

# "Who Are You Calling Asian?": Shifting Identity Claims, Racial Classification, and the Census

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## Introduction

Tiger Woods may be popularly regarded as a "black" golfer, but Woods himself writes that he is "Asian" on forms requesting racial and ethnic data. "Actually," Woods says, "I am 90 percent Oriental, more Thai than anything."<sup>2</sup> How Woods classifies himself reveals the inherent slipperiness of racial identity, and the gap between popular understandings of racial belonging and state definitions of race and ethnicity. Nowhere are these issues as evident as in the contested framing of racial categories for the U.S. Census.

This chapter describes how Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) have been affected by, and in turn have shaped, census classification. Through an examination of specific cases, we illustrate how racial categories have been significantly transformed by the advancement of APA political claims. A shifting consciousness regarding group "sameness" or "distinctiveness" has mobilized APAs to lobby for the creation of new categories, for the expansion of existing ones, or for the relocation of groups from one category to another. The cases illustrate how specific forms of classification are the result of dynamic and complex negotiations between state interests, panethnic demands, and ethnic-specific challenges. As such, APA census categories both reflect and help create group identities, influence the formation of public policy, and shape the popular discourse about race in the U.S.

## Racial Classification and the Census

The census is regarded by much of the population as a bureau-

cratic routine—a form of national accounting that provides a collective portrait of who we are as a people. Part of that picture involves dividing and clustering the population into meaningful and significant groups. Among others, the census establishes categories based on nativity, citizenship status, age, household income, and marital status. None of these categories, however, has been subject to such intense scrutiny, vigorous debate, and political controversy as that of race and ethnicity. The census has increasingly become the site where competing political claims for group recognition by race and ethnicity are advanced, and where classifications are established in response to statistical needs, administrative record keeping practices, and legal requirements. At stake is not only the “appropriate” classification of groups, but also the political and policy implications that flow from these definitions.

Sociologist William Petersen notes that, “Over the history of the American census, enumerations have helped create groups, moved persons from one group to another by revised definition, and through new procedures changed the size of groups” (Peterson 1983, 188). Contemporary national censuses have had to confront the demise of biological notions of race and its attendant impact on state classifications. For most of the modern period, race was considered something objective and fixed, much like one’s age or nativity status. The concept of race is now widely regarded as a social construct, and census categories are seen as an important force in the generation and reproduction of collective identities (Omi 1997, Goldberg 1997).

In the wake of the civil rights movement, new record keeping practices needed to be developed to monitor discriminatory trends and enforce equal opportunity laws. In 1977, the Office of Management and Budget issued Directive 15, which defines the federal standards for racial and ethnic classification:

This Directive provides standard classifications for record keeping, collection, and presentation of data on race and ethnicity in Federal program administrative reporting and statistical activities. These classifications should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature, nor should they be viewed as determinants of eligibility for participation in any Federal program. (OMB Directive 15)

Originally conceived to provide consistent categories for use by federal agencies, OMB Directive 15 has inordinately shaped the very discourse of race in the United States. Its categories have become the *de facto* standard for state and local agencies, the private and nonprofit sectors, and the research community. Social scientists and policy analysts use Directive 15 categories since data is organized under these rubrics.

Given the importance of racial data for monitoring and redressing the nation's racial inequalities, some demographers and statisticians hope that we can have racial and ethnic categories that are conceptually valid, exclusive and exhaustive, measurable, and reliable over time. However, as this chapter will illustrate, racial/ethnic categories have proven to be fundamentally unstable. Official racial categories have changed nine times in the past ten U.S. censuses. In the planning of the 2000 Census, the Census Bureau once again faced increasing public demand for revising or expanding the racial categories. This demand is driven in part by demographic shifts—the entrance of “new” immigrant groups since 1965 and increasing ethnic heterogeneity among pre-existing categories. It is also fueled by the “increasing recognition of the fluidity and accompanying ambiguity of racial and ethnic identities for many people” (Edmonston and Schultze 1995, 141). There is, for example, frequently a gap between state definitions and individual/group self-identities. Immigrant groups who come from societies organized around different concepts of race and ethnicity often have difficulty

navigating and situating themselves within U.S. categories (Omi 1997). Another concern is the temporal effect of evolving racial and ethnic labels. New labels come into vogue, old groups dissolve through assimilation, and new groups emerge as a result of changes in civil status or patterns of immigration.<sup>3</sup>

Our discussion of APA census classification takes place at a time when the very use of racial categories is being challenged from a number of political positions. For over a year, the American Anthropology Association debated the appropriateness of any form of racial classification (American Anthropology Association 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d). The Association concluded that there was no scientific basis for the concept of “race” and urged that the term not be used in scholarly practice. Political conservatives, in arguing for “color-blind” social policies, have also denounced the use of racial categories. Such race thinking, they argue, runs counter to the move to “get beyond race” and to judge individuals by “the content of their characters.”<sup>4</sup> Liberal voices have also expressed their dissatisfaction with racial categories, contending that to classify groups along racial line is to reify race. Sociologist Orlando Patterson, for example, questions why the Census Bureau needs an “Asian” category, arguing that such an umbrella category would only reinforce “the notion of race as a separate, meaningful entity” (Patterson 1997). The on going challenge to the practice of racial classification and record keeping has important social policy implications, for it can potentially affect the government’s ability to monitor trends and discern forms of racial inequality.

In this chapter, we address the complexity of classifying APAs—a diverse and changing population. When and under what conditions should APAs be classified as an aggregate? When do we need to disaggregate the category? And when do we need to advocate for new categories? In so doing, we hope to address the larger question of the relationship between racial classification, individual identity, and the

efforts by the state and various populations to address racial inequalities. We first turn to a consideration of how APAs have been historically classified by census definitions and practices.

## Historical Continuities and Contradictions

The U.S. federal government has been collecting racial data since the eighteenth century. From the very beginning of census taking in this country, a basic differentiation was established between nonwhites and whites. As Peterson (1983, 190) notes:

Those of European origin have been specified as the “foreign stock” if they or one or both of their parents were born abroad, but from the third generation on, whites of any nationality disappear statistically into the native population. For nonwhites, however, a separate category has been maintained, irrespective of how many generations lived in this country.

Extending this point, we would argue that such a distinction was explicitly linked to the political dynamic of racist inclusion and exclusion. Until the passage of civil rights legislation in the 1960s, census categories were utilized to politically disenfranchise and discriminate against groups defined as nonwhite. From prohibitions on naturalization rights to the setting of quotas for the 1924 National Origins Immigration Act, census categories were evoked and strategically employed to circumscribe the political, economic, and social rights of particular groups (Anderson 1988).

As nonwhites, Asians in the United States have always been counted separately in the “Race” or “Color” question. As indicated in Table 1, Asians first appeared in the census schedules in 1870 when “Chinese” was included in the “Color” question. After the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, Japanese were recruited as substitute

TABLE 1. ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER CATEGORIES IN THE U.S. CENSUS: 1870 TO 1990

Year	Chinese	Japanese	Other Asian or Pacific Islander	Other
1870	Chinese			
1880	Chinese			
1890	Chinese	Japanese		
1900	Chinese	Japanese		
1910	Chinese	Japanese		Other + write in
1920	Chinese	Japanese		Other + write in
1930	Chinese	Japanese	Filipino, Hindu, Korean	Other race, spell out in full
1940	Chinese	Japanese	Filipino, Hindu, Korean	Other race, spell out in full
1950	Chinese	Japanese	Filipino	Other race, spell out
1960	Chinese	Japanese	Filipino, Hawaiian, part Hawaiian, etc.	
1970	Chinese	Japanese	Filipino, Hawaiian, Korean	Other (print race)
1980	Chinese	Japanese	Filipino, Hawaiian, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Samoan, Guamanian	Other (specify)
1990	Chinese	Japanese	Filipino, Hawaiian, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Samoan, Guamanian, Other Asian or Pacific Islander	Other race

Source: Edmonston and Schultze (1995: table 7.1).

workers. The Japanese category thus appeared for the first time in the 1890 Census. In the Twentieth Century, the “race” question continued to be a combination of color, tribal status, and Asian national origin. Reflecting increased immigration from different Asian countries, the 1930 and 1940 Censuses added Filipinos, Koreans, and Hindu to the “Color or Race” question. However, presumably because of their small numbers, Koreans were dropped from the “Color or Race” question in the 1950 and 1960 Censuses. As we will discuss below, the classification of Asian Indians in the United States has been most fluid, beginning with “Hindu” in 1930 then changing to “white” after World War II and then to “Asian Indian” in 1980. Pacific Islanders were added to the census schedules in 1960 with the introduction of the categories “Hawaiian” and “Part Hawaiian.”

Civil rights legislation beginning in 1964 has stimulated vested interest in the racial and ethnic classification and enumeration of the Census. At the time of the 1960 Census, the race question had become discredited and would have been excluded in 1970 had it not been for the passage of civil rights and equal opportunities laws, which made it necessary for the census to continue to compile racial statistics (Kaplan 1979, 4). Civil rights legislation requires federal authorities to look for patterns of discrimination as evidenced by the under-representation of disadvantaged minorities; and where such under-representation is found, affirmative action by the responsible party must be undertaken to correct it. Disadvantaged minorities are defined as those who have been historically subject to racial discrimination and economic oppression in the United States. Congress also used census population statistics to ensure equal access to the electoral process. Until census data began to provide comprehensive data on an underlying population including its disadvantaged minorities in a specific geographic area, it was very difficult to demonstrate patterns of discrimination practiced by businesses, schools and political institutions against disadvantaged minorities. Thus, census

statistics became absolutely critical for the enforcement of every civil rights law passed since the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Not surprisingly, because the census tabulations of racial and ethnic groups had the potential to form the benchmark for many legal tests of minority underrepresentation, the accuracy, adequacy, and precision of census statistics became an explosive political controversy, as well as an important site for the political activity of racial and ethnic political interest groups. The passage of civil rights legislation thus marked an important shift in the use of racial and ethnic data—from a tool to identify populations who were excluded from citizenship to one that is used to ensure the inclusion of groups (Lott 1998, 31).

