
MULTIRACIAL RECOGNITION IN THE 2000 CENSUS: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

The census¹ classification scheme chosen for race and ethnicity has become a prominent social fact in its own right and involves serious political and cultural consequences beyond its explicit policy purposes. Thus, it is not surprising that fierce controversy surrounded the federal government's decision to rescind its "check only one race" rule for the 2000 Census and implement a "mark one or more races" option in its place.² The multirace option signals an official acknowledgment of a growing multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural population in the United States.

¹ Mandated by Article I, Section II, of the U.S. Constitution, the census is the most visible instrument for federal data collection on the demographics of this country's residents, and data on race has been collected since the first U.S. decennial census in 1790. Title 13, Section 221 of the United States Code states that all Americans are required by law to truthfully respond to census questions. For census history, *see generally* U.S. Gen. Accounting Office, "Decennial Census: Overview of Historical Census Issues" 12 (1998); David Theo Goldberg, "Made in the USA," in *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity* 237-57 (Naomi Zack ed., 1995); Hyman Alterman, *Counting People: The Census in History* 266-69 (1969).

² Recommendations from the Interagency Committee for the Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Concerning Changes to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, 62 Fed. Reg. 36,874, 36,885 (Jul. 7, 1997) (recommending that census respondents be able to check more than one category for race and ethnicity in the 2000 form); U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Report to Congress: *The Plan for Census 2000*, at ix (rev. Aug. 1997), <http://www.census.gov/main/plans/plan2000.pdf>; OMB Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, 62 Fed. Reg. 58,782, 58,788-90 (Oct. 30, 1997) [hereinafter *Revisions to Directive 15*]; Bureau of the Census, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, *United States Census 2000 Form D-1 (UL) (2000)* [hereinafter *Census 2000 Form*].

As a black Chicana often required to select either the “black, non-Hispanic” or “Hispanic” option³ in answering demographic inquiries that mandate a single selection, I appreciate the opportunity to provide a more accurate description of myself by choosing both applicable categories⁴; however, I question whether the scheme chosen to count race and ethnicity in the 2000 Census was the most appropriate approach to transition from the archaic “one drop of blood” conceptualization of race⁵ to a more

³ I identify as black when forced to select only one category. On countless occasions of symbolic defiance, I have crossed out the “non” in the “black, non-Hispanic” option when marking the box. I often receive criticism for not selecting “Hispanic.” Since “Hispanic” is not a race but an ethnicity to describe those of Spanish-speaking ancestry, some people view it as the more inclusive choice, especially since the alternative expressly rejects Hispanic (or what I prefer to call “Latina/o”) heritage. Though I embrace my Chicana roots, I feel it necessary to explicitly acknowledge that “black” describes my physical appearance and how I am treated in most situations. When possible, I handle the classification issue by selecting “Black/African American” as my race and “Chicano/Mexican American” as my ethnicity. See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) (arguing that our new consciousness should be a “both-and” as opposed to an “either-or”). See also Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (1990), and Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982) (usage of personal anecdotes as data, illustration, and support for arguments).

⁴ About 2 percent of blacks also identify as being of Hispanic or Latina/o origin. U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Tables PL1 and PL2* (2001). In the Spanish-speaking world, nationality is the paramount identity, populations are more racially mixed, and though skin tone matters and racism exists, color is a much more fluid concept than it is in the United States. People from Caribbean and Latin American countries, where 50 percent or more of the people are of mixed race, often find racial boundaries difficult to navigate in the United States because color lines are so rigid here and black heritage is based exclusively on color and ancestral lineage. Maria T. Padilla, “Black Hispanics resist color labels,” *The Orlando Sentinel*, November 12, 2000. I find it interesting that my backgrounds may have issues at stake that cause them to take opposing sides on the multirace issue. Latinas/os, as an ethnicity, need culture because we can be of any race; blacks, however, need race because it is necessary to distinguish ourselves from whites with whom we share a culture. Thus, Latinas/os may be more inclined to support the multirace option than blacks. See George Klor de Alva’s discussion of Anglos in Cornel West and George Klor de Alva, “Our Next Race Question: The Uneasiness Between Blacks and Latinos,” *Harpers* (Apr. 1996).

