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The Whitening Hypothesis Challenged: Biculturalism in Latino and Non-Hispanic White Intermarriage¹

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Assimilation theory holds that intermarriage between minorities and non-Hispanic whites is a gauge of integration and assumes that minorities jettison their ethnic identification in favor of whiteness. Drawing on race relations theory to argue that intermarriage is potentially transformative for non-Hispanic whites as well as Latinos, this article challenges assimilation theory's bias that minorities (should) undergo cultural change and that non-Hispanic whites remain unmoved. This article uses in-depth interviews with Latino and non-Hispanic white married couples to assess the consequences of ethnic intermarriage from the perspectives of both partners. Interethnic partners engaged in four "ideal types" of biculturalism, running largely contrary to assimilation theory's social whitening hypothesis. Due to boundary blurring, exemplified by affiliative ethnic identity, non-Hispanic whites can migrate into Latino culture.

KEY WORDS: assimilation; biculturalism; ethnic identity; intermarriage; Latinos; whiteness.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1970 the number of Hispanics married to non-Hispanics has tripled, reaching over 1.5 million in 2000 (Rosenfeld and Kim 2005:541, 547). By 2008, the intermarriage rate for native-born Latinos was 52.5%, 90% of those marriages being with non-Hispanic whites (Lee and Bean 2010:87–88).³ This article asks “What are the consequences of Latino/non-Hispanic white intermarriages, for both partners, in terms of cultural practices?” Assimilation literature tells us that minorities will move away from ethnic identification and toward mainstream identification. Cultural attachments are predicted to follow suit: In an unrealistically zero-sum game wherein either one does or does not have ethnicity (Spickard 1991:15), natal culture is shed as the host culture is holistically adopted. Race relations literature focuses on change *between* generations (e.g., first and second) rather than *among* Latino and non-Hispanic white⁴ intermarried couples.

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³ In contrast, 7.1% of non-Hispanic whites intermarry (Lee and Bean 2010:87).

⁴ This article uses “non-Hispanic white” and “white” as synonyms. Similarly, “Latino/a” and “Hispanic” are used interchangeably. In this use of terminology, I am not intending to claim that Latinos/Hispanics are not racially white, but instead, that they are ethnically dissimilar from non-Hispanic whites.

Empirical studies of incorporation have focused on change by *Latinos*,⁵ rather than non-Hispanic whites, missing an opportunity to assess change among members of the dominant racial group. While racial/ethnic homogamy in marriage still prevails (Blackwell and Lichter 2004), intergroup marriage increases with generations in the United States (Murguia 1982; Telles and Ortiz 2009), with second- and third-generation Hispanics far less likely to marry endogamously than immigrants (Lichter et al. 2007; Lichter, Carmalt, and Qian 2011). Because non-Hispanic whites are the most common exogamous dating and marital pairing for Latinos (Bean and Stevens 2003; Feliciano, Lee, and Robnett 2011; Lee and Bean 2010; Qian and Lichter 2007), this article investigates the cultural consequences of these unions, from the perspective of both individuals. Previous studies tend to undertheorize gender, overlooking how women and men are differently involved in the overlapping arenas of ethnic culture, family life, and interethnic relations.

Drawing on in-depth interviews, this article theorizes biculturalism as the chief cultural consequence of ethnic intermarriage. I find gradations of biculturalism which I theorize as “leaning white,” “everyday biculturalism,” “selective blending,” and “leaning Latino.” Preconditions of biculturalism are geographically proximate Latino/a family and a white spouse who supports Latino culture. Women’s desire for gender equality motivates selective blending and, regardless of ethnic heritage, women tend to solidify and perpetuate Hispanic ethnicity in the home. Ethnic intermarriage among Latinos and non-Hispanic whites produces a variety of bicultural amalgamations.

RACE RELATIONS, CULTURAL CONTACT, AND GENDER

Race relations literature centers on intergroup contact and considers intermarriage especially important because it indicates acceptance of the minority group by the majority group. Classic assimilation theorist Milton Gordon (1964:80) posited that intermarriage or “marital assimilation” was the “inevitable by-product of structural assimilation” and spatial proximity. While segmented assimilation theorists posit that race, class, and neighborhood context impinges on racial/ethnic identity and culture (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993), classic and new assimilation theorists argue that with substantial intermarriage minority groups will eventually discontinue identifying as ethnic (Alba and Nee 2003; Gordon 1964). Among the acculturated third-plus generations, ethnic behavior can take the form of “symbolic ethnicity,” a “nostalgic allegiance” that relies on the use of ethnic symbols (Gans 1996:9). Yet racialization processes hamper the march toward a “twilight of ethnicity” (Alba 1985), preventing Latino ethnicity from becoming optional for all (Telles and Ortiz 2009; Vasquez 2011).

Assimilation theory is popularly rendered as an intergenerational process whereby generations transition from immigrant to ethnic to native in three or more generations. However, as the term “marital assimilation” suggests, *intragenerational* processes can promote incorporation. Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003:38)

⁵ For simplicity, when referring to culture or a mixed-sex group of people, I write “Latino(s)” instead of “Latino/a(s).” I do not intend to privilege males or masculinity in so doing.

crisply define assimilation as “the attenuation of distinctions based on ethnic origin.” They continue that “it proceeds incrementally, *usually* an intergenerational process” (p. 38, italics added). This is consistent with Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz’s (2009:26) recapitulation of Americanization as “often involv[ing] a process over several generations, but may also occur in the lifetime of an immigrant.” Assimilation may occur at different rates within the same ethnic group, Alba and Nee (2003:38–39) citing intermarriage, an *intragenerational* differentiation, as an example. By overlooking within-generation race relations, contemporary scholarship has missed an opportunity to interrogate the “incremental” processes that occurs within a lifetime (Alba and Nee 2003:38). By employing a life course perspective that examines change in cultural practices over a lifetime, I fill a gap in the literature concerning the incremental nature of assimilation.

Because intermarriage involves two people, questions remain concerning how *two-way* acculturation occurs: How do people select which cultural elements to retain or discard? Current literature is missing a serious theorization of the relational process by which cultural exchange and mixing occurs in interethnic relationships. Dominant-group ethnicity (non-Hispanic whiteness), which assumes normative status and is “built into... ‘mainstream’ culture,” awaits examination and theorization (Doane 1997:378). Dominant-group ethnicity is “hidden”: ethnicity is seen as belonging exclusively to subordinate or “minority groups” while the superordinate group constitutes the norm and is viewed as “cultureless” (Doane 1997). Both psychological and sociological race relations literature contend that race and ethnicity are made salient through intergroup contact, justifying this study’s rationale that intimate relationships affect the cultural lives of the intermarried. This article extends race relations theory, which is overly concerned with racial/ethnic minorities, by proposing a typology of biculturalism, or “dual cultural socialization” (Padilla 2006:469), that affects both partners in interethnic marriages.