Responding to political pressure from racial and ethnic interest groups seeking to acquire not just substantive but legally authoritative data on their populations, the U.S. government undertook the standardization of the collection and presentation of data on race and ethnicity. In 1977, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Statistical Directive 15 required all federal agencies to use five standard categories in program administrative reporting and statistical activities: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, White, and Hispanic. Directive 15 defines an Asian or Pacific Islander in relation to geographical origin and ancestry as “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands.”<sup>5</sup> From a civil rights perspective, this directive is significant because it formalized and institutionalized the collection and representation of presumably compatible, nonduplicated, exchangeable ethnic and racial data by all federal agencies. This policy has resulted in a wealth of data previously unobtainable on the disparities between white and nonwhite populations, especially in the areas of voting rights, public accommodations and services, education, employment and housing (Lott 1998). The directive has also shaped the very discourse of race in the United States, becoming the *de facto* standard for state and local

agencies, the private and nonprofit sectors, and the research community. Directive 15 has also influenced group identity and community-formation patterns. For example, new organizations have emerged representing the interests of “Asian and Pacific Islanders” or “Hispanics” in a variety of forms from service providers to professional caucuses.

Although Directive 15 allowed the collection of additional detailed race and ethnicity categories, it required that such groups be reaggregated into the five basic racial/ethnic categories. To satisfy the new federal guidelines on the collection of racial statistics, the Census Bureau proposed to do away with the individual Asian Pacific racial codes in favor of one summary category “Asian or Pacific Islander” in the 1980 Census and again in the 1990 Census. According to the Bureau, this single classification would provide a 100 percent count of the total APA population, as required by the OMB. Both times, APA legislators, community leaders, and advocacy groups united to fight the Census Bureau’s proposal to lump all APAs together and recommended instead separate categories for the various APA populations. Citing the huge influx of recent immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Rim, APA community representatives argued successfully that new immigrants, particularly limited or non-English speakers, would not relate to the racial category “Asian or Pacific Islander” and that these newcomers have unique health, education, and welfare concerns that need to be separately identified (Espiritu 1992, 118-130). Mounting pressures from APA constituencies and unfavorable pre-census test results, which demonstrated a great deal of confusion about the summary category of “Asian or Pacific Islander,” ultimately forced the Census Bureau to not only retain the separate categories for APA groups from the 1970 Census, but to add Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Samoan, and Guamanian. In the 1990 Census, an “Other API” category was added.

Although APAs have been most effective in lobbying for representation on the census forms, it is important to note the limitations of these successes (Lott 1998, 91). Most importantly, despite these victories, data on APAs continue to be difficult to obtain. Many federal agencies do not solicit, record, or report data on APAs separately, claiming that it is difficult and costly to obtain data on such small populations. For instance, in the Census Bureau's survey of minority-owned businesses, data on APAs is combined and reported with data on American Indians and Alaskan Natives (House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight: Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology Hearings 1997, 670-671). Even when APAs are included in the collection of data, they often fail to appear in the actual reporting of data.

In recent years, the continuing utility of Directive 15—and of racial and ethnic categories—has been questioned. When Directive 15 was implemented in the 1970s, racial and ethnic minorities were a stable and small proportion of the American population. Moreover, African Americans were the only sizable minority group in the United States, comprising approximately 90 percent of the nonwhite U.S. population (Payson 1996, 1257). Since then, the United States has witnessed a substantial influx of immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the emergence of a new generation of multiracial families and children. As the United States becomes more heterogeneous, public pressure has increased for revising and expanding race and ethnicity classifications in the census as well as for increasing recognition of the fluidity and multiplicity of individuals' self-identification (Edmonston and Schultze 1995, 141). In the following section, we will discuss how APAs have negotiated, contested, and made use of these official racial and ethnic categories.

## Negotiating and Contesting Racial/Ethnic Categories

APAs are a diverse and changing population—a multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic people who have different socioeconomic profiles, immigration histories, and political outlooks. Despite these differences, APAs have at times come together as a panethnic group to lobby for recognition, to assert political claims, and to argue for increased resources (Espiritu 1992). Because the APA category is a social and political construct, it is inherently unstable. Within the broad and imprecise pan-Asian boundary, subgroup identifications remain important, leaving room for shifting levels of solidarity and mobilization, backsliding, or dropping out of the pan-Asian framework altogether. In recent years, APA groups have lobbied for both inclusion into and exclusion from the APA category. In this section, we examine how the issues of racial classification have been negotiated and resolved among APAs, between APAs and other minorities, and between APAs and the federal and state governments.

### ASIAN INDIANS

Racial terms used in census enumeration schedules are subject to constant revision—driven by shifting demographic trends, changing concepts of race, and claims for political/legal recognition. The convoluted history of how Asian Indians have been classified in the census provides a compelling illustration of some of these factors. In 1930, Asian Indians first appeared in the census schedules when “Hindu” was added to the “Color” question. The term “Hindu” or “Hindoo” in the popular parlance of the era was constructed as a racial classification, and not as an indicator of religious affiliation. Ironically, only a small portion of the initial wave of Asian Indian immigrants was Hindu. In fact, a third of the Asian Indian population was Muslim, and the clear majority was Sikh (Takaki 1989, 295). “Hindu” was omitted as a category in the

1950 Census. Despite the abolition of the Hindu category, enumerators were instructed in 1950 and 1960 to write in “Hindu” for the race of persons they regarded as Asian Indians (Colker 1996, 236).

The question of how to racially “situate” Asian Indians has historically been the focus of intense legal battles, primarily centered on securing naturalization rights. Between 1909 and 1923, court decisions on whether Asian Indians were “white by law” were contradictory and relied on different principles to arrive at their judgments (Haney López 1996). The courts found Asian Indians to be “white persons” in 1910, 1913, 1919, and 1920, but not in 1909, 1917, or after 1923 (Haney López 1996, 67). The deliberations of these legal cases are interesting because they reveal the tensions and contradictions between science, popular consciousness, and the law. At the turn of the century, leading anthropologists considered dark-skinned people from western and southern Asia, such as Syrians and Asian Indians, as “Caucasians.” At times, the courts agreed with this classification and its meaning for the extension of legal and political rights. At other times, the court decisions reflected the acknowledgment of a disjuncture, from a legal standpoint, between “scientific” evidence and “common knowledge” as rooted in popular conceptions of race.

This disjuncture is clearly revealed in the Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Thind* (1923). Bhagat Singh Thind, born in India and a graduate of Punjab University, had immigrated to the United States in 1913. He was petitioning to become a naturalized citizen based on his racial classification as “Caucasian.” The Court found that although Thind was “Caucasian,” he was not “white” by commonly understood notions of “whiteness,” and therefore ruled that Thind was ineligible for naturalization. “It may be true,” the court declared, “that the blond Scandinavian and the brown Hindu have a common ancestor in the dim reaches of antiquity, but the average man knows perfectly well that there are unmistakable and profound differences between them today” (*Thind* 1923, 209).

The *Third* decision had an enormous impact on immigration and naturalization policies and practices. In the immediate wake of the decision, the federal government attempted to deprive naturalized Asian Indians of their citizenship. The result was the denaturalization of at least 65 people between 1923 and 1927, including one man, Vaisho Das Bgai, who committed suicide after being divested of his citizenship (Haney López 1996, 91). Within weeks after the decision, California's Attorney General began proceedings to revoke Asian Indian land purchases under the restrictive terms of the state's Alien Land Law (Takaki 1989, 300). Finally, Asian Indian status as "aliens ineligible for citizenship" made them subject to the 1924 Immigration Act that denied admissions quotas for such persons. In 1946, Asian Indian immigrants, along with Filipinos, were finally granted naturalization rights.

In 1950, the "Hindu" category was removed from the census "Race" question; Asian Indians were then relegated to the category "Other" and subsequently classified as "white/Caucasian." Because Asian Indians defy the logic of U.S. established racial categories, it has continued to be difficult to situate or identify them by their "race" or "color." In 1978, a National Opinion Research Center (NORC) survey asked, "Would you classify most people from India as being white, black, or something else?" Twenty-three percent of respondents described Asian Indians as "brown," 15 percent as "black," and 11 percent as "white." What is striking is that 38 percent of respondents classified them as "other," while 13 percent said they could not classify them at all (cited in Xenos et. al. 1989, 3). This ambiguity and confusion extends to Asian Indians themselves. In the 1980 Census, many people who identified themselves as Asian Indian by ancestry also considered themselves to be white by race (Xenos et. al. 1989, 1).

In the mid-1970s, to challenge the "invisibility" of Asian Indians, leaders affiliated with the Association of Indians in America (AIA) lobbied for an Asian Indian category under the larger APA category.

The desire to obtain an accurate count provided the initial impetus for petitioning for a new category. Dr. Manornjan Dutta, an economist at Rutgers and former president of the AIA was the first to serve on the Census Advisory Committee and the principal actor behind the call for an Asian Indian category. He explained that it was important for Asian Indians to be “counted”:

I have said this in many meetings from San Francisco to Boston: “When you left India, you promised your mom and dad that you would be counted. You will not remain uncounted.” The first place to be counted is in the census of the country where you pay taxes. (Dutta interview 1999).