⁵ The infamous American “one drop rule” was adopted by the census in 1930 and historically stated that anyone with even a slight black lineage was black. Joel Williamson, *New People*, 98-129 (1980). Anthropologists use the term “hypodescent” to describe practices, such as the one-drop rule, for categorizing children with mixed racial parentage by assigning them to the parental racial category with the lowest social status. See F. James Davis, “The Hawaiian Alternative to the One-Drop Rule”, in *American Mixed Race*, *supra* note 1, at 115-32.

fluid and complex understanding of the intersectionality of multiple identities. This paper provides a personal perspective on the recent 2000 Census racial and ethnic identity debate. I argue that the multirace option chosen, though not without fault, is preferable to both the retention of the old single-race classification and the creation of a new “Multiracial” category. The single-race option of the past reinforces a view of racial identity as exclusive and rigid, the proposed “Multiracial” category could cause a harsh blow to the progress made by the oppressed to date, and the multirace option implemented for the 2000 Census has the potential to blur psychological and sociological racial and ethnic lines without detracting from civil rights initiatives, signaling a new era in the social attitudes of Americans.

Diversity on the Rise

New standards set by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) allowed census respondents to check more than one category for race and ethnicity in the 2000 form, allowing for 63 different racial combinations; the total increases to 126 possible combinations with the inclusion of Hispanic ethnicity.⁶ About 6.8 million Americans – 1 in 40 individuals, or 2.4 percent of the population – checked more than one racial category in the 2000 Census.⁷ This is more than three times the 2 million estimated in the mid-1990s, but still relatively small in comparison to the national population of 281.4 million United States residents.⁸ Based on available data, the census’ first

⁶ A Hispanic origin category was added to the census in 1970. In the 1980 and 1990 censuses, Hispanic or non-Hispanic ethnicity (replacing what was formerly labeled “Spanish”), was counted separately from race. In 2000, the order of the questions on race and Hispanic origin were reversed so that the one on Hispanic origin was placed first. See Margo J. Anderson, “The American Census: A Social History, 221-25 (1988) (describing the evolution of the “Hispanic origin” question on the census). Visit <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic.html> for current data on the Hispanic population.

⁷ Multiracial activists, however, maintain that the true number of multiracial Americans is much higher. They claim that the 2000 Census was skewed by a variety of factors, including a number of people who technically are multiracial but for historical, social, and/or political reasons identify themselves as only one race, as well as people who boycotted the system of racial classification by refusing to answer questions on race and ethnicity. Over time, these proportions are expected to increase, echoing trends in interracial marriages and births.

⁸ The 2000 Census counted approximately 211 million whites, 35 million Hispanics (about 66 percent reporting to be of Mexican descent), 35 million blacks, and 10 million Asians. See U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171), Summary File, Table PL 1; “Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2000,” U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Brief, C2 KBR/01-1, March 2001; D’Vera Cohn & Darryl Fears, “Hispanics Draw Even with Blacks in New Census,” Wash. Post, Mar. 7, 2001, at A1.

allowance for individuals to select more than one race to describe themselves has not yet had the large statistical impact that critics fear.

Although the number of individuals who self-identified as being of more than one race on the 2000 Census form may be statistically insignificant, the fact that millions of residents chose to select more than one race to describe themselves carries a great deal of expressive and symbolic significance from a social perspective. Though self-expression is not a purpose of the census, it is essential that the classification scheme in use not force people to violate their own sense of identity or that of their children.⁹ Since the census asks individuals to disclose their race and ethnicity, there is an obvious sense in which it conveys an official view of identity by granting acknowledgment to certain categories but not others and establishing a framework for thinking about diversity and social policy. Charles Taylor says that due recognition is a vital human need and discusses its importance for oppressed groups that have gone unrecognized or nonrecognized for a very long time.¹⁰ He describes self-definition as a dialogical process, meaning that others help shape the way in which we view ourselves. Naming has power, and the census can be seen as a vehicle to foster a change in the terms and concepts employed to analyze race and ethnicity.

