



## Article

# “There’s Something Very Wrong with the System in This Country”: Multiracial Organizations and Their Responses to Racial Marginalization

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**Abstract:** Multiracial organizing since the 1980s has centered around the need to define and make visible the term multiracial (e.g., U.S. Census). In the contemporary era when multiple race populations are a growing and institutionally recognized demographic, how do multiracial organizations characterize and seek to combat collective experiences of racial marginalization? Here, we draw on in-depth interviews with officers from diverse multiracial organizations in the U.S. and Canada (N = 19) collected from 2017 through 2018 to examine this question. The findings revealed that multiracial individuals experience distinct forms of exclusion, which we call *categorical invisibility*, that target individuals who do not “fit” into established monoracial categories, and *mixture as pathology*, a less common frame but representing more overt forms of bias targeting those of mixed backgrounds. The lived impacts of these experiences prompt the expressed need for “safe” spaces from the psychosocial costs of categorical invisibility. Multiracial organizations, located mostly in the United States with one in Canada, engage in diverse community building and advocacy efforts to address these needs and, thus, represent critical sites of resistance to the trauma of racial (in)visibility. This work amplifies the need to center Critical Multiracial Theory to expose how monoracial paradigms as a central feature of White supremacy continue to shape the lives of multiracial people and expand our knowledge on how multiracial organizations shape the (re)negotiation of racial categories that challenge the racial status quo.

**Keywords:** multiracial identity; multiracial organization; Critical Multiracial Theory collective organization



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## 1. Introduction

Collective organizations targeting multiracial people have persistently advocated for the right to establish “multiracial” as a legitimate form of racially identifying (Bernstein and De La Cruz 2009; Williams 2006), as well as establishing, a self-conscious community of multiracial people (DaCosta 2020; Jones 2011; Nobles 2000). According to the 2020 Census figures, nearly 1 in 10 Americans identify with more than one racial group, representing a several-fold increase from only 2.9 percent in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2021a, 2021b). While this growth suggests that “multiracial” is indeed a legitimate social category, it is not clear to what degree “multiracial” as a community has truly formed. A key facet of any community is a set of concerns that speak to real or imagined shared interests that are often expressed and institutionalized in grassroots organizing (Polletta and Jasper 2001). For organizations that target multiracial membership, the major concern has been the degree to which multiracial people feel racially visible and, if so, what does that mean (Jones 2011; DaCosta 2007). In this study, we ask what are the collective interests of multiracial organizations? How do these groups perceive the needs of their constituents, and how do they respond to these expressed needs? To explore these questions, we analyze in-depth interviews with 21 officers from 18 U.S. multiracial organizations and one organization in

Canada conducted between 2017 and 2018. Our goal is to examine the interests and action efforts of structurally and demographically diverse multiracial organizations. These spaces represent critical sites to examine how or if multiracial groups draw on a shared sense of systematic exclusion to advance their collective interests, as well as providing a window into the formation of multiracial communities (DaCosta 2007; Jones 2011).

We conceptualize “multiracial” as an identity that conveys a self-conscious attachment to multiple racial ancestries and “multiracial organizations” as groups whose primary missions are to advance the interests of racially mixed people (Malaney and Danowski 2015). Drawing on racial formation theory (Omi and Winant 1994), race is conceptualized as an ongoing social production that is shaped at the intersection of macrolevel social, historical, and political forces that create categories and microscale relationships and interpretations that give categories meaning. Thus, “multiracial” reflects the negotiation between the ways individuals understand a racially diverse ancestry in light of socially recognized categories (see Thompson 2012). This conceptualization privileges the respondents’ interpretation of their background that leads them to seek out and connect with others with similar identities even if their definitions are at odds with conventional ways to conceptualize multiracial. We acknowledge that some groups that comprise a multiracial identity may be known or enumerated as “ethnic” in administrative data. Additionally, we do not distinguish between racially mixed people who are the offspring of interracial parentage or grand-parentage in recognition that multiracial identity may reflect interracial contact in various generations (Morning and Saperstein 2018).

To frame our exploration of multiracial organizations and their collective interests, we draw on Critical Multiracial Theory (MultiCrit). Derived from Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic 2012), MultiCrit theorizes that race is socially constructed in ways that marginalize multiracial people and uphold dominant racial hierarchies (Harris 2016). In so doing, MultiCrit not only offers a critical lens through which to interpret narratives of the lived experiences of multiracial individuals and communities but also provides a conceptual tool to understand how the knowledge about multiraciality is (re)produced to potentially combat the legacies of erasure of multiracial communities.

MultiCrit specifies several key tenets (see Harris 2016) that provide the foundation for our investigation. First, we explore how multiracial people and, in turn, multiracial communities and organizations *challenge dominant racial ideologies*, specifically a monoracial paradigm. As Atkin and Yoo (2019, p. 5) argued “Whether Multiracial individuals want to be caught up in the politics or not, the mere existence of Multiracial people will always be political because it challenges the dominant ideas around race in U.S. society”. The current investigation explores the expression of that political identity, with a focus on how these multiracial organizations, through the aims and goals of their representatives, seek to challenge dominant racial structures by shaping the collective interests of multiracial communities and creating spaces to advance those interests. Second, this investigation centers *experiential knowledge as the primary means* to uncover the ways structural racism shapes the needs of multiracial groups and the responses enacted by organizations on behalf of their communities. Third, we examine the various ways that interests emerge to respond to conditions specified by the next tenet - *racism and monoracism* (Johnston and Nadal 2010).

Our sample is drawn from North American organizations, with all but one from the United States and one from Canada. We therefore discuss these dynamics within U.S. and Canadian contexts, with most of the discussion referring to the U.S. Historically, the construction of multiracial people within the U.S. or Canada is anchored both by the salience of boundaries between single-heritage groups, as well as investment in maintaining hierarchical relationships between races. The initial policies enacted in the 1600s governing racial classification in the U.S. allocated those of mixed origins to the category of least status, ensuring that rigid distinctions between Blacks and Whites could be maintained (Pascoe 2009; Sollors 2000). These practices formed the foundation of the “one-drop” rule, the notion that having one Black ancestor translated into membership in the Black racial category.