Dr. Jilen Shah, a physician and former president of the AIA who served on the 1990 Census Advisory Committee, underscored the need to clarify the racial status of Asian Indians:

Prior to the 1980 Census, nobody knew how many Indians there were in the country. When the questionnaire came, we didn’t know how to fill out the form. A lot of people were filling it out that we were black. Some were saying we were Hispanic. We just did not know (Shah interview 1999).

Dr. Narendra Kukkar, an endocrinologist and AIA member who actively petitioned for the category, notes the slippage that existed between census categories, popular conceptions of race, and individual/group self-identity:

We were listed on the official reports as Caucasians and we knew that we didn’t look like Caucasians....We didn’t act like Caucasians. We didn’t speak like Caucasians. Our names were not like Caucasians...Anthropologically they felt that we were Caucasian...our plea to [the Census Bureau] was that we didn’t fit into the category (Kukkar interview 1999).

The move for a separate category provoked debates within the broader Asian Indian community regarding its policy implications. Was the category meant to insure a more accurate count or to make claims to “minority status”? The debates primarily circulated in professional circles. The issue became framed, as it has in other instances, as one of individual merit and socioeconomic mobility versus group demands for recognition and collective empowerment. Many Asian Indians, subscribing to the former perspective, opposed the idea of a separate category:

There were many Indians that resented the idea that one should become a minority and claim a minority status...They would say, “What do you mean? You are undermining my own ability and my own education. You are trying to tell that I have to be a minority to get this? I’m getting this because I am capable of this” (Kukkar interview 1999).

On the other hand, the proponents of the Asian Indian category felt that the category would assist the next generation who may face some difficult obstacles with respect to access to higher education because of “the name factor, the color factor, and the pronunciation factor” (Kukkar interview 1999).

In the end, however, the group that would substantially benefit from the creation of the category was small businesspeople:

The fortunate part, which at that point none of us had realized, was that when the new wave of immigrants started arriving many of them were small businessmen and contractors. Minority businessmen have received most of the benefits of this minority status. They were eligible to get loans at a preferred rate from the federal government and from the state governments...That was totally unforeseen. In terms of benefits to kids who wanted to get into Harvard or Yale or UCLA...that did not even materialize. (Kukkar interview 1999)

In 1977, the OMB agreed to reclassify immigrants from India and their descendants from “white/Caucasian” to “Asian Indian.” They were officially listed on the 1980 Census as “Asian Indian” and were one of the subgroups under the “Asian or Pacific Islander” category under Directive 15. The term “Asian Indian” itself apparently emerged in response to comments from the American Indians who wanted to avoid confusion between the two groups. As Dutta recalls, “[American Indians] suggested that Indians should take a prefix or suffix otherwise Columbus’ mistake would persist. I said I preferred Asian Indian” (Dutta interview 1999).

The inclusion of Asian Indians under the APA classification has been contested by both Asian Indians and other APAs. Contending that they are *racially* different from other Asians, some Asian Indians have questioned the potential alliance with other APAs and argued that Indians run the risk of being ignored and marginalized in pan-Asian organizations (Misir 1996; Shankar and Srikanth 1998). On the other hand, some APAs have challenged the validity of Asian Indian claims to minority status as an APA group. For example, in San Francisco, Chinese American architects and engineers protested the inclusion of Asian Indians under the city’s minority business enterprise law (Chung 1991). Citing a Supreme Court ruling which requires cities to narrowly define which groups had suffered discrimination to justify specific affirmative action programs, Chinese Americans argued before the Board of Supervisors that Asian Indians should not be considered “Asian.” Obviously, at stake were economic benefits accruing to designated “minority” businesses.

The 1980 Census data—which indicated that the Asian Indian population was one of the most highly educated and had one of the highest incomes in the country—also challenged Asian Indian claim to minority status. As Kukkar stated, “They say, ‘You guys do so well. You’re so highly educated. What do you mean you want minority status?’” (Kukkar interview 1999). Asian Indian leaders have had to counter the claims of

being another “model minority” by demonstrating the existence of class cleavages and significant differences in life chances within the population. They have also emphasized discrepancies between educational attainment and income when compared to whites, and the phenomenon of the “glass ceiling” with respect to job mobility among professionals.

The case of Asian Indians illustrates the inherent fluidity of racial categories and how they are shaped by political interpretation and contestation. Labeled “Hindu” when the majority were Sikh, declared “Caucasian” but not “white” by the Supreme Court in 1923, and recognized as “Asian Indian” and “Asian American” in 1977, the category still remains open to further interrogation and change. As the number of South Asians has increased in recent years, questions regarding the relationship between Asian Indians and other South Asian groups have surfaced. In many academic and community-based settings, the term “Asian Indian” is being replaced with the term “South Asian” in an effort to decenter India and encompass groups from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, among others. “South Asian” was entertained as a possible term in the mid-1970s, but it was argued at the time that the majority of South Asians were Indian, so the term should reflect that. In addition, Dutta notes that, “[Indian] immigrants from several Caribbean and Latin American countries whose forebears immigrated from India also contacted me and preferred the term Asian Indian” (Dutta interview 1999). How other South Asian groups negotiate their location within the “Asian Indian” category is still an open question.

## FILIPINOS

As indicated by the Asian Indian case study, the state’s effort to classify racial and ethnic groups is imprecise at best, thus leaving room for ethnic groups discontented with their classification to challenge the validity of racial/ethnic categories. Whereas some Asian Indian leaders have lobbied to be reclassified from the “white/Caucasian” category to a

subgroup under the APA category, Filipinos have at times fought to be removed from the APA grouping. However, in both cases, a major incentive for requesting the reclassification was possible economic gain derived from civil rights affirmative action programs. Other motives included a desire to emphasize the group's unique cultural and racial identity and to assert their significance in U.S. racial schema.

Large-scale immigration of Filipino agricultural workers to the U.S. mainland coincided with their influx to Hawaii. The 1920s was a decade of dramatic increase in their numbers, with some forty-five thousand Filipinos migrating to the Pacific Coast. The 1921 and 1924 Immigration Acts which barred Asian immigration and restricted European immigration, prompted West Coast farmers and canneries to turn to Filipinos to fill the labor shortage created by the exclusion of the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and South Asians. Filipinos were the favored source of labor at that time due to their unusual legal status, for until the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934, Filipinos could migrate freely to the United States, protected by their colonial status as U.S. nationals. Due to the influx of Filipinos during the 1920s, Filipinos first appeared in the census schedules in 1930. The 1930 Census indicates that Filipinos were scattered across the nation; however, the majority concentrated in California (Espiritu 1995).

The precise racial classification of Filipinos was contested almost from the beginning. In 1905, California's lawmakers passed a bill to prohibit marriages between whites and "Mongolians." Because it was unclear whether Filipinos were Mongolians or not, some county clerks issued marriage licenses to Filipino-white couples, while others did not. In 1931, a Los Angeles county superior court judge decided that Filipino-white marriages did not violate the state antimiscegenation law because, in his view, Filipinos were not Mongolians. In 1933, the majority opinion handed down by the appellate court, based on an exhaustive reading of the works of nineteenth-century ethnologists,

declared that Filipinos were Malays, and not Mongolians, and therefore could marry whites. Undaunted by their failure in the courts, anti-Filipino forces, portraying the largely single Filipino men as sexual threats to white women, successfully lobbied the state legislature to expand the existing antimiscegenation laws to unambiguously include Filipino-white marriages (Chan 1991, 60-61).

The racial status of Filipinos vis-à-vis other APAs came up again during the Asian American movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the summer of 1968, more than one hundred students of diverse Asian backgrounds attended an "Are You Yellow?" conference at UCLA to discuss issues of Yellow Power, identity, and the war in Vietnam (Ling 1989, 53). In 1970, a new pan-Asian organization in northern California called itself the "Yellow Seed" because "Yellow [is] the common bond between Asian-Americans and Seed symbolize[s] growth as an individual and as an alliance" (Masada 1970). However, Filipino Americans rejected the "yellow" references, claiming that they were brown, not yellow (Rabaya 1971, 110; Ignacio 1976, 84). At the first Asian American national conference in San Francisco in 1972, Filipino Americans made it clear to the conferees that they were "Brown" Asians by separating themselves from the larger Asian American body and organizing their own "Brown" Asian caucus (Ignacio 1976, 139-141). Calling attention to their "braiding of cultures"-of Asian, Spanish, American, African, and Pacific Island cultures-Filipinos have also differentiated themselves culturally from other Asians. Maria Root (1997, ix) described Filipino cultural heritage in the following way: "Not dominated by Confucian philosophy, oral in tradition, coming from societies that have matriarchal structures and bilateral kinship systems, intersected and invaded by seafarers, traders, military, missionaries, and colonizers, Filipinos in America are seldom accurately situated in history or culture and are therefore often misinterpreted."

In addition to the perceived cultural and racial gap, Filipino Americans also claimed that they had a different socioeconomic profile from other APA groups and thus should be separated from the APA rubric. As indicated above, Directive 15 collapsed all Asian Pacific groups into the one summary category of Asian or Pacific Islander. As a result, federal agencies collect civil rights compliance data using the inclusive Asian or Pacific Islander category. However, aggregate data can be misleading, masking the economic diversity of the APA groups and ignoring the needs of high-risk groups. In the early 1980s, Filipinos in California began to clamor to be separated from the APA category, claiming that their socioeconomic status was lower than that of other APAs, namely the Chinese and Japanese. For example, in 1979, college-educated Japanese Americans on the average earned \$23,000 and Chinese Americans \$21,000. The same year, similarly educated Filipinos averaged just over \$16,000. Moreover, compared to Chinese and Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans “appear to be more of a working-class ethnic group, with greater occupational concentrations in semi-skilled jobs” (Nee and Sanders 1985, 82-85; Cabezas, Shinagawa, and Kawaguchi 1986-87). Because of their relatively disadvantaged position in the labor market, Filipino Americans have a potentially strong claim for inclusion in affirmative action programs. However, they feared that, when lumped together with other APA groups who are stereotyped as the “model minority,” their claim on the state could be diluted due to the relatively high economic level of the APA aggregate.