Ongoing interethnic or interracial relationships destabilize ethnic and racial boundaries by “boundary blurring,” wherein the “social profile of the boundary... become[s] less distinct,” in order to create a life and household together (Alba and Nee 2003:286). One mechanism of “boundary blurring” is what Joane Nagel (2003:15) calls “ethnic settling or sojourning,” involving those who are “permanent or long term resident[s] in another ethnic setting.” Similarly, “affiliative ethnic identity,” as a knowledge-based enactment based on “ethnically linked symbols and practices” (such as “cuisine, language, art, holidays, festivals”), blurs ethnic borders (Jiménez 2010a:1758). “Racial literacy” reaches the same end point of whites’ becoming sensitive to, adopting, and perpetuating ethnic minority culture and subjectivity (Twine 2010). Ethnic settling/sojourning, affiliative ethnic identity, and racial literacy are the means by which whites connect with and practice a Latino/a spouse’s ethnic culture. I am not referring to “ethnic switching” (Eschbach and Gomez 1998; Nagel 1996) whereby individuals alter their racial/ethnic identification. Following Gordon’s (1964:71) delineation of several “sub-processes” of assimilation, I focus on culture and behavior, not identification. Gordon (1964:77–81) posited cultural assimilation as the first step which may occur indefinitely and *not necessarily* lead to identificational assimilation. I apply this supposition to intermarried non-Hispanic whites. Through “affiliative ethnic identity” that is grounded in

cultural activity rather than ethnic labels, non-Hispanic white partners may *migrate into* Latino culture after intimate exposure to a different culture.

Gender is an important piece of the race relations, cultural transmission, and nation-building story. Women, imagined as wives and mothers, carry a particular “burden of representation” as symbolic bearers of collective identity (Yuval-Davis 1997:45). Gender matters both in the processes of migration and settlement (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Pedraza 1991) as well as the division of home-life responsibilities (Hochschild 1989). While the plasticity of gender norms across space and time is debated (Dreby 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Smith 2006), gender is clearly integral to both migration and family life. Absent from the integration story is the role non-Hispanic white women play in the perpetuation of Hispanic culture. As “ethnic settlers/sojourners” (Nagel 2003:15), “racial literates” (Twine 2010), or “affiliative ethnics” (Jiménez 2010a), non-Hispanic white women can maintain or even strengthen a Latino husband’s ethnic culture. This article addresses how non-Hispanic whites carry forward an ethnic culture not part of their biography until adopted at the point of marriage and family formation.

This article uses qualitative data to explore the cultural consequences of intermarriage, with an equal interest in Latinos and non-Hispanic whites, a group typically escaping purview due to whiteness being considered the “invisible norm” (Frankenberg 1993). Assimilation theory’s narrow focus on immigrant minority groups drawing closer to whiteness shortchanges the reciprocity of race relations. Both whites and Latinos are susceptible to cultural shifts. This study examines both sides of intermarriage, inquiring equally about how Latinos and non-Hispanic whites shift their cultural lives in response to intimate relationships with each other.

METHODS

This article draws from interviews with 28 adults (14 married couples) who are presently in Latino/non-Hispanic white intermarriages. Of the 28 adults, 9 are Latina women, 5 are Latino men, 5 are white women, and 9 are white men. Nine couples are comprised of Latina women and white men pairs, while five are Latino men and white women. There are no significant gender differences in intermarriage rates among whites and Hispanics, though minor variations appear when foreign-born status, generation, race, age, and national origin are taken into account (Jacobs and Labov 2002; Lichter, Carmalt, and Qian 2011; Passel, Wang, and Taylor 2010). My sample is not nationally representative and does not claim to be generalizable. Twelve couples hail from the northeast region of Kansas (Topeka, Lawrence, and Kansas City) and two from California (Los Angeles County). While I welcomed all couples regardless of gender composition (I used the language of “lifetime partners” in advertisements) only heterosexual couples participated. These data are a portion of a larger comparative project on in-marriage and out-marriage among Latinos that contains 109 interviews from 50 families (24 in California, 26 in Kansas).

The sample of 28 individuals representing 14 couples is comprised of U.S.-born Latinos and the 1.5 generation—those who were born in Latin American countries but immigrated to the United States prior to their twelfth birthday (Portes and

Rumbaut 2001)—and their non-Hispanic white, U.S.-born marital partners. Focusing on U.S.-born Latinos and those who arrived in their youth speaks directly to the question of Latinos' integration processes and "assimilability" (Huntington 2004; Perlmann 2005; Saenz, Filoteo, and Murga 2007; Skerry 1993). My recruitment strategies involved working through institutions that serve the community such as Catholic churches, Latino business and voluntary organizations, and preexisting professional contacts. Snowball sampling, as a second stage in the recruitment process, whereby I asked interviewees to recommend relatives, friends, neighbors, or work associates who might be suitable interviewees, was extremely effective. I used several social networks to get referrals for interviews, careful not to rely on a single source, because friends and relatives of one person likely vary in key features from the wider population. By utilizing various channels, I am confident that a reasonable variety of people, with a range of experiences and perspectives, are represented. The sources for recruitment for couples (not individuals) represented in this article include snowball sampling (8), Latino organization (3), Catholic Church (1), and professional contacts (2).

All Latino interviewees identified themselves during recruitment as Hispanic. Half of the Latino interviewees (7 of 14) have at least one parent who is foreign-born (Mexico in all but one case). Four of the 14 Latino respondents are multiethnic (three had one white parent and one had a Native American parent) and 10 are monoethnic (two Latino parents). The Latino category is an inherently racially/ethnically mixed group (Gómez 2007) and drawing boundary lines around parentage would reify one type of racial/ethnic mixture. Adhering to a monoethnic standard for research on Latinos does not reflect the complex reality of an "internally heterogeneous" group (Alba, Jiménez, and Marrow 2013) that experiences increasing intermarriage over generations (Murguía 1982; Telles and Ortiz 2009). By including multiethnic Latinos I avoid the pitfall of "unmeasured progress" (gains that are lost due to attrition from the group) (Alba and Islam 2009) and capture the experience of this segment of the Latino population. By relying on self-identification, this research design honors subjective identity claims which speak not only to parentage but also racialized experience.

I assessed skin color by coding respondents according to a 5-point scale (1 indicates a racially white appearance; 5 indicates a phenotypically black appearance). I created the scale by selecting one Latino celebrity to correspond to each skin color code from the Spanish-language *People* magazine website (<http://www.peopleenpanol.com/>). Of the 14 Latino interviewees, one had skin color code 1, five had skin color code 2, seven had skin color code 3, one had skin color code 4, and no one had skin color code 5. The three Latino respondents with mixed Hispanic and non-Hispanic white parentage possessed skin color code 2. While a vast literature attests to skin color stratification in various social realms (Espino and Franz 2002; Hunter 2002; Murguía and Telles 1996), my modest sample does not reveal skin color to be associated with type of biculturalism.