Categories of the mixtures that did emerge—specifically mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon—were reflected in the designations of the amount of Black relative to White ancestry (i.e., one-half, one-quarter, and one-eighth, respectively). Such categories advanced a biological notion of race and defined Whiteness as the absence of Black ancestry. Parallel constructions within Canada also emerged (Mahtani et al. 2014), however, anchored in contact between Euro-Canadians and the indigenous population, mostly with the fur trade. This gave rise to the Metis of Canada, who developed a “... unified sense of ethnic consciousness in the 18th and early 19th Centuries ... ” (p. 241). Ultimately, the formation of multiracial communities (e.g., mulattoes and Metis) may signal efforts to redefine racial categories and make space for multiracial selfhood, even as larger systems of racial hierarchies are maintained. Within the 20th and 21st centuries, the landscape of Canadian race relationships is informed by immigration from Asia and interactions with the resident White population. Relationships are more organized around the Asian–White divide (Mahtani et al. 2014). Importantly, while we do not see a “one-drop” rule emerging in this context, immigration policies have ensured the advantaged status of “Whiteness” through restricting access to Canadian citizenship based on race and national origins (Mahtani et al. 2014, p. 242).

Our analysis offers multiple empirical and theoretical contributions. First, this study examines contemporary dynamics of multiracial advocacy. Prior work has identified demographic representation as a core interest (Nobles 2000; Thompson 2012). We explore how issues of visibility are articulated in the contemporary era. Second, this work shifts the focus from examining how racial structures shape diverse multiracial identities to the ways multiracial organizations respond to and challenge dominant racial structures. Finally, we build on research focused on the single-site analysis of multiracial organizations (see Jones 2011) by exploring a sample of 19 multiracial organizations with diverse racial compositions, goals, and organizational types (e.g., campus-based and nonprofits) (see also DaCosta 2007; Malaney and Danowski 2015; Renn 2000, 2004; Williams 2006). Our findings reveal how the growing presence of multiracial organizations across social spheres not only challenges dominant racial ideologies but also challenges dominant racial structures by creating spaces that center around the needs of multiracial individuals, families, and communities. While these spaces exist under broader structures of White supremacy, we view their work as a political act that resists prevailing racial understandings.

Next, we turn to multiracial collectives in the contemporary era and their efforts toward community building. We nest our exploration both in the multiracial literature, as well as the larger discussion of race-based organizations whose works not only define groups in terms of their shared interests but can also redefine group boundaries. Overall, the interests voiced by multiracial organizers are anchored in a more fundamental task: towards establishing what multiracial means and the implications of living “outside” of dominant ways that race is organized. Many of these efforts aimed to establish the legitimacy of multiracial identities, as well as providing spaces of support when claiming identities that are not always validated.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. From Common Experiences to Collective Interests: An Overview of Multiracial Organizations

Race-based collective organizations remain a salient way to respond to structural racism through grassroots organizing. These organizations, by creating spaces populated by like-minded individuals, also give meaning to ethnoracial boundaries through establishing what it means to be a part of these groups (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Ethnic and panethnic community organizing often engages grassroots efforts to leverage identity politics to draw together memberships to create change (Cristina Mora and Okamoto 2020; Marquez 2001; Masuoka 2006). The emergence of panethnic organizing on behalf of Asian American communities provides a key example (Espiritu 1992; Okamoto 2006). To address a shared experience of disenfranchisement and exclusion directed towards diverse Asian ethnic groups, collective organizations drew together members of diverse ethnic communities with distinctive cultures, languages, and immigration histories under a broad “panethnic”

umbrella. These collective action efforts served to make visible the demands of ending discrimination against Asians while also establishing “Asian American” as a panethnic identity (see also [Espiritu 1992](#)). This community building can also traverse racial and ethnic communities. Black organizations have often welcomed mostly Latinx immigrant groups to address various forms of discrimination and, in doing so, deployed their Black identity in new ways ([Foerster 2014](#); [Jones 2019](#); [Nakano 2013](#); [Diaz-Veizades and Chang 1996](#); [Zamora and Osuji 2014](#)). Therefore, collective organizations are a meaningful site where racial and ethnic distinctions are defined or reconfigured as a means to draw communities together to combat racialized disadvantages.

Organizations have also aimed to draw together persons of racially mixed heritage, but the goals were far more fundamental, as they aimed to make space for a community and an identity that have not been truly defined. Organizations formed in the 1980s and 1990s explicitly focused on providing a space for multiracial families who desired connection and a space to share experiences ([DaCosta 2007, 2020](#); [Williams 2006](#)). These efforts sought to address challenges faced by mixed-race families, though often reflecting mostly Black/White couples and their children, such as social isolation and public stigma ([DaCosta 2007](#); [Steinbugler 2014](#)). These early efforts framed activities around the notion that mixed-race couples and offspring were misunderstood and their children were racially mislabeled. Programming aimed to protect children and families from conditions that possibly threatened their psychosocial development and overall wellbeing. Parallel efforts began on college campuses, providing a space for multiracial college students to convene “identity-based conversations” and activism around the institutional recognition of multiracial identities ([Malaney and Danowski 2015](#)). Thus, finding spaces to forge connections with others with shared racial experiences became a central feature of many organizations targeting interracial families and their offspring.

Many U.S. multiracial organizations advocated for racial classification to enable the counting of multiracial populations in federal and local data (e.g., U.S. Census, school forms, and health forms). These calls framed identity as a “civil right” that was violated if multiracial children were automatically allocated to single-race categories ([DaCosta 2007](#); [Williams 2006](#)). Beyond these goals, classification became a way for multiracial communities to be built on a shared sense of belonging to a “multiracial” statistical category, a category that had yet to be populated ([Nobles 2000](#)) but would provide institutional visibility ([Bernstein and De La Cruz 2009](#); [Bernstein and Olsen 2009](#)). However, the salience of the Black/White inequality in the U.S., as well as a history of Black/White intermixture resulting in Black offspring, meant that much of the discussion focused on how such a category would affect the size and scope of a Black community. As anti-discriminatory measures required consistent measurements of racial groups, the goal of a multiracial category was heavily critiqued by civil rights organizations that feared that this approach could diminish the demographic base of communities of color by reallocating multiracial offspring to other racial categories ([Williams 2006](#)). Reallocating partially Black persons to separate categories was also viewed as potentially enabling the anti-Blackness of White parents who sought alternatives to classifying their mixed-race children as Black ([Atkin and Yoo 2019](#)). These calls culminated to a shift in racial classification on the U.S. Census towards the option of selecting multiple racial categories, starting in 2000. This change aimed to satisfy both desires to enumerate multiracial people and ensure that the demographic base of single-race groups could still include multiple race persons who could be allocated to their respective categories. While the option to identify with multiple races did increase the visibility of multiracial populations, populating a category (or set of categories) may be insufficient to translate into a self-conscious community ([DaCosta 2020](#)).