Filipino Americans also fare less well in secondary and higher education than other APAs: Filipinos have a significantly higher high school dropout and non-completion rate than other APA groups; fewer Filipinos graduate from colleges; and fewer still enroll in graduate school (Okamura and Agbayani 1997). Although Filipino educational profiles differ from those of other APA groups, only seven percent of all public schools, mainly in the West, used “Filipino” as a

separate racial/ethnic category in addition to the five federal categories of Directive 15 (U.S. Department of Education 1996). Classified as APA, Filipinos have been presumed not to be an underrepresented minority and in higher education, in 1986, were removed from affirmative action recruitment and admissions programs in the University of California system (Almirol 1988, 6). In subsequent years, Filipino American admissions and enrollment at UC Berkeley and UCLA declined. For example, in fall 1996, at UCLA, only 26 percent of Filipino applicants were admitted—the lowest admission percentage of any ethnic/racial group. Similarly, UC Berkeley records indicated that the acceptance rate of Filipinos (16 percent) for fall 1996 was 16 percent—the lowest in recent years and also the lowest of all ethnic/racial groups and well below the overall admission rate of 25 to 30 percent. In contrast, during this same period, APA representation in the UC system and in higher education in general showed unprecedented gains (Okamura and Agbayani 1997). Because Filipino American experiences and status in higher education have not been comparable to those of other APA groups, lumping them together with the latter could only mask their specific academic needs and concerns. The post-1965 influx of immigrants from the Philippines has substantially increased the number of Filipinos in the United States. According to the 1990 Census, Filipinos now total more than 1.4 million, comprising the second largest immigrant group as well as the second largest APA group in the United States, and the largest APA group in California. Their increasing numerical strength has fortified their contention that they no longer need to coalesce with other APA groups. Some Filipino American community advocates have claimed that the pan-Asian grouping allows the more established groups to dominate the resources meant for all APAs; newer and less powerful groups are simply used as window displays. As a Filipino American aide explained:

There is a sense of feeling that Japanese and Chinese have gotten a piece of the pie and that Filipinos are not getting enough of the pie. The issues being addressed have always been Japanese and Chinese issues. Filipinos believe in coalition building with other Asian Americans. They understand its strength. At the same time, they don't feel that the coalition is benefiting them (Tony Ricasa interview, 1989).

A 1988 editorial in the Sacramento-based *Philippine News* argued that Filipino Americans should be separated from the Asian Pacific classification because "the Japanese and Chinese...dominate every outreach funding meant for Asian and Pacific Islanders combined" and that "[they] are only using the numerical strength of the Filipinos to attract larger funding for the Asian and Pacific Islanders" (Jacaban 1988a).

In 1988, Filipino Americans were successful in lobbying for the passage of California Senate Bill 1813, which requires state personnel surveys or statistical tabulations to classify persons of Filipino ancestry as Filipino rather than as Asian or Hispanic. With this bill, Filipino Americans can potentially reap affirmative action benefits independent of the APA grouping because these outreach programs or funds "shall include equitable allocations based on the percentages of Filipinos in local governments in the State of California." The numerical strength of Filipino Americans was indeed a factor in the passage of California Senate Bill 1813. In a letter to State Assemblyman Peter Chacon, United States Congressman Jim Bates (1988) urged the passage of the bill stating that "there are more Filipinos in California than Japanese or Chinese and they are the fastest growing ethnic group in the state. The Filipinos should be separately categorized and given separate funding for outreach programs to serve their own people." The sponsor of the bill, Melecio Jacaban, also made use of the politics of numbers. In a memo to

the bill committee, he wrote:

As you are all aware of, the Filipinos are the third largest ethnic group in the state...We estimate that there are about 850,000 Filipinos in California at this writing. And out of that number, there are approximately half a million Filipino American registered voters. This is quite a sizeable number of voters, and they could prove to be the margin of election victory for some of the legislators who have a heavy Filipino population in their district (Jacaban 1988b).

In a telephone interview that took place soon after the bill was passed, Melecio Jacaban argued that since affirmative action laws are based on numbers, Filipino Americans should be receiving a larger share than the Japanese and Chinese Americans:

If numbers count, then why should the Filipinos take a back seat? Because there are more Filipinos than Chinese or Japanese, we are the ones who should be dominating the outreach programs for Asian Pacific groups. We should be getting the directorship and the funding (Jacaban interview 1989).

After the passage of California Senate Bill 1813, California has devised more detailed categories than those specified by OMB's Directive 15. As the following examples indicate, the Filipino category was separated from the Asian and the Pacific Islander categories:

*California State Employee racial/ethnic categories:*  
White, Black/African American, Hispanic, Asian, Filipino, American Indian, Pacific Islander, and Other

*California Department of Education racial/ethnic categories:*  
American Indian/Alaskan, Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Hispanic, Black, White

These more detailed categories indicate that state government racial/ethnic categories can differ from those specified by the federal government. However, it is important to note that in areas where there is Federal-State partnership and cooperation, the racial/ethnic data would be reaggregated into the five standard racial/ethnic categories before they are transmitted to the Federal government. For instance, the racial statistics of Filipino students in California's public universities are reaggregated into the APA category when they are reported to the National Center on Educational Statistics. In other words, even when Filipinos lobbied successfully at the state level for a "Filipino" category distinct from an "Asian American" or "Pacific Islander" category, the federal mandate meant continued Filipino inclusion in the APA category at the national level.

#### NATIVE HAWAIIANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

One recent dramatic change to OMB Directive 15 is the disaggregation of the existing "Asian or Pacific Islander" category into the separate categories of "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander." The creation of the latter category was spurred by the claims of Native Hawaiians that they were ill served by inclusion in the Asian and Pacific Islander category. The "Hawaiian" and "Part Hawaiian" categories first appeared on census schedules in 1960. In 1970, Part Hawaiian was deleted, and in 1980 Guamanian and Samoan were added. Under OMB Directive 15, these subgroups were aggregated into the Asian or Pacific Islander category.

The 1990 Census reported 211,014 Hawaiians, or slightly less than 0.01 percent of the total U.S. population. The population was highly concentrated with almost two-thirds (138,742) residing in the State of Hawaii. The second highest concentration was California with more than one-sixth (34,447) of all Hawaiians. While Native Hawaiians comprised only 2.9 percent of the total Asian and Pacific Islander

population, they constituted about 59 percent of the total Pacific Islander population. Data from the 1990 Census illustrated deepening differences in the demographic profile between Asian and Pacific Islander groups (Lott 1998, 95-96). One trend was the decreasing proportion of the Pacific Islander population. Between 1980 and 1990, Pacific Islanders decreased from 7 percent of the total APA population to 5 percent. There were 365,000 Pacific Islanders in 1990 compared to 6.9 million Asians. Differences in nativity status were dramatic. In 1990, only 13 percent of Pacific Islanders were foreign-born, compared to 66 percent of Asians. Socioeconomic indicators also suggested two distinct groups. With respect to education, only 11 percent of Pacific Islanders 25 years and older had a bachelor's degree compared to about 40 percent for Asians. Median household income was \$41,583 for Asians and \$33,955 for Pacific Islanders (Federal Register 1997b, 92).

Beginning in the early 1990s, Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI) initiated a discussion and subsequent lobbying effort to move Native Hawaiians out of the Asian and Pacific Islander category. Senator Akaka's office had been receiving phone calls from students and alumni of Kamehameha High School complaining of the difficulty of convincing mainland colleges and universities to consider Native Hawaiian admissions and scholarship decisions separate from those of Asian Americans (Kiaaina interview 1999). Native Hawaiian students cited unique social hurdles and economic difficulties in pursuing higher education. College and university administrators countered that in line with OMB Directive 15, Native Hawaiians would be considered as part of the APA category and not be guaranteed any form of "special" consideration.

In March 1993, Senator Akaka contacted then OMB Director Leon Panetta and proposed to reclassify Native Hawaiians in the same category as American Indians and Alaskan Natives. Akaka did not advocate for the creation of a separate category for Native Hawaiians in the belief that many federal agencies would not support the creation of

any new categories under Directive 15. His move was to argue for a reconstituted indigenous category that would be called "Native Americans." Akaka believed that Native Hawaiian interests would be best served in this expanded category. He stated: "Like the varying cultures among the hundreds of American Indian tribes and Alaskan Native groups, Native Hawaiians have a unique political and historical relationship with the United States" (House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service: Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel Hearings 1994, 200). The move to classify Native Hawaiians as Native Americans called attention to the indigenous status of the population and to the past wrongs exacted on Hawaii's native people by the United States.

In 1993 testimony before the Congressional Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel, Senator Akaka contrasted the indigenous status of Hawaiians to the immigrant status of other APA groups and argued against their classification as Asian or Pacific Islander in Federal record keeping practices:

As a result, there is the misperception that Native Hawaiians, who number well over 200,000, somehow "immigrated" to the United States like other Asian or Pacific Island groups. This leads to the erroneous impression that Native Hawaiians, the original inhabitants of the Hawaiian Island, no longer exist. We exist, Mr. Chairman. The fact that I am sitting before you today is proof that we exist. And I want to make it clear that Native Hawaiians are Native Americans. While we are culturally Polynesian, we are descendants of the aboriginal people who occupied and exercised sovereignty in the area that now constitutes the State of Hawaii (House Committee Hearings 1994, 200).

