BOX 3.2 Talking About: Being Hapa, Flipxican, and Japanic

This chapter talks about ethnicity as a force for solidarity and identification, creating perhaps the most important connections that people have with one another. However, millions of people have parents of two or more ethnicities and grow up in mixed-race or multiethnic families. The US census only began allowing a person to check more than one box for race/ethnicity in 2000, reflecting society's slow acceptance of multi-faceted ethnic identities as well as the results of legalizing interracial marriage, high levels of immigration, and some social progress in terms of racism.

This rejection of people's identities that blur boundaries is reflected in antiquated terms of derision such as "half-breed" or "mixed-blood." These terms were often used against children of European settlers and Native peoples. In a society that uses racial or ethnic hierarchies to empower or oppress people, people with multiple ethnicities defy easy categorization. In fact, complicated classification schemes were developed in areas of colonial settlement to try to keep control of social rankings.

In colonial Mexico, inevitable mixing and marriage occurred between Spanish colonists, Indigenous peoples, and African slaves. Because social and political opportunities were based on a person's heritage, it became important for the ruling class to create clearly named racialized categories for people of mixed descent so they could be controlled and limited in the New World. The *sistema de castas* (caste system) included *mestizos* (people with mixed Spanish and Indigenous heritage). The children of mestizos, when conceived in wedlock, became *españoles* (Spanish). When a Spaniard married a mestizo, a *castizo* child was produced. *Criollo* (Creole) was the term used for children born in America to two European parents. There were also *mulatos* (people of mixed descent with African heritage), and its subcategories that included free mulattos and mulatto slaves. In effect, these multiracial labels served to define people's class and the possibilities of their social mobility (Schultz and Lavenda 2009).

In North America today, blurring the boundaries of imposed ethnic labels can be an act of personal empowerment. Multiethnic identity can be celebrated using creative terms, such as the Native Hawaiian term *hapa* meaning half (half-Hawaiian, half-foreign) or a wider ethnic identity that is partially of Asian or Pacific Islander descent. A few of the other creative labels people use to describe their mixed ethnicity include Blasian (Black + Asian), Flipxican (Filipino/a/x* + Mexican), Japanic (Japanese and Hispanic), and LatiNegro/a/x (Black Latino/a/x). By celebrating the fusion of their ethnicities, young people break stereotypes and find solidarity in their multiethnic experiences.

*Note: I use the "x" as a third alternative to the binary "o/a" to include gender non-conforming individuals.