In Canada, reporting race on the Census came considerably later, in 1996, where enumerating race and mixed-race populations became possible via self-reporting. The race question allowed Canadians to mark themselves as one of several “visible minorities” ([Mahtani 2015](#); [Mahtani et al. 2014](#); [Thompson 2012](#)). This enumeration has often linked to a discourse of multiculturalism, one where interethnic coexistence is celebrated. However,



this approach is often in tension with the need to use statistics to track and address racial inequality that recently entered the national conversation (Mahtani 2015; Thompson 2012).

## 2.2. Battling Racism or Monoracism? Multiracial Communities in the Contemporary Era

A pertinent question for contemporary efforts is whether these early themes of institutional visibility and providing spaces to share common experiences continue to frame the interests of multiracial organizations. Many contemporary efforts at multiracial organizing continue to occur on university campuses (Malaney and Danowski 2015; Renn 2000, 2004; Ozaki and Johnston 2008). Enhancing the spaces where multiracial youths can feel comfortable, as well as promoting institutional changes, constitute clear goals. According to Malaney and Danowski (2015)'s review of multiracial campus-based organizations, these organizations focused on two themes "... political activism and advocacy and the exploration of personal racial identity and experiences" (p. 63). Importantly, those focusing on personal racial identity were far more common in campus-based spaces. The ways this is enacted are complex. Jones (2011)'s ethnography of a single campus-based multiracial student organization revealed identity to be central interest initially, but the groups struggled to establish cohesive organization. However, responding to racially charged attacks served to galvanize and solidify collective goals. Beyond campus spaces, advocating for institutional change to enhance multiracial visibility is a constant strategy in addition to providing spaces for communities. For example, organizations targeting concerns of "Hapa" groups (a Hawaiian term denoting partial Hawaiian or Asian ancestry) are centered around the need for multiracial people to be identified within public data and recognized institutionally (Bernstein and De La Cruz 2009; Bernstein and Olsen 2009). Taken together, a range of goals and needs continues to shape how multiracial emerges as a collective identity.

More recently, other works revealed that engaging with issues of racism also frames the needs and goals of multiracial people. Growing work has focused on the engagement of multiracial people with organizations combatting anti-Blackness. Involvement in the Black Lives Matter movement within the U.S. by Afro-Latinx (Hordge-Freeman and Loblack 2021), as well as Black student organizations (Loblack 2020), reveals ways that multiracial people are indeed impacted by racism and that boundaries around "Blackness" provide the space for a range of ethnoracial identities. This involvement also has a strong bearing on the ways that multiracial people articulate their identity and attachment to racial communities (Loblack 2020; Sudbury 2001). Engaging activism around racism is also reflective of the ways multiracial people are situated within the racial hierarchy. In the United Kingdom, partially Black multiracial men confront not only being perceived as Black men but are exposed to racialized treatment by police as well (Long and Joseph-Salisbury 2019; see also Hordge-Freeman and Loblack 2021). While political organizing targeting anti-Blackness is also present in Canada, a discourse of multiculturalism tends to advance the notion racism is largely non-existent in Canada (Mahtani et al. 2014). The question remains, however, whether organizations that target multiracial groups engage with or respond to collective experiences of racism.

Importantly, multiracial individuals' encounters with race and racism are also complex and heavily connected with concerns about the ways multiracial people in particular are perceived. Many have reported invalidation of their racial identity or are perceived as an "inauthentic" member of a single-heritage group (Campion 2019; Franco and Franco 2016; Harris 2017; Snyder 2016). While these experiences may not always be interpersonally challenging (see Fozdar 2019), they are often regarded as unwelcome. Additionally, they are not always articulated as evidence of "racism" or "racial bias" (Harris et al. 2021; Harris 2019). Their specific nature is sometimes conceptualized as "monoracism", representing a persistent exclusion based on being perceived as unable to fit into monoracial categories. Monoracism can manifest in many ways, including isolation, exoticization, or a "denial of a multiracial reality", where individuals are either read as members of single-race groups or feel less valued due to the ways they are racially perceived (Johnston and Nadal 2010). This

conceptual framework has been applied in small samples of multiracial college students (Harris 2017; Johnston-Guerro et al. 2020) and adults in professional settings (Harris et al. 2021). Importantly, experiencing monoracism has resulted in drawing individuals closer to a multiracial identity or seeking out multiracial contexts as a means of coping (Gabriel et al. 2021; Giamo et al. 2012). Therefore, such experiences echo themes of not fitting into established racial categories. To what degree does this characterize a need of the collective, or does it follow the pattern the interests of contemporary multiracial communities?

This range of concerns represents a means by which White supremacist ideals and structures manifest in the lives in multiracial people. Here, we ask how do multiracial organizations harness and respond to these interests? Historically, multiracial organizations have either aimed to provide spaces for connection as a means to meet the needs of collectives or advocated for institutional changes. While we anticipate that these will remain as strategies, how are the interests framed currently? Do issues of feeling marginalized as a multiracial person still prompt groups to seek out spaces for connection? Are concerns about addressing racial inequality more salient? While collective organizations continue to operate to define what it means to be multiracial, they also signal how diverse groups can come together under a shared umbrella, as well as defining what “mixed-race” means as an institutionalized concept (Jones 2011; Sims and Njaka 2020).

### 3. Methods

In order to examine how multiracial organizations articulate their collective interests, we draw on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 21 individuals from 19 multiracial organizations collected from 2017 to 2018. There were 17 interviews conducted one-on-one, while two interviews were conducted with two officers at one organization. The respondents interviewed were in leadership roles in their organizations and, thus, shared diverse aspects of their personal lived experiences, as well as their experiences within their respective organizations. All but one interview was conducted over the phone, with the exception of one face-to-face interview. The interviews were digitally recorded for transcription and lasted between 60 and 90 min.

The interviews were conducted as part of a larger study on multiracial organizations and responses to health concerns that multiracial populations experience—specifically seeking bone marrow donors. However, emerging from the interviews were diverse narratives about how the formation of most of the multiracial organizations in our sample was a response to interpersonal and structural exclusion, offering robust empirical opportunities to examine the forms of exclusion that multiracial communities experience and the organizational responses to these challenges. Interviews were conducted by a team of researchers, including many of the authors, who each occupy diverse social locations and racial identities, prompting reflexivity throughout the research process from data collection to analysis.

