

Mixed Identity

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quate language for articulating multiracial subjectivity. For instance, in his essay, "A Passionate Occupant of the Transnational Transit Lounge," historian Adrian Carton narrates the difficult space of his own Anglo-Indian identity, where his Indianness was experienced "in exile" and where "home" was "a placeless place" symbolized more by cultural objects than by geography or race (83). Indeed, Carton asserts that today's "postcolonial hybrid generation has no name" (79).

Orathai Northern's essay describes multiracial subjectivity as a "compelling place of asking," a "frustrated space of telling," and "an over-rehearsed space of explaining" (114). Given such challenges, multiracial subjects may feel pressured to choose a monoracial identity. Evelyn Alsultany's essay compares how popular celebrities like Mariah Carey and Paula Abdul have obscured their multiracial origins, while other celebrities, such as Tiger Woods (who has described himself as "Cablinasian" to capture his white, black, Indian and Asian background), have maintained claims to multiethnic identity.

Multiple Identification as Strategy

While the 2000 US Census provided 30 separate racial categories, allowing respondents to choose multiple ones, the political effects of such strategies on the process of recognizing racial identities itself are less clear. While some of the contributors to *Mixing It Up* underscore the potential of multiracial identity to disrupt overly discrete notions of otherness, much of the volume sounds a cau-

tionary note on the tendency to overestimate the subversive potential of multiracial identities.

Many of the contributors wish to remind us that multiracial identity may be used to construct a newer yet equally oppressive and "brown-washed" monoracial category, forewarning risks of miscegenation and the necessity of maintaining racial boundaries, or to obscure the fact that multiracial subjects may have similar relationships to assumptions about white superiority as "monoracial" subjects, even while possessing privileges not enjoyed by others who are racially marked differently.

Meanwhile, civil rights activists may argue for the strategic necessity of discrete racial boundaries to mobilize greater representation in achieving the work of racial equality. In negotiating these complex and contradictory political effects, Dunning argues for the right of all "to identify as we wish" (128), while Kwan and Speirs emphasize the "individual lived experiences of mixed-race people" as the best avenue for understanding multiracial identities (4).

It is important, however, to ensure that a well-intentioned emphasis on the personal not result in overly essentialist identity politics; along these lines, Salgado argues for the invention of "another vocabulary" which would balance individual choice with collective action "for economic, educational, political and social justice" (50).

Recognizing History

As we attempt to construct such new vocabularies, the central work of anthropologists may be to show how racial identity formations are uniquely dependent on historical and sociocultural contexts.

Marilyn Grace Miller's *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race* accomplishes this by placing variability, polarization and juxtaposition at the core

of an analysis of Latin American *mestizaje*. Through fine-grained case studies, Miller demonstrates the contextual vagaries of multiracial identity in Latin America. Miller's chapters examine the shifting nature of Mexican writer José Vasconcelos' ideas on *mestizo* identity, the irreducibly unique and specific context of Caribbean *mulatez*, the domestication of the Afro-Caribbean roots of the Argentine tango, the ways that Brazilian notions of *mestiçagem* have masked racism through melting-pot ideology, and the place of Andean art in expressing spiritualized *mestizaje* within broader contexts of *indigenismo* movements. Miller powerfully concludes her work by questioning whether recent "hybridity" theorists such as Néstor García Canclini have overly disassociated *mestizaje* from race and attached it to culture, obscuring how race continues to play an ongoing role in identification.

Remaining Questions

In contemporary scholarship on multiracial identity there are two sets of questions that remain implicit, but could use more treatment: first, are newer moments of transnationalism and globalization, which seem to be challenging fixed categories, only obscuring deeper transnational histories and instabilities of racial identification? In other words, were racial categories ever as fixed as we have imagined, and do theories of multiracial identity indicate a renewed consciousness of much older realities?

And secondly, how might multiracial identity articulate with "mixed" categories in other identity category systems, such as class, gender or sexuality? Perhaps by engaging in a more comparative analysis of all sorts of mixed social categories, we may begin to understand more profoundly the dynamics that govern identity systems more broadly conceived. ■

The Politics of Identity in the Caribbean

Ruins of Absence, Presence of Caribs: (Post) Colonial Representations of Aboriginality in Trinidad. Maximillian Forte. Gainesville: U Florida Press. 2005. 304 pp.

