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Racial Socialization and Ability to Navigate Racism: The Experiences of
Multiracial Black Adults Raised in Cross-Racial Families

By

Cyndy R. Snyder

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge

Professor Na'ilah Nasir, Ph.D., Chair
Professor Bruce Fuller, Ph.D.
Professor Angela Harris, JD

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ABSTRACT

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University of California, Berkeley

Professor Na'ilah Nasir, Chair

Racial socialization is broadly defined as the transmission of information, norms, and values about race and ethnicity to children (Hughes et al, 2006). Often the responsibility of racial socialization is assumed to fall upon the family, and this “family” is assumed to be the same race as the child. However, for children of African descent who were raised by White or interracial parents or guardians, what I term “Cross Racially Raised,” the racial socialization process is complicated by racial and ethnic differences between parents and children (Samuels, 2009a; Perry, 1994; Raible, 1990). Using qualitative in-depth interviews with multiracial and transracially adopted adults of African descent, the purpose of this study was to investigate: (1) the ways in which Cross Racially Raised individuals experience racism in educational settings, (2) the ways in which Cross Racially Raised individuals perceive their parents/guardians’ efforts toward racial socialization, (3) the coping strategies Cross Racially Raised individuals employ to navigate racially hostile environments, and (4) the ways in which experiences of racism, coping strategies, or perceptions of parent/guardian approaches to racial socialization differ for multiracial individuals of African descent raised with a Black parent or guardian present in comparison to those raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian. Findings suggested that racial socialization processes varied by the racial composition of the family; that is, families in which there was at least one Black parent or guardian present tended to more openly address issues of race and racism in comparison to families in which there was no Black parent or guardian present. Studying racial socialization among those on the margins of race illuminated examples of agency in developing a sense of racial competency when parents did not talk about race or provide supports for navigating racism. Findings from this study hold theoretical implications for how racial socialization is conceptualized and practical implications for child welfare programs and policies.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the generations of the Cross Racially Raised men and women who grow up in a complicated world of racism. This project is my attempt to share your voices, your struggles, your accomplishments, and your realities.

This work is also dedicated to my dad, who was unable to complete this journey with me. You have been there every step of the way in spirit.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Encountering racism is a normal, everyday occurrence in the lives of people of color (Bell, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Schools are a particularly ripe context for encounters with racism. Racism manifests itself in schools at both individual and institutional levels (Ladson Billings, 1999; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). At the institutional level racism can be seen in the disparate quality of school facilities attended by Black students (Kozol, 1991), unequal access to resources (Education Trust, 2005), under-qualified teaching staff (Bakari, 2000; Education Trust, 2006), ability tracking (Oakes, 1985), Special Education rates (Coutinho & Oswald, 2000), unequal disciplinary practices (Noguera, 1995), and cultural discontinuities in the curriculum and classroom (Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 1991). At the individual level, personally-mediated racism can be seen in discrimination among and between students (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Tatum, 1997) and in teacher-student interactions, practices, and expectations (Ferguson, 2003; Weinstein, Gregory, & Strambler, 2004).

While the face of racism may have changed over the decades from a more overt form to a more complex, covert or “color-blind” form (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Pierce, 1974; Davidio, 2002) the effects of racism are very real, including negative mental health concerns such as low self esteem, depressive symptoms, psychological distress, hopelessness, poor academic performance, anxiety, risky behavior (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003; Steele, 1997; Pierce, 1995; Carroll, 1998). To combat the potentially negative effects of racism, scholars have argued that people of color need to be racially socialized – taught about race and racism - in order to develop a positive sense of self identity and strategies to cope with racism (García-Coll, 1996; Spencer, 1995; Stevenson, 1994; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990; Pierce, 1974).

Often the responsibility of racial socialization is assumed to fall upon the family, and this “family” is assumed to be the same race as the child. However, for children of African descent who were raised by White or interracial parents or guardians, what I term “Cross Racially Raised,” the racial socialization process is complicated by racial and ethnic differences between parents and children (Samuels, 2009a; Perry, 1994; Raible, 1990).

Who is Cross Racially Raised?

Developing a terminology to describe the experiences of those who were raised by parents of a different racial background, either by birth or adoption, is a difficult task. First, there are many circumstances that could have led to this situation – being adopted by White parents, being multiracial and raised by a White single birthmother, or being adopted by an interracial couple. Additionally, being of multiracial background blurs what is meant by same race and transracial adoptive families. Traditionally, transracial adoptive families are thought to occur when parents (two White or one single White) adopt a child of a different race (e.g.: Black), but what does it mean when this monoracial White couple adopts a multiracial “part-White” child? Is that still “transracial”? Similarly, who is the “same race” parent of an interracial couple who raised (by birth or adoption) a multiracial child? Or what about someone who was “passed” off by the adoption agency as White only to find out as an adult that they were also “part Black” after finding their birth parent(s)? These perplexing questions have led me to employ the term

“Cross Racially Raised” to describe the multidimensionality of such experiences and circumstances. I used the term Cross Racially Raised to describe individuals who grew up in contexts that “contradict monocentric race and kinship norms—that all family members and individuals embody a single racial-ethnic identity and cultural heritage” (Samuels, 2009a, p. 82).

It is often assumed that multiracial individuals raised in their birth families experience life differently than those adopted into White families (Brown, 1995). However, the stigma associated with being a person of color in a society where racism toward Black people and other minorities continues to reside cuts across both populations. The question is: how do their parents or guardians prepare them to deal with such racism?

Little is truly known about the role that parents play in the ability to navigate, or cope with, racism among people of African descent raised by in cross-racial families. Studies of multiracial Black/White young adults growing up in their birth families have identified several important factors in their ability to cope with racism and discrimination. The coping mechanisms individuals used to navigate issues of race and racism included finding comfort in similar physical appearance to other family members, receiving positive messages from family or friends, acceptance by Blacks in their social networks, and exposure to both cultures (Brown, 1995). However, multiracial Black children raised by White parents alone, as is the case with transracial adoptive families, may not have the benefit of these factors associated with the development of coping skills, particularly if they are being raised with few other Black people in their social networks or communities (Raible, 1990; NABSW, 1992; Lovett-Tisdale & Purnell, 1996; Taylor & Thornton, 1996). Thus, an approach that compares the racial socialization experiences of multiracial Black individuals raised in families with the presence of a Black parent or guardian and those raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian would help illuminate the similarities and differences in the ways these individuals learn to navigate racism and the role that parents and guardians play in this process.

Purpose of this Study

Using Critical Race Theory as a lens through which to view racial socialization processes and outcomes in cross-racial families, this qualitative study seeks to understand the significance of family racial socialization in helping multiracial Black children develop the ability to navigate in racially charged settings, in this case schools. The following research questions guided this study:

1. In what ways do Cross Racially Raised individuals experience racism in educational settings?
2. In what ways do Cross Racially Raised individuals perceive their parents/guardians' efforts toward racial socialization?
3. What coping strategies do Cross Racially Raised individuals employ to navigate racially hostile environments?
4. In what ways do experiences of racism, coping strategies, or perceptions of parent/guardian approaches to racial socialization differ for multiracial individuals of African descent raised with a Black parent or guardian present in comparison to those raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian?

Organization of the Dissertation

In the next chapter, I lay out the theoretical frames that guide this study and review the relevant literature on coping with racism, racial socialization, and Cross Racially Raised individuals. I begin by articulating how race and racism are defined in this study, paying particular attention to how these concepts play out for multiracial Black people. In the second part of Chapter Two, I present conceptual models about how racism shapes developmental processes and academic experiences of people of color, particularly individuals of African descent. The third part of Chapter Two reviews the current literature on racial socialization in Black families with a focus on the progression of the field. Part four of this chapter presents research on cross-racial families beginning with what is known about the racial socialization practices of parents in interracial families and the experiences of those who grow up in families with parents of two different racial backgrounds. I then review literature on transracial families and what is known about the experiences of Black individuals who grew up adopted by White parents. Finally, I discuss the limitations of current literature on racial socialization and cross-racial families and articulate the significance of the present study.

In Chapter Three, I present the research design that guided my inquiry. I begin with an overview of the two methodological approaches, qualitative and quantitative, and epistemological perspectives - positivist and interpretivist - that guide them. I then provide a rationale for the qualitative perspectives used in this study – the Extended Case Method and Critical Race Methods. Next, I discuss the significance of my positionality as a researcher and “insider” as a multiracial Black woman. From there I present the design of the qualitative interview study including data collection methods, demographics of the sample, data analysis procedures, and limitations of the study.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six present the findings of the study. Chapter Four focuses on interviewees' experiences with racism including: experiences with individual racism, experiences with institutional racism, experience with Black communities, racism in the family, and monoracism. Chapter Five discusses parent/guardian approaches to racial socialization by comparing families that were open to talking about race and racism to those who denied or downplayed the existence of race and racism. Chapter Six presents findings regarding the resources and strategies interviewees used for coping with and responding to racism including: internalizing strategies, externalizing strategies, education and advocacy, seeking Black culture and community, and chameleon identities.

In the final concluding chapter, I summarize the significant findings of this study. I then discuss theoretical implications for the fields of human development and racial socialization and practical implications for the fields of education and social welfare. Directions for future research are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

For multiracial people, race and racism are extremely complicated constructs. As multiracial individuals are one of the fastest growing groups in the US (US Census Bureau, 2001) it is important to understand how such individuals experience, make sense of, and learn to cope with racism, particularly given the many different family racial structures these individuals may grow up in which challenge monoracial assumptions of families. As noted in the previous chapter these circumstances, or family structures, can include but are not limited to being adopted by White parents, being multiracial and raised by a White single birthmother, or being adopted by an interracial couple.

In this chapter I present the theoretical frames that guide this study, provide historical and contemporary context on research and theory about multiracial individuals, and review the relevant literature on coping with racism, racial socialization, and cross-racial families. I begin by conceptualizing how race and racism are defined in this study, paying particular attention to how these concepts are manifested for multiracial Black people. In the second part of this chapter I present conceptual models about how racism shapes developmental processes and academic experiences of people of color, particularly individuals of African descent. Part three reviews the current literature on racial socialization in Black families with a focus on the progression of the field. Building on racial socialization concepts discussed in part three, part four of this chapter presents research on cross-racial families focusing on the most researched types of cross-racial families – interracial families and transracial adoptive families. Finally, I discuss the gaps in the current literature and research on racial socialization and cross-racial families and articulate the significance of the present study.

Part I: Race, Racism, and Multiraciality

One must not look far for the gross and obvious, the subtle, cumulative mini-assault is the substance of today's racism
(Pierce, 1974, p. 516).

Defining and conceptualizing race and racism are no easy tasks. Both are multifaceted, complicated, often contested constructs. Nonetheless, in this section I lay out the ways in which the constructs of race and racism have been conceptualized and define how they are being used in this study. I then relate these concepts to the history and experiences of multiracial people of African descent.

Race

Early notions of race focused on race as a biological phenomenon based on skin color and presumed differences in mental and physical abilities which held that race was objective and fixed; the “essence” of an individual (Omi & Winant, 1994). More contemporary, and generally accepted, theories of race assert that race is socially constructed. Omi and Winant (1994) highlighted the social construction of race and asserted that racial groups did not reflect discrete biological categories, but were social and political divisions based on superficial physical features, which were created for the purposes of economic and political gain.

Omi and Winant (1994) argue that race emerged as an organizing factor in society due to political actions they describe as racial projects. A racial project is defined as “an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (p. 56). Racial projects connect “what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning” (p. 56).

The project of *racial formation* is defined as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (p. 55). According to Winant (1998), “race has no fixed meaning, but is constructed and transformed sociohistorically through competing political projects, through the necessary and ineluctable link between the structural and cultural dimensions of race in the U.S.” (p. 760). Racial formation, then, is the process by which these socio-historical designations of race are created and manipulated. Omi and Winant (1994) identify two distinct levels upon which racial formation takes place: the micro-level and macro-level. The macro-level, involves the wide reaching influence of social structure and specific political projects launched both by and in opposition to the racial state. While the micro-level involves a persons individual interactions with other people; the ways other people perceive them racially and the individuals way of acting, comprehending, and explaining the world. The ways in which one’s race is perceived by others, which are often affected by macro-level processes, has a significant impact on the definition and perception of racial categories.

Race becomes real when it is used to ascribe people to certain categories to determine inclusion or exclusion. Often this categorization process occurs to maintain the status quo, maintaining privilege for those who are ascribed to categories believed to be superior to others. According to Omi and Winant (1994), race is “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social

conflicts and interest by referring to different types of human bodies” and that “the selection of these particular human features is always and necessarily a social and historical process” (p. 55) Historically, in the United States, Whites have been the privileged group believed to be superior to other racial groups (Tatum, 1997; Bonilla Silva, 2001; Bonilla Silva, 2003; Bell, 1993; Mills, 1999). Thus, race is a product of racism and various racial projects designed to protect the supremacy of Whites and Whiteness. Without such racial projects, the concept of race would not exist.

Initially the concept of “race” was something that was imposed on people, but was not necessarily personally claimed. While race is a superficial construct ascribed to certain groups of people, in more recent times such groups have also found cohesion, solidarity, and a means of political mobilization in the concept of “race.” Guinier and Torres (2002) outline a concept of political race in which people who have been “raced”, in this case as Black, begin to understand their fate as linked to others who are also “raced.” As Guinier and Torres point out:

They (people who are raced) see what happens to one happens to many others, if not to most others, who are similarly situated. Race becomes political in the sense of generating collective action only when it motivates people to connect their individuals experience to the experiences of others and then to act collectively in response to those experiences. (p. 17)

This concept of political race moves beyond individual racial identity to a group identity. Racial identity refers to the identification, personal meaning, and significance of racial group membership to an individual, all of which are often affected by experiences of racism. For example, Cross’ (1991) Nigrescence theory illustrates how Black people negotiate racism in their own definition of self, their relationships with other Black people, and relationships with people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Within the concept of political race, individuals can have many different types of individual racial identities, but also see that the racial labels others ascribe to them hold implications for their well-being and life opportunities, as it does for others who are similarly “raced.” The concept of political race extends the concept of individual racial identity to a “call to action” with the goal of eradicating power structures that perpetuate racial inequalities. This concept is particularly significant for multiracial individuals who can “choose” multiple identities at different times. For example, during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s many multiracial Black people embraced a Black identity and united with the Black community to fight for equal rights in the United States (Brown, 2001). Such efforts speak to the political power of the concepts of race and racial identity. The decision of multiracial Black individuals to choose to identity as Black, as opposed to multiracial, White, or some other race, during the civil rights movements is evidence of the power of political race.

While the concept of political race is important to the project of social change, the present study is situated at the individual level and focuses on the way in which individuals experience and make sense of race and racism. While not all individuals are particularly engaged with the project of social change, race and racism still impact their daily lives. Thus, it is important to examine the interpersonal and cultural aspects of race.

At the interpersonal level racial identities are both externally ascribed and internally claimed. This dynamic process of negotiation may change both across space and time. The dynamic nature of interpersonal racial identifications is particularly important to multiracial people because they may have racially ambiguous appearances, allowing them to “try on” or assert different racial identities, sometimes resulting in strangers ascribing various and perhaps conflicting racial identities to them (Twine, 1996; Knaus, 2006; Williams, 1996; Okizaki, 2000, Samuels, 2009a, Dalmage, 2000; Harris & Sim, 2002; Jackson, 2009; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993; Khanna 2010).

Although “race” initially developed as a justification for various kinds of political and economic exploitation and marginalization, it eventually was taken up by racially subordinated groups and claimed as an identity founded not in biological or moral inferiority, but in cultural difference. Thus race has partially become a form of “ethnicity” to the extent that, for example, American Black people consider themselves and are considered by others to have a “culture,” or a distinctive way of speaking, dressing, joking, talking, cooking, making music, and so on. The exposure to racialized culture, say via interaction with Black family members, may in turn influence the degree or extent to which multiracial people claim certain racialized identities.

Previous (and to an extent current) notions of race uphold monoracial assumptions about race that rely on separate, unmixed racial populations in which each group can only be viewed as constituting distinct populations. Membership in a specific racial category, specifically if that category was “Black”, has been used to the exclusion of membership in another category (e.g.: rule of hypo-descent, aka the “one drop rule”). To challenge biological, essentialist, and monoracial notions of race as fixed, discernable, and categorizable, I draw on Knaus’ (2006) definition of race as “an overly simplistic social construction used to classify people based on presumed cultural characteristics” (p. 53). I add presumed appearances and experiences to this definition, and remind readers that race is designed to maintain power structures (Omi and Winant, 1994).