Multiracial organizations are defined as those groups whose missions explicitly aimed to address the concerns of racially mixed people. To recruit organizations, we collated a list of multiracial organizations through a multistep process. The first step was to use search terms, such as “multiracial university organizations” or “mixed race college groups”, as Google search terms to discover active multiracial organizations on college campuses in the U.S. Before contacting the organizations, we looked for recent activity on their listed websites or social media links, such as Facebook or Twitter. In addition, we perused single-group identifying organization websites, such as <https://jacl.org> (accessed on 15 October 2017), to look for any links they may provide to associated multiracial organizations. We also recruited through attending conferences and events focusing on multiracial issues where organization representatives would be present and connecting with individuals as potential participants. These organizations varied by structural context (e.g., campus-based, nonprofit, and public); audience (e.g., university students and families of multiracial individuals); and the racial compositions of targeted members—with some organizations

centering around specific multiracial communities (e.g., Black-Asian and Hapa) while others engaged multiracial people more broadly.

Our analysis reflected an abductive approach that puts emergent themes from our data in conversation with the existing literature that draws on a MultiCrit framework (Timmermans and Tavory 2012; see also Deterding and Waters 2021). Specifically, we identified emergent themes from our interview data (e.g., perceptions of “invisibility” individually and categorically, and an expressed need for “safe spaces”) and analyzed these themes through a MultiCrit lens. The team convened to discuss the coding process, adjust the definitions of codes, or establish new codes based on what continued to emerge from the data. To protect respondents’ anonymity, we removed identifiable information about the officers we interviewed and organizations they are involved with.

To begin, we describe our sample of multiracial organization officers shown in Table S1. Out of the 19 organizations included in this study, 8 were located on a college campus, and the remaining 11 were initiated by community members that we labeled as the “public”. Many were nonprofits, and others were less formally organized. Next, we show the scope of targeted membership. Nearly all organizations welcomed members regardless of their specific mixture, except for two who limited membership to a specific racial combination. Nevertheless, within these 19 organizations that invited all multiracial persons regardless of their racial backgrounds, three indicated that their membership was almost entirely composed of Asian multiracials. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in the next panel in Table S1. Interviews were conducted with one person per organization, with the exception of two organizations where two individuals were interviewed. Thus, we interviewed 21 officers in total from 19 multiracial organizations. More than three-quarters of the respondents identified themselves as multiracial at some point in the interview. The majority indicated “Hapa” or part Asian and White heritage, while the remaining identified themselves as combining Black with either White or Asian, but many of them identified primarily as Black. Finally, all respondents answered an open-ended question on gender. Slightly more than 60 percent of the sample self-identified as “female”, with the remaining using the label “male”. None of the respondents used other labels or declined to answer this question.

#### 4. Results

We present three distinct aspects of how interests reflect organizational foci and activities. We explore how officers (a) described the challenges of navigating the need for visibility that multiracial groups face, (b) their articulation of the need for safe spaces, and then (c) how they respond through various forms of advocacy to advance visibility. Broadly, most organizations structure their missions and goals around the notion that multiracial people experience exclusion due to the notion that race is organized into single heritage categories. However, some interviewees highlighted racial exclusion from Whites as anchoring to their experience or a need for a more nuanced sense of mixed-ness that underlined particular combinations that could not be combined with others. For example, several organization officers referred specifically to “White” organizations and places where White people were the majority as spaces they did not feel welcome, thus prompting the need for a “separate space”. Additionally, officers discussed collective interests occurring at multiple levels, many focused on challenges and responses at the interpersonal level, with multiracial people facing exclusion and needing safe spaces for individuals to come together, aiming to form their own communities. Meanwhile, others took a more structural approach, highlighting systemic exclusions that required structural responses and changes. While all organizations understood multiracial people to be facing some forms of racialized exclusion, we find varied responses about the nature of that exclusion and the level (interpersonal vs. institutional) where responses are generated.

#### 4.1. Navigating Needs for Visibility: Collective Perspectives on Multiracials as Invisible Groups

We begin our findings by detailing the ways our respondents describe the needs of multiracial communities. Importantly, multiracial officers who participated in this study universally characterized their groups as speaking to the needs of communities of color. For example, respondents often compared their groups to those targeting Black, Asian, or Hispanic members. These responses took for granted the implicit non-Whiteness of multiracial people. However, terms such as “racism” and “discrimination” were rarely employed to discuss the needs specific to multiracial people. Rather, the officers often referred to the experiences of isolation and invisibility, with two seemingly divergent discursive frames. On the one hand, organization leaders described the needs of multiracial groups as based on encountering categorical invisibility—that is, a broad-based perceived lack of acknowledgement of multiracial experiences. Alternatively, one officer described multiracial individuals facing the costs of visibility through characterizing mixture as pathology. This refers to being perceived as multiracial as essentialized negatively due to the prevailing norm that races should remain socially separate.

This experience of categorical invisibility was evident in encounters with individuals and institutions, at times with material consequences. Despite extensive efforts to address categorical invisibility institutionally through enumerating multiracials (e.g., U.S. Census), several respondents articulated challenges that still remain. Such experiences formed the basis or primary rationale for founding multiracial organizations. Thus, while multiracial experiences are impacted by broader systems of racial exclusion, we focus here on how individuals involved with multiracial organizations articulate the distinctive features and consequences of this exclusion.

Most respondents detailed myriad ways that the organization of racial categories and boundaries within American society marginalize multiracial people. For example, one multiracial respondent who is a cofounder of an online multiracial organization shared and highlighted these distinctions when asked about the relationship between race and health:

*I think that multiracial people experience racism in different kinds of ways. Certainly dependent on their racial identity or experience and so I think that that could show up in terms of multiracial people experiencing certain kinds of racism through being categorized monoracially, and then experiencing racism within a larger ecosystem in just health and wellness.*

As she explained, multiracial individuals could be impacted by “racism within a larger ecosystem”, yet nested within this ecosystem are the “different kinds of ways”. In addition, this statement suggests that multiracial individuals could experience racism because of the ways they are classified, specifically as members of monoracial groups. Indeed, while not explicitly described as or tied to “racism” as an experience, experiences of interpersonal hostility did emerge throughout the course of some interviews. Additionally, these felt boundaries and tensions also emerged within their families for some interviewees. For example, one respondent, who identifies as Black and multiracial, and an officer from a multiracial student organization in the Northeast, shared how growing up in a “White household” with a White, Hispanic mother while “coming into a world” where she was being recognized as “Black” by others took a significant toll on her mental health. This personal experience, to an important extent, shaped her views about the broader challenges that multiracial individuals experience. She explained in detail:

*I think that being biracial or being multiracial is difficult at times because it's not something that even though it's accepted, it's not really acknowledged as something that is a different race. Because I definitely think like the Black experience, the White experience, the Hispanic experience is totally different from someone's experience like me that is all three.*

As seen in this quote, while multiraciality is being legally accepted as a social category, this respondent describes the distinct difficulties that multiracial people encounter. Moreover, we find that being challenged by categorical invisibility as one of the significant ways



race mattered to the respondents also occurred within the multiracial category. For example, when asked about the relationship between race and health for mixed-race people, one respondent who was the founder and officer of a campus-based multiracial alumni association on the West Coast struggled to answer, because specific needs of multiracial groups with different racial combinations could be overshadowed by an overarching multiracial category. Specifically, she explained:

*I mean, it's really difficult to put all multiracial people in the same category. So, if someone who is, you know, Black and Latino might have a very different experience from someone who's white and Asian American. So, it's-that's why, like, for me, when I think about, like, race and health, yes. But mixed race, it just-it-it looks-it's more difficult for me to wrap my head around just because mixed people can be so different.*

The distinctions of being “Black and Latino” and “... white and Asian American” reveal that merely highlighting that one is of mixed race is insufficient. This respondent suggests that a denial or erasure of multiracial experiences of varied racial combinations can also happen even within a multiracial category. From a monoracism perspective, the struggles of a multiracial category lie in its heterogeneity and the risk of denying multiple “multiracial realities” that multiracial individuals experience in their everyday lives.

The most common encounter with categorical invisibility emerged when confronted with institutional efforts to racially categorize or classify individuals, and this type of experience marked clear systemic problems. Many respondents shared narratives that detailed the tensions of embodying and negotiating the multiplicity of racialized categories and experiences. For example, one respondent who was the founder of a national organization centered on multiracial advocacy explained how these tensions emerge in school settings and the impact that can have on children, as exemplified by her son's experience:

*I found out that his Kindergarten teacher was told to pick a race for him [for school forms] based on her knowledge and observation of him on his first day of school. And his father took him to school that day so she classified him as Black. So, he was the same child who was multiracial at home, white on the Census because they took the race of the mother, and Black at school because someone else looked at him, observed him and picked a race. Same kid, three different racial designations. It said to me there's something very wrong with the system in this country.*

For this respondent, speaking as the parent of a multiracial child, the challenges of navigating policies that ascribe different racial statuses across social spaces not only represented a micro-level challenge for her as a parent but also reflected a broader struggle with the “system in this country” that privileges monoracial assignments.

This concern was echoed for groups describing unique concerns of multiracial people in the health sphere.

*Well, let's say that a person finds out they have cancer, they don't know anything about this. But, worse than that, they might not know that they're mixed race because sometimes people are not told the truth and they go in and they can't get the support they need because, you know, technically through the birth records and everything else, they don't know exactly who they are. Or if they find out exactly who they are but then the progress may be better if they're, they're matched [with another multiracial person].*

This narrative reveals another site of invisibility and exclusion that occurs in the process of collecting racial data particularly within healthcare settings. For some multiracial individuals, these barriers could create a challenging condition to get the support they need due to not knowing “exactly who they are”. Similar to the parent who described the data collection within her child's school, worrying about the invisibility of multiracial subgroups within institutionalized data sources in the health sphere constitutes another way multiracial realities are denied.

This tension around where multiracial individuals “fit” within systems and spaces that center monoracial groups have also emerged on college campuses. For example, in

detailing how the multiracial student organization emerged and desires are expressed by students to “explore [and] kind of even out the wrinkles in their identities”, one respondent who was the founder and member of a campus-based multiracial organization in the Northeast explained:

*When you first come on campus, it's kind of tough to recognize because you have the Black student organizations tell you this is what it means to be Black. Or that's how you could be interpreting kind of what they're putting out there, or if you're not part of this organization, then you might not be [ . . . ] Black in the sense of how people are reading these organizations, and they might not feel comfortable in those spaces. So then they go into other places like that kind of have a more white space [ . . . ] and they feel welcome at first but then they still don't feel like they fit. Eventually start experiencing microaggressions and kind of this you kind of are caught up between these two identities and can't really find a place to kind of work out the differences and talk about it.*

Importantly, this respondent describes a particular type of racialized exclusion from both Black organizations and “a Whiter space”. While these exclusions signal the boundaries multiracial individuals may confront by virtue of their identities as situated outside of monoracial categories, they also highlight the differences in exclusion depending on the type of boundary encountered.

By contrast, one organization officer described racial marginalization that arose in response to multiracial visibility. We term this frame mixture as pathology. The sole example of racialized bias towards multiracial people came from an officer whose organization was based in Vancouver, Canada. The discussion highlighted how, while trying to forge multiracial communities, reminders emerged about the salience these hierarchical notions of superiority and inferiority have in how some multiracial individuals experience racism. This organization leader described how the venue they were using from an event had been vandalized with posters from White supremacist groups. Specifically, he explained:

*There were maybe like four or five posters that basically—it was a really racist drawing of someone who identified as Hapa [Part Asian] and underneath is said a failed experiment in racial mixing. And basically there were a lot of links back to white supremacist sites that were on the poster, and swastikas and such. So we knew it was definitely from a neo-Nazi, white supremacist group based on who had designed it and the symbolism that was encompassed within the poster. But I think at the same time for me I realized that okay; people are targeting us. Like this means that people know we exist. We're actually at a point where after seven years of existing in [city], people are actually aware of the work we're doing.*

Here, the respondent tied gaining visibility as a community with risks of being targeted while highlighting distinct forms of racial harassment multiracial individuals and communities can experience due to being perceived as a “failed experiment of racial mixing”.

#### 4.2. Seeking Safety: Articulating the Necessity of “Safe” Spaces

For many organizations, the primary need of their communities is to provide safety. In response to mixtures being viewed as either invisible or pathological, many officers articulated the need for safe spaces, a term that many officers employed to refer to spaces where a multiracial presence is normalized or where multiracial identities are visible and unquestioned. Most often, these were spoken of as a goal that an organization could provide given its broader absence. Our respondents articulated a range of concerns, from personal wellbeing to collective representation, that motivated a need for “safe” spaces within their respective social environments and institutions. Together, these concerns illuminate how the need for “safe” spaces not only traverses diverse organizational contexts, from university campuses to nonprofit organizations, but also spans the life course for multiracial individuals beyond the college life. These characterized a universal interest among mixed-race people, with few mentions of the needs of particular racially specific groups.

