



EMORY
UNIVERSITY

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Research Statement

My general research interest includes race and ethnic relations, gender, class, and their intersections, culture, law, and qualitative methodologies. As a result of my legal training and professional career in Multicultural Affairs, my research reflects rigorous, intentional inclusivity. I work diligently to incorporate the experiences of African American, Latinx, Asian American, and Native American (ALANA) populations in my research. It requires more work and takes more time but it makes me a stronger, well-rounded race scholar who is able to engage the complexity that is the social, historical, and legal construction of race in America.

Dissertation Research

In my undergraduate studies and in law school, I learned the profound role of *Brown v. Board of Education* in the Civil Rights Movement of the United States. In my career as a Director of Multicultural Affairs, however, my students began to ask about the contributions of Latinx, Asian American and Native American communities to the civil rights in the United States. They were hungry for that knowledge. As an advocate, I took it upon myself to learn about other cases, which led me to *Mendez v. Westminster*, a Mexican American school desegregation case that occurred seven years before *Brown* and *Tape v. Hurley*, a Chinese American case that occurred in 1885. That initial research became the seeds for my dissertation project: *The Bricks before Brown v. Board of Education*.

My dissertation is a comparative, historical case study of the construction of race, class and gender across four school desegregation cases representing African American, Mexican American, Native American and Chinese American plaintiffs. After researching 104 school desegregation cases filed prior to 1954, I identified three cases out of California to conduct historical, archival and legal research. Fortunately for me, *Mendez* and *Tape* were among the California cases. *Piper v. Big Pine*, a 1924 case involving Native American plaintiffs became my third case.

These cases, I argue, act as “donor” bricks that help to lay the road to *Brown*. I argue that the narrative of the civil rights movement is not exclusive to the 1950s, the South, and the Black/White binary. The experiences of Latinxs, Native American, and Asian Americans have largely been excluded, overlooked and/or ignored when it comes to the fight for equality in the United States. Using Critical Race Theory (Kuo 1998; Perea 2004; Bell 2004; Blalock-Moore 2012) and the concept of Controlling Images (Collins 2009), my research is able to make critical connections between the experiences of historically marginalized populations in the United States. While I would never put an equal sign between the experiences of ALANA populations, these cases demonstrate that the mathematical symbol, simile, is useful to generate a more inclusive narrative.

For my dissertation, I visited several archives and collected data including, but not limited to, newspaper articles, court transcripts, interviews, etc... I am completing a content analysis on the newspaper and magazine data using the software MAXQDA coding for gendered images of Asian American women and children and Native American women and children. Upon completion, I have two objectives for my dissertation. The first is to transform it into a book that would appeal not only to sociologists who research various forms of inequality but also critical race scholars, and civil rights historians. The second is to explore the possibility of generating a children’s book called *Four Little Schoolgirls* for distribution to Elementary School libraries that are constantly searching for historically based, multicultural content that reflects their diverse populations (McNair 2016).

Prior Research

The very first research project I had the honor of participating in was Dr. Earl Lewis and Dr. Heidi Ardizzone’s book, *Love on Trial: An American Scandal in Black and White*. I conducted archival research of newspaper coverage of the trial through the Black and White Press. This initial research no doubt influenced my current research and love of archival research.

I was also selected to participate in a three-month research project called the Birth to Ten Study at The University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is a program offered through The University of Michigan called the Minority International Research Training (MIRT) Program. In addition to analyzing data, I conducted legal research on the rights of unwed mothers and the legal protections for children orphaned by AIDS. It was a life changing experience and the reason why I encourage all my students to study or research abroad.

Future Research

Following the completion of my dissertation, I plan to extend this inclusive approach to studying how Black, Latinx, Asian American, White and Native American comedians joke about race. The working title of that project is *Otherwise We'd Cry* taken from the oft-used saying, "Sometimes we have to laugh otherwise we'd cry."

The inspiration for this project came from a program I organized during my time in Multicultural Affairs. I played clips from a popular comedy show known as *The Kings of Comedy*. Most students were familiar with that production. They did not, however, know that two other versions were created: a Latinx version known as *The Latin Kings of Comedy* and an Asian American version known as *The Kims of Comedy*.

Now as a sociologist, I am interested in conducting a content analysis of those productions to identify recurrent and divergent themes between the different racial groups. I would then use these findings to guide qualitative interviews with comedians asking them how and when they decide to joke about race. Is there a line? How do they know they have crossed it? How do their experiences inform their performance? In an effort to be as inclusive as possible, I would interview Black, Latinx, Asian American, Native American and White comedians equally to obtain a more complex and informative discussion of race. This project explores broader sociological inquires related to boundaries, belonging, and the capacity to traverse unequal statuses.

Another general area of interest is the exploration of race, community, and belonging. For example, I would like to examine the history and experiences of the Latinx, Asian American, and Native American students who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) or sought membership in Historically Black Greek Organizations. For members of these racial groups these institutions and organizations may have been the only place where they found acceptance, identity, and opportunity. Another area of interest is doing a comparative, historical study of Black, Latinx, Asian American, and Native American Civil Rights Movements.