The term “Black” is used in this study as an inclusive term, which encompasses individuals of African, Black, Afro Caribbean, and West Indian descent to name a few, to describe individuals who have been “raced” similarly and thus have a linked fate as described by Guinier and Torres (2002). The terms “monoracial” and “multiracial” used in this study are purely sociological and have no biological meaning. “Monoracial” is used in this study to include individuals who claim a single race status, and who have parents who claim a single racial status as Black, but whose ancestors may be of a different race or ethnic group. Conversely, the terms “multiracial” is used to refer to individuals who have one parent who claims one racial status and another parent who claims a different racial status. Specifically in this study, “multiracial Black” is used to denote individuals who have one parent who claims a single race status as Black, and one who does not.

Racism

Although it is generally accepted that race is a social construct, racism still holds significant implications for those who are ascribed to specific racial categories (Bonilla Silva, 2003). There are many lenses through which to view and explain racism. On the one hand, racism is thought to be an individual act predicated by the beliefs and values of an individual that

deem other individuals inferior. Classical psychological views of racism tended to view the phenomenon as a set of attitudes and behaviors resulting from psychopathology, mistaken beliefs, or miseducation. Modern psychological theories posit that racism stems from normal social and cognitive processes such as one's natural desire to categorize people and favor one's in-group (Davidio, 2001). For example Tajfel and Turner's (1985) *social identity theory* asserts that individuals seek out others like themselves to improve self esteem. Thus, overt racism would be in one's best interest when there is a need to maintain power dynamics or justify one's sense of self.

Other psychologically based theories posit that racism is an unconscious process by which individuals express their prejudices. In examining what they call *aversive racism*, Davidio and colleagues (2002) found that many liberal-minded Whites harbored unconscious or preconscious negative racial feelings and attitudes toward Blacks and other people of color. In comparison to the explicit discriminatory attitudes and feelings exhibited by overt racists, feeling expressed by aversive racists tended to be less explicit in nature, such as feeling anxious or uneasy when interacting with people of color (Dovidio et al., 2002). Most importantly, the authors note that although aversive racists may not consciously acknowledge or endorse negative attitudes towards people of color, their implicit prejudices influenced their behavior towards them.

On the other hand, sociopolitical and sociohistorical perspectives focus on the ways in which racism has shaped social structures and institutions and posit that racism serves to maintain social and economic hierarchy (Mills, 1999). These theories of race focus on White supremacy as the normative organizing ideology of racial discourse, and also treat White supremacy as an accurate description of political and economic life. For example, Critical Race Theorists, such as Bell (1993), assert that race and racism are central, endemic, and a fundamental part of defining and explaining how US society functions. Race and racism preserve the economic, political, and cultural status quo, which privileges Whites and White identity at the expense of racial minorities. The aim of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is to show how race and racism operate, and how White supremacy is preserved even in a society that now praises racial equality. As such, CRT focuses on three primary strategies to expose and analyze racism: (1) *a commitment to articulating and valuing the voices of people of color*, (2) *skepticism about liberal narratives and color-blind agendas*, and (3) *the recognition that racial hierarchy stems from relations of power, giving its beneficiaries powerful incentives to maintain the power structures*. CRT scholars use rhetorical devices and narrative to illustrate the everyday manifestations of racial inequalities and their connection to broader structural systems, linking individual experiences with societal processes of racialization, and exposing the structural, ideological, and material expressions of racism in the course of everyday life.

Drawing upon the CRT framework, Bonilla Silva (2003) discussed racism as a set of institutions through which societies allocate material and social rewards differentially by race, which in turn creates a racial structure that reinforces White privilege. This racial structure - the set of social relations, cultural practices, and assumptions based on physical distinctions that govern the social construction of racial groups - is in turn expressed through racial ideologies. One such ideology is "color-blind racism", which Bonilla Silva (2003) defines as the way in which Whites have developed explanations and justifications for contemporary racial inequalities. Color-blind racism, Bonilla Silva (2003) contends, is a post-civil rights racial ideology, which explains contemporary racial inequality as a form of nonracial dynamics. With a

color-blind racial ideology, Whites are able to rationalize minorities' status as a product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and cultural limitations. Such rationalizations serve to maintain the social structures that privilege Whiteness.

It is important to note that psychological and sociological perspectives on racism are not in opposition to each other, but rather complement each other. For example, Pierce (1974) notes that racial "microaggressions" - subtle, covert acts of interpersonal racism - exist because the belief in people of color, specifically Blacks, as inferior and Whites as superior has been ingrained in our society and norms and is expressed by individuals. This theory shows the interconnected role of individual and institutional aspects of racism. What is important, as Pierce points out, is that such acts accumulate and take a toll on a person of color's psyche.

In this study, I attempt to integrate both the psychosocial and sociological perspectives and posit that racism is characterized by both individual behavior and by structural relationships, policies, ideologies and institutional practices that privilege Whiteness and differentially allocate resources based on an individual's presumed racial affiliation in order to maintain racial hegemony¹. The absence or presence of one form of racism does not necessitate the absence or presence of the other. For example, Essed (1990) argued that the daily experiences with racism faced by Black people can include both overt acts that are experienced by individuals, as well as covert and elusive acts that may not be apparent to individuals. Thus, Essed concluded that racism does not have to be perceived to exist. Moreover, the relationship between the structural and institutional aspects and individual behavior is mutually constitutive – the structural components influence individual ideology and behavior, which in turn influence structures and so on.

Black Multiraciality

For multiracial people of African descent, notions of race are rooted in histories of slavery, segregation, and hypo-descent. Interracial relations between Blacks and Whites in the US are thought to have occurred between African slaves and the European indentured servants who worked beside them in the 17th and 18th centuries in Virginia and Maryland (Williamson 1980). In an effort to preserve the ideology of White racial purity, both states passed statutes in the 1660s prohibiting interracial marriage (Higginbotham & Kopytoff, 1989). Although many states followed suit by prohibiting such relationships, these relationships persisted, both through consent and coercion or force² (Daniel, 1996).

The offspring of such relationships who were both Black and White posed treats to the racial hierarchy and practice of slavery. In order to keep the color line clear and restrict access to White kinship, a 1662 Virginia statute legislated that slavery as a status follow the condition of

¹ Delgado and Stefancic (2001) define hegemony as "domination by the ruling class, and unconscious acceptance of the state of affairs" (p. 147)

² It is important to note that during the Southern patriarchal system of slavery, Black female slaves were often perceived as acceptable sexual outlets and raped by White slave owners. (Daniel 1996; Khanna, 2010).

the mother (Higginbotham & Kopytoff, 1989; Khanna, 2010; Okizaki, 2000; Zack, 1993). Because many mixed race Black/White children were often a result of White slave masters' sexual relations (either consensual or coercive) with their Black female slaves, multiracial Black/White individuals would be classified as Black (Daniel, 1996). This practice gave way to the principle of hypo-descent (aka the "one drop rule") which was based on the premise that any "drop" of Black blood contaminated pure White blood and therefore resulted in being identified or labeled as Black (Brown, 2001; Graves, Jr., 2004). The enforcement of the principle of hypo-descent provided an economic asset to White slave owners in that their mixed race children remained slaves to whom they did not have to provide parental support but rather could use as additional labor. Additionally, because slavery was based upon the assumption of White superiority, the one-drop rule helped justify the enslavement of a growing number of slaves with light, sometimes White, skin and Caucasian features (Zack 1993; Okizaki, 2000; Khanna 2010). While the "one drop rule" was not legislated in all states, many states followed it by custom rather than law.

Subsequent classification theories emerged during the 1800s, placing Black/White multiracial individuals superior to monoracial Blacks but inferior to Whites in the racial hierarchy. Such theories exacerbated a rift between multiracial Black people and the larger Black community. In addition to the "divide and conquer" effects of this ideology, internalized racism and the ability of some light-skinned multiracial people to "pass" as White led to "colorism"- a form of prejudice based on skin color - within the Black community. One effect of colorism, particularly in the wake of the promotion of Black culture and political theories of Black separatism in the 1960s, has been a suspicion of multiracial children within the Black community, and the popular belief that multiracial people are culturally "too White" or "not Black enough" (Brown, 2001).

While current research supports that multiracial individuals identify in a myriad of ways (e.g.: mixed, Black, White, Black and White, other, human, raceless, etc.) and have different reasons for choosing such identities, at times external factors – friends, families, acquaintances, and strangers - push multiracial individuals to choose one race over the other (Dalmage, 2000; Samuels, 2009a; Harris & Sim, 2002; Jackson, 2009; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993), particularly if the multiracial person has physical features that are more characteristic of a certain racial group (Waters, 1996). Specifically, in her study that explored the role of the one-drop rule and societal perspectives on racial identity, Khanna (2010) found that multiracial respondents frequently explained their Black identities as due, in part, to how they believed they were viewed by others in society. She notes that "Black/White biracial people may 'publicly' identify as biracial or multiracial yet societal ascriptions, via reflected appraisals and the one-drop rule, continue to tell them that they are Black, hence shaping 'internalized' Black identities" (p. 116). Additionally, Harris and Sim (2002) found that Black/White multiracial youth were more likely than any other multiracial group to identify as Black and attributed this trend to "the enduring power of the one-drop rule" (p. 621).

Furthermore, efforts still continue in the United States to monoracially classify multiracial individuals. According to re-tabulation procedures governing the collections of racial classification data, a multiracial person will always be counted in the minority group with the largest population (US Census Bureau, 2001). According to Census procedures, if an individual checks Black and White they are re-tabulated as Black; a person will supposedly never be

classified as White. The issue of how multiracial individuals should racially identify – monoracial vs. multiracial - is still highly debated in society. Although Census 2010 data will not be available until late 2011, a quick Google search to find preliminary statistics using the terms “multiracial Black census 2010” yielded numerous hits related to President Obama’s decision to check “Black” on the census. Articles and blog-postings decrying and applauding his decision were plentiful, reinforcing the politics of race and furthering the debate about appropriate ways for multiracial individuals to identify.

One critique of Obama’s choice came from a mother of biracial children who wrote an op-ed piece in the Washington Post entitled “Why Obama should not have checked Black on his census form”; Elizabeth Chang wrote, “Despite being raised by a White mother and White grandparents, despite have spent most of his childhood in the rainbow state of Hawaii, despite clearly being comfortable in almost any type of crowd (though I suppose Tea Partiers might give him pause), the president apparently considers himself only Black.”³

In contrast, comments applauding the idea that Obama appropriately checked Black include, “Put a hoodie on him and have him walk down an alley, and see how biracial he is then.”⁴ Likewise, in response to Chang’s previously mentioned op-ed piece, one individual commented:

People have treated Obama as if he were Black since his infancy. That's the legacy of the one-drop rule. Neither Obama, nor his mother or White grandparents chose to have others treat Obama as if he were Black. It has much more to do with history than a personal decision by Obama. If Obama chose to label himself biracial that would not stop tea-partiers from portraying him as a witch doctor with distorted Black features. ...don't take Obama and people like him to task for the way others treat them.”⁵

Additionally, a poll by the Pew Research Center (2010a) found 53% of White people said Obama is “mixed race” and 24% said he is Black. In contrast, 55% of Black people said Obama is Black and 34% said he is mixed.

Compounding efforts to confine appropriate ways in which multiracial people can racially identify is the reality that multiracial individuals can often be racially ambiguous and not easily categorized as one race or another. Multiracial people are often confronted with the “What are you?” question in a number of contexts (Knaus, 2006; Williams, 1996; Okizaki, 2000) or exoticized for their ambiguous, racial melting pot, features (Senna, 1998; Root, 2001; Thornton,

³ Chang, E. “Why Obama should not have checked Black on his census form” Washington Post. April 29th, 2010: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/28/AR2010042804156.html>

⁴ Leila McDowell, vice president of communications for the NAACP as quoted in MSNBC op-ed entitled “Black or biracial? Census forces some to choose: Some Blacks with one White parent are deciding to simply ‘stay Black’” by Jesse Washington April 19, 2010: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36646538/ns/us_news-census_2010/

⁵ Comment by reader on Washington Post regarding Chang op-ed

1996; Knaus, 2006). An important, often cited experience in the literature about multiracial individuals is the sense of feeling excluded from multiple racial or ethnic communities (Knaus, 2006; Samuels, 2009a). For example, multiracial individuals with both Black and White racial backgrounds often note feeling like they are “not Black enough” in predominantly Black settings, but at the same time are “too Black” to be accepted by the White community. Additionally, multiracial individuals often experience racism within the extended family, particularly if one side of the family does not accept the multiracial relationship or child that was a product of such unions (Samuels, 2009a).

While multiracial people experience race and racism in ways that are similar to monoracial individuals, it is clear that there are situations that are unique to the multiracial experience. It is important to note that just as monoracially identified people are not a homogenous group, neither are multiracial individuals. Experiences differ based on the combination of one’s racial and ethnic background (e.g. the White/Asian experience is different from the Black/White experience which is different from the Black/Asian experience), phenotype, family support, environment, and social networks, to name a few. However, as “obvious ethnics⁶” multiracial individuals, particularly those of African descent, experience racism at both the individual and institutional levels which has the potential to impact their well-being and life opportunities just as it does other people of color (Reed, 2008).

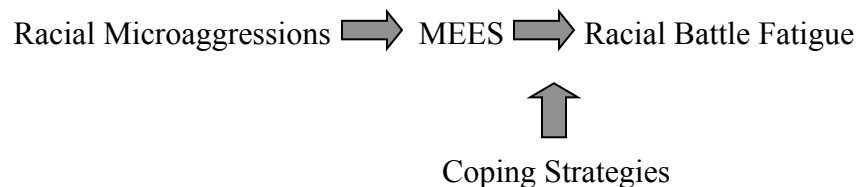
⁶ This term is borrowed from comedian W. Kamau Bell’s show *The W. Kamau Bell Curve – Ending Racism in About an Hour*.

Part II: Developmental Implications of Racism for People of African Descent

In and of itself a [racial] microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence. (Pierce, 1995, p. 281)

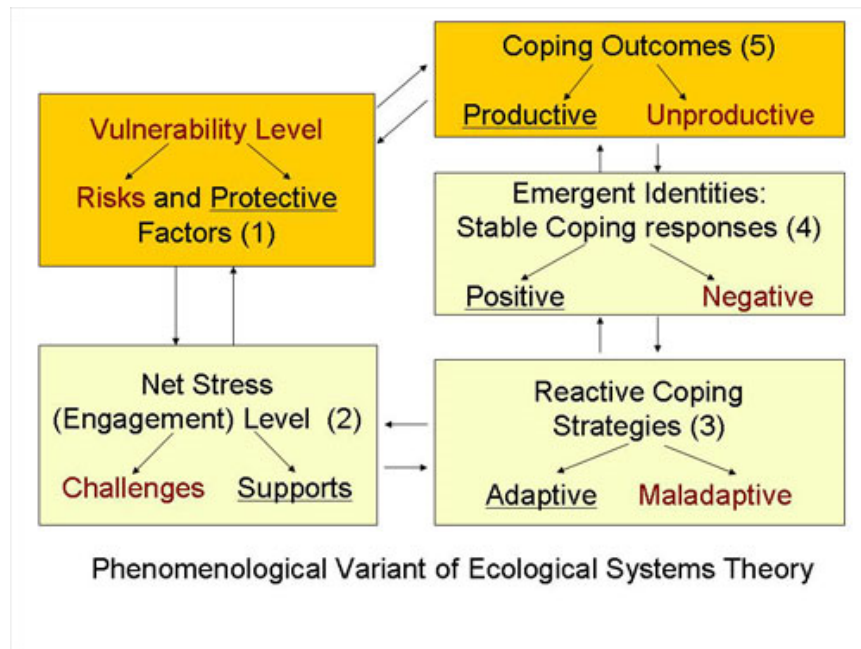
Given that racism is a commonplace occurrence for people who have been “raced” Black, it is important to understand the psychological toll that racism takes on the everyday lives of people of color; tolls that cut across gender and class divisions (Feagin & Sikes, 2000). As Pierce (1974) notes, the cumulative effects of racial microaggressions result in an environmental stress, a concept that Carroll (1998) terms *Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress* (MEES). The stress of living in such an environment can cause psychological distress for the individual. Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) employ the term *Racial Battle Fatigue* to describe, “the manifestation of the physiological, psychological, and emotional strain imposed upon racially marginalized, oppressed, and stigmatized groups” (p. 552). Racial battle fatigue can manifest itself as frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear. The key moderating factor in this process is the adaptive or maladaptive coping mechanisms one employs (Carter, 2007; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Smith et al, 2007; Spencer, 1995). Adaptive strategies, such as seeking social supports, are suggested to mitigate the symptoms of Racial Battle Fatigue and lead to more positive outcomes (self efficacy, positive identity), while maladaptive coping methods, such as withdrawal or internalizing negative stereotypes, have been suggested to result in negative outcomes such as heightened symptoms of Racial Battle Fatigue (anger, depression, hopelessness). The following model illustrates this process:

Figure 1. Coping Strategies as a Moderator between Racism & Racial Battle Fatigue



The *Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory* (PVEST, Spencer, 1995) further illustrates this theory and offers an identity focused, contextually sensitive theory for human development which illustrates how racism impacts people of colors’ experiences, coping strategies, identity formation, and developmental outcomes (Spencer et al, 1997). The PVEST consists of five components: (1) Net Vulnerability Level, (2) Net Stress Engagement Level, (3) Reactive Coping Strategies, (4) Emergent Identities, and (5) Life Stage Outcomes.