One such context where this expressed need for “safe” spaces emerged was college campuses. For example, one respondent who was working as an officer at a campus-based organization in the Northeast described her struggles navigating campus as a Black/multiracial student until she discovered and joined her university’s multiracial student association. As she explained:

*Being on a campus that is predominantly white like it’s very important for us to create safe spaces for all cultures and identities and stuff like. But especially with the turmoil like politically and stuff like that, I think that having our club makes it safe. Because there’s always tension between Black people and White people, but I don’t think that we could define that unless we speak to the needs of multiracial and biracial people, like how being both or being multiple races affects them. So I definitely think that a goal of ours is to give people a safe space where they feel like they can talk about stuff that other people understand because they come from the same background as them.*

The “tensions between Black people and White people” signal an important context driving the need for safety. This need was shaped not only by a desire to be in a community with others who “come from the same background” but also a need for safety within the distinct-racialized context of a predominately White institution (PWI). Many respondents signaled the duality of this need for safety, both from a White majority as well as from specific communities of color that would either not embrace or not validate a multiracial background.

While not confined to campus, this student associates this perceived rise in racial tension and political turmoil within the broader U.S. as having distinct implications for multiracial students in the context of a predominantly White campus. Thus, the need for spaces that “speak to the needs of multiracial and biracial people” is described as not only important for cultivating a sense of belonging and community but also addressing broader racial tensions that tend to focus on Black–White relations and overlook multiracial experiences.

That said, this expressed need for “safe” spaces was not unique to campus contexts but instead spanned the life course. As one respondent who was the founder of a national nonprofit organization explained:

*... that sort of opened my mind up to the importance of these spaces. Growing up mixed race I didn’t really have that space when I was a kid and really felt the magic of it, the power of it when I was doing it on campus and really connecting with other people who had similar experiences as I did. So when I was looking for a job I actually was looking for an organization to join like [name of organization], but when I didn’t find it I was actually probably complaining about it to a friend and she said well, you’ll have to start something yourself.*

For this respondent, attending a college with a multiracial student association marked her first experience engaging in distinctly multiracial spaces and highlighted the “magic” and “power” of these spaces. This exposure prompted her to reflect, in turn, about the impact that the absence of these spaces during her childhood had on her sense of belonging, along with her motivation to continue seeking out these spaces after graduating and entering the workforce. The perceived absence of these spaces professionally, however, ultimately motivated her to launch a “pretty grassroots” organization in collaboration with friends that was largely centered around “creating community and providing the space for multiracial individuals, interracial couples and mixed families to come together and literally just have community with each other”. This focus on supporting not only multiracial individuals but also multiracial couples and families amplifies how this need for space, community, and support spans all life stages and family contexts.

In addition to an expressed need for community and a sense of belonging, some respondents explained how the absence of multiracial spaces that they either observed or personally experienced had lasting psychosocial and material consequences. For exam-

ple, as one respondent who was the founder of a multiracial organization located in the West explained:

*I think for me the main thing is kind of mental health, or the idea that when we do these events together, it helps people see how there are different ways. Especially I think younger people to see people that are a little bit older and have been able to navigate and negotiate being mixed race, to be able to see real examples and hear how people negotiate and navigate that stuff of identity. To me that's a helpful mental health kind of hopefully impact or contribution that I hope our organization is making.*

In this way, he details how multiracial spaces can be critical to tackling the toll on mental health and wellbeing that would remain unaddressed in the absence of these spaces and support systems.

The absence of these spaces can also have material impacts on lifelong employment and economic opportunities, as one respondent who is the founder and officer of a multiracial organization located in the West with members spanning across the country explained:

*I saw how a lot of the student groups got extra support from their alumni counterparts and [organization name] never had that. And so, even as a student, that was an idea that I had to start the alumni association. And so, that motivated me as well.*

In this vein, this respondent observed the support afforded to his classmates at his undergraduate institution by virtue of having access to broader alumni organizations and networks, which he felt multiracial students were precluded from by virtue of the absence of a comparable association specifically for multiracial students. While this particular respondent took steps to address this at his alma mater and motivated him to start an alumni association, this reflection highlights broader concerns around equitable access to support, resources, and opportunities for students after graduation and the distinct barriers multiracial students may encounter.

This felt need for safety emerged at the individual level, with many respondents articulating personal mental health challenges and longing for community. However, this need for “safe” spaces was also expressed at the collective level, particularly in terms of the power of representation across sectors and in response to some of the distinct types of racism community member encounters. For example, one respondent from a collective of multiracial Asian and Pacific Islanders explained “I was really tired of not seeing people that had similar stories to myself and that looked like me on stage”, yet then proceeded to share some of the challenges multiracial individuals confront when seeking opportunities in the performing arts:

*A bunch of us felt very frustrated for the lack of opportunities to play ourselves, like play like an actual mixed race person. Usually you have to go and you're like oh, I'm going in for this full Korean role or Chinese or whatever, they don't really—it kind of sucks to being put in this box.*

While underrepresentation in the arts remains a challenge for diverse racial minority communities, this respondent speaks to some of the distinct barriers for multiracial individuals given the monoracial approach to casting and named these challenges as motivation for launching this nonprofit.

#### 4.3. Cultivating Community and Visibility: Creating Spaces, Resisting Invisibility, and Advocating for Change

Establishing distinct safe spaces for multiracial individuals represents a pathway of resistance in response to forces of exclusion and invisibility. We turn now to the ways discursive frames of isolation, invisibility, and, to a lesser extent, pathology provide rationales for advocating for change. Although these organizations confront a wide variety of issues facing multiracial communities, many respondents indicate that much of the programming sponsored by these organizations aims to address these issues through the creation of support networks and communities. While these organizations engage in various types of

programming, many of them focus on hosting regular meetings or semiregular conferences for multiracial individuals to come together and find support among others who have dealt with similar forms of exclusion.