I interviewed both partners of all the married couples. I conducted the interviews individually and did not refer to information yielded in a partner's interview to the other. I paid each interviewee \$20 as a thank-you for their time. On a reflexive note, my social position as a Latina (half Caucasian, half Mexican American) likely

facilitated access. The vast majority of interviewees positively commented that our interview was a refreshing opportunity to think about important topics that rarely get attention in busy, everyday lives. Pseudonyms are used; all names have been replaced with fictitious names that correspond to interviewees' Hispanic or Anglo-phone first and last names.

In-depth interviews that allow for discovery, complexity, and unexpected insights that emerge from people's narratives (Chambliss and Schutt 2010) were appropriate for my research. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to reply at length on meaningful points and a semistructured interview protocol allowed me to prompt for detail and pursue themes. The semistructured interviews took a life-history approach, inquiring about respondents' racial/ethnic background, identity claims, natal family, marital family, child-rearing strategies if they were parents, and cultural practices. The interview protocol was sharpened over time, a process of "progressive focusing" (Chambliss and Schutt 2010) wherein conducting interviews provides insight into which questions are crucial, which need to be reworded, and types of questions needed to be added to access pertinent themes. This process of "discovery" and progressive focusing hones the interview schedule, improves the interview technique, and leads to conceptual categories which are used during data analysis.

I tape-recorded and transcribed all interviews in order to utilize verbatim narratives in the coding and writing process. Writing field notes after each interview captured personal affect that gets lost in written transcripts; I noted any pertinent material about a respondent's physical appearance, demeanor, tone during the interview (laughter, tentativeness, etc.). In the field notes I documented both similarities and differences across cases and analyzed the reasons for repeated themes or departures from a trend.

I used an inductive, grounded theory approach to analyze the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987), allowing for categories to emerge from the data upon analysis, as opposed to approaching data analysis with preconceived categories. I used ATLAS.ti (Berlin, Germany), a qualitative data analysis software program that allows researchers to code sections of interview material based on key words and themes. During the coding process, I identified common patterns and exceptional cases as well as key quotations that illustrate prominent themes. Grouping interviews according to emergent themes and teasing out associations is the basis of the results section.

RESULTS: BICULTURALISM

Cultural shifts and boundary blurring, conceived here as biculturalism, is the chief consequence of intermarriage that affects both partners. This section provides conceptual detail for the four ideal types of biculturalism articulated by interethnic couples. Biculturalism can be theorized as four ideal types: "leaning white," "everyday biculturalism," "selective blending," and "leaning Latino." First, "leaning white" is when whites and/or Latinos continue their affiliation with whiteness that began prior to, and was unchanged by, their marriage. While Latino culture is acknowledged, it ranks a distant second to whiteness. Second, "everyday biculturalism," often

taking the form of symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1996), requires little intentionality and is a cultural intermixture that results as people live their lives. Cultures are routinely intermingled; biculturalism here is the product of *laissez-faire* attitudes toward one's own and one's partner's ethnic culture. Third is "selective blending" wherein partners conscientiously choose cultural elements from *both* of their backgrounds to continue or discontinue. This multidimensional and multidirectional form of cultural intermixing is highly intentional, motivated by desires to guard, jettison, or revise cultural aspects. Concern about gender norms tends to drive this form of biculturalism. Fourth, "leaning Latino" is a highly intentional embrace of Latino culture. Leaning Latino is a stronger identification with Latino identity than everyday biculturalism and is less critical of Latino culture than selective blending. The categories of biculturalism can be envisioned as running along a spectrum from leaning white to leaning Latino (which are themselves fuzzy, overlapping categories). These categories are not mutually exclusive but can be deployed in succession.

There are varying levels of intentionality in the forms of biculturalism: leaning white is intentional and often precedes intermarriage; everyday biculturalism is the least deliberate outcome, the result of a *laissez-faire* or hands-off approach; selective blending is highly intentional as people conscientiously select elements of *both* individual's ethnic heritages to retain or discard; and leaning Latino requires that intermarried couples *choose* to seek out and embrace Latino cultural elements, with little selectivity among cultural aspects.⁶

In applying these categories, individuals are my unit of analysis, although most partners substantially agreed in their cultural inclinations. Of the 28 individuals, 6 lean white, 13 display everyday biculturalism, 5 engaged in active selective blending, and 10 lean Latino as their primary mode of conduct. People can use multiple forms of biculturalism, as discussed at the end of this results section. As scholarship on love, marriage, and interracial relationships attests, multiple narrative framings can coexist, individuals deploying diverse frames at different times (Steinbugler 2012; Swidler 2001). I coded each person according to the one or two types of biculturalism dominant in their lives. Twenty-one percent of respondents (including 29% of Latino respondents) lean white, demonstrating the fluidity of cultural borders. The least intentional of the forms of biculturalism, everyday biculturalism, describes nearly half of the interviewees (including 57% of Latinos). Selective blending, a product of conscious intent, describes 18% of interviewees. Over one-third of the respondents lean Latino. Half of the non-Hispanic whites lean Latino, speaking to the porousness of boundaries and showing that effortful action within marital lives is a vehicle to affiliative ethnicity.

FOUR TYPES OF BICULTURALISM

Leaning White: Affiliation with Whiteness

A minority of respondents (6 of 28; 4 Latinos and 2 whites) continued or increased their identification with whiteness. This is not usually a rejection of Latino

⁶ In the Kansas context, leaning Latino requires more effortful action than in the California context where couples have the option to be immersed in a Latino environment.

identity but rather an emphasis on whiteness. The predisposition to “lean white” often preceded and informed marital choices. For some people, like 51-year-old Mexican American Nathan Lucero, gravitation toward whiteness was the result of *prior* assimilation. Born and raised in Kansas where out-marriage with whites was common due to the area’s demographic makeup, Nathan’s out-marriage was prompted by his parents’ upward mobility which took him to the predominately white “west side of town—the better side of town.” His parents did not try to pass on Mexican culture, pushing instead an assimilationist agenda.

Latino and non-Hispanic white intermarried couples who lean white do not completely disregard Latino culture, but they do not emphasize it either. For the Guthries, who identify as a “middle-class white family,” Latino culture is acknowledged but left to the Latino partner to maintain. Kent, a 41-year-old white man, describes his mixed family as Caucasian, with occasional activities that suggest Latino influence:

[Our family] probably leans more to the Caucasian side. . . . However. . . I go to all the fiestas. . . the folklore type stuff. . . . I wanna support her; whatever she wants to do. If you look around the house here you couldn’t tell that there is a Hispanic person living here. . . . I think of [us] as a middle-class white family.