Retain Single Race Selection

Many civil rights groups,¹¹ societal realists, and single-race proponents fear that the advantages of granting recognition to a small class of people via the multirace option are far outweighed by its potential to harm the gains justly secured by people of color, which include a loss in both political influence and federal funding for marginalized racial populations. They argue that the census is about much more than self-identity: it is about money and power and justice. Census data are used to apportion districts for elections, distribute federal aid to state and local governments, track trends and shifts in population growth and distribution, trace the correlation between different racial and ethnic groups and a variety of health and well-being indicators, and meet

⁹ See Maria P.P. Root, "The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as a Significant Frontier in Race Relations," in *The Multiracial Experience*, xiii-xxviii (Maria P.P. Root, ed., 1996).

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 25 (Amy Gutmann, ed., 1994).

¹¹ Civil rights groups like the Council of La Raza and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) opposed any type of multiracial classification due to expected drops in numbers for Latinas/os and blacks. See Padilla, *supra* note 4; Lee Hubbard, "Why I checked [B]lack on the census", *SF Chronicle*, Wednesday, July 11, 2001. See also Lawrence Wright, "One Drop of Blood," *New Yorker*, July 25, 1994, 46, 48 (reporting census estimates that 75 percent of those who currently identify as black could identify as being of more than one race).

the needs of both federal agencies responsible for civil rights monitoring and enforcement and judges who must interpret laws involving race and ethnicity. Single-race advocates argue that *internal* identification is worthwhile, but the government must track *external* identification to effectively collect data that will assist in anti-discrimination efforts.¹² According to this view, an outsider's perspective is of primary importance: how one chooses to define herself is of little relevance for administrative purposes; what matters is how she looks and is treated by others with regard to race.¹³ Besides, some single-race advocates argue, one can self-reflect and be proud of her heritage without government endorsement.¹⁴

Since government programs are often designed around specific counts of racial and ethnic groups, it will become more cumbersome and difficult to determine who qualifies for certain federal and state programs as racial and ethnic distinctions become more complicated and harder to define. The census already undercounts people of color by the millions, and some worry that a further dilution of those numbers from people identifying themselves under more than one racial group may weaken institutional safeguards that were implemented to combat racial injustice. Single-race proponents fear that as people "opt out" of identifying with only one racial category,¹⁵ statistics will erroneously show a lessening of race-related problems and

¹² For an in-depth discussion on the immutability of blackness in terms of physical appearance and treatment regardless of internal identification, *see* Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Charles Lam Markmann, trans., 1967) (contending that blackness is deeply entrenched in the body).

¹³ Race and ethnic categories, such as those employed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "do not denote scientific definitions of anthropological origins. Instead, a person may be included in the population group to which he or she appears to belong, identifies with, or is regarded in the community as belonging." *Indicators of Equal Employment Opportunity – Status and Trends*. (ob. cit.), 14 U.S. EEOC, Appendix page B-2 (Jun. 2000).

¹⁴ On the other hand, many scholars argue that people should have the right to be publicly recognized, as opposed to delegating one's identity to the private realm. From this stance, mixed identity does not have to be solely an interior matter. *See generally* Catherine MacKinnon, *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State* (1989). *See also* Eric Liu, *The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker* (1998), (claiming that identity politics splits the individual between public and private selves).

¹⁵ *See* Review of Federal Measurement of Race and Ethnicity: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel, House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, 103d Cong., 273 (1993) [hereinafter 1993 House Hearings] (testimony Arthur A. Fletcher, chairperson of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, predicting that the recognition of multiple racial origins will result in light-skinned black Americans "running for the door" in an effort to say "I am something other than black").

people of color will receive proportionally less representation, less consideration in college admissions, and fewer employment opportunities as a result.