While most of the officers characterized the creation of spaces as a universal need for all multiracial people, some referenced this approach as needed for groups tied to the need to navigate certain forms of racialization. For example, a respondent from a regional organization from the Midwest stated, when asked about the motivation for their programming that featured an online forum and regular meetings:

*Who is it for? It's for biracial/multiracial women of African-African American descent who are mixed with other heritages. And number two, you know, why does it exist? To basically address any type of concerns, interests, and needs of the part-black biracial/multiracial female. Especially since a lot of times she faces a lot of challenges within the U.S. African American community at large about being biracial or identify[ing] as biracial/multiracial. I wanted to make sure that she had a support network that she could come to and feel safe in. You know, without having fear of being attacked about being open about how she identifies racially, you know, or what she's been through with her family and so forth. I wanted to make sure that—that the [name of organization] was going to be that safe haven for every member there.*

More frequently, however, officers described this as a need that all multiracial people share. A respondent from a different regional organization based in the West stated, when asked about why members typically join the organization, “they wanted to have an organization or a group of people that would support them in their life as multiracial individuals and families”. As these respondents indicate, for many of these organizations, the social support and networks created through regular meetings provide a mechanism through which multiracial individuals can navigate the aftermath of invisibility. To illustrate, a respondent from a separate regional organization based in the Midwest said the following about their monthly dialogues where they discuss issues members face:

*Well, you know [ . . . ] a word that people used to describe that space is “healing”. Again and again there's somebody—there's got to be a few people that come up to me or come speak to one of our planners about this or write feedback into us. And so, it's emotionally healing. Yes. It brings folks some peace of mind to just say some of the things aloud that they're voicing. That gives them strength and courage to show up themselves in—in other spaces that they haven't.*

Another officer explicitly referenced the broad-based need for all types of mixed-race individuals to have community-building events. For these organizations, the creation of safe spaces within these social gatherings is a critical mechanism through which community is built and a key mechanism to deal with the aftermath of invisibility. In particular, these organizations are often founded, because their members did not feel a sense of community among other racial groups. For instance, a respondent from a campus-based organization based in the Eastern United States stated, when asked about the mission of their organization:

*So, we provide a community for people who are mixed, multiracial, transracial adoptees, people with mixed race experiences, to come and talk and to find each other and make friendships. I think something that's special about our club is that unlike other affinity groups, like we really try and encourage people to think of [name of organization] as a stepping stone if that's what they need. You know, like maybe you come into college and you don't feel like comfortable enough to go to the like Latinx or the, you know, the Southeast Asian or the Black affinity groups, but maybe you feel comfortable coming to [name of organization] because your experience feels a little more confusing, more mixed up, you know, you don't feel like you're enough.*

Here, the respondent articulates the reason that community building in order to increase social support remains a priority for their organization. Several organizations



identify the perceived lack of community and support within other racial affinity groups in their area as a key motivation for the type of programming they sponsor and for the founding of the organization.

However, while the majority of organizations focus on events that emphasize building community and support networks, a couple organizations emphasized policy advocacy to create structural changes that will benefit their members. For example, a respondent from a national organization explained why they focus their programming on policy advocacy around multiracial identification:

*I think that we're different from other organizations in that our core mission has always been a multiracial classification. It's always been that we wanted more than to only have to check one race. That's been our driving force throughout the years. There are other organizations that do things more socially and have, you know, ongoing picnics and social groups. And [name of organization], we have . . . [event] every June, but and we have activities that we do for that, but on an ongoing basis we're not a social group like some of these other organizations are.*

Although this respondent noted the difference in their organization's focus, they also perceived the prevalence of a focus on social activities among other multiracial organizations. Additionally, while this particular organization focused on policy advocacy around multiracial categorization on forms, another national organization focused on education around the need to register multiracial individuals in bone marrow registries, as well as registry drives. As the respondent from this organization explained when asked about bone marrow drives and their mission as an organization:

*Before [bone marrow drives] used to be number one priority was to register everybody [to be a bone marrow donor]. But I realized in doing so many drives, there was just such a lack of education that a lot of people wouldn't even give me the time of day because when they hear being a bone marrow donor it's very scary. So I felt like the first step for me became then to educate or raise awareness because I felt like so many people had heard, but they didn't know much about it until it happened to someone in their family. Then it became something they really knew a lot about, and then they became very passionate because they were like wow how come I didn't know anything about this before.*

While their focus on policy and structural changes was distinct, the rationale extended from a similar shared interest of racialized invisibility and isolation of multiracial people and experiences. Importantly, most respondents indicated that their organization solely focused on community building, highlighting the possible limitations these types of organizations have in responding to structural forms of marginalization experienced by the multiracial community. Community building appears to be an important step in reacting to marginalization that potentially leads to movement toward advocating for meaningful social change.

## 5. Discussion

This work expands our knowledge on how multiracial organizations serve as sites for the (re)negotiation of racial categories. Ultimately, ongoing concerns about being unable to “fit in” continue to dominate the collective interests of multiracial groups. Employing a MultiCrit framework (Harris 2016), we find that multiracial organizations are sites where the dynamics of racial difference unfold in many ways. First, our findings show that the goals and activities of multiracial organizations largely aim to challenge an ideology that provides little space or visibility to multiracial people. Officers therefore frame the shared experiences of multiracial people as reflecting categorical invisibility, as well as the relatively less common perception of mixture as a pathology, which only emerged within the Canadian organization. These two frames motivated the provision of “safe spaces” for discussion and community building. Such spaces addressed the absence of any institutionalized space for multiracial people, as well as mental health concerns that arose because of the invisible nature of being multiracial. In addition to providing safe spaces,

invisibility motivated the advocacy for institutional-level changes such as the classification of multiracial people beyond the census and greater awareness of the need for health support (i.e., needing multiracial bone marrow registrants) as ways to provide more room for multiracial personhood.

There are many implications of this work. First and foremost, we show that Critical Multiracial Theory is a framework that can explain the dynamics of multiracial collectives, as well as experiences of multiracial individuals. We find that feeling racially invisible continues to be quite common amongst people of multiracial backgrounds, and this serves as a foundational shared interest for multiracial groups. Although the self-identified multiracial population has expanded considerably since the U.S. Census first enumerated this group in 2000, this demographic expansion has not yielded a clear social space for multiracial people. While multiracial people have gained visibility in the official counts of the U.S. population, multiracial organizations continue to frame their missions, activities, and rationales around combating invisibility and isolation.

Second, this work reveals the complicated nature of community visibility as a goal for collective organizing. For many respondents, not being validated as members of mixed or multiracial groups constituted an experience in need of healing. While previous works have pointed to how individuals from many race/ethnic groups face a mismatch between the race they are perceived as and their identity (Farrell 2020), this study builds on these works by demonstrating how multiracial organization officers attempt to address this experience in their programming. This suggests the experience of being racially unseen continues to represent a collective concern that organizations are rallying around (Malaney and Danowski 2015).