Figure 2. Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory



The theory underlying PVEST is that (1) *Net Vulnerability Level*, which consists of the contexts and characteristics that potentially pose challenges during an individual's development (race, class, gender) influences one's (2) *Net Stress Engagement Level*, which refers to the actual experience of situations that challenge one's well-being such as racism and discrimination offset by the social supports, or actual protective factors, which help individuals navigate such experiences. In response to stressors and in conjunction with supports, individuals employ (3) *Reactive Coping Mechanisms* to deal with racism, which can be adaptive or maladaptive. As a result of the coping mechanisms one employs, (4) *Emergent Identities* are formed that define how individuals view themselves within and between their various contexts of development which is affected by experiences of racism in previous stages. Finally, such identities shape one's (5) *Life Stage Outcomes* with more positive identities being likely to lead to more productive outcomes including higher self esteem, positive relationships, and good health while negative identities are hypothesized to lead to unproductive outcomes such as poor health, destructive behavior, and antisocial tendencies. These experiences and coping mechanisms recycle throughout one's lifespan development, allowing individuals to establish more expansive coping strategies and redefine their identities as they encounter new situations, contexts, and stressors. In this current study, family racial composition is included as part of the *Net Vulnerability* as it is hypothesized that family racial composition potentially adds to or detracts from one's vulnerability. Additionally, parental approaches to handling racially charged incidents are included in *Net Stress Engagement*, which may also be linked to family racial composition.

Research on the psycho-education implications of racism on students is helpful in providing evidence for the theory of PVEST. For example, Sanders' (1997) interview study of academic achievement among Black eighth graders at an urban school illustrated students' use of adaptive coping strategies to navigate racism. Students in her study indicated one of the motivating factors in their achievement was their desire to overcome the negative stereotypes

and future discrimination based on race (coping and identity). Conversely, Steele's (1997) work on *stereotype threat* illustrates how students employ maladaptive coping strategies and internalize stereotypes, which lead to poor academic performance outcomes. Steele concluded that stereotype threat – the fear of conforming to a negative stereotype about one's group - diminished one's academic performance, particularly for high achieving students. Similarly, Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) work on oppositional culture is another example of maladaptive coping strategies. The authors suggested that structural discrimination has led Black students to disengage from school and develop an oppositional identity, or coping response, where academic achievement is devalued to protect a sense of pride and identity.

The PVEST is a particularly useful model to understand the developmental process and implications of racism for multiracial Black people. For the past 20 years scholars have focused on understanding how multiracial individuals identify racially and what factors contribute to this developmental process (Spickard, 1989; Poston, 1990; Kich, 1992; Root, 1992, 1996; Zack, 1993; Funderburg, 1994; Katz, 1996; Brown 2001; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Renn, 2003; Jackson, 2009), yet few have explored how they experience racism or the social supports they have to cope with such experiences (Buckley & Carter, 2004). Likewise, little is known about the role that families play in teaching multiracial people how to cope with racism.

Early theories of development focusing on multiracial Black individuals posited that multiracial Black/White individuals were confused, disturbed, and even dangerous because of their mixed racial backgrounds (Brown, 2001; Stonequist, 1937; Wilson, 1987; Johnson & Nagoshi, 1986). In turn stereotypes portraying multiracial individuals as physiologically and psychologically inferior “mulattos” began to arise (Brown, 2001). Such theories emphasized the deficits of being multiracial and led to a research agenda that focused on the social and emotional problems of multiracial individuals. There have been mixed findings on the psychological development processes and outcomes of multiracial individuals. Some studies have challenged traditional notions that multiracial individuals suffer severe psychological distress by concluding that children of interracial marriages were not much different in their psychological development than children of same race marriages (Johnson & Nagoshi, 1986) and that the majority of multiracial individuals had a positive self-concept and felt comfortable with their multiracial identity (Gibbs & Hines, 1992). Conversely, other studies have found that multiracial Black adolescents had lower self-esteem than monoracial Black adolescents (Bracey, Bamaca, & Umana-Taylor, 2004). However, it is important to note that a major limitation in many of the studies designed to understand racial identity and developmental process of multiracial individuals is that many employed monoracially framed theories of development which assumed there is one “right” way for individuals to racially identify and many measures of development did not take into consideration the familial context of development. Additionally, previous studies have not focused on experiences of racism and racial socialization as factors in shaping developmental outcomes.

More recent theories and research approaches to understanding development for multiracial individuals have begun to surface which portray a more complex picture of multiracial individuals that challenge the “tragic mulatto” paradigm. For example, Wijeyesinghe (2001) developed the *Factor Model of Multiracial Identity* (FMMI), which challenges the notion that there is one right or appropriate racial identity choice for multiracial people. This identity model focuses on variables that influence identity such as physical appearance, family,

community, and social institutions and points out that people can choose different identities at different times. In addition to providing a more comprehensive theory of identity development for multiracial people, scholars have challenged notions of multiracial people as troubled and suggested that multiracial individuals may actually benefit socially and emotionally by developing a “bicultural” competence which allows them to navigate through multiple environments (LaFramboise, Hardin, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Trueba, 2002; Wardle 1999, 2001; Jackson, 2009). These modern theories of identity development for multiracial individuals, along with the PVEST, which allows for a dynamic and changing view of identity and emphasizes racism and social supports as factors that influence it, have the potential to provide a more complex understanding of developmental outcomes for multiracial individuals, both those who were raised with a parent or guardian of color present and those without.

Part III: Racial Socialization as a Tool for the Survival of Racism

Racial socialization is necessary to ameliorate the impact of racism and for Black children to develop a positive self-image. (Stevenson, 1994, p. 190)

Given that the United States is a society in which race and racism are still a reality, people of color have developed multiple strategies to survive and persist in spite of this racially hostile environment. Racial socialization practices that teach about the reality of racism and prepare people to navigate in a racially charged world are one means people of color have employed to combat the negative effects of racism. Scholars have noted that family is one of the most important, and often initial, social contexts to play a formative role in how Black individuals make sense of the significance and meaning of race (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hughes, Johnson, Smith, Rodriguez, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006). The following review of the literature examines how scholars have defined racial socialization, what approaches parents take to socialize their children to race, and the outcomes of different racial socialization approaches.

Defining Racial Socialization

The term socialization refers to the process of acquiring cultural norms, customs and ideologies, which provide the individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating in a society (Macobby, 1992). Early socialization theories approached the study of socialization in families through a deracialized lens. This is partially due to the fact that most studies of socialization were conducted with White families, which yielded theoretical frames that did not account for the socialization and developmental process that occurred in non-White families (Boykin & Toms, 1985). Additionally, as García Coll (1996) and Spencer (1995) point out, socialization research has not traditionally included factors such as racism and discrimination, which they argue have the potential to impact the development of individuals of color.

Scholars have posited that families have a unique role in helping their children develop means of coping with and navigating a society where race still matters (Peters, 1985; Boykin & Toms, 1985; Spencer, 1995; García Coll, 1996; Pierce, 1974). Thus, the field of racial socialization developed out of the need to understand how parents socialized Black children to perceive themselves in a society in which their race is devalued (Peters, 1985; Hughes et al, 2006). Racial socialization, then, has been broadly defined as adults' transmission of information, norms, and values about race and ethnicity to children (Hughes et al, 2006).

The theory of racial socialization is two-fold. First, racial socialization is rooted in the assumption that teaching and preparing the next generation how to deal with racism and discrimination will help them develop a positive sense of identity and persist in a society fraught with racism, both subtle and overt. Second, racial socialization is also a means of giving people tools to combat racism (Pierce, 1970; Frankenberg, 1993). For example, Pierce (1974) discussed the importance of teaching individuals to recognize and address racial microaggressions in order to help bring an end to racism. This underlying assumptions of the importance of racial socialization in helping bring an end to racism by giving people the tools to identify and call out incidents is most evident when he stated, "It is my fondest hope that the day is not far remote

when every Black child will recognize and defend promptly and adequately against every offensive micro-aggression” (1970, p. 280).

Studies support the theory that the majority of Black parents exhibit practices that are intended to socialize their children to race (Peters, 2002; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thornton et al, 1990; Bowman & Howard, 1985). Parents’ racial socialization practices are most often intended to prepare youths for encounters with racial bias, to enable youths to maintain positive self-beliefs despite prejudice, and to teach youths to negotiate diverse cultural contexts (Hughes et al, 2006).

Measuring Racial Socialization

There has been much debate in the literature about the measurement of racial socialization. Contention has focused on how to measure racial socialization (quantitative or qualitative), from which perspective to measure it (parent vs. child), and what to focus on in the measurement of racial socialization (attitudes, behaviors, beliefs). The different foci of research agendas coupled with great variation in means of collecting data, and the different epistemological perspectives that underlie data collection, have made it difficult to compare findings to aid in the development of a thorough conceptual and theoretical basis for understanding racial socialization.

Initial studies of racial socialization focused on the analysis of qualitative, open-ended survey questions (Thornton et al, 1990; Hughes & Chen 1997; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Sanders Thompson, 1994), much of which was drawn from the National Survey of Black Americans. However, more recent studies have focused on the use of quantitative scales to measure socialization. The most common measures include the Scale of Racial Socialization (SORS, Stevenson, 1994b), the Racial Socialization Measure (Hughes & Chen, 1997), the Parent Experiences of Racial Socialization (PERS, Stevenson, 1999), the Teenager Experiences of Racial Socialization (TERS, Stevenson, 2002), and the Comprehensive Scale of Racial Socialization (CRSI, Lesane-Brown, Brown, Caldwell, & Sellers, 2005). Few studies have used observational measures of racial socialization (Caughy et al, 2002).

Quantitative measures have assessed (1) parent or child attitudes and values (Stevenson, 1994b, 1995), (2) parents’ behaviors and practices (Hughes & Chen, 1997), (3) adolescents’ or adults recall of racial socialization experiences (Lesane-Brown et al, 2005; Sanders Thompson, 1994), (4) correlations between parents’ and children’s ethnic-racial attitudes or practices (Smith, Atkins, & Connell, 2003), and (5) the presence of race-related artifacts in the home (Caught, Randolph, & O’Campo, 2002).

Qualitative, open-ended questions have assessed the salience of a particular racial socialization theme (e.g.: what first comes to mind when reflecting on experiences or child-rearing goals), while binary questions have assessed the prevalence of specified dimensions of racial socialization (e.g.: whether a specific approach was used), and Likert type survey measures have assessed the strength of racial socialization values or the frequency of racial socialization practices (Hughes et al, 2006). Observational methods have allowed researchers to assess the many subtle but relevant messages that are embedded in families’ cultural practices, such as artifacts in the home and daily routines (Caughy, et al 2002). Researchers have called for a

greater range of assessment tools such as qualitative, observational, longitudinal, and experimental designs to further articulate the intricacies and affects of racial socialization practices (Hughes et al, 2006; McHale, 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006).

Components of Racial Socialization

Initial writings on racial socialization focused on theorizing about the necessity and nature of racial socialization in Black families. For example, the seminal work by Boykin and Toms (1985) posited that Black children should be socialized with a “triple consciousness” which they termed the *triple quandary*. This triple quandary consisted of (1) *mainstream socialization* in which children are socialized to White middle class norms, (2) *minority socialization* which individuals are taught about racism and strategies to help cope with or navigate it, and (3) *cultural socialization* which children are taught about Black cultural and social traditions and motifs.

Progressing from these theoretical beginnings, scholars began to investigate the techniques parents used to socialize their children. For example, Thornton et al (1985) employed Boykin and Toms (1985) framework to investigate the socialization messages of parents and found that parents’ messages mirrored the triple quandary framework. As the field progressed, some disjoint began to occur in the literature regarding terminology used to describe parents’ approaches. Generally, parents’ racial socialization messages can be classified into five major themes: (a) *cultural socialization*, or the promotion of cultural knowledge and pride (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor & Davis, 2002); (b) *preparation for bias* or racism awareness training, including emphasis on discrimination and coping strategies (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Stevenson, 1994b; Caughy et al, 2002; Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Marshall, 1995; McHale et al, 2006); (c) the *promotion of mistrust* in interracial interactions (Caughy et al, 2002; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Thomas & Speight, 1999); (d) the *promotion of mainstream or egalitarian characteristics*, including messages about hard work, individual self-worth, and fitting into the dominant culture (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Stevenson et al., 2002; Thornton et al, 1990); and (e) *silence*, including unwillingness to talk about race and race related issues (Marshall, 1995; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Bowman & Howard, 1985). The messages most commonly noted by Black parents include cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and egalitarianism (Hughes et al., 2006).

Factors that Influence Parental Racial Socialization Practices

Factors such as a child’s age or gender and the parent’s socio-economic status (SES), race, racial identity, or experiences of discrimination may all influence what messages and strategies parents choose to communicate to their children (Hughes et al., 2006). Scholars have found that as children age, parents’ racial socialization messages may change to meet children’s growing cognitive capabilities and their experiences with discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Boys are more likely to receive messages about racial barriers (preparation for bias) while girls are more likely to receive messages about racial pride (cultural socialization). Additionally, parents from higher economic statuses are more likely to report racial socialization than those from lower economic statuses (Hughes et al., 2006).

Studies have also found that parents who experience discrimination are more likely to anticipate that their children will also experience racism and to provide their children with tools for coping with it (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Umana-Taylor & Fine, 2004). Likewise, children's previous experiences of discrimination also prompt parents to discuss discrimination more openly (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Researchers have also found that parents with more positive racial identity attitudes are more likely to view racial socialization as an important component to raising children (Thomas & Speight, 1999).

Parent race may also play a role in whether and how parents approach issues of race and discrimination with their children. Although there is little research focusing on how White parents socialize children to race, a few studies have found that White parents were less comfortable talking with children explicitly about race and racial discrimination. Bronson and Merryman (2009) found that non-White parents were nearly three times more likely to discuss race than White parents, and 75% of White parents reported *never* or *almost never* talking about race with their White children. Other studies have concluded that when White parents did talk about race, they are more likely to focus on egalitarian messages that emphasize that "everyone is equal", while parents of color were more likely to focus on preparing children of color for bias (Vittrup, 2007; Hamm, 2001; Katz & Kofkin, 1997).

Outcomes of Racial Socialization

Current research on racial socialization has focused on understanding the outcomes of racial socialization approaches. Racial socialization has been found to influence one's racial identity (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Marshall, 1995; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, 1995), self-esteem (Constantine and Blackmon, 2002), academic performance (Bowman & Howard, 1985), psychosocial functioning such as managing anger and depression (Stevenson et al, 1997) and ability to cope with racism (Brown, 2008; Edwards & Polite 1992; Scott, 2003).

The goal of many racial socialization practices is to promote cultural pride and knowledge; therefore, the most commonly investigated outcome of racial socialization is youths' ethnic identity attitudes (Hughes et al., 2006). For example, cultural socialization practices have been associated with more advanced stages of identity development and more positive racial group attitudes (e. g.: identifying more closely with Black people, history, and culture) among Black adolescents and young adults (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Stevenson, 1995). Messages intended to prepare individuals for bias have also been positively associated with more advanced stages of racial identity development (Stevenson, 1995).