While I share several of the single-race advocates' concerns, objection to multiple groupings seems to embrace a spurious objectivity about race. Perhaps by employing different groupings for different purposes instead of allowing classification in only one racial group for any purpose whatsoever, we may learn to see racial identity as flexible and imprecise.¹⁶ Also, it appears that the multirace option allows for recognition of the fact that risk of discrimination does not exist only for individuals who are considered "exclusively" black¹⁷; since the "one drop rule"¹⁸ is so deeply entrenched in society, the risk also applies to people with black ancestry. It is entirely consistent to count a person as a member of the at-risk pool for those with black ancestry and still acknowledge her self-identification as both black and non-black.¹⁹ To illustrate, the 2000 Census tallies now organize racial data both in terms of those who reported only one race (the "race alone population") and for those who selected one or more races (the "race in combination population") so that individuals of mixed race are not missing from aggregate racial counts.²⁰ The federal government

¹⁶ See Martha Minow, "Not Only for Myself: Identity, Politics, and Law", 75 Or. L. Rev. 647, 662 (1996) ("To identify fluidity, change, border-crossing, and unstable categories is not to deny the real force and power that some people have accorded group labels and categories, to the clear detriment of others").

¹⁷ The rape, genocide, miscegenation and assimilation that were by-products of the institution of slavery mean that almost every black American person has a non-black ancestor. Since the American racial category "black" is neither well constructed nor internally consistent and, historically, it has socially and legally included people of mixed racial heritage as black, separating these people out from "pure" blacks, when blacks by definition are mixed, is a fiction at best. I tend to see my mixed experience as being within the broader tradition of blacks overall, and attempts to obscure those common black experiences seem like ways to sever a shared cultural legacy and bond.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the "one drop rule," see *supra* note 5.

¹⁹ 1.7 million people, or 1 in 20, chose to identify themselves as black and another race in the 2000 Census. For a discussion of the tensions produced by such trends, see Trina Grillo, "Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master's House," 10 Berkeley Women's L.J. 16, 25-27 (1995) (hoping to recognize mixed identity without undermining the black community).

²⁰ The maximum number of people reporting a race is reflected in the "race alone or in combination" count. U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Brief: "The Black Population 2000" (Aug. 2001).

also announced that data for people who checked that they are of both white and non-white ancestry are allocated to the non-white population in an effort to both ensure that any reporting system used reflects national diversity and also maintains the strength of civil rights laws.²¹

Create a Multiracial Category

Many interracial couples with children, adults of mixed heritage, organizations²² that represent Biracial, Multiracial, and/or Multiethnic individuals, and proponents of colorblindness wanted the federal government to officially recognize mixed identity through the inclusion of a “Multiracial” box on the 2000 Census form. Though all remaining state laws against racial intermarriage were struck down by the Supreme Court case of *Loving v. Commonwealth of Virginia*,²³ official census categories have provided no way to recognize or accurately place mixed-race children produced by interracial unions. These advocates hope that more accurate census statistics will help track discrimination against people of mixed race as well as assess their status in society. The proposal for an all-inclusive “Multiracial” designation on the 2000 Census forms also appealed to those who find it troubling that institutions are working to maintain the practice of illogically classifying individuals based on the

²¹ Sally Katzen, Counsel to the Director of the Budget Office, reported that this allocation rule “reflected a determination that people who have suffered discrimination in the past should be subject to certain protections.” Steven A. Holmes, “New Policy on Census Says Those Listed as White and Minority Will Be Counted as Minority”, *N.Y. Times*, Mar. 11, 2000, at A-9.

²² PROJECT RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally) and AMEA (Association of MultiEthnic Americans) are two advocacy organizations that argue that the lack of a “Multiracial” category on the census form forces those with parents of different races to deny or suppress part of their heritage. See 1993 House Hearings, *supra* note 15 at 133-34, (testimony of Susan Graham, Executive Director, PROJECT RACE; prepared statement of Carlos Fernandez, President, AMEA). See also James Clifford, “Identity in Mashpee,” in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (1988) (discussing the American binary view of race relations and White Over Black dichotomy of society that results in other races being ignored or placed within the established racial hierarchy).

