

FROM IMPOSED CLASSIFICATION TO SELF-IDENTIFICATION: TRACING THE DEFINITIONS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN AMERICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

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One ever feels the two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

W.E.B. Du Bois¹

Racial categorization is not completely determined by one's language, skin color, or shape of the head.² Although such characteristics play a role in exaggerating differences, racial definitions are political, social, and historical constructions. Ethnic and racial groupings are what Benedict Anderson calls "imagined communities" in constant state of flux.³ Understanding racial and ethnic definitions requires an understanding of power.⁴ In the American past, racial definitions were often tools utilized by Anglo-Europeans to establish their dominance over other groups. They defined their "whiteness" by imposing definitions on non-white groups. This is evident in U.S. Census records. For example, in the 1790 U.S. Census residents in the districts of the United States were categorized in one of five groups: free white males older than 16, free white males younger than 16, free white females, all other free persons, or slaves.⁵ Whiteness was defined by its opposites—"others" and "slaves." However, whiteness is not an invariable category.⁶ By 1940, the U.S. Census Bureau noted three major race classifications: White, Negro, and other races. This time, however, the definition of whiteness expanded

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1. W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," in *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 11.
 2. See Linda Joyce Brown, *The Literature of Immigration and Racial Formation: Becoming White, Becoming Other, Becoming American in the Late Progressive Era* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 18-21.
 3. For information about imagined communities, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006).
 4. *Ibid.*, 26.
 5. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *First Census of the United States, 1790* (Philadelphia: J. Phillips, George-Yard, Lombard-Street, 1793).
 6. Brown, xvi. "At the heart of this study lies the assumption that whiteness is not a stable, unified category of human classification. Instead, whiteness, like other racial-defined groupings, is an ever-shifting terrain..."

to include Mexicans.⁷ In 2000 the categorizations changed once more. The government declared that “race” and “Hispanic origin” were separate concepts. Participants were first asked to answer “yes” or “no” to being of Hispanic origin. Then, the person could proceed to choose any number of races, such as White; Black, African American or Negro; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian Indian; or Native Hawaiian. People also had the option of writing in a race of their choice, allowing people to define their racial identity on their own terms.⁸

American historiography follows a similar path, on which racial definitions are constantly forming and reforming along with the evolution of historical schools of thought. However, a noticeable path emerges, from a time when racial distinctions were imposed upon groups by those outside of the group—dominated by a hegemonic system that defined “whiteness” against the inferior “others”—to the late twentieth and early twenty-first century when race became a means of self-identification.⁹ This transformation of American historiography does not simply give agency to those “other” races; instead the “others” take control of their own agency.

Before one can understand the historiography of race and ethnicity, one must understand the differences between the two categorical terms. They are not easy to define. According to Nancy Foner and George Fredrickson, “race” is a “socially, culturally, and historically constructed” concept. It is often associated with the idea that physical differences between people are “innate and unchangeable,” and in a multi-group setting often causes one group to establish dominance over another based on physical differences.¹⁰ Linda Joyce Brown adds that although racial categorizations are “biological misnomers,” such definitions retain cultural significance.¹¹ Ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to a group of people who share similar cultural origins, such as nationality, ancestry, or shared history.¹² Foner argues that “race” is an imposed construct—where one group defines another—while “ethnicity” is a consciousness or a self-identification.¹³ However, these distinctions become increasingly confusing with the acceptance of multiple ethnicities, causing many historians to define racial and ethnic categorizations on their own

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7. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940* (Washington, D.C.; GPO 1943). The introduction explains that although those of Mexican ancestry were designated as Mexican in 1930, by 1940 they were included with the white population.
 8. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Twenty-Second Census of the United States, 2000* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2002).
 9. Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson, “Introduction: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States: Social Constructions and Social Relations in Historical and Contemporary Perspective,” in *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States*, ed. Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 3. Foner states that the identification as “white” was initiated in the seventeenth century when American colonists distinguished themselves from Indians and blacks.
 10. *Ibid.*, 2.
 11. Brown, 3.
 12. Foner, “Introduction,” 3-4.
 13. *Ibid.*, 4.

