identity?
- Have you been in a racial and/ or sexual closet? With whom? Have you been rejected for your racial and/or sexual identity? How did you feel?
- Have you been asked (insensitive) questions about your racial background? By whom? How did you respond/feel? How do you feel about not fitting into a recognized racial category?
- Have you experienced racism? What is your definition of racism?
- Do you feel that racism, sexism and bi/homophobia are similar oppressions? How have they affected your life? Do you feel that one is worse than another? Explain.

- What communities do you feel included/excluded in?
- Are you an activist around any of your identities?
- Have you studied the history of your racial and sexual orientation groups?

4. Participants Choice:

- Is there anything else you would like to discuss or relate?
- Do you have any questions?
- Are there other questions that you think should be included in this interview?

**THE POLITICS OF BISEXUAL/BIRACIAL IDENTITY:
A STUDY OF BISEXUAL AND MIXED RACE WOMEN
OF ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER DESCENT**

This book explores the dynamics of and interplay between bisexual and multiracial Asian/Pacific Islander (API) identities through an analysis of historical events, identity politics theory, and interviews. This research is an important development in understanding the concept of identity because of the ways in which it challenges current models and points to new ways in which identity can be constructed and conceptualized.

The historical section analyzes the legal, political, and social development of homosexuality and of Asian Americans within the United States context drawing out the parallels between the two. Based on this historical overview, the thesis then explores similarities and differences between the social construction of both bisexual and multiracial identities. A theory review examines the (marginalized) position of bisexuals and multiracials with the areas of women's studies, queer theory, and ethnic studies, and discusses the implications of this silence. The final chapter is based upon nine interviews conducted with women who are both bisexual and multiracial of Asian/Pacific Islander descent. This chapter examines key theoretical issues around three themes: language, identity, and community.

This research focuses on such key elements as fluid and situated identity, construction of communities based upon both identity and world-view politics, and self-understanding versus dominant perspectives on bisexuals and multiracials. The book concludes with a call for a reevaluation of identity that would include fluid, multiple, and situated identities.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beverly Yuen Thompson graduated from the New School University in New York City with an MA and Ph.D. in Sociology. She earned a Master's Degree in Women's Studies at San Diego State University, from which this book originates. She also graduated with a BA in Government from Eastern Washington University. She studies feminist theory, race, social movements, and subcultures.

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