Callaloo Nation: Metaphors of Race and Religious Identity among South Asians in Trinidad. Aisha Khan. Durham: Duke U Press. 2004. 264 pp.

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Throughout the 1990s the Caribbean emerged as an emblem of globalization, a supposed model for the imagined futures characterized by hybridity, syncretism and other forms of mixture. Scholars across a range of disciplines imported Caribbean conceptions of mixture, including terms such as "creolization" and "métissage," to represent and think through the politics of identity endemic to this new era of movement and cultural exchange.

Although anthropologists working in and with populations of the Caribbean welcomed the recognition of the wider theoretical salience of the Caribbean (a region often relegated to the margins of the discipline), many Caribbeanists

also expressed discomfort with the ahistorical appropriation of these concepts and, in turn, the reification of such categories and processes. Maximillian Forte's *Ruins of Absence, Presence of Caribs* and Aisha Khan's *Callaloo Nation* represent two ethnographically and historically grounded endeavors to explore the politics of identity among Caribs and Indo-Trinidadians in the republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

"Reengineering" Contemporary Caribs

Focusing upon the Santa Rosa Carib Community (SRCC) and the cultural brokers within this organization who navigate and structure Carib identity, Forte seeks to elucidate the "political economy of tradition" which he argues rests at "this juncture

between power, patronage-brokerage, and the political and economic implications of the role of the state in managing diversity" (32). Moving from Spanish, French and English colonial documents, anthropological accounts as well as the interviews with three influential cultural brokers involved in the SRCC, Forte traces the "reengineering" of the contemporary Caribs as they have been inscribed in Arimaian and Trinidadian history.

A particularly fascinating facet of Forte's account revolves around how Caribs and Arawaks were juxtaposed, and at times conflated, with shifts in Spanish colonial policy. Later the Caribs were accorded special "protected" status under the Spanish mission in Arima, a status through which they continue to seek to solidify their "authentic" presence and place within Trinidadian society (indeed most Caribs possess a Spanish name and are locally termed "Spanish" or "mixed"). In so doing, Forte challenges the popular representations of the "vanishing" Caribs and, in turn, creates a space for reconsider-

ering the contributions of the Caribs as a material and discursive presence in the Caribbean.

Articulating "Race" and "Religion"

Emphasizing the articulation of "race" and "religion" for Hindu and Muslim Indo-Trinidadians living in southern Trinidad (Penal), Aisha Khan examines how contemporary Indo-Trinidadians reflect upon, navigate and articulate their sense of self and community through the discourse of mixing. Quandaries over how to "live good" with Christian neighbors, what to wear and if Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians should mix (and potentially produce children known as *douglas*) represent just a few of the daily quandaries of Indo-Trinidadians who may subscribe to and thus seek to locate themselves within Trinidadian ethos' of unity and mixture but at the same time desire to remain untainted and maintain their identity as South Asians.

Khan's astute analysis of the term *simi-dimi*, or superstition (broadly defined) represents an important contribution to our understanding of the subtle negotiations of identity which take place through discourse. In the realm of *simi-dimi*, Indo-Trinidadians negotiate the fluid boundaries between Hindu and Muslim religious practice, boundaries historically transgressed through residential proximity and intermarriage. Through *simi-dimi* Indo-Trinidadians also explore the tensions between the "high culture" of South Asian religious tradition and the "low culture" of Indo-Trinidadians who continue to be perceived as illiterate, rural and backwards. Khan's nuanced account of Indo-Trinidadian identity reveals how mixing is "an ongoing principle of this region, inflected towards an emphasis on racial and religious identities, and the cultural qualities they have been assumed to signify" (222).

Revealing Ambiguity

Together *Callaloo Nation* and *Ruins of Absence, Caribs of Presence* enable us to navigate the intricacies of racial and ethnic identity in Trinidad and the Caribbean. Through their focus upon the marginalized histories and experiences of the Caribs, Hindu South Asians, Muslim South Asians as well as the often neglected Spanish presence in the Anglophone Caribbean, the authors join a growing corpus of sophisticated ethnographies that interrogate the nation-building projects in the region.