²³ 388 U.S. 1, 87 S.Ct. 1817, 18 L.Ed.2d 1010 (1967). In *Loving*, the appellee argued that the desirability of “racial integrity” warranted retention of the anti-miscegenation law in the state of Virginia. *Id.* at fn. 11. The Court held that marriage is a basic social liberty that cannot be regulated on the “invidious” basis of racial difference alone. *Id.* at 12, 1824.

socially constructed boundaries of race.²⁴

There are also “Multiracial” category advocates who argue that it may be for the better if matters are complicated to the point that government cannot use race to allocate services. Wendy Brown views the practice of entrusting race to the government in the hopes that it will protect disadvantaged groups as empowering officials and state entities more than the oppressed groups themselves.²⁵ Conservative critic Shelby Steele makes the same argument from the ideological right that Brown makes from the left.²⁶ Perceiving identity politics as victim politics and advocating for formal equality rather than distributive justice, he asserts that we have erred in making society the agent of change instead of the individual. Steele disbelieves that government needs to intervene on behalf of people of color because, as he can attest, it is possible to “overcome” blackness.²⁷ In his view, black identity is wrapped around oppression and as racism decreases, so does our need for the identity. Though he would probably prefer to only be considered American, he would most likely applaud the “Multiracial” box choice as a step away from group identity and toward

²⁴ See Anthony Appiah, “Stereotypes and the Shaping of Identity,” 88 *California Law Review*, 1, 41-54 (2000) (stating that, scientifically speaking, there is no such thing as biological race); Ian F. Haney Lopez, “The Social Construction of Race: Some Observations on Illusion, Fabrication, and Choice,” 29 *Harv. C.R. – C.L. L. Rev.* 1 (1994) (defining races as groupings of people based loosely on historical, social, ancestral, and physical components). See also Greta McMorris, “Critical Race Theory, Cognitive Psychology and the Social Meaning of Race,” 67 *UMKC LR*, 695-730 (1999) (discussing how the reification of race causes us to reason backwards from physical difference and label behavioral characteristics onto race as a psychological shortcut).

²⁵ Wendy Brown, “Wounded Attachments: Late Modern Oppositional Political Formations,” in *The Identity in Question* 199, 204-205 (John Rajchman ed., 1995); Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* 52-76 (1995). For an analysis of oppression generally, see Iris Marion Young, *Justice & the Politics of Difference* (1990).

²⁶ Steele, *supra* note 3.

²⁷ *Id.* Paulo Friere would diagnose Steele’s notion of “overcoming” his race as symptomatic of the oppressing process. Friere says that we become more individualistic as we become less oppressed, and we end up wanting to identify ourselves out of the group. Thus, individuals, instead of groups, are emerging out of oppression. Capitalism’s emphasis on personal responsibility, individualism, etc. reinforces this process. See Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 25-51 (1993).

individualism and successful assimilation into dominant culture.²⁸

The creation of a multiple lineage category for the purpose of advancing a race-free world may result in a failure to reflect the meaning that race and ethnicity still hold in society. While it may be true that race is a scientific fiction, colorblindness is not a feasible or reasonable way to deal with the problems before us given the strong social meanings of race and ethnicity in the United States.²⁹ Furthermore, since the no-race default is the standard of whiteness, people of color may be further disadvantaged if the federal government were to abandon its practice of making specific racial inquiries.³⁰ Similarly, it is important for census respondents to seek information beyond “Multiracial” classification and disclose which parent races comprise one’s mixed identity so that data can better assist populations in need. The multirace option is also preferable to advocating for a collective mixed identity on a personal level, because limitations on individual autonomy is sometimes too high a cost for being part of a group.³¹

By making ever more precise breakdowns of Americans’ backgrounds, racial blurring will increasingly frustrate attempts to label discrete groups as victims in need of compensation. Since everyone is of mixed racial and ethnic heritage to a certain extent, it may not be possible to determine the “real” Biracials or Multiracials who

²⁸ Steele, *supra* note 3. Also, query whether assimilation should be the goal. Assimilation amounts to conformity to a dominant culture norm or ideal and it is not a desirable option for many people.

²⁹ Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun weighed in on the race issue with: “In order to get beyond racism we must first take account of race. There is no other way.” *Regents of University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 407, 98 S.Ct. 2733, 2807-2808, 57 L.Ed.2d 750 (1978).

³⁰ See Tanya Kateri Hernandez, “‘Multiracial’ Discourse: Racial Classification in an Era of Color-Blind Jurisprudence,” 57 Md. L. Rev. 97, 139-56 (1998).