Other studies have also provided evidence that different racial socialization messages were related to different outcomes. Bowman and Howard (1985) found that Black adolescents who received positive messages about their racial identity (cultural socialization) were more academically prepared in comparison to Black adolescents who did not receive such positive messages. Cultural socialization processes have also been found to be related to one's ability to navigate in a racially hostile society (Brown, 2008; Edwards & Polite 1992; Scott, 2003). For example, Edwards and Polite (1992) found that Black men and women identified a positive sense of racial identity as a primary reason for their survival of racism.

Racial socialization has been found to impact on one's internalizing behaviors such as depression and anxiety, and externalizing symptoms such as anger and physical fighting. Specifically, cultural socialization is found to be associated with positive outcomes, including more positive group attitudes and less behavior problems (Caughy et al., 2002; Demo & Hughes, 1990), but attitudes of racial mistrust have been found to predict deviant behavior and less positive outcomes (Biafora, Warheit, Zimmerman, & Gil, 1993; McKown & Strambler, 2009).

There have been mixed results regarding the effects of preparation for bias messages on youth outcomes because such messages are often confounded by messages of mistrust (Hughes et al, 2006). Interestingly, most studies parcel out types of racial socialization which conflicts with the initial theory of triple quandary in which Boykin and Toms (1985) stress the importance of socialization people to all three frames.

Part IV: Racial Socialization in Cross-Racial Families

As the previous section pointed out, the majority of Black parents engage in practices that intended to racially socialize their Black children. The next sections discuss what is known about racial socialization process in the most common types of cross-racial families – interracial and transracial adoptive families.

Interracial Families

Perhaps the most well-known historically significant event regarding interracial families was the *Loving vs. the State of Virginia* in 1967 court decision (*Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1, 1967), which made anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional. This groundbreaking case gave way to a rise in interracial relationships that have dramatically increased the population of multiracial children over the past 30 years (Spickard, 1989; Root, 1996; Jackson, 2009). According to the 2000 census, the first to allow individuals to report more than one race on federal forms, approximately 12% (~785,000) of the nearly 7 million individuals who selected two or more races selected Black and White (US Census Bureau, 2001). Although the most current Census 2010 data are not yet available, this number is expected to grow.

While the number of interracial couples is increasing and resulting in even larger numbers of multiracial individuals (Pew Research Center, 2010b), racism is still a very real part of life for people who are “raced” as people of color or minorities. Multiracial people are not exempt from incidents or racism, discrimination, and prejudice and may experience such incidents in unique ways. Only a few studies have documented the ways and extent to which parents of multiracial individuals prepare them for the inevitable racialized experiences that await them.

One particular study by Rollins (2009) which sought to understand the racial socialization efforts of mothers of multiracial youth analyzed a subsample of the longitudinal Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS; Eccles, 1997) to explore the racial socialization messages used by mothers of 104 multiracial adolescents and evaluated the relative impact of these messages on the racial identity of multiracial adolescents. This study found that mothers engaged in a range of racial socialization efforts, including cultural, minority (including preparation for bias), mainstream, egalitarian, and silence. Racial socialization varied by maternal race as Black mothers were most likely to use mainstream socialization messages while White and other mothers of other minority groups were more likely to provide no direct racial socialization. In general, the study concluded that Black mothers provided more socialization than their White and other minority counterparts (Rollins, 2009). The findings of this study mirror other studies of monoracial White families that found White parents were less comfortable talking with White children explicitly about race and racial discrimination and tended to employ egalitarian socialization strategies (Bronson & Merryman, 2009; Vittrup, 2007, Hamm, 2001; Katz & Kofkin, 1997).

In terms of outcomes of parent racial socialization efforts, studies of multiracial Black individuals raised in interracial homes have most often focused on the connection of racial socialization to identity development. For example, Rollins’ (2009) study found that multiracial adolescents whose mothers emphasized mainstream and egalitarian (color-blind) messages were

less inclined to report that race was a salient part of their life. She also found that multiracial adolescents with White mothers, who were more likely to employ egalitarian and color-blind approaches to socializing their children to race, reported lower racial identity exploration and less identification with Black culture.

While many multiracial individuals are raised by at least one of their biological parents, it is important to point out that some end up in the child welfare system. A primary reason multiracial Black children end up in the child welfare system is intrafamilial racism; White mothers felt pressure from family members to surrender their children because of their Black heritage (Hess, 1993; Miranda, 2002; Patton 2000). Ironically, many of these children end up being adopted by White families. The next section briefly discusses the history of transracial families and what is known about racial socialization practices in such families.

Transracial Adoptive Families

Transracial adoption is generally defined as occurring when a child's race or ethnicity is different than that of the adoptive parents', or parent in the case of single parents. There have been significant debates and changes in the policies that govern transracial adoption in the past 40 years. The most contentious debates around transracial adoption center on the adoption of Black children by White families. While the debate is framed as concerned with the best interests of the children, it is also an ideological debate about color-conscious versus color-blind approaches to policy. Race-conscious perspectives on transracial adoption center the significance of race and question the ability of White parents to help Black children develop a positive sense of racial identity and the skills necessary to cope with prejudice and discrimination (Perry, 1994; Raible, 1990; NABSW, 1992; Lovett-Tisdale & Purnell, 1996; Taylor & Thornton, 1996). On the other hand, color-blind approaches argue that race should not play a role in placement decisions because considering race slows the path to adoption which poses risks resulting from long-term foster care by precluding eligible White families from adopting children of color (Bartholet, 1999; Kennedy, 1995; Banks, 1998; Barth, 1997).

While there is no exact statistic for the number of Black children being raised transracially in the US, data from the Department of Health and Human Services shows that the adoption of Black children by White couples has increased each year since 1998 (from 14 percent to 26 percent in 2004⁷). According to data from the 2000 Census, the first to collect data about adoptions, approximately 16,000 White households included adopted Black children. An overwhelming majority of these children are multiracial Black/White (Samuels, 2009).

The preponderance of multiracial Black children who are adopted by White families can be partially attributed to child welfare agencies' attempts to circumvent traditional social norms that ascribe Black identities based on the one drop rule to appease the interests of the increasing number of White adopters desiring to adopt a limited number of healthy White babies (aka "Blue Ribbon Babies"). As a result, multiracial Black children are more likely than monoracial Black children to be adopted by White families (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983) and White parents are more

⁷ *New York Times* analysis of data from the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect at Cornell University and the Department of Health and Human Services.

likely to indicate a preference for a multiracial Black child over a monoracial Black child (McRoy and Grape, 1999). Commonly noted reasons White parents give for this preference include feeling more legitimately or “biologically” tied to a child with whom they partially share a racial heritage and the belief that a racially mixed child will be less visibly “different” to relatives, neighbors, and friends (McRoy & Grape, 1999; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983; Steinberg & Hall, 2000).

Research has documented the different socialization approaches that transracially adoptive families take towards addressing issues of race, culture, and racism with their children. In a review summarizing the racial and cultural socialization processes for transracially adoptive families, Lee (2003) identified four themes that arose in studies of how White parents approached racial socialization for children of color. These themes included (a) *racial inculcation* which included proactively teaching about racism and discrimination (Lee, Yoo, Weintraub, & Su, 2002), (b) *enculturation* which focused on instilling a sense of cultural pride in children (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983; Huh & Reid, 2000; Steinberg & Hall, 2000), and (c) *assimilation* which encouraged children to assimilate and adopt mainstream values (Andujo, 1988; DeBerry et al., 1996; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983). Lee (2003) identified another approach taken by adoptive parents that is related to enculturation; the idea of *choice*, which occurred when parents let children determine how, and when they would like to be culturally socialized (e.g.: “I’ll tell them about their birth culture when/if they ask.”). Relatedly, past studies have found that transracial adoptive parents varied in the ways in which they handled racial issues; some parents downplayed or ignored racist comments, others made derogatory comments about racists, and in a few cases, some became actively involved in community social justice efforts (Andujo, 1988; Friedlander et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 1987).

Current research suggests that a growing number of White adoptive parents take a cultural socialization approach by acknowledging differences within the family and making a concerted effort to teach their children about their birth cultures (Carstens & Julia, 2000; Friedlander, Larney, Skau, Hotaling, Cutting, & Schwam, 2000; Vonk & Angaran, 2001). Additionally, studies of transracial adoptees have found that parents’ racial socialization practices are influenced by the child’s skin tone. Black children with darker skin tones are more likely to receive preparation for bias messages in comparison to lighter (often multiracial) children who often receive more mainstream messages (Vroegh, 1997, DeBerry Scarr & Weinberg, 1996, McRoy & Zurcher, 1983). This is partially due to the parents’ belief that lighter skinned multiracial children would more easily be able to “blend into” White society and be less likely to experience racism and discrimination based on skin tone (Samuels, 2009; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983).

Among transracially adopted children, racial socialization practices have been positively associated with racial identity and acculturation (Andujo, 1988). Researchers have suggested that transracial adoptees exposed to messages that emphasize cultural assimilation are more likely to internalize their White adoptive parents’ cultural worldview and identify more strongly with the majority (White) culture than with minority (e.g. Black) cultures (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983). Conversely, Feigelman and Silverman (1983) and Huh and Reid (2000) found that adoptees were more likely to show racial pride when adoptive parents emphasized cultural socialization messages and actions, embraced the child’s racial backgrounds, encouraged and participated in

ethnically and culturally related events and activities, and lived in racially integrated communities.

Part V: Gaps in Current Research and Contribution of the Present Study

While theory and research on racial socialization of Black children has progressed over the last decades, limitations still exist. Perhaps the most significant limitation is that most studies on racial socialization take a monocentric view of race and spend little time describing what was meant by race or why terms such as “Black” or “African American” were used when defining the population or describing whom these definitions include or exclude. Aside from the work specifically on multiracial or transracially adopted individuals, to my knowledge, only Constantine and Blackmon (2002) acknowledged that their sample of “Black” students included multiracial children and Caribbean born Blacks. This is a severe limitation because such assumptions treat Black people as a homogenous group, makes certain assumptions about who is considered Black or African American, and presupposes that all “Black” children are raised solely with Black parents or guardians.

A second concern with current research on racial socialization is that most studies have approached topic from a unidirectional process in which the parent is the actor and the child is a passive recipient of messages. However, racial socialization may in fact be a bidirectional process. For example, children’s experiences and questions may prompt parents to share values and information regarding race, ethnicity and intergroup relations, regardless of parents’ predetermined racial socialization agendas (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Additionally, children are active participants in their socialization; they can disagree with, misinterpret, or ignore parents’ socialization messages (Marshall, 1995). For example, Marshall (1995) found that many children whose parents had described a range of racial socialization strategies reported that their parents did not teach them anything about ethnicity or race. Additionally, one study that examined the experiences of transracial adoptees noted that only 35.2% of parents said they denied or de-emphasized their children’s race, but 55.7% of adolescents in the same study noted that their parents denied or de-emphasized race (DeBerry et al, 1996). This disconnect may influence how well children are actually able to address and navigate incidents of racism when they occur and who, if anyone, they seek out for support should they not interpret their parents’ efforts as adequate.

Third, racial socialization literature has traditionally centered on processes within the family. However, individuals are socialized to race by many other individuals and institutional forces including schools, peers, other relatives and family friends, and strangers, to name a few. Because this study does not confine the racial socialization process to the family, particularly given the multiracial nature of the families from which interviewees are drawn, this study has the potential to illuminate racial socialization forces outside of family.

Fourth, given the racial complexity, and sometimes ambiguous features, of multiracial Black individuals, this research allows for the investigation of the role of phenotype and physical appearance in racial socialization experiences. For example, this study can help researchers understand how racial labels are placed on people, who gets labeled as Black and who does not, and how if at all parents and guardians respond and prepare their children for such experiences.

Fifth, while quantitative data has been useful in illuminating the types and frequencies in which parents or children report certain aspects or approaches to racial socialization, this method is limited in its ability to deeply understand the dynamic nature and impact of such messages.

Qualitative methods offer more details about and explanations for certain types of approaches and outcomes of racial socialization. Thus, the use of in-depth interviews can help answer questions such as why and how (process) approaches are carried out and interpreted, whereas survey measures primarily get at the “what” (product) question.

With respect to research focusing specifically on cross-racial families, few studies focus specifically on the extent to which the parents of Cross Racially Raised individuals (adopted and non-adopted) engage in teaching their children of color coping skills to deal effectively with racism and discrimination. While little research has been conducted to understand the outcomes of various parental racial socialization strategies in cross-racial families, personal narratives of and about individuals who were Cross Racially Raised often emphasize the need for family support and socialization methods which teach them how to cope with racism and discrimination (Patton, 2000; Simon & Roorda, 2000; Trenka, Oparah, & Shin, 2006; Samuels, 2009a; Senna, 1998; McKinley, 2002).

This study hopes to address some of the gaps in current literature by conceptualizing racial socialization as a bidirectional process in which individuals have agency in their racial socialization and development. Additionally, the use of in-depth interviews solicits a deeper, more conceptual understanding of how racial socialization practices are linked with one’s ability to cope with racism and ways of addressing racism, particularly among those families that contradict monoracial assumptions of racial socialization processes.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Methodologies that dismiss or de-center racism and its intersections with other forms of subordination omit and distort the experiences of those whose lives are daily affected by racism. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32)

Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions (Smith, 1999, p. 5)

Introduction

In this chapter I present the research design that guided my inquiry. I begin by articulating the research questions that this study addressed. Second, I provide an overview of the two methodological approaches, qualitative and quantitative, and epistemological perspectives - positivist and interpretivist - that guide them. I then provide a rationale for the qualitative perspectives used in this study – the Extended Case Method and Critical Race Methods. Next, I discuss the significance of my positionality as a researcher and “insider” as a multiracial Black woman. From there I discuss the design of the qualitative interview study including data collection methods, demographics of the sample, data analysis procedures, and limitations of the study.

Research Questions

The central aim of this study was to understand the significance of family racial socialization in helping multiracial Black children develop the ability to navigate in racially charged settings, in this case schools. The following research questions were addressed through a qualitative research design using in depth interviews.

1. In what ways do Cross Racially Raised individuals experience racism in educational settings?
2. In what ways do Cross Racially Raised individuals perceive their parents/guardians' efforts toward racial socialization?
3. What coping strategies do Cross Racially Raised individuals employ to navigate racially hostile environments?
4. In what ways do experiences of racism, coping strategies, or perceptions of parent/guardian approaches to racial socialization differ for multiracial individuals of African descent raised with a Black parent or guardian present in comparison to those raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian?

The Qualitative Paradigm

Methodological perspectives depend heavily on the epistemologies – views on the nature of knowledge – that guide researchers (Gall, Gall, Borg, 2010). Two epistemological perspectives that guide research are the positivist and the interpretive perspectives. Positivist perspectives assume that features of the human environment have an objective reality that exists separately from the individuals who created or observe them and that reality is rather constant across time and settings. Quantitative research is often grounded in this perspective. The strengths of quantitative data lie in their ability to illuminate the “what” of the phenomenon, generalize findings to a larger population, test hypotheses, and model causal theories. In addition, quantitative methods are often cost and time efficient. However, quantitative data often miss contextual detail such as depth and insight regarding the emotions, feelings, insights, motives, intents, views and opinions of the subject.

On the other hand, interpretive perspectives take the view that aspects of the human environment are continuously constructed by the meaning individuals construct. Most qualitative is grounded in this perspective. Qualitative data are useful in their ability to illuminate the “how” and “why” of a phenomenon, give rich explanations of complex phenomena, articulate in depth detail regarding insights and perspectives, create or evolve theories or conceptual bases, and propose hypotheses to clarify the phenomena (Eisner, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

As the focus of this study was on understanding how Cross Racially Raised individuals experienced and learned to cope with racism in schools, qualitative methods, which focus on understanding people’s lived experiences, were well suited for situating the meanings people place on events and interactions and connecting these meanings to the broader social realities (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although surveys based in positivist perspectives are useful in gathering actors’ general thoughts about a subject, such tools are limited in their ability to get at how people explain, rationalize, or interpret their socialization to race and racism. Most research on racial socialization has been conducted from a positivist perspective using survey instruments and other quantitative measures to investigate racial socialization by categorizing parent messages and child perceptions then correlating these measures with racial identity scales or academic metrics parents socialize their children to race⁸. While quantitative data has been useful in illuminating the types and frequencies in which parents or children report certain aspects or approaches to racial socialization, understandings of the dynamic nature of socialization, the meanings one makes about their experiences, and the impacts of such experiences are yet to be fully understood. The field of racial socialization would benefit from in-depth qualitative investigations on the impact of racial socialization.