Akaka received strong support for his proposal to expand the

definition of “American Indian or Alaskan Native” to include Native Hawaiians. In an earlier statement before the Subcommittee, Henry Der of the National Coalition for an Accurate Count of Asians and Pacific Islanders pointed out that some federal statutes already recognized and classified Hawaiians as Native Americans. For example, under Title VI, FTA Circular C4702 defines “Native Americans” as a category that “includes persons who are American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, or Native Hawaiians” (House Committee Hearings 1994, 99). The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights also supported Akaka’s proposal. Then Chairperson Arthur A. Fletcher stated before the Subcommittee that Native Hawaiians are the indigenous, aboriginal people of Hawaii and that they should be included under the category of American Indian or Alaskan native. Fletcher (p. 259) drew out the implications of this reclassification:

The Congress should promptly enact legislation enabling Native Hawaiians to develop a political relationship with the Federal Government comparable to that enjoyed by other native peoples in the Nation. Such legislation would encourage the realization of sovereignty and self-determination for Native Hawaiians, a goal that this Advisory Committee strongly endorses.

The proposal to relocate Native Hawaiians to the American Indian or Alaskan Native category subsequently received support from the entire Hawaii Congressional delegation, then Governor John Waihee, and a range of Native Hawaiian organizations.

On the other hand, groups representing American Indians vigorously opposed the proposed reclassification. Some feared that such reclassification would reduce data consistency over time for American Indians, without improving the data available for Native Hawaiians (Edmonston et. al. 1996, 31). They argued that minor changes in terminology and formatting would yield better data for Hawaiians. The

Results of the 1996 Race and Ethnic Targeted Test by the Bureau of the Census (1997, 1-22) found that use of the term "Native Hawaiian" in place of "Hawaiian," combined with listing this category immediately as the first of the APA groups, increased reporting of Hawaiians in the Asian and Pacific Islander targeted sample. This conclusion supported the additional, more minor request by Akaka and others to shift the terminology from Hawaiian to Native Hawaiian.

The more contested issue was over the political legal status of Native Hawaiians. Some Native American representatives feared that Native Hawaiians, when reclassified as Native Americans, would be granted special tribal status akin to the government-to-government relationship, which exists between federally recognized Indian tribes and Alaskan Natives and the federal government. Testifying before the House Subcommittee on the federal measures of race and ethnicity and their implications for the 2000 Census, Senator Akaka sought to allay these concerns: "My proposal...does not, and I repeat does not affect...the political status of Native Hawaiians. That is something that we, as Native Hawaiians, will resolve through the legislative process" (House Committee Hearings 1997, 262). Representative Akaka (House Committee Hearings 1997, 270) submitted an analysis done by Roger Walke of the Congressional Research Service as documentation. This analysis noted that the proposed move of Native Hawaiian to the American Indian and Alaskan Native category might not be as significant as it might seem at first glance. This was because the majority of federal spending on Indian programs was not based on a *racial* classification, but on a government-to-government relationship between the United States and federally recognized tribes. In his analysis, Walke (House Committee Hearings 1997, 272) made a distinction between a racial group and a *genealogical* one based on a chain of kinship relations: "A federally-recognized Indian tribe, no matter what its apparent racial makeup, is assumed to be a genealogical grouping whose kinship ties, to

whatever degree of consanguinity required by tribal (or federal) laws, can be adequately demonstrated.” Because of this, Walke argued that a shift in racial classification for Native Hawaiians would not imply either “tribal existence” or recognition of a government-to-government relationship. It is interesting to note that while the proposed change was over the 2000 *race* question, the *racial* logic of moving Native Hawaiians into the American Indian and Alaskan Native category never surfaced. Instead, debates swirled around the issues of unique federal status, territorial assignment, and the aggregate profile shifts that a change in classification would precipitate. This case study clearly illustrates that the concept of race is not a biological but a social and political construction.

Towards the end of the hearings, Sally Katzen of the OMB reported that the OMB-appointed Interagency Committee had recommended that the term “Hawaiian” be changed to “Native Hawaiian” but that Hawaiians should continue to be classified in the Asian or Pacific Islander category (House Committee Hearings 1997, 600, 131-132).<sup>6</sup> Principle findings in favor of this classification included: geographically, Hawaiians should be classified with other Pacific Islanders; time series and other analyses would not have to account for the change in classification. More importantly, the report asserted that the reclassification of Hawaiians into the same category as American Indians would confuse the question of special legal status. It would also have a major impact on the social and economic profile of the category since Hawaiians would comprise 9.7 percent of the total population of a combined American Indian, Alaska Native, and Hawaiian category (Federal Register 1997b). Again, it is noteworthy that the OMB recommendations on the 2000 race question were not about race per se, but about geography, special legal status, and record keeping needs.

Advocates of the proposed change in classification were “flabbergasted” when it appeared that OMB would decide that Native Hawaiians would remain in the Asian and Pacific Islander category (Kiaaina

interview 1999). Many felt it was a political decision that was not determined by the actual merits of the case. Advocates organized a grassroots campaign to challenge the maintenance of the existing framework of classification. Over 7,000 cards were sent to OMB requesting the change (Federal Register 1997a, 6). Representatives of major Hawaiian service organizations, including Alu Like, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and the Department of Hawaiian Homelands meet with Clyde Tucker (Bureau of Labor Statistics) and Nancy Gordon (Census Bureau liaison to OMB) to exchange information and express their concerns.

In a September 8, 1997 letter to Katherine K. Wallman of OMB, three Congress members strongly opposed the recommendation that Native Hawaiians continue to be classified in the Asian and Pacific Islander category. Among other points, they refuted the “geographical basis” for classification and stressed the indigenous status of Native Hawaiians (Abercrombie et. al. 1997, 3):

While Hawaii is geographically a Pacific island, the circumstances of Native Hawaiians...must be differentiated from other Pacific Islanders...Native Hawaiians are a dispossessed people (see P.L. 103-150, legislation offering a U.S. apology to Native Hawaiians for American complicity in the 1893 overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii). This accords them a special status compared to other Pacific island groups in their relationship with the United States.

Placing the issue within an international context, the letter quotes Article 8 of the U.N. Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, stating that “Indigenous peoples have the collective and individual right to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics, including the right to identify themselves as indigenous and to be recognized as such (Abercrombie et. al. 1997, 2).” The Congress members urged that the country needed to adhere to this

principle and respond to the concerns of its indigenous peoples.

On September 7, 1997, Senator Daniel K. Inouye (D-HI) wrote to Franklin D. Raines, Director of the OMB in response to the Interagency Committee's recommendation.<sup>7</sup> Inouye argued that "if it is the pre-existing sovereign status of the native people of the United States which is the underlying rationale for the American Indian/Alaska Native category, that rationale applies with equal force to Native Hawaiians, and thus is not a credible basis upon which to exclude Native Hawaiians" (Inouye 1997, 3). He concluded that the adoption of recommendations for changes in classification and data gathering would constitute "the single most important instrument in our ability as a nation to ensure that Native Hawaiians are afforded the same rights and opportunities as other Americans" (Inouye 1997, 5).

It was speculated that the OMB staff was faced with two political concerns emanating from the White House. First, the White House did not want to upset American Indians in light of then recent Congressional battles regarding contested amendments to the Department of Interior appropriations bill. Second, the White House wanted to allay the concerns of the Hawaiian delegation with respect to the neglect of Native Hawaiian issues (Kiaaina interview 1999). Faced with competing demands, OMB's Sally Katzen proposed a compromise at a meeting with the Hawaiian delegation that completely surprised Native Hawaiian advocates: Why not put Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders together into a separate category? Her proposal had the political asset of avoiding further conflict with American Indians and satisfying Native Hawaiians, whose statistical numbers had been swamped by other groups in the Asian and Pacific Islander category. The sudden and unexpected prominence in negotiations of a major change in racial and ethnic categories acts as strong evidence supporting the notion of race as a socially and politically constructed concept.

While a version of this proposal was entertained earlier in the Report from the Interagency Committee (Federal Register 1997b, 92-94), the concerns were that it might become difficult to obtain adequate sample data from such a small group. Only a few agencies, such as the Department of Education in its assessment of reading proficiency collect data separately. Substantial costs might be incurred by federal agencies if they had to collect data separately. In addition, it was feared that splitting the Asian and Pacific Islander category would have an impact in those areas (such as Hawaii) where APA populations have significantly intermarried. Individuals with both Asian and Pacific Islander ancestry who would currently respond to a single category, would now have to choose between two categories or declare themselves as “other race” or “multiracial” (Federal Register 1997b, 92-94).

The proposal became official on October 30, 1997. OMB decided to break apart the Asian and Pacific Islander category into two categories:

**Asian.** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. <sup>8</sup>

In announcing the reclassification, OMB acknowledged the significant efforts waged by Native Hawaiians for changing existing racial categories:

The Native Hawaiians presented compelling arguments that the standards must facilitate the production of data to describe their social and economic situation and to monitor discrimination against Native Hawaiians in housing, education, employment, and other areas...By creating separate categories, the data on Native

Hawaiians and other Pacific Islander groups will no longer be overwhelmed by the aggregate data of the much larger Asian groups (Federal Register 1997a, 9).

In the wake of the OMB decision, concerns still remain. The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) wrote to Katherine Wallman on April 14, 1999 to express their concerns regarding the recently released Draft Provisional Guidance on the Implementation of the 1997 Standards for the Collection of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (1999). The Consortium feared that data on Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders would be lost due to data quality and confidentiality reasons because they are expected to total less than 0.2 percent of the populations. The Consortium urged that information be provided to the fullest extent possible adding that if significant data is not provided for the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander groups, then the goal of creating a separate category is thwarted (NAPALC 1999, 7).