terms.¹⁴ These complexities follow the progression from race and ethnicity as an imposed classification to a form of self-identification. In the early twentieth century, historians either ignored non-Anglo groups or treated them as inferior obstacles. Later, historians depicted groups such as African Americans and Native Americans as objectified “others” that were exploited by the superior whites. With the rise of social history, historians in the 1970s began to give agency to non-white groups and by the late twentieth century those groups took agency for themselves.¹⁵

In *The Frontier in American History*, published in 1921, historian Fredrick Jackson Turner depicts Native Americans as “savage lords of the boundless prairies,” a group that served as a hostile barrier between the civilized East and the frontier West.¹⁶ As historian Sucheng Chan notes in her introduction to *Peoples of Color in the American West*, Turner asserted that the American national character was developed as civilized European Americans were forced to confront “savages” as they moved West.¹⁷ Black slaves also were defined as a mere buffer zone. Their presence marked “a clear line of division between the Old Northwest and the South.”¹⁸ Turner references a few specific Native American groups: Sioux, Iroquois, and Algonquin. Yet, he generally refers to them as the collective “Indian” or “savage,” while the offspring of Puritan settlers and Indians are classified as “half-breeds.”¹⁹ According to historian Mario T. Garcia, Turner’s thesis that the environment caused “Americanization” focused only on the assimilation of racial groups rather than “ethnic pluralism.”²⁰

Many scholars who addressed race and ethnicity in America at the turn of the twentieth century focused on opposing forces, often defining a supposed superior race by its opposition to an inferior race. Like Turner, John Commons was concerned with the ideas of assimilation and acculturation, but often on the inability of non-Anglo groups to succeed on either front. His 1907 work, *Races and Immigrants in America*, constantly characterizes Native Americans, Africans, and Asians by their inferiority to Anglo culture. For example, he states:

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14. Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 2. In the footnote, Garcia explains: “Mexican refers to a person of Mexican descent who is either a U.S. citizen or a Mexican national; Mexican American refers specifically to a U.S. citizen of Mexican descent; *mexicano* refers to a Mexican national residing in the United States, and Anglo refers to a U.S. citizen of European descent.”
 15. Sucheng Chan, et al., “Preface,” in *Peoples of Color in the American West*, ed. Sucheng Chan, et. al. (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), v.
 16. Fredrick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921; Project Gutenberg, 2007), 144. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>. “A period of almost constant Indian hostility followed, for the savage lords of the boundless prairies instinctively felt the significance of the entrance of the farmer into their empire.”
 17. Sucheng Chan, “Introduction: Western American Historiography and Peoples of Color,” in *Peoples of Color in the American West*, ed. Sucheng Chan, et. al. (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 1.
 18. Turner, 242.
 19. *Ibid.*, 44-45.
 20. Garcia, 9.

The Chinaman comes from a mediæval [sic] civilization—he shows little of those qualities which are the product of Western civilization, and with his imitativeness, routine, and traditions, he has earned the reputation of being entirely non-assimilable [sic].²¹

He combines the political, social, and economic issues associated with racial definitions by studying industry, labor, crime, poverty, and politics. He categorizes races into five basic divisions: “white, yellow, black, red, and brown races of the earth.”²² He blatantly supports white superiority, suggesting the importance of testing immigrants before they are allowed to enter the country in an effort to root out undesirables.²³ Commons also declares that Christian ideals, particularly the Christian God’s “impartiality toward races,” allowed the United States to avoid the caste system and create less-defined social classes.²⁴ Yet, he devotes his entire work to drawing those sociopolitical racial lines.

At the turn of the twentieth century, there were political and academic battles between writers who supported Chinese immigration into the United States and those “whose sensationalist accounts kindled anxieties about a potential Yellow Peril invasion.”²⁵ Similar issues followed Japanese immigration, causing pro-Japanese scholars such as Yamato Ichihashi of Stanford University to assert that Japanese people were effectively assimilating into American society.²⁶ However, Ichihashi’s assertion contradicted popular opinion. From the turn of the twentieth century to the end of the 1960s, “the Asian presence in the United States was almost invariably framed as a ‘problem.’ Because Asian Americans allegedly failed to assimilate, they were considered deficient or deviant.”²⁷

During this period of historiography obsessed with the idea of assimilation, and by association exclusion, a non-Anglo voice emerges to offer a different view on race and ethnicity in America. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois’ definition of race contains some of the elements that historians at the end of the twentieth century will define as ethnicity.