In general, there are five primary traditions within the qualitative framework: (1) biography which captures one story in the life of a single individual, (2) phenomenology which

⁸ The most common measures include the Teenager Experiences of Racial Socialization (TERS, Stevenson, 2002), Scale of Racial Socialization (SORS, Stevenson, 1994), Parent Experiences of Racial Socialization (PERS, Stevenson, 1999), Comprehensive Scale of Racial Socialization (CRSI, Lesane-Brown, 2005) and the Racial Socialization Measure (Hughes and Chen, 1997).

seeks to understand the meaning or “essence” of an individuals’ experience among a number of representatives, (3) grounded theory, which is similar to phenomenology but goes beyond descriptive analysis of a phenomenon to develop conceptual theories about a single experience or process through constructing theoretical generalizations across cases (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), (4) ethnography which seeks to understand and describe the culture of individuals or groups through interviews and observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), and (5) case studies that investigate systems as complex entities represented by individuals or groups tied together by a specific event or context (Stake, 1995).

Another perspective, which blends some of the above-mentioned perspectives, is the Extended Case Method (ECM, Burawoy, 1998). Similar to grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), ECM is an interpretive method that produces conceptual findings, but also seeks to expand, rearticulate, and complicate existing theoretical knowledge (Burawoy, 1998). In ECM, “the research agenda becomes collecting data that will allow for a multisystemic analysis of a unique case, and the use of this analysis for the extension of an existing theory” (Samuels, 2009b). The Extended Case Method frames the analysis of the individual within larger socio-political and historical structures by drawing from social constructivist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) and critical traditions (Collins, 2000; Warren & Twine, 2000; Smith, 1999) and advocating for collaborative knowledge construction. ECM researchers often incorporate historical and current popular culture and current affairs contexts into their analysis to illustrate how such events shape peoples’ experiences, interpretations, and identities. For example, interviews of transracial adoptees can be further contextualized by taking into consideration how the current debates around Sandra Bullock’s, and other well known White celebrities, decision to adopt a Black child may have shaped an adoptee’s views, identity, and experiences. For this study, ECM was an appropriate analytical tool to investigate the racial socialization experiences of multiracial Black people because it allowed me to link the analysis of interviewees’ lived experience to societal constructions of race and family.

In addition to ECM, Critical Race Theory (CRT), which starts from the premise that race and racism are central, endemic, and a fundamental part of defining and explaining how US society functions, provides a strong methodological justification for the use of in-depth interviews in studying racism and racial socialization. The use of voice or “naming one’s own reality” is central to CRT in that it contributes to the “psychic preservation” of marginalized groups (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Historically, the telling of stories has been a healing or coping mechanism to combat the negative outcomes of racism among communities of color. Thus, narratives not only provide in-depth understanding into the perspectives and experiences of an individual but also allow people to name their own reality and make sense of, or cope with, their experiences, in turn mutually benefiting the researcher, the interviewee, and potentially the community.

Researcher Positionality

As a multiracial Black woman who was raised by White grandparents, I have great insight into the experiences of the population in which I am inquiring. The experiences of being both an “insider” and a scholar can pose challenges while at the same time be of great asset (Kanuha, 2000). The relationship between researchers and respondents has traditionally been viewed on two ends of the spectrum - objective and distant or overly immersed. Both the

Extended Case Method and Critical Race Theory challenge notions of the researcher as distant and objective and advocate for collective meaning making in which researchers share insights resulting from interactions with participants who informed the research process (Burawoy, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Samuels, 2009b). Thus, an insider-scholar perspective is valuable in studying the emic perspectives of multiracial individuals.

My insider status is an asset to this research project for many reasons. First, my insider position helps me gain *entrée* with the population I am interested in. I was able to pull on my experiences as an insider via professional networks to recruit my population of interest. Second, this insider status helped me establish rapport with participants so that they felt comfortable sharing their most intimate and personal stories. In addition to establishing rapport, my insider perspective allowed me to develop an interview protocol and ask questions that are sensitive to multiracial and transracial adoptee issues (Jackson, 2010). Third, as someone who is “native” to the population I am studying, I am deeply invested in ensuring that stories are accurately conveyed and portrayed. However, this insider status does not mean that I am free from bias; I will discuss the various steps I took to minimize bias and ensure rigor and accuracy of reporting in the analysis section of this proposal.

Research Design

Data Collection. Purposive criterion procedures (Patton, 1990) and snowball sampling (Weiss, 1994) were used to identify and select a stratified sample of multiracial adults who were raised by White parents or guardians (adoptive or biological) and interracial parents or guardians (adoptive or biological). I chose to interview adults because their perspectives allowed for access to the full longitudinal and reflective perspectives regarding experiences with racism and racial socialization messages. Understanding racial socialization from the adult perspective also provided insights into how individuals have processed the messages they received about race and racism, from parents and society in general, and the impact such messages have had on their development. Studying racial socialization among those on the margins of race, such as multiracial and transracially adopted individuals, illuminated examples of what happens when Black people are socialized primarily within one domain such as mainstream socialization as well as examples of silence about race and racism as a form of socialization. Such populations provided examples of agency in developing a sense of racial competency when parents did not talk about race.

Sampling criteria for this study included individuals who (1) identified as a person of African descent (including multiracial), (2) were raised by either White (White couple or single White parent) or interracial (one Black parent and one non-Black parent) parents or guardians (adoptive or biological), and (3) were between the ages of 18 to 35 years old. Recruitment efforts included national outreach to Black/African American college student groups, multiracial and Transracial Adoptee associations, professionals and scholars in the field of education and social welfare, and word of mouth.

Procedure. A total of 21 adults participated in at least one 90-120 minute semi-structured interview. Interviewees were asked questions about their family background, experiences with racism, their parents’ or guardians’ approach to dealing with racism, and their perceptions of their ability to address and navigate racism. Each interview began in the same way, by asking the

interviewee to discuss their family and the circumstances under which they were raised. From there, interviewees were asked about their most salient memories of racially charged incidents in school and how their parent/guardian responded to that incident. As the interviews were semi-structured, questions were adapted to respond to shifts in interviewee responses. Follow up interviews were conducted with select participants to solicit further information and to clarify or build upon points of significance in previous interviews.

All interviews took place at a time and location that was convenient for the interviewee. Consent forms explaining the potential risks and benefits to interviewees were obtained from all participants and interviewees were informed they could decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. Over half (n=12) of the 21 interviews took place in-person and were audio-recorded and transcribed. Nine of the interviews were conducted over the phone; of those, seven were audio-recorded and transcribed and two were not audio recorded and only detailed notes were taken⁹. Transcripts and recordings were assigned a number that corresponded with the interviewee and names were stored separately to maintain confidentiality. All names and any other information that could make the participant easily identifiable were changed to protect the confidentiality of the interviewee. All procedures for this study were approved by the UC Berkeley IRB (2009-2-35).

Participants. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 35 years old (mean = 28) and all but one of the interviewees were female¹⁰. Of the 21 interviewees, about 60% were (n=13) raised in a situation where there was no Black parent or guardian present and the other 40% (n=8) were raised in interracial families with one Black parent or guardian. Twelve (57%) grew up with at least one birth parent, seven (33%) were raised by adoptive parents, and two (10%) were raised in a different situation. See Appendix A for further description of the participants' family backgrounds.

Of the thirteen interviewees who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian, the majority of them (83%) grew up in middle to upper class families, lived primarily in predominantly White neighborhoods (83%) and attended predominantly White schools (75%). Of the eight interviewees who were raised with a Black parent or guardian at least partially present, two (25%) grew up in racially mixed neighborhoods and attended racially mixed schools, four (50%) grew up in predominantly White neighborhoods and attended predominantly White schools, and two (25%) grew up in neighborhoods and attended schools that were predominantly people of color. It is important to note that those who were adopted by White parents (as opposed to those who were raised by a White or other non-Black birth parent only) tended to be a more homogenous group, with all six reporting they grew up in middle to upper class families, lived in predominantly White neighborhoods, and attended predominantly White

⁹ The two phone interviews that were not recorded were conducted before the author obtained the appropriate phone recording equipment.

¹⁰ The majority female sample could be attributed to the idea that men may be less open to discussing personal experience and family matters in an interview setting, as was common among other interview studies focusing on identity and personal issues. Similarly, many multiracial individuals who were adopted by White families during the time-period (late 1970s early 1980s) in which the adopted interviewees in this study were, tended to be females (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983).

schools. Regardless of whether or not they grew up with a Black parent or guardians present, the majority of interviewees currently live in racially mixed or mostly Black neighborhoods (85%). Eleven of the interviewees live in the San Francisco Bay area, four live in the East Coast, four live in the Midwest, one lives in the South, and one lives in Southern California. The group of interviewees was highly educated, with 57% having a graduate or professional degree (MA, JD, PhD), 33% holding a Bachelors degree, and 10% having some college education but no degree.

Data analysis. Analysis followed a multiphase interpretive approach (Tolman & Bydon-Miller, 2001). The first phase involved open coding two to three initial interviews to help refine interview questions, articulate preliminary conceptual themes, and identify potential follow-up questions. The next phase consisted of a reflexive interpretive process (Schatzman, 1991) to identify exceptions or disconfirming evidence in the data and early conceptual themes (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Follow-up interviews were conducted with participants whose experiences challenged or added complexity to the conceptual findings.

This analysis produced five broad conceptual themes in experiences with racism in school or educational settings (individual racism, institutional racism, exclusion from Black communities, intrafamilial racism, and monoracism/monoculturalism), two themes in parent approaches to racial socialization (parents who talked about race and racism and those who did not), and five themes in resources or strategies for coping with and addressing racism (internalizing, externalizing, education and advocacy, seeking Black culture and community, and chameleon identities).

Limitations

As with all research, there are a few limitations to note in this study. First, this study focused solely on the adult child's perspective and did not inquire about the parents' perspective. This study focused on the adult child's perspective because the parents' perspective is often over-emphasized in the literature. The goal of this study was to center the voices and experiences of those who were raised in such circumstances and to illuminate the impact of racial socialization strategies long-term, from the perspective of those who must use these skills in their daily life.

Second, this study relied heavily on participant recollection and memory to guide interviews, and although most participants were easily able to recall in vivid detail their earliest memories of racially charged incidents and how they and their families responded, this study may still be susceptible to certain internal validity threats (participant memory loss, exaggeration, and/or dishonesty).

Third, the majority of the individuals who volunteered to participate in this study were women and while many of them who had male siblings discussed how their brothers' experiences were different from their own, there was not enough data to draw conclusions about differences based on gender at this time. This limitation is common among other interview studies focusing on identity and personal issues; men may be less open to discussing personal experience and family matters in an interview setting.

Finally, this sample is a self-selected, motivated group of individuals; many of whom have been actively involved in exploring their identities and experiences and were willing to talk about them. Individuals who are more comfortable talking with others about their identity may have been more likely to respond to the recruitment efforts. Future efforts to recruit individuals who are not as open to talking about their experience may yield unique findings in terms of identity process and experience with racism, experiences which may be directly connected to their more introverted personality styles.

Future research efforts should include broader search and recruitment efforts, which may result in increased numbers of males and those who are more introverted in discussing personal experiences. Additionally, a study that includes the parent perspective along with the adult child's perspective would help paint a more complete picture of family dynamics. For example, focus groups with multiple members of the family may allow for further explanation regarding how and why parents choose to address race and racism the way they did and illuminate differences in how siblings and other members of the family interpreted events.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPERIENCES WITH RACISM

Introduction

In this study, I define racism as encompassing both institutional and individual actions, beliefs, and norms that privilege Whiteness and maintain the racial status quo. To solicit information about the ways in which interviewees experienced racism in school, I asked each interviewee to share their first salient or vivid memory of racism that occurred in school or educational settings. The findings presented in this chapter are organized around themes that arose during those conversations. Themes presented here are not mutually exclusive.¹¹

In talking about their experiences with, and perceptions of, racism in schools, the interviewees in this study discussed both subtle and overt forms of racism at the individual and institutional levels. While just over half of individuals experienced blatant incidents of racism, such as being called a derogatory name, nearly all discussed the more subtle or institutional markers of race and racism in their lives, such as peers not wanting to associate with them or feeling treated differently by teachers for no clear reason. Most interviewees' initial memories occurred early in elementary school (1st through 3rd grade), while others occurred in middle school (grades 7 through 9). There were no discernable patterns in experience with racism with regard to whether the individual was raised by solely White parents or interracial parents; that is, individuals who were raised solely by White parents or guardians did not discuss different themes than those who were raised by interracial parents.

This chapter presents the five major themes that arose in talking about interviewees initial and most salient incidents of racism; including: (1) experiences with individual or personally-mediated¹² racism in schools, (2) experiences with institutional racism in schools, (3) experiences with the Black community, (4) experiences with racism in their extended families, and (5) monoracism/monoculturalism.

Racism at the Individual Level

Individual racism, or racism that is personally mediated, can take the form of covert subtle actions such as verbal statements to Black people that dismiss their racial experiences or that profess color-blindness, or overt blatant racism such as referring to someone with a derogatory racial epithet or excluding someone because of their race. An overwhelming majority (86%) of the interviewees I spoke with discussed salient memories that included instances of subtle or overt racism from their peers or teachers in school. Sydney¹³, a 31 year old Biracial woman who was adopted at birth by a White couple on the East Coast, attended predominantly

¹¹ It is not to say that interviewees did not experience a certain type of racism because they did not discuss it.

¹² Scott (2009) defined personally-meditate racism as "prejudice or discrimination that can include intentional or unintentional acts, overt and subtle forms of individual racial discrimination" (p. 20).

¹³ All names in this report have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the interviewee.

White middle and high schools. Sydney summarized her early memories of racism in school by saying:

There were lots of things that happened that are not clearly racial; kids not wanting to play with me or whatever, I feel there are lots of things that happen to me that were probably racial, but it wasn't like overt racism.

Similarly, when asked about her first memories of racism, Julie, a 28 year old woman who was raised by her White birth mother and Black birth father and attended predominantly White elementary school but later moved to a more diverse high school, stated, "I can't really remember anything aside from those little incidents or microaggressions." Pierce and his colleagues (1978) define racial microaggressions as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, nonverbal exchanges which are put downs of Blacks by offenders" (p. 66). While racial microaggressions often go unnoticed or are dismissed by others who witness the behavior, they often cause great stress, which can lead to negative mental and physical health, for those who experience such incidents (Constantine, 2007; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). The racial microaggressions described by interviewees in this study often took the form of children not wanting to play with them, teachers treating some students differently than others for no discernable reason, or other subtle assumptions from teachers, counselors, and peers about the capabilities of an individual.

Interviewees provided examples of incidents where they felt teachers either did not acknowledge them or treated them differently in comparison to their White peers. Specifically, individuals noted incidents where they did not receive the same recognition for good performance or received very harsh reprimands for not doing well. Karyn, a 30-year-old Biracial woman who was raised by her White birth mother and Black birth father, and is the older sister of Julie, described her experience with a teacher in her relatively diverse middle school:

I went to ask teacher a question because I didn't understand and she responded [harshly] with "well you should have done your homework" and she was totally nice to the other White students who had the same issues but not us...me and my friend who was Mexican. I really thought it was because we were the only students of color in the class. I was always a good student and never got in trouble so I thought her actions had to be based on something else. So then I thought I'd show her and I stopped doing my work and got a D in the class.

Karyn's description of her teacher's treatment and Karyn's subsequent performance is reflective of teacher expectancy effects. For example, Ferguson (2003) notes that teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors interact with students' beliefs, behaviors, and work habits in ways that can either encourage or discourage students from high academic performance. Teachers' biases and stereotypes based on race, gender, and class often shape their expectations, and researchers have documented that teachers often hold lower expectations for Black and Latino students in comparison to White and Asian students (Ferguson, 2003; Scott, 2009; McKown & Weinstein, 2008). In this case, Karyn's teacher seemed to assume that Karyn did not understand

the concept because she did not do her homework, when she did. This experience shaped Karyn's subsequent actions resulting in a self fulfilling prophecy in that Karyn became disengaged and stopped trying to perform well in the class (Weinstein et al, 2004). Karyn's description also supports the findings of Scott's (2009) study regarding racism in schools that found students' perceptions of racism in teaching and curriculum significantly predicted disengagement.