Advocates remain fearful that the Census Bureau might resist implementing the changes in the new directive (Kiaaina interview 1999). For example, the Census Bureau did not create a separate committee for the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander category within the structure of the Census Advisory Committee. In addition, formatting changes to the census forms did not adequately reflect the changes in classification. It is clear that Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander advocacy groups will have to vigilantly monitor the implementation of the directive and data collecting efforts.

This case study illustrates that for smaller and more economically impoverished groups such as Native Hawaiians, the inclusion in a panethnic category can mask their specific needs and interests. It also illustrates the power of a small group—in this case, Native Hawaiians—to successfully make claims based on its historic grievances against the

FIGURE 1. 2000 CENSUS SHORT AND LONG FORM QUESTIONS ON RACE AND ETHNICITY

*Asked of all persons on Short and Long Forms*

**Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?**

Mark the “No” box if not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.

- No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino [*Print group*]

**What is this person’s race?**

Mark one or more races to indicate what this person considers him/herself to be.

White

Black, African Am, or Negro

American Indian or Alaskan Native

[*Print name of enrolled or principal tribe*]

- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Vietnamese
- Korean
- Other Asian- *Print race*
- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian or
- Chamorro
- Samoan
- Other Pacific Islander - *Print race*  
[*Print name of other Asian and/or Pacific Islander race*]
- Some other race  
[*Print name of other race*]

*Asked of a sample of persons on Long Form only*

**What is this person’s ancestry or ethnic origin?**

[*Print ancestry or ethnic origin*]

(For example: Italian, Jamaican, African Am., Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian, and so on.)

Source: Census 2000 Questionnaire “Informational Copy” Form D-61B

United States. Native Hawaiian advocates, lobbying to gain more access to college/university admissions and scholarship awards, ended up *changing* federal classifications: the separation of the Asian and Pacific Islander category *and* the expansion of the minimum set for data on race from four to five groups. The crucial role played by APA legislators supporting the Native Hawaiian effort also reinforces Espiritu's conclusion on the important role ethnic representation plays in political struggles over the census (Espiritu 1992, 131). Finally, the case called attention to the fact that the fight for "appropriate" racial categories is not only waged between interested groups and the state but also between interested groups themselves—in this case, between Native Hawaiians and Native Americans.

#### MULTIRACIALS

Like the case study of Native Hawaiians, this case study documents how multiracial Asians have challenged the existing racial classification and substantially modified the ways individuals classify themselves on census forms. As a new millennium looms, the United States is set to become more a nation of blended races and ethnic groups than it has ever been. By 2050, demographers calculate that the percentage of the U.S. population that claims multiple ancestries will likely triple, from the current 7 percent to 21 percent (Puente and Kasindorf 1999). APA multiracials will comprise a significant proportion of this increase. In an analysis of multiracial households in the United States, Chew, Eggebeen, and Uhlenberg (1989) report that a significant number of these households comprise a person of some Asian ancestry through marriage, birth, and/or adoption. It is estimated that in the post-civil rights era, approximately half of U.S.-born Chinese and Japanese Americans are married to whites (Jacobs and Labov 1995). A 1990 California survey found that 25 percent of Asian-ancestry children in the state were the product of both Asian and European-descent parents

(Federal Register 1995). The Japanese American community has the highest rate of interracial marriage and of multiracial children. According to the 1990 Census, there were 39 percent more Japanese/white births than monoracial Japanese American births that year (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

The state—as represented by the Census Bureau—has routinely distorted or disregarded the reality of interracial families and multiracial individuals. Through the categories it uses to count and classify ethnic and racial groups, the census has often legitimated the hypodescent rule, bolstered the claim of white racial purity, and imposed an arbitrary monoracial identity on individuals of mixed parentage. As an example, the 1920 Census stipulated that “any mixture of White and some other race was to be reported according to the race of the person who was not White” (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1979, 52). In the post-civil rights period, OMB’s Directive 15 provides that “[t]he category which most closely reflects the individual’s recognition in his community should be used for purposes of reporting on persons who are of mixed racial and/or ethnic origins.” The presumption of monoracial identification is evident from the language of this provision, “which takes as given that a mixed-race person will be identified monoracially by ‘his community’” (Payson 1996, 1257).

In an attempt to assert their multiracial heritage, some multiracial persons have ignored census instructions to “[f]ill ONE circle for the race that the person considers himself/herself to be” by marking two or more boxes. However, since the census scanners are designed to read only one marked box, such a person ended up as monoracial based on whichever box was marked more firmly (Payson 1996, 1261). In the 1990 Census, nearly 10 million persons marked the “Other” race category, making it one of the fastest growing racial categories. Although the bulk of the growth came from a shift in racial identity among Hispanics,<sup>9</sup> the growth can also be explained in part by the increase in the number of multiracials who used the “Other” category to write in

“multiracial,” “biracial,” “mixed-race” or other alternatives to the monoracial categories (McKenney and Cresce 1992). However, the Census Bureau routinely reassigned such persons to one of the OMB’s distinct racial categories based on the first race listed or the race of the nearest neighbor who gave the same response in the Hispanic category (Payson 1996, 1270). As legal theorist Kenneth E. Payson, the child of a Japanese mother and a white father, laments (Payson 1996, 1234):

While I am able to explain that I am of both Asian and European descent to curious people on the street, I am not able to do so with respect to federal agencies. Were I to describe myself as a mixed-race to a federal agency, my race would be reassigned to one of the distinct racial categories outlined in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive Number 15.

Among several APA groups, the high reporting of “European” as a first ancestry may reflect personal attempts to report on multiracial identities (Edmonston and Schultz 1995, 150).

Since the 1980s, multiracial advocacy groups<sup>10</sup> have consistently challenged the notion of mutually exclusive racial categories embodied in the “single-race checkoff” policy. In June 1993, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA), the first nationwide group of its kind in the United States, testified before the Census Subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives and proposed that the Census Bureau add a multiracial category to the 2000 Census (House Committee Hearings 1994). Under the vigorous leadership of Executive Director Susan Graham, Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally) also actively lobbied for the multiracial category. Whereas Project RACE framed the multiracial category as a “self-esteem” issue, APA organizations such as the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum and Hapa Issues Forum viewed it as an opportunity to generate more accurate data on their communities and to educate the larger public about race (Guillermo

interview 1999; Mayeda interview 1999). As Greg Mayeda, co-founder Hapa Issues Forum, stated:

Hapa Issues Forum was more interested in changing people's perceptions about race, generally speaking, and the census was one avenue. We kind of got thrown into the census debate. We were never motivated by a touchy feely good thing, feeling validated by the government. There was something that was clearly wrong and inefficient [about the old census categories], and we were willing to work on it. If anything, we were trying to make society conform to our reality rather than the other way around (Mayeda interview 1999).

The public education sector has been the source of much of the public pressure for a review of the current OMB race and ethnicity classifications, as parents of multiracial children became increasingly concerned about the (mis)classification of their children in public schools. In a survey of U.S. public schools, only about 5 percent of the schools used a general multiracial category; the others employed the standard racial/ethnic categories as specified by OMB's Directive 15 (U.S. Department of Education 1996, iv). From the perspective of the multiracial/ethnic families, forcing a multiracial/ethnic child to favor one parent over the other offends the child's personal dignity and interferes with his/her development of self-esteem. It also constitutes an unwarranted intrusion by the government into the families' fundamental right of privacy. As Graham, executive director of Project RACE, stated:

The reality is that multiracial children who wish to embrace all of their heritage should be allowed to do so. They should not be put in the position of denying one of their parents to satisfy an arbitrary government requirement (House Committee Hearings 1997, 286-87).

Sociologist Reginald Daniel, who has done extensive research on multiracial issues and is himself a multiracial, likened the “single-race checkoff” policy to “psychological oppression,” stating that the most consistent grievance expressed by multiracials centers “around not being able to indicate their identity accurately on official forms that request information on race/ethnicity” (p. 395). The growth and activism of the multiracial movement—along with increasing skepticism of the continuing utility of Directive 15—forced the federal government, in its preparation for the 2000 census, to launch a comprehensive review of the race and ethnicity categories.

Among Asian Pacific Americans, the interests of the panethnic APA group and those of multiracial Asians diverged and even collided over how best to classify and count multiracials in the 2000 Census. Denouncing the government’s past attempts to wedge mixed-raced Americans into one rigid racial category, multiracial advocacy groups and their supporters favored adding a mixed-race category under which multiracial people could check all the boxes that applied. It is important to note that proponents of the multiracial category did not challenge the continuation of current categories but instead requested an expansion of categories (Lott 1998, 98). However, following the stance of most civil rights groups, many APA organizations lobbied against the inclusion of a multiracial category, arguing that it could substantially change the APA count and thus cause the community to lose hard-won gains in civil rights, education, and electoral arenas (Nash 1997, 23). For example, while multiracial Asians consider the meaning and importance of the racial/ethnic categories to be highly personal matters, NAPALC opposed the multiracial category because:

the issue of whether to add multiracial to the existing racial categories is more than a personal issue. The data is being collected for use as a basis for important research, policy development, and resource allocation.

The data is also extremely important to monitor and fight discrimination, both institutional and otherwise (House Committee Hearings 1997, 414).