In Kent’s description, middle-class status, his own whiteness, and his children’s mixed-race status justifies the family’s “middle-class white” appellation. Scholars have noted that changes in individuals’ racial and ethnic identity claims can lead to a “loss” of Hispanics, making it impossible to accurately chart gains, causing the problem of “unmeasured progress” (Alba 2006:293; Duncan and Trejo 2011). Kent’s judgment of his mixed family as simply “white” obscures their interethnic status, renders invisible his wife’s Latina heritage, and conceals cultural complexity. His wife, Adriana, has a mixed ethnic background: half Mexican American and half white. Though she identifies as Hispanic and her parents own a Mexican restaurant, Kent’s summary of his interethnic family as white uses “rounding-up” logic wherein married couples emphasize their ethnic commonality rather than difference (Waters 1990). Caucasian is not only Kent’s racial status but is also the common denominator between him and Adriana.

An inclination toward whiteness, for both the white and the Latina partner, can preexist intermarriage. Rowena Cooper is a 62-year-old Mexican American whose first and second marriages were with non-Hispanic white men. From a young age living in an agricultural region of California, Rowena perceived a racialized hierarchy wherein the bosses were whites and the “worker bees” were Mexican origin. As a teenager she worked to earn money and dress in higher-class fashion in hopes of dating and marrying “up” in class status. Rowena, who noted that her attractiveness and physical “good shape” was the envy of other women, desired socioeconomic improvement, predisposing her to intermarry a white man. This is a classic example of racial-beauty exchange theory wherein women of color might “trade beauty. . . for a higher racial caste mate” (Feliciano, Robnett, and Komaie 2009:41).

Supporting the concept of white superiority by perpetuating Latino stereotypes (Feagin and Cobas 2008), Rowena cautioned her Latino/white sons: “Don’t you

bad-mouth or talk back to a Hispanic because they are one mean son of a gun.” Rowena was referring to *lower-class* gang member Hispanics, yet she does not make this class and gang distinction clear. Despite her identification as Hispanic, Rowena promotes affiliation with whiteness and distance from Hispanics. Rowena’s mixed-ethnicity children pick up her cues about the conjoined nature of race, ethnicity, and class, claiming that “they are more Caucasian.” Considering the stress placed on class attainment—which obscures her own reality as a middle-class Mexican American—this family intentionally veers toward whiteness.

Everyday Biculturalism: A Laissez-Faire Approach

Everyday biculturalism is the most frequent outcome reported by intermarried couples. This form of biculturalism involves both partners engaging in a casual two-way cultural exchange. This iteration of biculturalism is in concert with symbolic ethnicity, pursued as a recreational or “leisure activity” (Gans 1996:9). Everyday biculturalism requires little intent and results from organic sharing between partners. More symbolic than selective, everyday biculturalism is a low-commitment outcome for couples who are not especially dedicated to either spouse’s ethnic heritage.

Bianca Stroeh, a 41-year-old Mexican American woman, and Chuck Stroeh, her 44-year-old non-Hispanic white husband, live in California. They both claim an American identity and give little thought to their ethnic identities. As Americans first, and Mexican origin or white ethnic a distant second, Bianca and Chuck are casually bicultural. In the context of Southern California, Bianca, born in the United States, notes that her everyday biculturalism is far weaker than their immigrant neighbors who lean Latino:

I still consider myself Mexican American though I think being here in California I’m probably not as Mexican as some families are who are immediately from Mexico. I would say we’re more American as far as... our practices and...our traditions... For Father’s Day we’re going to barbecue *carne asada* [barbecued beef]. That’s my husband’s choice; that’s his favorite... I identify with American and California.

In the immigrant-heavy context of California, Bianca compares herself against immigrants and those who more fervently engage in traditional customs. She refers to her white husband’s choice of Father’s Day food as “*carne asada*,” showing both the symbolic nature of their ethnicity and the minimal commitment it requires.

Everyday biculturalism is bidirectional. As Bianca adopts her husband’s German last name of Stroeh, Chuck requests *carne asada* for a celebratory dinner. While her parents “just didn’t pass on traditions,” Bianca is not devoid of Latino culture and imparts her symbolic ethnicity to her husband. Chuck remarked, “She jokes that I become more and more Mexican all the time. Because I like the food—which I always have.” Pointing to nearby Latino family, Chuck discusses the influence of grandparent–grandchildren relations: “I think the kids have learned a lot from Bianca’s dad, spending time with him... [My son] Tito will go over there and they’ll watch a movie... in Spanish... I think that exposure [has] been good.” The

two-way street of everyday biculturalism is a costless and symbolic cultural expression.

Cuisine carries meaning and is a low-commitment, low-cost way to engage ethnicity. Latino interviewees either waxed nostalgic about the ethnic food they regularly ate in their youth or spoke about their occasional efforts to retain ethnic food. Food is a cultural element susceptible to creative adaptation. Showing the fusion of food cultures, one non-Hispanic white wife remarked on the passage of a family recipe through the female line (to her, the affiliative ethnic) and her modification of it: “[My Mexican rice is based on] his cousin’s daughter’s recipe. I just tried to make it healthier with the brown rice.” Having joined them for dinner, I can testify that the rice was a tasty fusion: brown rice (substituting for the traditional long-grain white rice) made with cumin, chicken bouillon, and tomato sauce lending an orange hue.

Food and music are, as Herbert Gans (1979) pointed out, nostalgic, costless, and minimal-commitment ways to participate in ethnic culture. Gans (1979:15) posited that ethnic behavior will be evaluated before engaged publically, people considering “what costs it will levy and what benefits it will award to them.” In the contemporary moment of multiculturalism where diversity is celebrated and Mexican American ethnicity can be rewarding, ethnicity can be more freely engaged than in the past (Jiménez 2010b). In this multicultural context, the cost–benefit analysis that ethnics conduct may find ethnicity to be worthwhile and without significant penalty, especially among the intermarried.

Fifty-seven-year-old Mexican American Luke Ybarra, of Kansas, who is married to a 58-year-old non-Hispanic white woman from St. Louis, Missouri, discusses the superficial intermixing of their ethnic backgrounds: “Before our relationship I don’t know how much exposure [my wife] had [to Mexican American culture]. I think that she does appreciate it; she’s learned to make enchiladas. . . . I think that being married to her probably has enhanced my appreciation of the Irish holidays and food. So. . . it’s been good in both directions.” Calling equally on Mexican and Irish backgrounds, this family casually relates to both as symbolic ethnicities through practices such as “holidays and food.”