Particularly compelling is the authors' attention to transnational connections in the constitution of and performances surrounding Carib and Indo-Trinidadian assertions of authenticity and the seeming contradictions between claims to authenticity and mixture, epitomized in the Carib shaman who incorporates new age Native American symbols in local Carib rituals. By revealing the daily, fraught and often ambiguous articulations of identity in the lives of Carib cultural brokers and rural Indo-Trinidadians, Forte and Khan effectively demonstrate the power of discourse in mutually constructing and conveying social life in the Caribbean. □

Tools for Considering Power and Intercultural Communication

Intercultural Discourse and Communication: The Essential Readings. Scott F Kiesling, Christina Bratt Paulston, Eds. Boston: Blackwell. 2004. 330 pp.

Words of the True Peoples (Palabras de los Seres Verdaderos): Anthology of Contemporary Mexican Indigenous-Language Writers, Vol 1, Prose/Prosa. Carlos Montemayor, Donald Frischmann, Eds. Austin: U Texas Press. 2005. 295 pp.

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These two volumes, when juxtaposed, suggest scholarship on intercultural communication has matured recently, while also establishing several touchstones for fieldworkers to keep in mind as old boundaries are exceeded. The central one is that the ramifications of power must be represented in our work. Closely connected is the insight that explanation of the social context of discourse and communication is indispensable for its analysis. Another is that "everyday" speech can be very different from ritualized or artistic discourse—and can position the anthropologist, as a facilitator of cross-cultural understanding, in radically different ways.

Speech Ethnography

The reader Kiesling and Paulston have assembled is rich and practical, ideal for graduate courses or for independent scholars crafting field projects. The first section alone justifies the volume: it includes Hymes' and Duranti's famous taxonomies of speech ethnography and several other frameworks for developing analytical approaches. The rest of the articles, lively ethnographic case studies from around the world, make the book compelling and more useful to a broader audience.

Across differences in scholarly background and method, these articles demonstrate a solidly shared set of purposes that clearly define them as speech ethnography. Within that larger field, this set of articles is strong in its commitment to contextualized analysis that ultimately arrives at insights into how social power is represented and negotiated through speech acts. It is also notably confined to situations of "everyday speech." Explicit references to "performance" analysis are striking in their absence, even if many of the authors implicitly draw on the strengths of that approach as they point to the slippage that occurs in intercultural circumstances when narrative cues, shared assumptions and other chemical elements necessary to catalyze shared meaning simply fail.

Translating Indigenous Texts

Montemayor and Frischmann are well aware that to extract texts from their cultural and performative context is to risk misunderstanding, especially when translating across cultural and linguistic boundaries; but, simply put, they have calculated that the need to publish these Mexican texts, in their indigenous languages as well as in Spanish

and English, outweighs the risk. Their project here is not speech ethnography in any of its previous forms, nor even primarily textual interpretation; it is the collection and translation of literature, and as they point out in their separate introductions, their positions are those of editor-translators, not author-anthropologists.

Words of the True Peoples—Prose, the first of three volumes, has an urgency about it, a self-awareness that comes not only from the editors' intentional stepping back, as they facilitate the circulation of work produced by intellectuals of under-recognized communities, but from the political movement that has accompanied the indigenous literature renaissance and writing project in Mexico. The anthology contains short prose texts by highly accomplished indigenous Mexican authors whose work is virtually unknown abroad.

Montemayor's and Frischmann's expertise in Maya literatures, and the notable success of the Maya writing project help to account for the strong representation of Maya authors in the collection (10 of 15). Yet this series is clearly the tip of the iceberg; this brief sampling is just a hint at the library shelves that could and should be filled with the cultural and linguistic work developed in recent decades by indigenous intellectuals in a variety of Mexican languages.

Meanwhile, precisely because the series is breaking new ground, and because the mosaic of stories and essays—some of which are excerpts from longer texts—does not easily resolve into conceptual patterns, Montemayor's short appendices on indigenous cosmology and Frischmann's interpretive introduction are necessary. Frischmann's excellent discussion of indigenous literature, especially his insights into "inscribed orality," is helpful beyond the boundaries of this volume. In addition, his commentary on the pieces here bring them to life and draw out some of the meaning which would otherwise be missed by all but other experts in the subfield.

The concern with power relations imbedded in these two very distinct approaches to intercultural discourse is heartening, since it has not always accompanied speech ethnography or the transcription of indigenous literature. The negligible areas of overlap between the two indicate that the field has become broader and more specialized; their achievements indicate that the field has become more precise in its concepts and more demanding in both criteria and methods. Books like these give new scholars the tools and the data to meet those challenges. □