Many of the interviewees note experiencing racism from peers and counselors towards the end of their high school career as they were preparing for college. For example, when Sydney learned she was accepted to college, she commented, "everyone said the only reason I got in was because I was Black." When Jennifer, a 23-year-old Biracial woman who was adopted by a White family, excitedly told her guidance counselor how well she did on her SAT, the counselor responded, "you don't look like the type of person who would get that score on the SAT." Like Sydney, Jennifer also added that it was the norm for other students to say the only reason she received a scholarship and got accepted to NYU was because she was Black.

While the aforementioned incidents are characteristic of how many of the interviewees discussed the subtle racialized experiences they struggled with in elementary and high school, many individuals also noted dealing with blatant, overt forms of racism from their peers, teachers, and counselors. Over half of the interviewees' initial memories of overt racialized experiences occurred during a time in school when race, and specifically Blackness, was a central topic of discussion. Such instances included MLK day events or learning about slavery in history lessons. Sydney's comment illustrates the experiences of many interviewees who attended predominantly White schools where they were one of the few students of color:

It was around second or third grade... We were learning about slavery and MLK in school and the acceptable word, at least the one used in the textbooks, was Negro. I remember this [White] girl coming up to me after and calling me a Negro, she didn't say the other n-word, she said you're a Negro. I got so upset! It was like she said the other n-word or worse!

Although Sydney did not directly attribute what this classmate said to be racist, she did note that it was clear to her that being a "negro" was a negative thing and such comments carried negative connotations about the racial group to which she is ascribed. Additionally, Sydney's experience speaks to monoracism in that term "negro" was used to ascribe her to specific monoracial category. This phenomenon will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Maria, a 35-year-old woman of Black, Filipino, and White descent who was adopted by White parents and grew up in the northwest and attended predominantly White middle and high schools, discussed a particularly painful experience in junior high.

I remember having a crush on this boy when I was in junior high and we play dated for a while. Then one day he came to school and said he couldn't date me because he didn't want to get Black on his hands.

This incident had a profound, long lasting impact on how Maria views the world and the choices she makes. Now, at the age of 35, she still vividly recalls how she felt during this moment and discussed how this incident shaped her decisions to not date White men and has little trust when men, of any race, show interest in her.

The issue of dating or “having a crush” also posed challenges for many other women in the study. In an incident similar to Maria’s, Hayley described an experience of trying to find a date for prom her junior year of high school. When she asked a White male whom she had a crush on if he would like to go to the prom with her, he replied, “I’d like to go with you, but we wouldn’t look good together in the picture”. Hayley went on to clarify that she understood this to mean he didn’t want to be in a picture with a Black girl. She went on to explain that while she always had friends who were White males, they never wanted to date her. This was a common experience for the woman I interviewed; almost all the women in this study discussed how White males rarely wanted to be more than friends. In turn, a majority of these women discussed how they gravitated towards dating Black men as young adults. As Karyn put it, “I’ve never actually dated a White guy...it’s not because I wouldn’t, but they just never responded to me or liked me that way, so I always dated Black men.” Such experiences are examples of how incidents that occurred early in school can affect one’s long term development, sense of self, and decisions later in life.

While instances of subtle racism prompted many individuals’ initial awareness of race and racial difference, the more overt incidents brought about not only an awareness of race in general, but also an awareness of how people saw them racially, what it meant to be seen as a Black person, and the negative connotations associated with being ascribed to that racial group.

Institutional Racism

While examples of personally-mediated racism are plentiful in schools (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Weinstein, Gregory, & Strambler, 2004), institutional racism is also embedded within educational practices and policies. When asked about their initial memories of racism in school, close to a third of the interviewees discussed institutional level racism such as the salience of the segregation of Black students into lower performing classes. In describing her memories at a diverse high school, Julie stated:

I haven't really had any overt things happen; no one ever called me the n-word, I've never had someone say a racial joke to me or about me, so I haven't had that obvious, clear experience with racism...but in high school I remember there were no teachers that looked like me and I remember this zero tolerance sweep where half of the Black students had been sent to the continuation school within that day. I remember telling my parents that all my friends were gone and I didn't know what happened.

Julie’s experience echoes many other interviewees’ comments regarding the segregation and tracking - the system of grouping students for instruction on the basis of ability - of Black students they noticed as they progressed through school. Interestingly, many of the individuals I spoke with, such as Julie, were high achieving students who were often placed in advanced

classes with the White and Asian students. This phenomenon can be partially attributed to class and skin tone privileges in that many of the interviewees were middle to upper class and had relatively light skin tones. Their parents' socioeconomic status and social and cultural capital may have shielded them from tracking. Additionally, research has documented that Black people with lighter skin tone, as is often the case with multiracial Black people, have been afforded many privileges, such as higher levels of education, that darker skinned Black people have been denied (Keith & Herring, 1991). Although the interviewees in this study were not directly negatively impacted by tracking, they were keenly aware of the race-based tracking system that was in place at many of their schools.

Institutional racism was also evident in the curriculum individuals experienced. For example Trevor, a 33-year-old Biracial man who was raised primarily by his White birth father and whose Black birth mother was in and out of the picture, discussed his experience with curriculum in elementary school:

In second grade we were studying MLK and I knew everything about him, because my dad had already taught me a lot, and I remember thinking, 'gosh there is so much more to learn about this guy and why are we only learning about this today?' I was really excited and engaged when we talked about him (in class that day) and remember questioning myself, 'gee why don't I feel like this the rest of the time?' Well now I realize it's because I, my people, were basically excluded from the curriculum.

Racial tracking systems and curricula that excluded the voices and experiences of people of color were two aspects of the structural nature of racism that were present in interviewees' schools. Ladson-Billings points out that school curriculum is a "culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script" (p. 21) and explains that the stories of people of color are "muted" or "erased" when they challenge dominant power structures. Thus, Trevor's explanation of being "excluded from the curriculum" illustrates the ways in which the voices of people of color were distorted or omitted from the curriculum.

The tracking patterns noticed by the interviewees I spoke with support previous research that found low-track classes tend to be primarily composed of low-income students and students of color, while upper-track classes are usually dominated by students from socioeconomically advantaged groups and White and Asian students (Davidson, 1996; Oakes, 2005). While the tracking did not negatively affect many of the individuals I spoke with directly, there may have been indirect effects of their placement into higher tracks. Studies have found that students may be more likely to form friendships with students in the same tracks than with students in other tracks, suggesting that tracking may also influence students' overall peer groups and attitudes regarding other students (Gamoran, 1992; Hallinan & Williams, 1989). Given the racial composition of high and low tracks, interaction between racial groups, for example Black students and White students, can be hindered by tracking. Many of the individuals I interviewed had predominantly White friendship groups and limited interactions with Black students in middle and high school, which could be partially attributed to school tracking systems.

Exclusion from Black Communities

Just over half of the individuals I spoke with discussed times when they felt excluded by the Black community because they grew up in predominantly White spaces with White parents, or had light or racially ambiguous features. Maggie, a 30-year-old multiracial woman of Black Columbian and Yugoslavian decent who was adopted by a White family, describes her middle school experience with the Black Student Union:

The things that happened were really like the opposite of what I would think of as racism...I'd be in school and there were things I'd try to participate in, like the Black student association and stuff, and there would be members of those groups that would tell me I couldn't participate and since I couldn't verify my pedigree of who my birth parents were, it [the Black community] was like the one place I was starting to feel comfortable and then I couldn't participate and I had no counter argument as to why I should be able to.

While Maggie's light skin tone made her experience unique in that she could pass as White and she did not yet know her birth parents, her story is characteristic of what other individuals discussed regarding their initial experiences with other Black students and communities.

Serena, a 22-year-old Biracial woman who was adopted by White parents, shared her experiences and fears of fitting-in with Black communities by saying "I was always afraid I wouldn't be accepted by Black people because of mannerisms." She went on to describe her experiences in college:

Initially I didn't feel accepted when I got to college. I had a few Black girlfriends and they would tease me and say "you're like a White girl" and there was this notion that 'Black' is a certain way of being...at first thought I through I was weird; they made comments that I acted White, I talked White. So, I would tell them more about my background (adopted by White people) when they teased me and then they would understand more.

These early experiences with other Black people shaped interviewees' understanding of race and race relations and eventually pushed many of them to be more proactive about immersing themselves in Black communities, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

Another common theme tied to feeling excluded from Black communities was the presence of colorism, particularly among females. Nearly all of the women interviewed discussed, as some point, how they felt other Black women did not like them because they were multiracial and many had lighter skin tones and European features. For example, Serena noted that other Black women framed her as "a threat" because Black men found her attractive. Additionally, Diana, a 30-year-old Biracial woman who was raised primarily by her White birth father, stated that Black women would often make comments to her that thought she was "better" because she had "good hair" and light skin. Interestingly, Trevor, the sole male interviewee

described his experience as a light skinned male in opposite terms: “For women it’s like a desirable thing, you’re attractive; for guys there is still a privilege that comes, but it’s not always good thing, at least not in the community.”

The issues of colorism discussed by the interviewees were manifestations of internalized racism within the Black community. The practice of colorism in the United States began during slavery in which slaves with the lighter complexion (commonly the children of the White slave masters and their Black slaves) were made to engage in less strenuous, domesticated duties (“house negroes”), while those slaves with darker skin tones and features participated in more strenuous labor that tended to be outdoors (“field negroes”) (Hill, 2002; Hunter 2005, 2007). This “capital” of lighter skin created a perception in both Black and White communities that White features were better than Black features and therefore were more valued in a White-based society. In turn, those with lighter skin and more Caucasian features were often afforded access to the political, social, and economic spheres of society that darker skin Black people were denied (Keith and Herring, 1991). Consequently, this notion that “lighter was better” was internalized by members of Black communities who maintained social hierarchies (aka “pigmentocracy”) based on skin tone. For example, sororities and fraternities often implemented the “paper bag” test in which individuals would be denied entry to the sorority or fraternity if their skin tone was darker than a brown paper bag. In addition to paper bag tests were the “comb test”, which tested the coarseness of one's hair, and the “flashlight test,” which assessed the extent to which a person's profile reflected Caucasian features (Kerr, 2005). The experiences of individuals in this study speak to the continued struggle of internalized racism and colorism in Black communities. Often when female participants describe reactions from other Black women, they took into account the internalized racism and historic context in which these premises were based. Diana, a 30-year-old Biracial woman who was raised the majority of the time by her White birth father and had sporadic contact with her Black birth mother, discussed her experience and understanding of colorism in Black communities:

When I finally immersed myself in the Black community and started learning more about Black history and everything I really started actively reflecting on what racism is...that was a big upheaval for me and I was like “oh my god I’m a race traitor, I’m a house nigger, I’ve just been playing my brothers and sisters against each other by placating the White man” and I was having all those realizations about the role of light skinned Black people in our history which were pretty problematic. There was a lot of ugly history there around blue-vein societies and paper bag societies where you have to be just light enough to get in and I started seeing all that yuck. Which I haven’t fully recovered from because I’ve made my choices, I married a White man and I have these children who are very light-skinned biracial and sometimes I’m confused about how to teach them about identity because they could almost pass and sometimes life is easier than trying to claim a Black identity when you have to explain yourself because of how you look.

Diana's comments illustrate the complicated nature of colorism and its effect on multiracial people in that she felt conflicted about her decisions to marry a White man. Her comments speak to the idea of having to prove one is "Black enough" and extends Serena's comment that "there is this notion that Black is a certain way of being" to the assumption that there is a certain way a Black person is supposed to look.

Intrafamilial Racism

When I asked interviewees about their first or most salient experiences of racism in school, a little over a third of the interviewees articulated that their most salient memories of racism when they were younger actually occurred within their extended and immediate family and that the school incidents paled in comparison to racism in the family. This was true for both transracially adopted individuals as well as those who were raised in interracial families.

Katrina, a 25-year-old Biracial woman who was raised by her White mother and Black father discussed an incident that occurred with her White maternal grandmother who did not approve of her mother's relationship with a Black man.

When I was four my mom's mom, well, I always felt like she didn't like me because I was Black, I don't know why, but I felt that. It was very clear in my head that she didn't like me, I'm Black. When I was born I was named after her, my middle name, and then they changed it because she didn't want me named after her... When she was close to passing away my mom and I would go visit her and later I learned that she didn't approve of dad because he was Black, and you can't marry a Black guy. And I don't remember who told me this but there was one time that she said, after dad left, that 'it took me like a week to get the nigger smell out of the shower'. So she was *super* racist!

Maggie also discussed an experience regarding racism in her adoptive family. When Maggie, who is Black Columbian and Yugoslavian, was put up for adoption, she was marketed as a "Latina" with no mention of any African descent from her birth father's side. Maggie's light features made it easy for both the adoption agency and her parents to overlook her African heritage. However, it became evident to Maggie that she was not fully accepted by her family because, although she looked very light, she was still not White.

They [my family] didn't know for a long time that the Black part was there, but even knowing that my parents had chosen not to adopt a child who was White caused a lot of tension in my family. It took my parents a while to adopt, and later I found letters that my mom was clearly looking for a White baby, but I guess it was so hard to adopt a White baby and my mom was so desperate to have a baby, that changed. I feel like the family would have wanted my parents to wait longer and adopt a White baby. But because I was light-skinned enough, it sorta worked for a while until I started to get older and was obviously not White looking.

The complicated nature of intrafamilial racism was eloquently captured in the quote by President Barack Obama. In speaking of his White grandmother, who was his primary caregiver for a significant and formative portion of his life, he described her as:

...a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of Black men who passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe.

Intrafamilial racism is a commonly experienced phenomenon among multiracial people. For example, Samuels' (2009a) research on biracial individuals adopted by White parents found racism in the family was a common phenomenon experienced by interviewees. Likewise, interviewees in Knaus' (2006) study of multiracial college students discussed encountering racism from their grandparents and sometimes even their parents. Jackson's (2007) study on the identity of multiracial individuals concluded that intrafamilial racism had the most significant impact on the cultural identity of multiracial people.

In thinking about the links between multiracial individuals who are adopted by White families and those who were raised with birth families, it is important to note that children of interracial relationships are the only children relinquished for adoption because of race, most often because of intrafamilial racism (Samuels, 2010). While intrafamilial racism is not the only reason multiracial children are relinquished, they are the only group of children for which this happens; monoracial children are not relinquished because of race or intrafamilial racism. Ironically, multiracial children are more likely to be adopted by White couples (Samuels, 2009a; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983); however, as this and other research has documented, these individuals are still exposed to intrafamilial racism in their adoptive families. As Kartina and Maggie's experiences illustrate, such experiences are painful and often shape one's sense of belonging and views of race within a family as well as in the larger society.

Monoracism and Monoculturalism

While multiracial people experience racism in many of the same ways as monoracial individuals who are "raced" a certain way, multiracial individuals also experience racism as, "a social system of psychological inequality where individuals who do not fit monoracial categories may be oppressed on systematic and interpersonal levels because of underlying assumptions and beliefs in singular, discrete racial categories" (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 125). Racism from peers, teachers, strangers and family members can also take the form of monoracism or monoculturalism. The urban dictionary¹⁴ defines monoracism as:

¹⁴ Urban Dictionary: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=mono-racism>

- (1) The belief that racial and ethnic labels are mutually exclusive
- (2) The tendency to identify ambiguously phenotyped individuals as one race and/or not recognize the existence of mixed individuals
- (3) The belief that culturally complex individuals should only identify with one culture
- (3) The prejudicial belief that individuals not identifying with only a single race or ethnicity are intrinsically more psychologically maladjusted.

Monoracism is one of the unique ways that multiracial people experience racism and discrimination, from both Whites and people of color. Such experiences that have a significant influence on individuals' racial identities. Khanna (2000) discussed how multiracial individuals' identities were shaped by "reflected appraisals," meaning that multiracial individuals explained their identities in relation to how they believed others viewed and labeled them racially. Nearly half of the interviewees discussed their experiences with monoracism and how such experiences demonstrated the influence of external forces on their racial identity. Jesse, a 31-year-old Biracial woman who was raised by her Chinese birth mother and White step-father, articulated this point in her comment that, "you can choose, but people place it [race] on you." Additionally, as will be discussed more in Chapter Five on racial socialization, Julie understood that "society will see you how they want." Likewise, revising Sydney's earlier comment about how her classmate called her a "negro" reflects another example of race being ascribed to someone who is multiracial based on his or her phenotype.