Luke’s wife, Trudy, puts forth the image of a symbiotic relationship in her answer to my question about whether biculturalism describes her family: “I always told [my children] they’re Mexican. They are Irish. . . . It’s. . . a blend. . . . It’s not pinning two against [each other]. It’s just [like] blending the Germans with the Irish, or the French with the Polish. It’s really no different than that. It’s kind of fun.” Everyday biculturalism combines two cultures without much intention or deliberation. If there is conscious thought, it is about striving for a “middle ground” or a “blending,” without particular regard for which elements are to be preserved or altered, a *de facto* blending rather than intentional selective blending described next. Occurring easily in her family, Trudy “never even really thought about it,” simply combining heritages in the course of everyday life. Pointing to a history of European nation intermixing, Trudy likens her family to European interethnic blends now commonly accepted as white ethnics in the United States. Overall, everyday biculturalism is the effortless result of conjoined ethnic lives where partners casually meet in a cultural middle.

Selective Blending: Retaining and Discarding Cultural Elements

Although assimilation literature presumes that all ethnic traits will diminish over time, in reality, attributes are selectively guarded, jettisoned, or revised. People actively choose to blend cultural traits from their and their partner's ethnic backgrounds. Due to personal, agentic preferences, cultures are creatively blended and new amalgamations emerge. While selective blending can involve any cultural trait, gender norms and relations were the attributes most often chosen for modification.

Celeste Collins, a half Native American and half Mexican American 43-year-old woman, exhibits selective blending. While this article focuses on consequences of intermarriage, Celeste's *motivation* for out-marriage is directly tied to the *consequence* of selective blending. Her motivation was about gender: she chose to marry an emotionally sensitive white man. Celeste described her family of origin and the trait of male domination she *selected out* as she chose a life partner:

We had a very traditional household. My dad was a traditional, strong male figure and my mother was *clearly* the nurturing [one]. . . managed the house, took care of the dishes and the cooking and the cleaning, and primarily responsible for the care of the children. . . . This sounds terrible, but I did not want to marry anybody like my dad. He's too domineering, and everything had to center around him and. . . that was very not attractive to me. . . . I consciously did not want to pursue anyone that looked like my dad.

Celeste refused to marry anyone who "looked like her dad" and exhibited dominating characteristics. Celeste avoids strict gender expectations by choosing to marry a sensitive white man who displays "gender flexibility," that is, willingness "to share power, child care, and household chores with women" (Sherman 2009:161). Her husband, Doug, agrees that his philosophies and behaviors accord with Celeste's gender expectations: "One time her dad was. . . giving me a hard time. . . . I was helping [the women] clean in the kitchen and. . . he was like, 'Oh, no, no, no, you don't need to do that. No, no, no, let Celeste take care of that.' I'm like, 'Mmm-no, I don't think so.' . . . I grew up in a household where *everybody*. . . jumped in."

Celeste and Doug consciously change gender norms from those experienced in Celeste's youth. She explains the cultural shifts since marriage as well as Doug's reinforcement of valued Mexican American cultural elements:

I. . . moved away from *my* background a little bit, in the traditional roles of the home. Because I am. . . a dominant part of. . . our economic life. And my husband takes up more of the home life than my father ever did. I think we're more distant from the traditional roles [of] my. . . Mexican American culture. But we continue to have the larger family dynamics, where family is important. [Doug] definitely *loves* that part of my family, that we are close and affectionate and fun-loving. . . . His side of the family, unfortunately, does not have that closeness.

Particular family dynamics, such as closeness, are also subject to selective blending. Doug appreciates his wife's affectionate family and replicates that in his marital home. Celeste appraises Doug's motivations for change: "As a child he didn't get a lot of his parents' attention, and I think he's trying to veer away from that. . . . He's very involved with both my son and daughter. . . . His family. . . [didn't] express their love very openly [whereas]. . . my family [does] and he. . . admires that." Selective blending allows for the conscientious retention or removal of

characteristics, both cultural and familial. Natal families serve as models to be altered, as seen in Celeste's desire to avoid male domination and traditional gender scripts and Doug's wish to have loving relationships with family members.

Selective blending allows for critical assessment of both cultures in a partnership. Ryan Carlisle is a 25-year-old non-Hispanic white man married to Glenda, a 23-year-old Mexican-born woman. Ryan and Glenda temper attributes they view as negative in *both* national cultures: machismo in Mexican culture and self-centered individualism in American culture. Ryan equally condemns constricting gender norms that reigned in Glenda's Mexican immigrant household and America's "dog-eat-dog" culture. He recalls an incident wherein his Mexican mother-in-law counseled Glenda not to cry saying that "men don't like that." He rebutted this advice, assuring her, "I want to discuss this. I want to know what you really think." Even-handed in his critique, Ryan faults U.S. society—in particular capitalism—for promoting selfishness, an attribute that runs contrary to his Christian beliefs and the collectivist orientation of the U.S. military:

The American dream is all focused on *me* and this is to benefit *me*—you see that a lot in capitalism. . . . In [the biblical book of] Romans we're called to be "living sacrifices." Which means if I have a chance to sacrifice my desires. . . .to help better you or a group, then that's the path that I should take. . . . It's not about making the most money. It's not about being the most powerful. . . . Part of that comes from my military background, too. It's instilled in you that your life is something that you can use to the benefit of others. In boot camp. . . .they'll read all of these Medal of Honor citations about so-and-so jumped on a grenade and lost his life but he saved 10 other people.

Selective blending modifies both cultures represented in the home. In this case, selective blending is used to recalibrate gender relations and critique selfish individualism.

While being the child of a Latin American immigrant does not directly lead to a particular form of biculturalism,⁷ the two Latina children of immigrants who engage selective blending (Glenda Carlisle and Sylvia Nava-Kelly) chisel away at gender inequality. They target gender norms for revision, expanding on Robert C. Smith's (2006:125) concept of the "immigrant bargain," that is, the "expectation that the parents' sacrifice will be redeemed and validated through the children's achievement." The classical understanding of the immigrant bargain rests on educational or socioeconomic achievement. In the selective blending deployment of the "immigrant bargain," gendered behavior is the subject of attention. After some success in the educational realm, women who are children of immigrants criticize and modify problematic gender norms associated with immigrant Latino culture. Sylvia recalls gender inequality in her youth, such as her brothers getting paid for chores while she and her sister did not. She lobbied for equal payment (and won) saying, "I had no tolerance for it at all. I was always assertive to make sure I was treated fairly because [the inequity] was so obvious." Her parenting style carries forward the goal of gender equality to the next generation: "With my daughter I'm always making sure she asserts herself and. . .stands her ground." In this gendered twist on the "immigrant bargain," Latina women validate their parents' sacrifice through

⁷ All seven children of immigrants are clustered in the everyday biculturalism, selective blending, and leaning Latino portion of the spectrum.

both academic success and reconfigured gender norms that reward them with greater authority.