[Race] is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals

21. John R. Commons, *Races and Immigrants in America* (1907; Project Gutenberg, 2010), 211. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34028/34028-h/34028-h.htm>.

22. *Ibid.*, 17.

23. *Ibid.*, 231.

24. *Ibid.*, 9.

25. Sucheng Chan, “Asian American Historiography,” *Pacific Historical Review* 65:3 (Aug., 1996): 364. Chan mentions pro-Chinese missionaries William Speer and Otis Gibson, diplomat George F. Seward, and sociologist Mary Roberts Coolidge, as well as anti-Chinese writers M.B. Starr, Pierton W. Dooner, and Robert Wolter.

26. *Ibid.*, 364-365.

27. *Ibid.*, 369.

of life.²⁸

Yet, Du Bois still maintains that there are biological differences among races, a “common blood” that links people within a group, but separates them from those outside the group. He divides people into eight racial categories, including the English of Great Britain and America, the Negroes of Africa and America, and the Mongolians of Eastern Asia. American Indians, however, are a minor racial group.²⁹ However, for Du Bois color, hair texture, and head shapes are not definitive distinctions between races. Instead, he declares that racial characteristics are “spiritual, psychical, differences” that transcend physical differences.³⁰ Du Bois also discusses the idea of “double-consciousness,” the dichotomy between being American and Negro, questioning whether identifying as a member of both groups is possible.³¹

Most early twentieth century historical works demonstrated “Anglo-Saxon superiority over other racial and ethnic groups.”³² Herbert Eugene Bolton’s history of the Borderlands progresses beyond the traditional Anglo-European agency, writing American history from the perspective of Spanish explorers.³³ Although a breakthrough in historical interpretation, this perspective automatically gives Spanish conquistadors dominance over other ethnicities in the Borderlands. Like Turner, Bolton asserts that Native Americans were merely “buffers against European rivals.” However, he also defines non-European ethnic groups as the objectified “others” who were killed, subdued, exploited, and married off to aggressive European explorers.³⁴

Reviewers Victoria and Light Cummins express their trepidation about relying on Bolton’s work in a journal article published in *Latin American Research Review*:

Despite the work’s status as a classic, readers should evaluate it carefully. The Spanish Borderlands remains an appropriate starting point for students interested in the subject. But its implicit and explicit assumptions about race, ethnicity, gender, and social history raise troubling questions for contemporary readers.³⁵

28. W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Conservation of Races,” in *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 177-178.

29. *Ibid.*, 177-178. “The history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races...”

30. *Ibid.*, 178.

31. Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” 11; Du Bois, “The Conservation of Races,” 180-181.

32. Victoria H. and Light T. Cummins, “Review: Building on Bolton: The Spanish Borderlands Seventy-Five Years Later,” *Latin American Research Review* 35:2 (2000): 232.

33. Herbert E. Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), vii. According to Bolton, the Borderlands includes “regions between Florida and California, now belonging to the United States, over which Spain held sway for centuries.”

34. Herbert E. Bolton, “The Epic of Greater America,” *The American Historical Review* 38:3 (Apr., 1933): 452.

35. Cummins, 231.

Nowhere in Bolton's history of the Borderlands are Native Americans active agents in the cultural system or economy. The theory that Native Americans were weaklings against powerful European forces supports the idea of "American exceptionalism," where indigenous people enjoy inter-tribal peace until European explorers exploit and enslave them.³⁶ Like Commons, Bolton refers to those of mixed ethnicity as "half breeds."³⁷ Although writing from the Spanish European perspective, he maintains ideals of Anglo superiority, using phrases such as "standard-bearer of the white race."³⁸

However, Bolton does recognize the need for a synthesis of American history and the importance of studying "the effects of the Indian on European cultures."³⁹ Although this gives more agency to Native Americans, it still places them as the inferior group in comparison to a superior group. Charles McLean Andrews views history in a similar way, as a war "between the privileged and the unprivileged, the satisfied and the dissatisfied, the "haves" and the "have nots" of political, economic, and social groups."⁴⁰ Not until James F. Brooks' seminal work, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, does an historian give complete agency to two non-Anglo, non-European groups—Native Americans and Borderlands settlers far removed from imperial Spain.