Diana explains the conflict she felt claiming two racial backgrounds in Black communities:

I've pretty consistently identified as biracial because that always felt the most honest. I was challenged by communities of [Black] peers in my current neighborhood to identify as Black exclusively, and I realize there is a history to that. They were like you are Black, your children are Black and it was like being biracial was a traitor in some ways and to claim that White part of you is wrong. I have other biracial friends that identify solely as Black, but I never felt totally honest doing that. Maybe if I were darker or my hair was different I could wear that [racial label]... I feel like I could never wear that; I look biracial. I definitely don't look White, but I get a lot of what are you and all that.

Skin tone is a significant factor in determining how people will be raced, and this is particularly true for multiracial people who often have racially ambiguous features. In discussing his most vivid memories of racism, Trevor, who identified as Black but has light skin and could be mistaken for White, described an experience of mistaken identity in high school.

In 9th grade I was really into hip hop culture and this kid used to call me a wigger because of the way I dressed. I don't think he really knew I was Black.

Trevor's experience speaks to monocentric assumptions of race and culture and what others see as appropriate or stereotypical ways of being for White and Black people. Such definitions of appropriateness are often opposed to each other; it was inconceivable for someone with light skin to be both Black and White and inappropriate for someone who was raced as White to present themselves in ways that were stereotypically defined as "acting Black."

Tracey, 24, who is the younger sister¹⁵ of Trevor, identified as multiracial Black, White, and Native during the time of the interview. Tracey described her process of coming to identify as multiracial and how she negotiated the monoracism she encountered:

How I identify now is multiracial, but that's after a long process...In college I was mixed, then I would say mixed Black so it was acceptable answer that people could understand. I identified as mixed until I found the term multiracial. I'm not just a Black person, I'm not a White person, obviously because I'm brown [pointing to her arm], so for me this works. And now I would like to know more about my native identity. That's the main reason I want to find my biological parents -- to learn more about what tribe and all. I want to find them not to have a new family but to better explain my racial identity...because everyone else is always trying to identify me and comes up with everything under the sun!...There was time when everyone identified me as Black. And I wanted to hold on to all three identities – White, Black and Native. My family never made me choose, but everything and everyone else did.

Such experiences speak to the power of external forces in determining what racial or ethnic group an individual belongs to and thus how they should identify. As Jesse notes in her example about Obama (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six on racial socialization), even though he is multiracial, "society perceives him as Black" and, as was evidenced by the numerous discussions of how he did or should identify on the census discussed in Chapter Two, many believe he should and will identify as a Black person.

Building on the ways in which monoracism attempted to ascribe a specific monoracial identity to multiracial individuals, interviewees also discussed assumptions of monoculturalism and the idea that culture is inextricably tied to how they were "raced." Trevor's previously mentioned experience illustrates this disconnect; although he could pass for White, he was raised with a strong sense of Black culture, but was often racialized as White. Additionally, any individuals who were raised without the presence of a Black parent emphasized how they were racially Black but did not grow up with an understanding of Black culture or community because they were raised in White environments and socialized by White parents with little exposure to other Black people, cultural traditions, or norms. Jesse, whose Chinese birth mother was not open to talking about race and raised her in a predominantly White community, articulates her frustration with people making certain assumptions about her because she phenotypically looks

¹⁵ Tracey was adopted as an infant by Trevor's parents and is also multiracial.

Black by saying, “you can be Black but be part of White culture....nothing about color defines culture.” Freedom, a 28-year-old Biracial woman who was raised by her White adoptive parents in the Midwest, discusses the disconnect between race and culture by stating “sometimes it’s like I’m not authentically Black because I’m not culturally Black.” Jesse and Freedom’s explanations also speak to the assumptions and narrow definitions of “Blackness” previously discussed by Serena.

Nasir (personal communication, October 2010) defines culture as an interaction; a set of emerging and negotiated routines, practices, norms, and ways of being and thinking. Given this definition and the complicated fact that many of the individual interviewees were raised in predominantly White neighborhoods and attended predominantly White schools - in essence, socialized in a White cultural context - differentiation between culture and race became salient constructs which often influenced their identities, pushing them to learn to negotiate multiple cultures and contexts. This will be further discussed in Chapter Six, which focuses on how individuals cope with and respond to racism.

Summary

As the above stories illustrate, racism is a very real experience in the lives of people of color, particularly for multiracial people of African descent. The types of racism one experienced did not depend on whether one was raised with the presence of a Black parent or guardian, or whether one was adopted or raised by birth parents. The individuals I spoke with discussed personally-mediated racism, which manifested both subtly and overtly. Additionally, individuals were cognizant of the institutional racism that was embedded within their school structures, such as tracking and biased curriculum. While the participants in this study all described at one point or another being an outsider, or feeling disconnected from their Black and White peers, this disconnection was usually described as due to having a different appearance, experiences, and/or beliefs. This outsider feeling was often prompted by environmental factors such as the racial composition of the neighborhoods they lived in and the schools they attended. For individuals who grew up in predominantly White communities, they felt excluded from the White community because they were racially not solely White, but also from the Black community for being too light or having grown up in a White community. For individuals who grew up in mixed communities, they often felt critique from the Black community for being too light or having White parents and excluded from the White community because they were too Black.

Monoracism presented a unique experience for multiracial individuals in that they often felt encouraged by others to embrace a monoracial identity or as Diana put it, “encountered peoples’ ignorance about the variety of features that might go together in one person.” Likewise assumptions of monoculturalism, or the idea that one’s cultural experience was inextricably tied to their racialized appearance, frustrated individuals who did not fit within monocentric assumptions of cultural identities.

While the focus of these interviews was on racism in schools, interviewees often discussed experiences that went beyond the educational context. For example, exclusion from Black communities and monoracism occurred in and out of schools. Likewise, many individuals discussed the salience of racism in their families as having a significant impact on their understandings of race and racism. In the next chapter, I will focus on the measures parents or

guardians took to help the interviewees navigate the racially charged incidents they encountered and what, if anything, their parents or guardians taught them about race and racism.

CHAPTER FIVE

RACIAL SOCIALIZATION IN CROSS-RACIAL FAMILIES

Introduction

Racial socialization is thought to be one of the primary ways that Black individuals learn to navigate and cope with racism (Stevenson, 1994). Peters (1985) describes socialization as additional parenting tasks that “include the responsibility of raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society in which being Black has negative connotations” (p. 161). Such responsibilities include but are not limited to: talking to children about race and racism, protecting children from encounters with racism when possible, providing social supports when children encounter racism, and ensuring children have positive images of people of color, particularly people of African descent, available to them. To solicit information about the approaches and strategies interviewees’ parents employed to teach them about race and racism, I asked interviewees to describe how their parents responded to the incidents of racism described in the previous chapter and what, if anything their parents taught them about race. This chapter seeks to shed light on the question: In what ways do perceptions of racial socialization strategies employed by parents or guardians vary by the racial composition of one’s family?

While it is clear from the previous chapter that the individuals I interviewed experienced racialized incidents within educational institutions and larger social contexts, not all parents and families were necessarily prepared or willing to address such incidents or help their children navigate their experiences. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that some families talked about race and racism with their children, while other families did not. The majority of interviewees who were raised in a situation where there was at least one Black parent or guardian discussed the various ways in which their parents addressed the reality of race and racism, with some parents being more direct than others. Some families talked overtly about race, what it meant to be a Black person in society, and the reality of racism, while others took a more covert approach to putting their children in contexts in which race was the topic of discussion or ensuring that they grew up in diverse situations and were exposed to other Black people.

In contrast to those parents and families who recognized and discussed issues of race and racism were the families who denied, downplayed, and overlooked the significance of race and racism in their children’s lives. The majority of individuals who were raised in situations in which there were no Black parents or guardians present noted that their parents did not discuss race or racism and sometimes even went to great lengths to deny that their child was also Black.

In this chapter I discuss interviewees’ perceptions of their parents’ or guardians’ approach towards racial socialization by laying out the primary racial socialization themes that emerged during the interviews and juxtaposing families that were open to talking about race with those who denied or downplayed race and the existence of racism.

Who’s Talking About Race and Racism?

Parents and guardians who openly acknowledged the reality of racism and the impact it could have on their child focused on preparing their children for bias, strengthening the child’s sense of self, and passing on cultural traditions and values. All but one of the eight interviewees

who grew up with at least one Black parent or guardian and only one of the 13 individuals that grew up without the presence of a Black parent or guardian noted that their parents employed racial socialization strategies and measures to address and protect them from the potential effects of racism. As Julie, who was raised by her White birth mother and Black birth father, stated:

I was a student that really excelled in school. When my dad noticed my teachers were trying to hold me back at the all White school, he said that he didn't know why they were trying to hold me back, but it might be a possibility that you are one of the only Black kids. So they took me out of that school and put me in another school.

I also asked Julie what her parents told her about race and her racial background. She recalls the following incident with her mother:

When I was in middle school, there was this random time in the car with my mom and she said you are going to be what society perceives you to be; you are what society says you are. And I was like Ok cool. I knew what that meant because I always looked Black. I think it would be different for people who look more mixed. I could never pass for White.

Similarly, Katrina remembers her father's responses when she would share experiences with racism that occurred in school with her parents.

The biggest conversation we would have was that Dad would always say 'you are Black, no matter that your mom is White, you are Black ... and you are always gonna be seen as Black and you just need to act and live that way and know that about yourself.' And mom would always have her voice in there saying 'you are White too'. ...I get both their points...I get his point, especially given his upbringing where there wasn't that much room to have own identity and in small towns you are going to be seen as Black. But I get her point too that she didn't want to be left out.

Julie and Katrina's comments about how her parents approached the topic of race and racism echo the experiences of other Biracial individuals raised in families in which there are Black people present.

Trevor's father, who is White, had an instrumental role in teaching his children about race and racism. The previously mentioned example of his father teaching him extensively about MLK before Trevor learned about it in school illustrates this. Additionally, Tracey discussed their father's approach to racial socialization in the following way:

My dad would talk to me with a more critical or analytical spin and my mom would more like make jokes or react by making fun. But my dad would try to explain things more. This is interesting cause he's a White man but would explain a lot that White people can be ignorant and do bad things. He would criticize the hell out of White people...My dad would say he didn't know everything, but that he grew up seeing prejudice and when things would happen he would be like furious and confront them. This is what happened all the time that's what they taught me... don't put up with peoples' shit. Whenever anything happened my parents were on it!

Tracey, who noted people often referred to her family as the "the zebra family" when she was growing up, went on to explain that:

For my parents there was more emphasis on being biracial; they really wanted me to have an understanding of both cultures [Black and White]. They always said both...but we talked about us being a Black family, not a White family. But obviously my dad is White so that makes it messy. But there was also an emphasis on we're mixed...they said mixed or Black.

These individuals often spoke of how their parents, even the ones who were White, had a conscious recognition of what it meant for someone to walk around this earth as a Black person, either because they were Black or they made a conscious choice to be in a relationship with someone who was. Raible (2005) describes this phenomenon as "transracialization" and explains it as "a positive outcome that can happen when a person of one race spends a lot of time with individuals of another race." Through the process of transracialization, individuals, particularly White people, can transcend the myth of color-blindness, developing a deeper understanding of the role that race and racism play in a color-conscious society. This process was evident in the cases of Trevor and Tracey's White father as well as with Julie's White mother, both of whom are still in relationships with their Black partners.

A few interviewees also noted their families used indirect approaches or taught them about race and racism through modeling approaches such as taking pride in Black culture and history or openly talking about the existence and impact of racism with their friends. For example, Julie's illustrates the approach that her parents took by saying:

My parents' approach was very calculated...their approach was to expose us to things and make us aware so we could experience things and then reflect back on it and make sense of it. It wasn't like 'let's talk about race and this is what I know and this is what happens', it was like let's put them in specific situations and let them experience things and then we'll talk about it. My mom would take us to MLK day celebrations and cultural events and visit historical places and expose us to Black history stuff, but it wasn't like they would do it and say something about it [before we went]; they would just do it and expose us and make sure we knew.

Julie's story illustrates the significant role that parents' norms and actions play in bringing about an awareness of racial issues and shaping racial identity. As scholars have noted, racial socialization not only includes direct, verbal behavior, but also indirect or modeling behaviors (Thornton et al, 1990; Caughy et al, 2002). Social learning theory posits that people learn through observing others' behaviors and attitudes and explains human behavior in terms of reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Bandura (1997) notes, "Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 22).

Individuals noted that their families' efforts served as an indirect approach that taught them about race and racism through ensuring they were in racially diverse neighborhoods or schools, as was the case with Julie and Karyn's parents, taking pride in Black culture and history, and openly talking about the existence and impact of racism as was the case with Trevor and Tracey's father.

Who's Not Talking About Race and Racism?

In contrast to those families who used direct or modeling techniques to teach their children about race and racism, 12 of the 13 (92%) interviewees who grew up without the presence of a Black parent or guardian and only one of the eight (13%) individuals who grew up with a Black parent or guardian present, noted their parents took a color-blind, or egalitarian, approaches to socialization and sometimes avoided conversations about race and racism.

Leilani, a 32-year-old woman who was raised by her Hawaiian birth mother and Black birth father, explained her father's color-blind approach to discussing race as tied to class:

My dad had that military mentality of 'don't rock the boat'; it's like a middle class Black thought that 'if I work a job and raise my kids to be good people then I don't have to teach them about racism.

Interestingly, Leilani's explanation of her father's approach at racial socialization as tied to issues of class is inconsistent with previous research that suggests Black parents in middle and higher socioeconomic statuses report doing more racial socialization via cultural socialization and preparation for bias efforts (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Caughy et al, 2002; McHale, 2006). This inconsistency could be due to disconnection between what parents report, as many previous studies were based on data obtained by the parents, and how children experience and interpret their parents' efforts.

Somewhat similar to Leilani's experience, Sydney talked about her White adoptive parents' avoidance of racial issues and how this affected her sense of self:

My parents really didn't deal with it [racism] at all so I just internalized all of it. I didn't share with them what happened to me. They were like 'race doesn't matter, everyone's the same, and there's no problem'. I thought there was something wrong with me cause I thought there *was* a problem. And I didn't feel like I could talk to them about it.

As a result of her parents' reluctance to talk about race issues and her internalization of the negative attention she was getting, Sydney threw herself into her academic work and strove to be a perfectionist to avoid such experiences. She thought if she was perfect and did well in school, she would not stand out as much and the attention would be directed away from her. However, this was not the case because, as Sydney began to realize, the attention she got was due to her being the only Black person in her school, something she could not escape no matter how well she did in school.

Sydney's experience is characteristic of what many of the transracial adoptees that were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian discussed. These individuals often noted that when they told their parents about the racism that they were encountering, their parents either denied it was happening and attributed it to something else or just told them to ignore it. As a result, many of the interviewees said they stopped telling their parents about their experiences with racism or asking questions about race because they felt their parents did not know how to handle such issues.

In addition to not addressing race and racism, half of the interviewees who grew up without the presence of a Black parent or guardian discuss how, at some point during their lives, their parents were in denial that their child was also Black. This was particularly salient for the adoptees in the group for whom adoption agencies often bent racial categorization norms. For example, Maria was marked as "an Asian mix," and Maggie as Latina, both of which are true; however, this racial construction allowed both the adoption agency and the parents to deny their child was also Black. Likewise, Freedom, who was adopted by a White family and who could pass as White, had no idea she was biracial until she made contact with her White birth mother who told her that her birth father was Black, despite the fact that the adoption agency labeled her "White". While this denial was initiated by the adoption agency in an effort to market these multiracial children, it was perpetuated by the families for a significant portion of the adoptees' lives.

Maggie recounts the time when her father began to realize she was not White and how this incident conflicted with what she knew all along:

My dad had met some of my extended birth family in Miami, [he said] it was the first time he started to realize I wasn't White, because he went to this woman's house and saw pictures on her wall of my great-great uncles or something and they looked Black and had kinky hair and stuff... Even though I didn't know much about my background, even from the time I was in Miami from like 3rd or 4th grade, my fiends whose families were Caribbean or Black, their families would always be like 'are you mixed, what do

you know about your family?’ So even though I had no concrete information it was always very clear to me that there was something there and I just accepted that. I never really talked to my parents about it a lot; so when I met my birth father I was not surprised, you know? I [felt like I] had known that since I was little. But I didn’t know how to tell my parents that.