Selective blending is a conscious crafting of a bicultural atmosphere where people carefully select elements of Mexican and American cultures to retain, discard, and improve.

Selective blending is relevant to *both* partners' cultural and familial backgrounds. In selective blending, family cultures and ethnic cultures are negotiated according to the priorities of the couple. Some attributes, such as family unity and affection, are guarded while others such as gender relations are revised.

Leaning Latino: Active Biculturalism

Leaning Latino is an active, deliberately engaged form of biculturalism that is more wholehearted than selective blending. Active biculturalism relies on an interested Hispanic partner and a supportive non-Hispanic partner and is aided by geographically proximate Latino family members. In Kansas, leaning Latino requires motivated efforts because Latino culture is less concentrated than in majority-minority regions. The families profiled below demonstrate the intentional quality of leaning Latino and the supporting role of non-Hispanic spouses who are affiliative ethnics. White spouses who are affiliative ethnics practice Latino culture but do not identify as Latino because they understand Latino *identity claims* to be grounded in ancestry or "common descent" (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:17). In contrast, *ethnic culture* is practice based and therefore accessible to those who lack ancestral connection to an ethnic group. While analysis of the ethnic claims of these couple's children is outside of the purview of this article, prior research has demonstrated that familial ethnic socialization strongly influences children's ethnic identification and cultural practices (González, Umaña-Taylor, and Bámaca 2006; Vasquez 2011).

Courtney Flores, a 46-year-old non-Hispanic white Kansan, rejected the idea of out-marriage producing a breaking of ties with Latino culture: "In our case it's been opposite." She converted to Catholicism after meeting her husband ("I wouldn't be Catholic if it weren't for Roland") and has been attending Spanish mass for the past 10 years. Courtney depicts her family's lifestyle of leaning Latino as an active choice: "We've definitely kept [Latino culture] and in some instances have even made it stronger than what Roland grew up with. We've had to make the choice. Do we want to participate in this event or do we want to teach this value that comes from his family? . . . The Hispanic is more dominant in [our] relationship." Courtney speculates as to why her family leans Latino: "Maybe it's because the non-Hispanic person is non-native to Lawrence. Or maybe because I'm a mutt and he's a purebred." Two reasons, repeated by other respondents, account for why they lean Latino: first is the proximity of Latino family who reinforce this identity (her husband's extended family resides there), and second is that "he's a purebred." Roland's "purebred" Latino identity is easily identifiable, whereas her "mutt" heritage is fractional and therefore difficult to identify with. In their "purebred" and "mutt" pairing, Roland's easily-identifiable 100% Latino background outweighs hers on an imaginary scale, tipping the family culture in that direction.

Born in the United States, Julio Herrera's inclination to lean Latino comes from his familiarity with his father's immigrant narrative. Julio's father achieved upward mobility yet was eager to assist his compatriots. He would "give back" by hosting Mexican students who attended nearby University of Kansas, where he worked as a horticulturalist: "We used to joke about having adopted kids all the time at our house." The immigrant narrative was a part of Julio's youth, shaping his strong commitment to his ethnic community. As a result, Julio and his wife, Susan, both native Kansans and in their early 40s, lean Latino. Latino ethnicity is prominent in their lives due to a remembered immigrant history and proximate family. Reflecting this, Julio remarked that Susan "adapted more to my family than I have adapted to her family."

Julio is an advocate for Latino issues in the public sphere and a support in the domestic sphere. As a banker, Julio thinks it is important to educate people—with an emphasis on newcomer Latinos—on financing and credit:

I try to stay in touch with my culture. . . . Now that I'm a banker one of the things I'd really like to get into [is help people] understand how credit works. . . . One of the wealths [sic] you can have in the country is to own your own home. But to own your own home you have to have credit. So, do we understand what credit is? . . . I don't know if first-generation Mexican kids really get to know how the system works because everything is cash—if the parents are undocumented, they don't open bank accounts.

Julio explains the roots of his calling to coethnic mentorship: "you can't save the whole world but I can help. . . . the people who look like me. . . . When you see someone that looks like you, you feel more comfortable asking them questions." Perpetuating his immigrant father's inclination to aid newcomers, Julio uses his occupational skills to educate immigrant and lower-income Latinos on credit and home buying, the keystone of the American Dream. Potentially open to the charge of being assimilationist, Julio believes that economic integration is the best way to achieve success in a capitalist society. As other studies on African Americans have found, economically successful minorities can be critical of the U.S. opportunity structure and the unequal distribution of resources (Carter 2005; Hochschild 1995). Seeing inequality and reflecting on his own upward mobility, Julio aids coethnics in their acquisition of monetary resources and their socioeconomic integration.

Gender is relevant in how the Herrera family divvies up cultural duties. Historically, women have been responsible for feeding the family, maintaining kinship relations, and transmitting ethnic culture to children (DeVault 1991; Stack and Burton 1994; Yuval-Davis 1997; Vasquez 2010). An added twist is when mothers pass on *their husbands'* ethnic culture to her children. Non-Hispanic white Susan is an "ethnic settler" (Nagel 2003) who possesses an "affiliative ethnic identity" (Jiménez 2010a). Susan has acquired "racial literacy" (Twine 2010), learning cultural traditions from her parents-in-law in order to pass them to her mixed children. Exemplifying the importance of both supportive spouses and the proximity of extended family to the maintenance of an ethnic culture, Julio describes how his wife's migration into his ethnic culture is crucial to the flow of traditions to his children:

I do believe [culture] goes through the mom. . . . I think moms probably have the most influence on the kids, girl or boy. . . . But, I think fortunately for me Susan is open to that, to

learn. . . . She'll wear the Mexican dresses to functions sometimes that my mom will find for her. . . . She would wear that stuff to. . . show the girls "this is who you are."

As a family, they actively embrace the Latino culture. Julio directs his efforts toward the community, as a banker and a longtime committee member of the Catholic Church festival. Founded in his belief in the centrality of the mother-child relationship, he leaves the job of cultural transmission largely to his white wife.

Susan's support for Latino ethnicity is seen in their wedding: "We had the double rosary, we had the gold coins. . . Hispanic traditions." Inquiring as to the source of these ideas, she points to her mother-in-law and her own experience: "His mom. . . told me. . . . And I'd gone to some weddings. . . . [Julio] was more in agreement." From the start, women are in charge of cultural representation, information flowing from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law with "agreement" from the son/husband. Susan's mother-in-law was also a valuable cultural resource concerning quinceañeras (a coming-of-age ritual at a girl's fifteenth birthday): "His mom. . . gave me ideas. . . . She went to Mexico and got items. If they lived out of town I don't know that we'd have [the quinceañera]." Proximity of Latino relatives exerts a gravitational pull toward that ethnic culture, even in predominately white areas. Susan reasons: "I think it leans more towards his family just because. . . they're here in town." With an ethnically affiliated white wife/mother at the helm of the Herrera household, plus cultural resources delivered by the Mexican American mother-in-law, the children receive cohesive messages about both ethnicity and gender.