The Consortium then concluded that “adding a multiracial category would undermine the effectiveness of civil rights enforcement agencies because of the inconsistent counts and the uncertainties it introduces in being able to analyze trends” (House Committee Hearings 1997, 418). In another opposing statement, the National Coalition for an Accurate Count of Asians and Pacific Islanders questioned the appropriateness of including a multiracial category alongside racial minority categories that are protected under civil rights and other federal programs:

Like individuals of single race group, persons of biracial or multiracial backgrounds seek acknowledgment and identification through the race question. Because existing federal civil rights laws and programs are premised largely on exclusive membership in a racial group, it becomes difficult to ascertain the salience of biraciality or multiraciality in relationship to the specific provisions and intended benefits of these Federal laws and programs...What can be stated about common experiences shared by biracial or multiracial persons?...biracial or multiracial persons have the burden to document what distinct experiences or disadvantage, in contrast to persons of protected single race backgrounds, they have had because of their biraciality or multiraciality before the decision to establish a multiracial or biracial category would be appropriate (*Hearings* 1994, 96).

The arguments in opposition to the multiracial category essentially deny the possibility or the appropriateness of multiple affiliations and pose the interests of multiracials—the right to claim their full heritage—in

opposition to the civil rights needs of APAs—the possible loss of political clout and economic benefits that are tied to numbers. For their part, multiracial Asians have charged that APA community leaders claim multiracial Asians because “it is politically propitious and advantageous” (Houston 1991, 56) but that APA organizations have largely ignored or marginalized multiracial concerns. They point to the fact that even today, few Asian American Studies programs in the country incorporate multiracial issues into their curricula; and few APA organizations have multiracial representatives in their leadership circles. Finally, some APA leaders call attention to the political importance of self-identification. As Tessie Guillermo, director of the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum, stated, “I think the civil rights community has to remember that self-identification is a civil liberty” (Guillermo interview 1999).

Confirming the concerns of APA civil rights organizations, the preliminary survey findings suggest that the provision of multiracial options may well lead to declines in the proportions reporting as Asian and Pacific Islanders. In May 1995, the OMB-established Interagency Committee asked the Bureau of Labor Statistics to design a supplement to its Current Population Survey that would obtain data on the effect of having a multiracial category among the list of races. This survey found that about 1.5 percent of the population reported as multiracial and that the inclusion of a multiracial category decreased the proportion of Asian and Pacific Islanders from 3.83 to 3.25 percent (U.S. Department of Labor 1995). Similarly, the National Content Survey (NCS), conducted by the Census Bureau in 1996, found that when the multiracial category was included, about 1 percent of the respondents reported as multiracial. Of those identifying as multiracial in that sample, 30 percent partially identified themselves as Asian and Pacific Islander (House Committee Hearings 1997, 416). While the study found that the inclusion of a multiracial category had no statistically significant effect on the percentages of larger race groups, it indicated that the proportions reporting as APA

declined, from 4 percent to 2.7 percent—a possible decline of at least 3,250,000 APAs. (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996, 26; House Committee Hearings 1997, 416). Finally, the results of the 1996 Race and Ethnic Targeted Test further confirms that the inclusion of a multiracial category and the provision of instructions to “mark all that apply.” while not statistically significant, nevertheless reduced reporting of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the targeted samples (House Committee Hearings 1997, 416).

In December 1996, citing the NCS results, the Census Advisory Committee on the Asian and Pacific Islander Populations recommended that the “OMB Directive 15 should not be revised to include the multiracial category” (Census Advisory Committee 1996). In May 1997, the Asian and Pacific Islander Census Advisory Committee, along with the Census Advisory Committees on the African American, American Indian, and Alaska Native, and Hispanic populations, jointly recommended that the “Census Bureau does not add a multiracial category in Census 2000 form, and that no separate instructions be added for multiple responses in the race question” (Census Advisory Committees 1997).

After four years of heated debate, the OMB’s Interagency Committee for the Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards rejected the proposal to create a separate multiracial category. Instead, in July 1997, the 30-agency task force recommended that Directive 15 be amended to permit multiracial Americans to “mark one or more” racial category when identifying themselves for the census and other government programs. Critics of the inclusion of a multiracial category were generally supportive of the “check one or more” proposal because they perceived it to be less likely to reduce the total count of their respective groups (Fiore 1997). The Interagency Committee rejected the creation of a new multiracial category because committee members feared that the category would generate yet another population group and add to racial tension and fragmentation. The Association of MultiEthnic Americans disagreed with the Committee’s reasoning:

We disagree that a multiracial/ethnic classification would create a new population group. The population groups to which they refer already exist and are growing rapidly. We also take issue with the opinion that a multiracial/ethnic classifier would add to racial tension and fragment our population. The essence of the multiracial/ethnic population is one of racial/ethnic unity. As we have stated before, our community is specially situated to confront racial and interethnic issues because of the special experiences and understanding we acquire in the intimacy of our families and our personalities. Of all populations, ours has the unique potential to become the stable core around which the ethnic pluralism of the United States can be united (House Committee Hearings 1997, 573-74).

However, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans and allied organizations and individuals regard the Interagency Committee's recommendations as necessary and even revolutionary. They believe that, if implemented appropriately, the proposed changes to OMB Directive 15 will meet their most fundamental concern: the acknowledgement by the state that multiracial/ethnic people do exist and have a right to be counted as such.

The controversy then shifted to the tabulation of multiple racial responses. The 1997 standards require that at a minimum, the total number of persons identifying with more than one race must be reported. Beside this provision, it is still undecided as to how federal agencies will tabulate the new racial information, particularly what they will do with the overlap. In a 1998 joint report to the Census Bureau, the four Census Advisory Committees on the race and ethnic populations made the following recommendations:

- 1) That the OMB prepare two sets of data tabulations: one set would be the "full distribution" that preserves all of the multiple responses; and a second set that would collapse the multiple

combinations back to the OMB standard six racial categories and would be used for redistricting, affirmative action, voting rights, distribution of funds for government programs, and other mandates to reduce racial inequality.

- 2) That the following approach be used to collapse the combination responses back to the OMB standard six groups: individuals who check both a nonwhite majority group and white would be classified as a member of the specific racial minority.

At the time of their report to the Census Bureau (June 1998), the four committees had yet to reach a consensus on how individuals who check off two or more racial minorities would be classified. For its part, the Asian and Pacific Islander Advisory Committee had recommended assigning the multiple minority individual to the smallest minority. The Committee further proposed that whenever the response is a Black and Asian racial combination, it should be reassigned to Black or Asian depending upon whether the respondent lives in or near a Black or Asian community; otherwise, the response should be assigned equally randomly to Black and Asian. In all, the recommendations of the Census Advisory Committees represented a compromise, designed to recognize the concerns of multiracial individuals and organizations as well as to protect the rights and interests of historically underrepresented groups. In contrast, the Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA) vigorously opposes the reassignment of multiracial individuals to monoracial categories. Ramona Douglass, AMEA president since 1994, argues that such reassignment would defeat the purpose of the multiple responses and expects that AMEA will pursue litigation if reassignment of any kind occurs (Douglass interview 1999).

In August 1999, for the purpose of redistricting data, the Department of Justice selected the “full distribution approach”—or the “PL 63 Matrix” approach<sup>11</sup>—to tabulate the “more than one race” census responses. Multiracial advocacy organizations praised this

decision since the full distribution approach reports multiple responses in the most expansive and detailed way possible-with no reassignment of multiple responses to monoracial categories. Under this, people would be placed in a racial category that matches the combination of races they list. In all, the various combinations would give the United States 63 officially recognized races. However, for non-redistricting issues, as of this writing, no decision has been made on how to allocate the multiple check-off responses. It is expected that the decision will be put off until the 2000 Census data comes out and studies are done on it.

## Conclusion

The decennial national census has increasingly become *the* site of demands for political recognition. Until very recently, census categories were created and strategically employed to politically disenfranchise and discriminate against groups of color (Anderson 1988). In the wake of the civil rights movement, by contrast, state definitions of race and ethnicity have been increasingly used to monitor discriminatory trends and for the enforcement of equal opportunity laws. Given this, the census has become the focus of intense debates over the recognition and definition of groups. Groups realize the political value of racial categorization, along with the strategic deployment of "numbers," in highlighting inequalities, arguing for resources, lobbying for particular forms of redistricting, and other policy debates. Strategic APA political actors, aware that hundreds of millions of dollars-not to mention political fortunes-are dispersed based on data gathered from responses to the racial and ethnic questions, actively seek to influence the content of the race item on the decennial census. Over the past several decades, APAs have been quite successful in challenging and expanding existing racial and ethnic categories to

address specific concerns and interests. Census numbers are also extremely important to APAs because relative to other groups like African Americans, so little data is generated elsewhere on their population. The absence of census data on APAs means that they are generally not sufficiently counted and acknowledged in social science and policy discussions of broad racial trends.

Asian Pacific American campaigns for recognition have not been waged solely to secure state-sponsored benefits but also to advance distinctive forms of identity claims. Some multiracial organizations have argued for the creation of a separate multiracial category as an issue of “self-esteem”—not as an issue of seeking underrepresented status. Other groups, such as Native Hawaiians, may be responding to both historical oppression and contemporary forms of inequality by asserting specific identities that question their current classification. What is interesting is how the census becomes the site of distinctive identity claims, how they are handled through the existing framework of state definitions, and how classification correspondingly shapes particular policies.

While APA accomplishments and gains regarding census classification are impressive given their small political base, the overall impact of these achievements on the quality of APA lives has been limited. Part of the problem is the generation and publication of quality data. In the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander case, for example, NAPALC fears that data would be lost due to data quality and confidentiality reasons since the category constitutes less than 0.2 percent of the population. The Consortium has urged that data be collected and provided to the fullest extent possible. If significant data cannot be gathered in a timely fashion for Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander groups, then the goal of creating a separate category may fail to address the initial concerns that generated it (NAPALC 1999).