³¹ To me, the outrage of racial identification comes not in being considered a member of a particular group but in being denied the right to honor the other elements of one’s background. “Biracial,” “Multiracial,” “Mixed,” and “Other” appear to be meaningless distinctions within themselves and only take on definition when embraced as recognition of the cultures that comprise the individual. Thus, I prefer explicit identification as Black Chicana, which conveys the pride and wonder of owning a piece of more than one part of the human race, to a catch-all umbrella term such as “Multiracial,” which lumps anyone of mixed ancestry into a state of namelessness. See generally Michael Omi & Howard Winant, “By the Rivers of Babylon: Race in the U.S.” (Part I), 13 *Socialist Review*, 31-65 (1983); Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (1996).

would appropriately qualify for the category.³² Questions abound as to whether we would find ourselves judging generations (grandparent but not great-grandparent) and blood quantum (one-half but not one-quarter) and wind up with a situation akin to that of Native Americans who must prove their bloodlines to the federal government for tribal recognition.³³ There is also the possibility that whites who identify as people of color for selfish motives will falsely inflate the non-white population and skew data. In question nine of the 2000 Census, the phrase “considers himself/herself to be”³⁴ clearly bases racial categorization on self-identification; as such, it is difficult to challenge. The white person who thinks she had a non-white great-great grandparent and marks “Multiracial” could hurt people of color by trivializing “minority” status.³⁵ Though she has never been treated or personally identified as a person of color, she may now qualify for programs designed to help such populations and her experiences may distort data, making a population seem less disadvantaged than it actually is.³⁶ Such possible overcounting of persons of color could undercount what it means to be considered a “minority”³⁷ in contemporary society.

Conclusion

The decision of Census Bureau 2000 to allow people to select more than one racial category to describe themselves triggered caustic campaigns to influence the choices Americans made in their racial and ethnic self-identification; it also sparked a na-

³² See generally Stanley Fish, “Boutique Multiculturalism,” in *Multiculturalism and American Democracy*, (Arthur Melzer, Jerry Weinberger & M. Richard Zinman, eds., 1998); Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land* (1997).

³³ Terry P. Wilson, “Blood Quantum: Native American Mixed Bloods”, in *Racially Mixed People in America*, 108-25 (Maria P.P. Root ed., 1992); Russell Thornton, “Tribal Membership Requirements and the Demography of ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Native Americans,” 16 *Population Res. & Pol’y Rev.* 33, 36 (1997).

³⁴ Census 2000 Form, *supra* note 2.

³⁵ I dislike the term “minority” as a descriptor for people of color because it not only denotes a numerical description, but with its root being “minor” (*i.e.* trivial; unimportant), it is yet another way to promulgate the concept of white superiority. However, since it has also come to denote a political racial status, I use the term in this context.

³⁶ Wilson, *supra* note 33.

³⁷ *Supra* note 35.

tional debate as to the proper focus and use of race and ethnicity in government data collection forms. Though the most recent census could have been more comprehensive,³⁸ it may eventually help us change our notions of race and reconceptualize how we think of ourselves by altering our collective valuations of the importance of sameness and difference. By allowing people to convey complex, personal understandings of racial identity, the census can be seen as a contextual backdrop for exploring the various psychological and sociological perspectives that surround personal racial and ethnic identification. The federal government will likely revise the race categories before the 2010 Census. The challenge now will be to see how government policies can keep up with the changing demographic realities reflected by our most recent national count.

³⁸ The 2000 Census should have included an additional question about each respondent's racial designation under the single-selection requirement of the past so that the data gathered in the most recent census can be more easily compared to demographic trends and statistics collected in prior years. See Nancy A. Denton, "Racial Identity and Census Categories: Can Incorrect Categories Yield Correct Information?", 15 *Law & Ineq.* 83, 93-94 (1997) (conceptualizing a two-tiered approach in which respondents select both an individual and a social identity to describe themselves). It also should have explicitly allowed for identification of more than one ethnicity. See Revisions to Directive 15, *supra* note 2, at 58,787 (rejecting request that multiple responses be allowed on the Hispanic origin question until further research is conducted).