Winthrop Jordan's *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1150-1812* essentially takes Bolton's charge to study the effects of one group on another, writing a history about African Americans from the perspective of Anglo Americans. Jordan explains that, "This is not a book about Negroes except as they were objects of white men's attitudes."⁴¹ For Jordan, white American attitudes toward blacks reveal the intellectual history of whites. In essence, Anglo Americans established their racial identity and superiority by imposing racial definitions on those they deemed to be their opposites—the African Americans.⁴² Although African Americans are given more agency in Jordan's work, it is, ultimately, a history of white Americans.⁴³ Reviewer David Brion Davis summarizes:

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36. James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 365.
37. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America," 452.
38. Cummins, 232.
39. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America," 474.
40. Charles McLean Andrews, "On the Writing of Colonial History," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 1:1 (Jan., 1944): 30.
41. Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1969), viii.
42. *Ibid.*, 134. "In retrospect it is easy to see that their presence constituted an invitation to development of a new rationale which would tell white men who they were and where they stood in the community—the rationale of racial superiority."
43. James Campbell and James Oakes, "Review: The Invention of Race: Rereading White Over Black," *Reviews in American History* 21:1 (Mar., 1993): 182.

Still, the most valuable message of the book is that for Americans racial slavery was a good deal more than a system of economic exploitation. It was a system of psychological exploitation, of cultural parasitism, which allowed the whites to achieve a sense of communal solidarity and purpose through the systematic debasement of Negroes.⁴⁴

Jordan's definition of race also focuses on biological differences. In his "Note on the Concept of Race," Jordan discusses recent scientific discoveries about genetic differences between racial groups, declaring that "one of the most important recent breakthroughs has been the conception of race as a group of individuals sharing a common gene pool."⁴⁵ He also mentions scientific debates about the differences between white and black physiology, anatomy, and mental abilities. He emphasizes that race is in a constant state of change, but this also refers to biological differences.⁴⁶ Toward the end of the twentieth century, racial categories will shift from focusing on biological distinctions to understanding the fluctuations of social and historical constructs.

Carl Degler's 1971 work *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*, maintains biological distinctions between races, but also shows that racial definitions are dependent on politics and geography. "To perceive physical distinction is the first step toward making social distinctions."⁴⁷ To accomplish this, Degler offers a comparative analysis of race relations in Brazil and the United States. He also focuses on studying the mixed race, not as "half breeds," but as a distinct group of mulattos.⁴⁸ Of course, this distinction is dependent on social constructions of the region. For example, Degler asserts that in the United States, any hint of black ancestry categorized a person as Negro, whereas in Brazil there were various levels of blackness.⁴⁹ Reviewer Rayford Logan argues against Degler's main thesis, stating that the United States has more than a basic black-and-white distinction.⁵⁰ Ultimately, Degler's Pulitzer Prize-winning book was written to produce a discourse.⁵¹ He declares it was written to encourage the general public to discuss the question of biracial respect.⁵² He concludes with a call to action: "We have to recognize that the price of equality in pluralism, like the price of liberty, is

44. David Brion Davis, "Review: [untitled]," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 26:1 (Jan., 1969): 112.

45. Jordan, 584.

46. *Ibid.*, 584-585.

47. Carl N. Degler, *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 209.

48. *Ibid.*, xii. In Brazil the mulatto is a distinction separate from "negro", whereas in the United State mulattos are considered black.

49. *Ibid.*, 101-103.

50. Rayford W. Logan, "Review: [untitled]," *The Journal of American History* 60:1 (Jun., 1973): 131.

51. For more information on discourses, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction* (1978; New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 11.

52. Degler, xi.

eternal vigilance.”⁵³

During the 1970s there was a noticeable shift in the categorical terms used by historians. Degler used the term “Negro” in his work that was published in 1971. In the same year, George Fredrickson published *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. His use of term “Afro-American” displays a shift from defining racial concepts by biological differences to acknowledging origins. Fredrickson’s book studies the intellectual history of racism by surveying “the racial views of few hundred prominent white Americans, almost all of whom were male.”⁵⁴ Like Jordan, Fredrickson’s work is not about African Americans. It focuses on Anglo American racist ideas about African Americans.⁵⁵ For Fredrickson, however, it was not biological racial characteristics that are in a constant state of flux—as Jordan notes—but a “fluid pattern of belief” that was “affected in significant and diverse ways by the same social, intellectual, and political currents influencing other basic aspects of American thought and experience.”⁵⁶