White women who are affiliative ethnics support leaning Latino. Forty-seven-year-old Mexican American Ignacio Gonzalez articulates how his non-Hispanic white wife reminds him about his ethnicity:

I think that the person that reminds me the most that I'm Latino is Dierdre. She reminds me that we have to speak to the kids in Spanish. . . . We cannot have. . . children who won't speak Spanish at all. . . [and the] language is gone from 'Gonzalez.' That would be a shame not only for traditional purposes but also because of practical purposes. She said, "How can you give your son a name like Ignacio Gonzalez and have him not be able to speak Spanish?" . . . That's why. . . Dierdre learn[ed] Spanish.

An affiliative ethnic, 44-year-old Dierdre Gonzalez supports Hispanic ethnicity, learning Spanish and reminding her husband about his heritage. She encourages Ignacio's "retraditionalization" (Nagel 1996), the resumption of skills and observances, an ethnic renewal that tends to occur when contemplating the ethnic context in which to raise children. Leaning Latino can extend beyond home life: Dierdre has worked for Latino and Southeast Asian migrants' educational access for the past decade, her professional efforts inspired by her husband's family's hard-fought efforts for educational achievement.

Supportive non-Hispanic spouses who express "affiliative ethnic identity" (Jiménez 2010a) are crucial in maintaining, or even enhancing, connection to Hispanic culture and the local Hispanic community. Non-Hispanic whites can lean Latino: 7 of 14 (50%) non-Hispanic white spouses lean Latino (four women and three men). Despite this near parity, women remain primarily in charge of cultural maintenance in the home and cultural transmission to children. The white women who lean Latino actively immersed themselves in their husband's Latino culture, whereas white men supported or reinforced the cultural proclivities of their Latina

wives, taking a more passive role as their wives took charge of the family's cultural life. Women, as "symbolic bearers of collective identity" (Yuval-Davis 1997:46), play a significant role in the continuation or revivification of ethnic culture (Vasquez 2010b), even if it was not part of their biography until marriage. Non-Hispanic white partners who adopt and maintain a spouse's ethnic culture runs counter to assimilation theory. While Latina women have cultural resources or networks to draw on as they engage biculturalism, non-Hispanic white women acquire knowledge they then supply to their families. Ethnic boundaries are indeed permeable, and the non-Hispanic white category does not always win out over nonwhite ethnic cultures.

USING MULTIPLE TYPES OF BICULTURALISM

Use of adjacent forms of biculturalism, which characterized a quarter of the sample, shows the nonmutually exclusive nature of the categories. The ideal types are useful to delineate between modes of cultural practice and yet people can engage more than one form of biculturalism. Those who deploy multiple brands of biculturalism (men and women, Latinos and whites) always utilize neighboring middle categories (everyday biculturalism and selective blending) or a middle category in combination with one extreme (leaning white or leaning Latino) but never two extremes. Simply put, the same person never leaned white and leaned Latino. Selective blending was the common cultural practice for nearly all (six out of seven) interviewees who used multiple forms of biculturalism and was used alongside leaning white, everyday biculturalism, and leaning Latino. Thus, specific intents, such as gender equality, that motivate selective blending can accompany a proclivity toward whiteness, a *laissez-faire* attitude, or a focus on Latino ethnicity.

The Nava-Kellys include non-Hispanic white Derek who moves between selective blending and leaning Latino and Hispanic Sylvia who alternates between selective blending and leaning white. Regarding selective blending, Derek desires to retain their shared emphasis on education and, like his wife, wants to diminish the quickness to temper that they associate with her Cuban father. Referring to *both* cultural backgrounds, Derek nods to dissatisfaction with his own emotionally lacking natal family relationships and, in reaction, adopts the rituals of family meal-times and physical affection customary in Sylvia's natal family.

Regarding leaning Latino, Derek claims to have gravitated toward Sylvia's culture: "my habits and rituals shift[ed] more to the mix that Sylvia grew up with than Sylvia. . .shifting more towards me." Derek appreciates and requests Cuban food: "I really came to like black beans. I often will ask for them now." His support for his wife's ethnicity is important, as he muses: "But imagine if that weren't the case: if I were resistant to it [and] the impact that could have on culture. So, there [are] reinforcement issues that become important." As affiliative ethnics, white women discussed above were active agents of ethnic transmission, whereas white men's "reinforcement" tended to rank second to a Hispanic wife's ethnic agenda.

Sylvia, whose youth in Chicago involved "Cuban Sundays," her home a meeting place for the local émigré community, vacillates between selective blending and

leaning white. She calls herself a “diluted Hispanic,” referring to her disconnect from the local Hispanic community (where Cuban representation is low) as well as her multiethnic status (she is Czech and Cuban). Sylvia engages selective blending by casting aside quick emotionality and female subservience while retaining food culture such as pulled pork, black beans, yucca, and guava. Her selective blending predated her marriage to Derek. She recalls wanting a mate who, unlike her hot-tempered father, “was not controlling or...emotionally a roller coaster,” traits she associated with Cuban masculinity. She found this equanimity in her “Wonder Bread white” husband, this evocative phrasing suggestive of Derek’s pale skin tone and placid temperament. Leaning white comes from her familiarity with white ethnic culture stemming from her Czech mother plus her predominately white professional environment. Her half-white status is also relevant: “I can relate to my husband just ‘cuz part of me is white.” Crossover among multiple forms of biculturalism achieves her goals and fits her lifestyle. By selective blending, Sylvia jettisons extreme emotionality and safeguards Cuban cuisine and by leaning white she shares in her mother’s and husband’s white ethnic culture and operates seamlessly in a largely white social environment.

CONCLUSION

Assimilation literature proposes that intermarriage paves the way for loss of ethnic affiliation. Newer formulations of incorporation theorizing “boundary blurring” stress unintended consequences of everyday decisions (Alba 2009; Alba and Nee 2003) yet do not theorize the variety of potential outcomes or the impact on non-Hispanic whites. This research has drilled down further to examine how interethnic unions shift cultural lives. There are three shortcomings of current literature this article addresses: the proposition that ethnic identity is dichotomous (one can only be American *or* ethnic) and that transition is lockstep toward whiteness;⁸ an exclusive focus on ethnic minorities, ignoring native-born non-Hispanic whites; and overlooking gender as an integral part of integration.