The collection and dissemination of data is an important, but insufficient step towards addressing APA social, economic, and political concerns. Data is always subject to multiple interpretations, and distinct policy options can emerge from a common set of trend lines and observed disparities by race (along with other axes of stratification). One issue centers on the tabulation of results. APA political actors have been concerned with the tabulation procedures for the multiracial count in Census 2000. At issue is not only the different numbers generated by distinct tabulation procedures, but the meaning of these counts for the established relationship of collecting and reporting race data to enforce civil rights laws.

Another important concern is to assess the impact of this data on specific policy initiatives to improve APA life chances. Our sense has been that while APA categories are used for administrative reporting and record keeping, the data generated has neither been widely disseminated nor sufficiently analyzed. Thus the generation of categories and data obtained under these rubrics has not translated into substantive policy outcomes. The Census Bureau has decided that untabulated census data from the 2000 Census will be made available via the internet for public access. How this data will be used in policy discussions will remain unclear for several years after the census.

We recommend and urge that APAs be more attentive to the publication and use of the data collected on APAs. They need to strategically utilize the data on APAs in the advancement of specific policy proposals. APAs also need to actively follow up on what federal agencies do, or fail to do, with APA data. In pursuing these actions, the focus extends beyond the process of simply adding up and demonstrating the “numbers” to make claims, but to deal with the complex social issues that lurk behind them.

One hopeful sign is the recent Executive Order (June 7, 1999) issued by President Bill Clinton to “improve the quality of life of Asian

Americans and Pacific Islanders through increased participation in Federal programs where they may be undeserved (e.g., health, human services, education, housing, labor, transportation, and economic and community development).” Relevant to the issues addressed in our chapter are Section 2a and Section 5a which call for the collection of data related to Asian American and Pacific Islanders, and Section 2c and Section 5c which call for ways to “foster research and data on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including research and data on public health.” The Executive Order establishes the President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the Department of Health and Human Services. It is important that this Commission advise the President with respect to the issues considered here, and underscores the importance of quality data as a policymaking resource.

Racial and ethnic classification is an eminently political process, subject to change under specific historical contexts. One might interpret our selective case studies as a challenge to the appropriateness and utility of the APA category. We caution against such a reading. APAs continue to be “lumped by race” in employment practices, cultural representations, and as victims of anti-Asian violence. Aggregate data is necessary for discerning broad trends and to comply with existing laws and practices. For example, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission collects compliance data using the inclusive APA category. Similarly, the Voting Rights Act and the redistricting process require data on the collective group, not on the individual subgroups. In fact, no federal legislation requires the Census Bureau to provide 100 percent data for the Asian Pacific subgroups, but only for the APAs as a whole (Espiritu 1992, 132).

That said, a delicate balancing act between the needs/interests of the larger category and that of the individual subgroups needs to be maintained. Summary statistics (regarding educational attainment, income, and housing trends) mask the heterogeneity within the category.

Different numbers need to be invoked in different policy contexts. A wide gap in subgroup profiles can lead, as in the case of Native Hawaiians, to a radical reconsideration of the category itself.

So who makes the call with respect to balancing competing demands and making political claims to state institutions? Thomas P. Kim suggests that there are several different “groups” of APA political elites involved in census politicking (Kim correspondence, 1999). There are elected legislators like Senator Akaka, lobbying organizations like NAPALC, insider/appointees like Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Bill Lann Lee, and the APA members on the Census Advisory Committee. A loose collection of political consultants and elected officials also emerges around census and redistricting debates, reflecting an interest in consolidating particular voting blocs for future electoral campaigns.

On the issue of political empowerment, it may well be that only groups with sufficient political capital can effectively lobby for change. Other groups may be marginalized, and not sufficiently “connected” to present their concerns to appropriate bodies. For example, other Pacific Islander groups did not appear to have been consulted by OMB officials regarding the creation of the Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander category. They were simply relocated as a consequence of balancing competing demands between those groups that had voice in the political process. A question for continual study is who gets to speak and what specific interests do they represent. APAs must be attentive to the organization of political actions in the politics of racial and ethnic classification.

We are at an important juncture with respect to racial and ethnic classification and data. Under the guise of “colorblind” policies and practices, conservatives are urging the abandonment of racial and ethnic classification—specifically their use in record keeping procedures and in establishing eligibility requirements for various programs. For instance, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich tied his support

of a multiracial category to efforts to end affirmative action. Scholarly works in anthropology, genetics, and other fields have rejected biologically based notions of race, rendering any form of classification as suspect. While race is no longer seen as a biological “fact,” the reality of race as a social concept persists.

The notion that race is a social concept is amply illustrated by the history of the Census. Classifications utilized since the first census was taken reveal the inherent fluidity of racial categories, and how demographic changes, shifts in collective attitudes, panethnic coalitions, and individual identity formation constantly shape and re-shape the processes of classification. APAs have been subject to specific forms of classification from “above”—by federal, state, and local policies and practices—and have challenged such classification from “below”—through grassroots mobilization, political elites, and organized lobbying groups—to advance their own distinctive political claims for recognition.

APAs have often been rendered “invisible” by the broader emphasis on black/white relations. As a consequence, policy debates regarding health, immigration, labor, housing, and economic and community development, among other areas, have not taken into account nor discerned the impact of different policy initiatives on APA communities. Debates over census classification need to be situated in this context. Demands for specific categories are driven by the issue of appropriate “representation,” and the perception of unique issues and concerns not addressed, or disguised, by a particular group’s current location.

The goal of establishing racial and ethnic categories that are conceptually valid, measurable, exclusive and exhaustive, and reliable over time is an illusory one. That said, we do not argue for abandoning the use of racial and ethnic categories. Without some form of classification, we cannot monitor and track invidious forms of racial inequality and discrimination. The current debate on police profiling

of black motorists illustrates this issue. To get at the “reality” and scope of this problem, one needs to engage in racial record keeping that employs specific categories. However “unscientific” and imprecise these categories may be, some form of racial/ethnic classification is needed to discern trends and discriminatory patterns.

The determination of these categories is a policy issue. Categories are the result of processes of intense negotiation between state institutions and different groups advancing claims for recognition. As we have seen, the OMB has had to weigh different claims, assess their merits, and consider their impact on different federal agencies and their practices.

This process is not exclusively confined to the dealings between the state and a particular group. In the Native Hawaiian case, American Indians voiced their concern and dismay over the proposed relocation of Native Hawaiians to their “racial” category under Directive 15. The point is that different groups often contest the boundaries of state definitions in ways that bring them into conflict with each other. In so doing, the broader dynamics of racialization in the United States are revealed.

Outcomes with respect to census classification are never easy to predict, and no clear, coherent principles exist to guide and frame the decision-making. The process, despite claims to the contrary, is inherently political. Specific forms of classification are the result of dynamic and complex negotiations between state interests, panethnic demands, and ethnic-specific challenges. APA census categories both reflect and help create group identities, influence the formation of public policy, and shape the popular discourse about race in the U.S.

## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> "Earning his Stripes," Newsmaker Column, *Asian Week*, October 11, 1997, 9. On a 1997 Oprah Winfrey show, Woods complicated his identity further by declaring himself "Cablinasian"—an amalgamation of Caucasian, Black, Indian, and Asian.

<sup>3</sup> In the past several years, for example, the Census has studied whether to maintain the term "Guamanian" or use the term "Chamorro." The 1997 RAETT study observed the following trend: "Recently, 'Chamorro' has become more preferable to some, much like 'African American' has in the Black population...Younger and more educated respondents preferred 'Chamorro' and older respondents preferred 'Guamanian' (RAETT 1997, 2-15)." The final compromise was to use both terms in the check-off category.

<sup>4</sup> Newt Gingrich, prior to his resignation from Congress, used the issue of a multiracial category to illustrate the indeterminacy of all racial categories, and to advocate for their abolition in government data collection: "America is too big and too diverse to categorize each and every one of us into four rigid racial categories...It is time for the government to stop perpetuating racial divisiveness" (Federal Measures of Race and Ethnicity and the Implications for the 2000 Census 1997, 662). Some have done just that. In 1998, then-California Governor Pete Wilson ordered state agencies to stop tracking data on women and minority-owned businesses in the state's \$4 billion public contracting system.

<sup>5</sup> See Directive No. 15, Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting, 43 Fed. Reg. 19, 260, 19269 (1978).

<sup>6</sup> The Interagency Commission for the Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards was established by the OMB in March 1994. Its members come from more than 30 federal agencies that represent the many and diverse Federal needs for data on race and ethnicity, including statutory requirements for such data (Federal Register July, 9, 1997, 20).

<sup>7</sup> Inouye had special credibility on this issue. Not only did he represent Hawaiian constituencies, but he had served on the Senate Committee for Indian Affairs for 19 years, including 8 years as its Chair.

<sup>8</sup> The Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander category includes the following Pacific Islander groups reported in the 1990 Census: Carolinian, Fijian, Cesarean, Melanesian, Micronesian, Northern Mariana Islander, Plain, Papua New Guanine, Ponapean (Pohnpelan), Polynesian, Solomon Islander, Tahitian, Tarawa Islander, Tokelauan, Tongan, Trukese (Chuukese), and Yapese.

<sup>9</sup> Between 1980 and 1990, many Hispanics abandoned the white racial category in favor of the “other” racial category.

<sup>10</sup> Initially, multiracial advocacy groups were organized by parents in interracial unions who advocated on behalf of their mixed-race children. However, the people who are currently challenging the monoracial paradigm and resisting monoracial labels are predominantly the offspring of interracial couples (Payson 1996, 1233, n. 16).

<sup>11</sup> For the sole purpose of the 2000 Census, OMB has granted an exception to the Census Bureau to use a category called “Some Other Race.” Thus, there are 63 mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories of race, including six categories for those who marked only one race and 57 for those who marked more than one race. (See Draft Provisional Guidance on the Implementation of the 1997 Standards For the Collection of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (1999).

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