The rise of social history ignited a desire for historians to focus on what E.P Thompson called class-consciousness, or “the consciousness of an identity of interests as between all these diverse groups of working people and as against the interests of other classes.”⁵⁷ Lawrence W. Levine’s *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom* focused on the consciousness of African Americans in U.S. history. Rather than sourcing historical documents that frequently depict slaves “either as docile, accepting beings or as alienated prisoners on the edge of rebellion,” he used oral sources to give African Americans a voice and agency in their own history.⁵⁸ Levine shows African Americans not as inarticulate, empty shells without culture or control of their situation, but as “actors in their own right who not only responded to their situation but often affected it in crucial ways.”⁵⁹ He argues that despite “racial, social, and economic exploitation black Americans forged and nurtured a culture.”⁶⁰ He utilizes oral traditions, such as slave songs, folktales, and jokes from the antebellum era to the end of the 1940s, which were previously thought to be flawed sources by historians, to show that African slaves were not stripped of their traditional African culture,

53. Ibid., 292.

54. Mia Bay, “Review: Remembering Racism: Rereading the Black Image in the White Mind,” *Reviews in American History* 27:4 (Dec., 1999): 648.

55. Ibid., 649.

56. George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), 320.

57. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1965), 194. Thompson here was discussing the formation of the English working class between 1790 and 1830; however, the idea of class or group consciousness persisted into other studies within the historical profession, such as race and ethnicity. See Chan, “Asian American Historiography,” 375-376.

58. Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, 30th anniversary ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xx and 114.

59. Ibid., xxv.

60. Ibid., xxv.

emerging “from bondage in an almost culture-less state” and forced to adopt white culture.⁶¹ In fact, the improvisational and expressive nature of African American oral culture is rooted in African traditions.⁶² Levine’s work essentially dismisses the long-held notion that African American slaves and freed people desired acculturation and assimilation into Anglo American society and introduces readers to the idea of dual ethnic identities.⁶³ He revisits Du Bois’ notion of “double consciousness” and proves that blacks can be both African and American. Levine does not merely give agency to African Americans; he uses their oral expressions of culture to prove that they already had agency, a voice, and power.

In *Telling the Truth About History*, Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob assert that the democratization of education initiated dramatic changes to the craft of “doing history.” More women, racial minorities, and those with immigrant backgrounds earned Ph.Ds in history during the twentieth century and began producing dissertation topics that related to their personal histories.⁶⁴ The democratization of education, Appleby argues, is what initiated “the rewriting of American history from a variety of cultural perspectives, and the dethroning of science as the source and model for what may be deemed true.”⁶⁵ This is certainly true in writing about race and ethnicity in American history, as historians move from definitions based on biological differences to those examining social and cultural constructs. It also rids the history profession of imposed hegemony by the authors and proves that agency does not need to be given to Native Americans, Mexican Americans, or African Americans. These “others” are now taking charge of their own agency.

In 1972, Rodolfo Acuña, a Chicano teaching in the Chicano Studies department at California State University, Northridge, wrote an introductory textbook about Chicano history in America. Reviewer J. Joseph Huthmacher describes *Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle toward Liberation* as “an excellent introductory survey of the history of a particular minority group that conveys not only scholarship and information, but sincerity, concern, and commitment as well.”⁶⁶ It offers a narrative of American history from the perspective of Chicanos, written by a Chicano. Similarly, Mario T. Garcia’s monograph *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* is “a study of ethnic leadership” in the United States during the Mexican-American Generation.⁶⁷ Reviewer Juan R. Garcia summarizes that Mexican Americans during this period “strongly espoused the concepts of cultural pluralism, Pan-Americanism, integration, and education as key components in promoting equality and

61. Ibid., 442.

62. Ibid., 6.

63. Ibid., 444.

64. Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 146-147.

65. Ibid., 5.

66. J. Joseph Huthmacher, “Review: [untitled],” *The American Historical Review*, 80:2 (Apr., 1975): 480; Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972).

67. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960*, 1.

social advancement for Mexican Americans.”⁶⁸ Mario T. Garcia defines Mexican Americans as “mostly a people of color—mestizos.”⁶⁹ This dramatically contradicts the 1940 U.S. Census, which fused Mexicans into the white racial category.⁷⁰ To tell the history from a Mexican American perspective, Garcia uses oral interviews, newspapers and periodicals from the period, and archival sources.⁷¹ There also is an attempt by the author to integrate Mexican American women’s stories into the history.⁷²

Shirley Ann Wilson Moore’s *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963* also focuses on a specific period of African American history. However, she zooms in closer than Garcia by studying African Americans in a specific region of California. Moore also uses a variety of sources that historians in the early twentieth century often ignored, including newspapers and periodicals, shipyard recruitment sheets, letters, pamphlets, and more than 100 hours of oral interviews to reconstruct everyday life from the perspective of African Americans living in Richmond from 1910-1963.⁷³ In Moore’s history, women are not merely integrated into the history of men; women’s voices shine through, particularly as workers in shipyards and owners of blues clubs.⁷⁴

With the recognition of a multiplicity of ethnic groups, American historiography has in the last twenty years experienced an age of anthologies. Asian American studies professor Sucheng Chan collaborated with Douglas Henry Daniels, Mario T. Garcia, and Terry P. Wilson to bring together a collection of essays in 1994 focusing on the relationship between various ethnic groups—Native Americans, Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans—not just relationships between peoples of color and Anglo Americans.⁷⁵ Chan explains that early works in American history of the West ignored peoples of color or saw them as obstacles while newer works depict them as victims. *Peoples of Color in the American West*, however, is an “attempt to transcend the perspectives of both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ western American history.”⁷⁶ Essays include “American Indians’ Ideas About Themselves,” “Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970s,” “African Americans in the Cattle Industry, 1860s-1880s,” and “Korean Americans and the Model Minority Myth, 1970s-Present.” Chan admits that

68. Juan R. Garcia, “Review: [untitled],” *The American Historical Review* 96:2 (Apr., 1991): 631.

69. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960*, 8.

70. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940* (Washington, D.C.; GPO 1943).

71. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960*, 303-307.

72. *Ibid.*, 2-3. Although Garcia admits that he found limited sources about Mexican American women, he states that he decided to “integrate the material on women...within rather than apart from the other material.”

73. Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond California, 1910-1963* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000), 5 and 203-218.

74. *Ibid.*, 57-58 and 135-137.

75. Chan, “Introduction,” 10. See also Chan, vii-viii: The editors represent each ethnic group: Asian American, African American, Mexican American, and Native American.

76. Chan, “Preface,” v.

there are significant gaps in historical knowledge that prevent a synthesized history about peoples of color. However, she views the anthology as a building block which other historians can use to create a master ethnic narrative.⁷⁷

Nancy Foner and George Fredrickson also compiled an anthology of historical essays discussing the multiplicity of ethnic identities in America, including those who identify as people of mixed ethnicities, in *Not Just Black and White: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States*. Eric Foner's *The New American History* incorporates essays and historiographies about race and ethnicity within a broader collection of works about American history from "the experience of previously neglected groups."⁷⁸

One of the major attempts at synthesis, although not on a country-wide scale, was successfully achieved by James Brooks in *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*. Writing from the perspective of local actors in Borderlands history—Native American tribes and Spanish colonists—Brooks blurs the line differentiating the cultures. He shows that involuntary servitude, the necessity for intermarriage, and the integration of captives demanded the blending of races and led to the dismantling of former racial definitions. Reviewer Theda Perdue writes that *Captives & Cousins* rescues "Indian history from the 'tenaciously sunny romanticism' that not only placed Native people in a precontact Eden but also exempted them from active participation in Euro-American expansion."⁷⁹ In Brooks' history of the Southwest Borderlands, Native Americans fuel the economic slave system through "capture, adoption, intermarriage, and occasional sacrifice."⁸⁰ By giving agency to Native American tribes in the Southwest, Brooks razes Bolton's idea of "the heroic and romantic contributions of Spanish conquistadores to North American history" and the stereotypical view of Native Americans living in a primordial Utopian society.⁸¹ Even Brooks' use of the term "Native Americans" in contrast to Bolton's use of "Indians" breaks some of those preconceived notions and shows the evolution of scholarship.