Additionally, this work has implications for how increasing the mixture and growth in multiracial populations translates into a potential reorganization of racial hierarchies and distinctions. Mixtures, in terms of coupling and intimate unions, as well as mixed ancestry and identities, assert the possibility that racial boundaries can be reconfigured, expanded, contracted, or even dissolved (Omi and Winant 1994). The ability for racial mixtures to unsettle definitions of Whiteness, for example, remains a salient indicator of its broader social impact (Alba 2021). Rather, we observe in the body of multiracial organizations' missions, goals, and activities that the boundaries of Whiteness remain firmly intact. Across all organizations, these groups consistently cast themselves as representatives of communities of color. Other respondents similarly highlighted an othering from Whiteness as implicit but still being regarded as inauthentic amongst communities of color. Our data demonstrates that, rather than mixtures translating into a loosening of racial boundaries, multiracial communities operate on a landscape where boundaries remain intact, providing little social spaces for multiracial populations. Moreover, the continuation of racial boundaries creates an implicit "non-Whiteness" amongst multiracial groups. This is coupled with the often-referenced experience that these individuals are unable to find spaces amongst communities of color. These dual realities of boundaries around Whiteness and non-White racial and ethnic groups set the context for the invisibility and isolation that lies at the core of the need for safe spaces that nearly all of the organizations are motivated to provide.

The persistence of multiracial "non-Whiteness" is visible in our data beyond the United States context in ways that are both culturally specific and yet broadly representative of the ways multiracial people are racialized. We are referring to the case of the Hapa organization in Canada involving their posters being defaced with a message that mixed-race people represented a "failed experiment". While this type of targeting did not emerge in any of the U.S. organizations, a discourse that demonizes mixture has deep roots in histories of biological racism and the racial science of the 18th and 19th centuries (Nobles 2000). However, some aspects may be reflective of interracial dynamics of a Canadian context (Alba and Reitz 2021; Hou et al. 2015). The targeting of a Hapa organization may reflect the centrality of the racial divide between Asians and Whites within Canada that supersedes the Black/White divide (Mahtani 2015), even as anti-Blackness is still present (Hou et al. 2015). Second, this reaction may also be in conversation with the national policies of

multiculturalism that celebrate the coexistence of multiple ethnicities. This policy, which is even enshrined in the national constitution, often draws on images of mixed-race people as symbolic of its success (Mahtani et al. 2014). While multiracial people are often depicted as emblematic of an integrated future within the U.S. (Alba 2021; see Spencer 2014 for a critical response to this representation), there are fewer (if any) U.S. policies that explicitly aim to draw together different racial groups or point to interethnic harmony as a goal of the national policy. Even as this points to one of the very few incidents of overt hostility, this circumstance still demonstrates that multiracial people are regarded as racially “marked”.

The findings also raise questions about how multiracial organizations fit in amongst race-based organizations focused on antiracism and social justice. While both are critical of the racial order, these efforts are distinct. Many social justice groups are often framed as advancing the interests of single-heritage communities (e.g., Black Lives Matter and efforts to address Anti-Asian Hate) and, thus, may not be viewed as welcoming to the interests of specifically advancing multiracial identities, even as some groups have rearticulated group-based identities to include a diverse range of ethnoracial experiences (Hordge-Freeman and Loblack 2021; Jones 2019). Alternatively, multiracial organizations focus on the ways race is defined, perceived, and identified and are understood as distinct from advocacy to address structural racism. Importantly, the term racism was rarely used to characterize the missions, goals, or experiences of our respondents. Ultimately, this may highlight a need for coalition building, particularly as the multiple-race reporting population continues to grow. Moreover, future works on multiracial organizations should address how the current discussions of antiracism have shaped how multiracial people understand the need and potential for a multiracial community.

There are a variety of limitations of the research. First, the number of organizations ( $n = 19$ ), while larger than some studies of multiracial organizations, is still limited in scope. We encourage caution against claims that these dynamics are necessarily representative of the entire population of multiracial groups. Second, organizations had various experiences of stability and institutionalization. While some are newly formed, others have been in place for decades, potentially impacting the clarity and stability of their missions and activities provided (see also Malaney and Danowski 2015). Third, our interviews focused on the missions of multiracial organizations that do not directly address structural considerations that also reveal the influence of White supremacy on the viability of multiracial community organizing. Some of our interviews referenced that their efforts did not receive university resources due to not being classified as a cultural organization by universities. Many described their efforts as not well-resourced, functioning purely on a volunteer basis. However, other forms of structural inequalities are likely operating, but such racialized circumstances and tensions were not probed during the interviews.

Future research should explore both how multiracial organizations continue to sustain a presence, as well as how multiracial individuals occupy race-based organizations. While most of our respondents described feelings of isolation from traditional race-based groups, future works should explore how multiracial people actually traffic these spaces to examine the future dynamics of these experiences. Additionally, this work provides a selective slice of how interracial coalition building can form but is limited in speaking to how particular communities of bridging divides. Third, these interviews captured impressions during times of somewhat heightened racial tensions during the Trump presidency, but it is not clear how these groups responded to more recent shifts in the U.S. racial climate during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic and the focus on Black Lives Matter in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. Future works would benefit from continuing investigation of the dynamics and action efforts of multiracial organizations over time.

Additionally, the limited inter-country comparisons here point to a larger need for more works that provide transnational comparisons of multiracial experiences (Laster 2007; Sims and Njaka 2020; Njaka 2022). Based in our findings, we found evidence of a pathological framing within Canada in a context with no such frame present in our U.S.-based findings. This raises questions as to whether there are differences across national

contexts in the ways multiracial identities are viewed and understood. We acknowledge that mixtures within the U.S. have been seen as “pathological” historically (Nobles 2000), as racial mixtures are often conceptualized as a challenge to racial hierarchies through blurring distinctions between groups. Its absence in our interviews with U.S.-based officers suggests that such framing may be emerging in new ways. We admittedly identified these patterns with some degree of caution, given limitations in the size and scope of our sample; this may reflect dynamics that are not captured or unobserved.

Importantly, prior work contrasting multiracial communities and experience in the U.S. to those in Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, or other nations provides a window into the many ways multiracial peoplehood can be constructed as well as the ways racism and racial formation emerge on a global scale (Sims and Njaka 2020; Laster 2007; Dikotter 2008; Goldberg 2009). Such comparisons may reveal to what degree a sustained multiracial community can take hold or even the consequences of that visibility once communities are established. Finally, future work should continue to explore how multiracial organizations’ goals and needs are shaped by specific political contexts alongside their on-going efforts to craft spaces, promote communities, and resist dominant racial structures.

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