This article updates theories of race relations by rectifying each of those three simplifications and oversights. First, the vast majority of intermarried respondents charted a bicultural course, eschewing dichotomous notions of ethnicity. Second, non-Hispanic whites are affected by, and actively take part in, biculturalism. Third, gender is influential in intermarried households; most women, both Latina and non-Hispanic white, steer the cultural lives of their families whereas most men are more concerned with public sphere activities and simply supportive at home.

Biculturalism, as opposed to social whitening, was the most common outcome of intermarriage. While leaning white was one possible consequence of intermarriage, it was most often a continuation of a preestablished affiliation with whiteness. Whites in this category intermarried with Latinos who were loosely connected to their Hispanic heritage and Latinos who lean white continue this trajectory uninterrupted through intermarriage with non-Hispanic whites. Those who lean white were primed by their family of origin, and society in general, to value whiteness.

⁸ Or integration into a marginalized subgroup as segmented assimilation argues.

Everyday biculturalism occurs calmly, a by-product of ethnic cultures intermixing with little effort. Selective blending is a deliberate process of bidirectional cultural change that uses ideological motivations (such as gender concerns) for retaining, discarding, or revising cultural elements. Partners who lean Latino find it an easily identifiable culture, embrace it indiscriminately, and foster it with specific actions. Capturing a wider definition of family than the myopic focus on the nuclear family permits (Gerstel 2011), I demonstrate how living in close proximity to extended Latino family and maintaining those kin ties helps foster ethnic identity. In the nuclear context, having a spouse supportive of the upkeep of Latino identity also aids the formation of biculturalism.

Adding to race relations theory, this article looks equally at non-Hispanic whites. Intermarriage disrupts non-Hispanic whites' white habitus, a "racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that *conditions* and *creates* whites' racial taste, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters" (Bonilla-Silva 2003:104). By rupturing one's white habitus, whites can begin to challenge their whiteness as nonracial. Intermarriage renders racialized experiences and nonwhite perspectives visible (Steinbugler 2012). This article demonstrates that non-Hispanic whites engage in various forms of biculturalism, only one of four types of which leaves white racial privilege intact. Not untouched by interethnic relations, non-Hispanic whites participate in the melding of ethnic cultures. Non-Hispanic whites can migrate into or "settle" in ethnic terrain, becoming honorary Hispanics due to their voluntary affiliation with their spouse's ethnic background (Jiménez 2010a; Nagel 2003). While whites can lean white, the majority did not. Instead, interracial relationships more often destabilize racial/ethnic boundaries as whites migrate into ethnic territory and gain racial literacy.

Race relations theory tends to underappreciate the influence of gender. My findings confirm what gender and race/class/gender intersectionality scholars would predict: that women and men differently engage ethnic culture. While women and men were equally inclined to engage in selective blending, Latina women spoke most strongly about their conviction to filter out negative elements—namely gender inequality—and preserve positive ones. Women of both heritages were far more likely than men to lead the continuation or stimulation of ethnic culture in their interethnic homes. Gendered responsibilities trump ancestral ethnic identity, as Latina and non-Hispanic white women foster Hispanic ethnicity with their cross-ethnic husbands and mixed-ethnic children. Latina women perpetuate their natal ethnic culture, yet non-Hispanic white women can also reproduce minority cultures and subjectivities. As "affiliative ethnics" (Jiménez 2010a), white women who lean Latino practice, share, and transmit to children *their Latino husbands'* Hispanic ethnicity. Non-Hispanic white "affiliative ethnics" are examples of not only boundary blurring but also "category divergence" where "ethnic identification. . . no longer refers in a clear, consistent way to a single group that is homogeneous with respect to race, class, geography, religion, language, and culture" (Smajda and Gerteis 2012:637). Contemporary multicultural society, which rests on cross-racial and interethnic families and relationships, challenges fixed notions of race and ethnicity by admitting diverse memberships and adapting cultural content.

This article illuminates the process of boundary blurring inherent in intermarriage and adds conceptual contours around biculturalism. I have theorized four distinct types of biculturalism, highlighted both partners' involvement, and underscored the significance of supportive spouses and extended kin networks to the maintenance or revival of ethnic culture. These findings agree with and explain the mechanics of "boundary blurring" (Alba and Nee 2003) wherein social boundaries become less distinct. It is through the daily cultural negotiations inherent in intermarriages that boundaries are flexed, traversed, and overrun, leaving a porous intermediate zone. When boundaries are blurred, cultural attributes are shared and reshaped, creating new cultural amalgamations in these intermediary spaces. The "hidden ethnicity" (Doane 1997) of the dominant group is made visible in interethnic relationships, challenging the notion of whiteness as a norm. As the intermarried and multiethnic populations grow, expanded ways of understanding racial and ethnic identity that include affiliative ethnics will challenge unidirectional theories of integration and social whitening.

There are questions that emerge from this study that serve as points of departure for future research. My data suggest that the proximity of Latino family is especially important for biculturalism in a majority-white area, but how do regional demographics influence ethnic identity? Given the possibility of affiliative ethnicity, the gender of the minority partner may prove to be less crucial, yet parsing out how gender inflects bicultural participation is thought provoking. The present study was inconclusive about the influence of skin color on bicultural type, so a statistical follow-up to this qualitative work would be valuable. Because phenotype remains a salient feature that influences mate selection (Qian and Cobas 2004) and integration into the U.S. racial order, how might skin color bias the ethnic culture predominant in an interethnic home? Number of children in a household may also drive the inclination to lean one way or another, to whiten or to "retraditionalize," which merits further study. Continuing in this vein, studying how intermarried parents' biculturalism affects the racial/ethnic classification of multiethnic children would tell us more about how cultural practices affect identification. For example, given the objective of social class attainment for those who lean white, this class mobility emphasis may extend to children which could result in opting out of the Hispanic category and contribute to the problem of "unmeasured progress" (Alba and Islam 2009; Duncan and Trejo 2011).

Latino and non-Hispanic white intermarriages do not unilaterally produce social whitening and minority culture detachment, as predicted by much race relations theory. Low-commitment, symbolic everyday biculturalism describes most families. At the poles, leaning Latino (social browning) is a more frequent outcome than leaning white (social whitening), inverting the expectations of assimilation theory and demonstrating the nontrivial impact of racial/ethnic minority partners in intermarriage. Finally, highly intentional selective blending critiques both cultures, partners choosing qualities for repair or preservation. Cultural boundaries are porous and both partners in an interethnic couple are apt to sojourn into newfound racial/ethnic territory. Ethnic migrations happen in everyday life, toward both the majority culture as well as the minority culture. This study has revealed the inner workings of biculturalism, showing how interethnic relationships open up a creative

space for intercultural understanding and varied forms of cultural expressions that do not always privilege whiteness.

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