Historians are also working to reveal more voices from ethnically diverse groups of women. Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore's anthology *African American Women Confront the West: 1600-2000*, gives agency to black women who "confronted myriad wests, from the seventeenth-century frontier of New Spain to Oakland of the 1960s."⁸² In 2009, Cynthia Orozco authored *No*

77. Ibid., v.

78. Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History: Revised and Expanded* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), x.

79. Theda Perdue, "Review: *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* by James F. Brooks," *The American Historical Review* 108:1 (Feb., 2003): 183.

80. Brooks, 33.

81. Ibid., 36 and 365-366.

82. Gayle Gullett, "Review: [untitled]," *The Journal of American History* 91:3 (Dec., 2004): 985; Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, ed., *African American Women Confront the West: 1600-2000* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, incorporating women into the discussion of the Mexican American civil rights movement and, by default, includes their experiences and self-identity into the definition of what it means to be a Mexican American.⁸³

Some historians were concerned that social history would eventually cause fragmentation and “overspecialization” within the profession.⁸⁴ However, Eric Foner explained in a lecture given in 1997, I think there is an excessive fragmentation and overspecialization in much of the writing of American history, and a history of our society is more than simply the sum of the parts of discreet groups that make up American life. On the other hand, the New History... with its increased attention to the experience of previously neglected groups has tremendously enhanced our understanding of American history.⁸⁵

Although the incorporation of a variety of ethnic identities has expanded an understanding of the American past, a synthesized narrative about ethnic diversity in American history is needed. There are anthologies that incorporate individual studies about various ethnic groups, monographs that feature a specific group, and comparative studies between two merging groups. Alan Taylor successfully told the story of American colonization from the perspective of the once excluded: non-English European empires, Native Americans, Africans, and women.⁸⁶ Yet, a synthetic narrative about race, ethnicity, and cultural pluralism has yet to be authored. As ethnicities in twenty-first century American society continue to merge—in addition to the growing ease of globe-trekking and starting families with people of different national origins—there will be a greater demand to study how people of mixed races are treated in history.

Studying race and ethnicity in American historiography is exciting in many ways, especially writing as an historian in the twenty-first century. This is an age when a plethora of source material is accepted within the profession to add depth to the history. Many historians, including Levine, Brooks, and Moore, injected their histories with cultural literature and personal interviews.⁸⁷ It is a valuable tool that adds narrative flow, draws readers into the history, and creates intimacy with the actors. Historians

83. Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 11. “Class, citizenship, and gender have had their effects as well on identity...”

84. Thomas Bender, “Strategies of Narrative Synthesis in American History,” *The American Historical Review* 107:1 (Feb., 2002): 131.

85. Eric Foner, “Who is an American?,” (1997) Alternative Radio website, MP3 recording, 7:01, <http://www.alternativeradio.org/programs/FONEool.shtml> (accessed Dec. 13, 2010).

86. Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), x-xiii.

87. See Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*; Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*; and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds*.

must follow their predecessors and utilize more than traditional source material. For instance, A. Gabriel Meléndez and M. Jane Young of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque compiled an anthology of poems, personal essays, and historical studies written by people with ethnic ties to the Southwest. The book also was published in the southwestern region by the University of Arizona Press in Tucson.⁸⁸ Such perspectives are vital to understanding ethnic diversity in the United States. Fashion, artwork, depictions of ethnic groups on stage and in film, as well as the adoption of pop culture phrases, music and dance styles by various ethnic groups also contribute to the constantly changing definitions of race and ethnicity in American history.

Racial and ethnic categorizations are not fixed. Definitions shift as a result of politics, economy, social structures, and the rise of self-awareness. Within the last century, the definition of race shifted from a classification imposed upon groups to a self-defining characterization of one's personal history, culture, and identity. Perhaps W.E.B. Du Bois' idea of "double consciousness," the feeling of "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" of being both African and American will never be resolved. Yet, a resolution is not necessary, or even desired. The history of the United States is not a story of multiple races fusing to form one homogenized ethnicity. As Frank Shuffelton notes, "America was ethnic from the beginning," and it will continue to be ethnic in the future.⁸⁹ A historical synthesis about race and ethnicity in America will surely guide Americans to a greater acceptance of ethnic diversity. For we are all similar in our differences.

88. A. Gabriel Meléndez, M. Jane Young, and Patricia Moore, and Patrick Pynes, ed., *A Multicultural Southwest: A Reader* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001).

89. Frank Shuffelton, ed., *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.