Those parents who did recognize their children were also Black, often downplayed their Black heritage. For example, Sydney’s parents told her she was “tan.”

My parents told me I wasn’t Black or White, I was this other thing that was mixed; they told me I was tan. Which is like ‘you aren’t Black you aren’t White you are both.’ They raised me to be both, but in being both I was neither one; I was some other thing.

Lyndsey, a 20-year-old Biracial woman who was raised primarily by her White stepfather, used a “hair story” to discuss her interactions with her White mother and her mother’s attempt to make her hair more “White” and manageable:

My biggest issue [around race] with my mom was around my hair because growing up I had straight hair... So every two months I’d have to go sit in this chair with these burning chemicals on my head and I didn’t like it, ever. My mom always wanted it done. I felt like she wanted my hair to be White so she could deal with it, but I didn’t want that.

Hair stories were a commonly mentioned phenomenon discussed by individuals who grew up without the presence of a Black parent or guardian, either by birth or adoption. In the play “Ungrateful Daughter”, about growing up as a Black person adopted by a White family, Lisa Marie Rollins¹⁶ vividly replays the experience of her White adoptive mother cutting off her hair because her mother could not “deal with it.” In a heart-wrenching scene, we see a young happy excited little Black girl sitting in a chair preparing for her recital in which she is to have her hair done in ringlets “just like Sarah” who was the proverbial pretty little White girl at school. In the scene, her White mother stands behind her Black daughter pulling and tugging at her curls commenting “this hair is like a wild bushman”. As her mother pulls harder and harder, the little girl begins to cry. The mother grabs a bottle of “no more tangles” and douses the little girl’s head with the ineffective detangling treatment. Finally, in a fit of frustration after no results, the mother grabs the scissors and begins to hack into the little girl’s hair telling her to “stop crying”. We end with a little girl sitting in the chair crying, tugging at her short curls while looking at a mirror, heartbroken.

¹⁶ “Ungrateful Daughter: One Black Girl’s Story of Being Adopted into a White Family. . . that aren’t Celebrities.” Written and performed by Lisa Marie Rollins, Directed by W. Kamau Bell

This scene was all too familiar to the women who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian; almost all have a story about their mother cutting their hair off short because their parents did not know how to “deal with” their hair and the pain that caused them growing up. Many endured teasing, being mistaken for a boy, feeling even more like an outsider in White communities because of their difference, and further excluded from other Black people as they grew older because they did not know how to manage their hair.

Many of the individuals who were raised by their White birth mothers discussed another phenomenon – their mothers’ desire to be acknowledged in their racial background. Hayley is 28-year-old Biracial woman who was raised solely by her White birth mother. When Hayley went to college and began socializing with other Black people, her mother would often tell her, “don’t deny me” meaning her mother did not want her to “ignore her White side.” Likewise, Leilani noted that her mother was “hurt” when she began identifying more with Black people. Similarly, Joanna, a 33 year old Biracial woman of Greek, Italian, Black, and Native American descent who was raised solely by her Greek Italian birth mother illustrates this point:

When I was in my 20s and I started talking to my mom about race she said if she had to do it again she would not have biracial children. The big thing was that she wanted to be acknowledged. Meaning she wants me to make sure I don’t check one box and if I do I have to check the White box because it’s an insult to her. She went off about Barack Obama one time because people were identifying him as a Black man and she was like ‘but he’s biracial, he has a White mother, and that’s an insult to his mother that they are calling him that and not acknowledging his mother.’ And I was like but when he walks out into the world he’s a Black man. The world sees him as a Black man. But she can’t see past her privilege.

In addition to downplaying their children’s Black heritage, some families were resistant to their children associating with other Black children. Maggie recalls a memory of how her parents reacted when she started befriending Black kids in high school:

My parents, they didn’t understand why their friends wouldn’t necessarily be my friends; because like they hung out with their White friends and wanted me to hang out with their kids and date their sons and stuff. And the kids I wanted to hang out with were not the people they would be friends with...I’d rather hang out with my Black girlfriend at her house. It was never said that it was about race but there was a lot of tension about ‘well why do you always want to hang out there and not here’ and ‘why do you want to listen to that music and bring that home and that irritates me’. And it wasn’t like overt racism in badmouthing them [my Black friends] but just not being supportive and not including them.

For the transracial adoptees in the group, another theme became salient: the intersectionality of race, adoption, and abandonment. In addition to their adoption stories, some of the adoptees

shared their fears of talking with their parents about race, particularly when their parents were not forthcoming about the issues of race and racism. Jennifer explains her fear of talking with her parents about race as tied to fears of abandonment:

I guess subconsciously I didn't want to talk [about race]... it was like the more I acknowledged it the more I didn't fit in. The more we talked about race it made clear how I was different. And I was scared that something I could do or say would make them not want me anymore, so I just didn't talk about it.

Maggie's earlier story about not knowing how to tell her White adoptive parents she knew she was also Black illustrates this fear of pointing out racial difference. Likewise, Maria's story echoes Jennifer's regarding the fear that talking about race might lead to heightened awareness of her difference and anger her family:

There is a risk involved in resisting the denial that your parents have put on you for so many years; the risk is that if I come out as this person of color, if I come out as a Black person and acknowledge that I'm Black there's a possibility that you aren't gonna love me anymore because your whole lives you've been telling me that Blackness is wrong. So how do I maintain my status as a Black person in this family if I acknowledge my whole self and if I do it at what cost do I do it? ...And I see this now in the kids I work with. Even if their parents are liberal and like 'I know you're Black'...there's something still going on there about being able to be a whole Black person.

Maria's comments speak to the subtle undercurrent expressed by many White parents and guardians that being Black was a negative attribute and builds upon themes of intrafamilial racism discussed in Chapter Four. This underlying issue of devaluing Blackness was evident in many of the interviewees' stories. In turn, many of the interviewees, particularly those who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian, struggled to find a positive sense of themselves as a person of color, especially as a Black person.

The idea of "coming out" as a person of color is a common phenomenon among transracial adoptees of color that were adopted by White parents.¹⁷ This phenomenon was expressed explicitly in Maria's comments and subtly in Maggie's comments about not knowing how to tell her family she was Black. As previous research has suggested, adoptees go to great lengths to protect the feelings of their parents; for transracial adoptees this often entails minimizing racial difference and avoiding situations or discussions that they fear would make their parents uncomfortable or suggest that they were not thankful for being adopted (Trenka,

¹⁷ A comedy skit entitled "Coming Out" in which an Asian transracial adoptee comes out as Asian to his White adoptive parents powerfully captures this experience. See "Coming Out" by the Pork Filled Players: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAMePmDCcw8>

Oparah, & Shin, 2006). These efforts at protecting their parents and minimizing conflict are often tied to fears of abandonment. Many adoptees exhibit fear their adoptive parents will give them up if they do something that upsets their parents (Brodzinsky, Schechter & Henig, 1993; Eldridge, 1999; Verrier, 1993). For adoptees to “come out” as people of color often means challenging color-blind notions held by many White transracial adoptive parents that love is all you need, which can pose potential source of conflict in many transracial adoptive families (Simon & Roorda, 2000; Patton, 2000; Trenka, Oparah, & Shin, 2006).

Summary

Interviewees’ perceptions of their parents’ approaches towards teaching them about race and racism suggest that the ways in which parents and guardians racially socialize their children is influenced by the racial composition of the family. The interviewees who were raised with the presence of a Black parent or guardian tended to report more variation in socialization methods employed by their parents, including proactive, modeling, and a few downplaying the significance of race. However, there was less variation for those who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian who more often reported experiencing avoidance or denial approaches.

There has been much debate about the effects of teaching children about race and racism. Some scholars argue that it has a positive influence by preparing children to effectively cope with racism and navigate in racially hostile environments (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Pierce, 1974; Stevenson, 1994), while others express concern that it can be detrimental to children’s development by lowering their self esteem and making them prejudiced toward others (Biafora, Warheit, Zimmerman, & Gil, 1993; McKown & Strambler, 2009). Most often, such concerns are directed towards messages about mistrust among interracial interactions. The findings of this study point to the positive aspects of openly and directly teaching children about race and racism. For example, Tracey discussed her father’s concern about teaching her about racism:

My dad was worried that he taught me too much about prejudice and he made me hate White people. ...and that just not true because I’m part White and it goes against what I do for work to hate White people and then expect there to be community building and all. I get mad at White people when they act racist, but at the end of the day I try not to make generalizations.

As Tracey discussed the special attention her father played to balancing his messages and teaching about racism, she went on to summarize her father’s approach as “direct, but not focusing on mistrust.” Trevor and Tracey’s father are examples of how carefully balanced racial socialization messages and strategies can instill a sense of efficacy and resilience while being honest about the existence of racism and directly addressing it when it occurred.

In the next chapter I delve deeper into how parents’ efforts towards racial socialization influenced interviewees approaches for responding to and coping with racism.

CHAPTER SIX

COPING WITH AND RESPONDING TO RACISM

Introduction

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person” (p. 141). The methods one employs to cope with racism are thought to influence the magnitude of the impact of racism on one’s mental health (Carter, 2007; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Smith et al, 2007). Some methods are more adaptive, such as seeking social support and developing a positive racial identity, while others are maladaptive, such as internalizing negative stereotypes or withdrawing. Racial socialization strategies that teach about race and racism, prepare children for bias encounters, and help them develop a positive sense of self are thought to offset the challenges involved in experiencing racism in turn helping people to develop more adaptive coping strategies (Spencer, 1995).

This chapter seeks to shed light on the ways in which family racial composition and parents/guardian approaches to racial socialization influenced Cross Racially Raised individuals’ methods for coping with and responding to racism. To understand how individuals previously and currently cope with racism, I asked interviewees to describe how they responded to, or coped with, the incidents of racism discussed in Chapter One, how they cope with racism now as an adult, and how they see their coping strategies as being influenced by their parents’ approach to dealing with race and racism. Among the interviewees I spoke with methods for coping with racism varied greatly, with many invoking multiple methods at once or across the span of their lives. In this chapter I discuss the various themes that arose during discussions of coping strategies that individuals employed to deal with racism they faced as young people and as adults, including internalizing, externalizing, education and advocacy, seeking community, and chameleon identities.

The categories and themes discussed in this chapter are not mutually exclusive; for example, a commonly noted phenomenon included internalizing behaviors during elementary and middle school, but moving towards more activist related strategies when in college.

Internalizing: Retreat, Detach, and Avoid

Internalizing strategies have been defined as behaviors that affect an individual’s internal psychological environment, such as withdrawal, anxiety, inhibition, and depression (Smith et al, 2007; Carter, 2007; Clark et al, 1999; Stevenson et al, 1997). In this study, internalizing responses include attributing the cause of the racist or discriminatory incident to oneself, retreating into isolation and distancing oneself from social interactions and supports, feeling hopeless or depressed, or avoiding situations and interactions that may elicit racism (Wei, Alvarez, Ku, Russell, Bonett, 2010). Over half of the 21 interviewees (n=13) employed a coping strategy that was categorized as “internalizing.” These interviewees often noted feeling like they had no one to talk to about their experiences and that talking to others would not change anything. For example, Sydney’s earlier description of how her parent’s avoidance of talking

about race led her to “internalize” her feelings and attribute her experiences as something being wrong with her. Diana discussed a similar phenomenon by saying:

I was getting beat up and made fun of because I was one of the only Black kids and the teachers never did anything about it and I didn't tell my parents...I buried all of it inside. I didn't have anyone to talk to so I just never really said anything. When things would happen at school I would tell my parents 'I didn't like school' but I rarely told them or the teachers what was happening.

Regarding coping as an adult, others shared they were cautious or protective of who they let in and did not easily befriend people until they trusted their intentions. Maggie concluded her interview by stating:

Because of all the racism I experienced in my family and all these people around me who I didn't think were racist but they really were, and my parents not really protecting me from that, I'm really cautious and protective of who I let in my life. A lot of this is around race lines, if there is a new White person coming into my life and I don't know you then it's unlikely that we'll be friends. I've built this cocoon around myself because during my childhood I was in very hostile territory and have now gone to the extreme of now I want lots of brown people around me. ...I have such a short fuse with people, especially White people in comparisons non-White people. So I'm really careful about who I let into my life.

Individuals who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian, either by birth or adoption, more often discussed internalizing their feelings as a means of coping with the racism they experienced in comparison to those who were raised with a Black parent or guardian at least partially in the picture (77% vs. 40% respectively). With regards to parent/guardian approaches to racial socialization, individuals who indicated their parents did not address race and racism and used color-blind or denial approaches to racial socialization, more often reported internalization strategies to cope with racism than those whose parents used direct or modeling approaches (70% vs. 50%, respectively).

Avoidance was another mechanism individuals employed to cope with racism. Billings and Moos (1981) theorized that avoidance was a distinct coping strategy in which an individual attempts to disengage from or escape a stressor. In this study, interviewees described attempts to avoid racism and limit the impact of discrimination by assimilating into White mainstream culture or immersing themselves in academics or extracurricular activities, such as sports, which took up a large portion of their time and limited their social interactions to those in their small circle. As Diana noted:

When I look back to all the coping options out there like drugs or substance abuse I think I chose rather productive methods of focusing on doing really well in school and being involved in sports which took up a lot of time.

Interviewees also sought to avoid or minimize experiences with racism by assimilating. A few interviewees discussed their attempts to assimilate into White, mainstream culture to cope with racism they experienced. The individuals who discussed this as a method of responding to and coping with racism were those who grew up solely with White parents or guardians, who often employed color-blind or denial approaches to racial socialization. Diana noted that as a young student she would often try to “act White” and fit into White culture to avoid racism. She elaborated that “acting White” meant:

...doing well in school, surrounding myself with White people and being very White people focused, adopting the vernacular and vocabulary of White people, and believing in White standards of success.

Sydney’s previous comments about working hard in school with the hopes of fitting into White culture and avoid bringing attention to self are illustrative of assimilating as a means of coping.

Carbado and Gulati (2003) discuss race as a “performative” identity and describe a Black person’s vulnerability to discrimination as tied to where they fit on the spectrum of stereotypical or “conventional” Blackness as measured by society in relation to “unconventional” Blackness. The less conventional a Black person is the more palatable they are to society, which in turn creates an incentive for Black people to “signal” through performance of identity (e.g., assimilating into mainstream White culture and norms) that they are not stereotypically Black. In short, serving as a coping mechanism through which one perceives they can minimize their experience of discrimination. However, such actions also serve as a form of internalized racism in that individuals endorsed the supremacy of White mainstream values and norms.

Externalizing: Anger, Defiance, and Violence

A smaller portion, about a quarter (n=5), of the interviewees employed a coping strategy or response to racism that was categorized as “externalizing.” These interviewees discussed the use of anger, defiance, and violence as a means of responding to racism. There were no substantial differences in their report of such behaviors between those who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian in comparison to those who were raised with the presence of a Black parent or guardian. Additionally, there were no discernable differences in the use of externalizing strategies between those who indicated their parents used color-blind or denial approaches to racial socialization and those who indicated their parents used more direct and modeling approaches to racial socialization. The use of externalizing strategies also did not appear to be related to type of racism experienced.

Maria, Maggie, and Joanna each discussed instances of getting involved with “the wrong crowd” or “acting out” in high school. Joanna’s story illustrates how she attempted to cope with racism she experienced in her family and her mother’s inability to support her emerging identity as a person of color:

I didn't have anyone to talk to about the racism... When I was 14, I disconnected from the family and went down a really bad road. I was running away I was stealing cars and doing what I wanted to do. I lived in this one town (that predominantly White), but I ripped and ran in this other town (that was predominantly Black). It was where I needed to be and then all my friends were people of color, but they were not positive images of people of color. I had gang banger friends and drug dealer friends and some other really shady characters.

Joanna summarized her getting involved with these groups as tied to a lack of socialization and exposure to positive Black identities.

I'm angry that my mom didn't take more responsibility with raising biracial children. She took the easy route and that makes me angry. I think my life would have been different had I had more exposure to things, I think if she would have I would have made better decisions had I had more exposure to things versus having to go and look for things that TV told me were 'Black' so I went down that stereotypical route.

Others also discussed the anger they felt at not knowing how to deal with the racism they experienced. Jennifer explains her anger by saying:

The anger didn't come until later; I'd try to stay positive then after when I think about it (racism experienced) I'd get upset and respond later...in college I got really angry, those were the 'I hate White people years' and I got involved with some revolutionary organizations that were pretty anti-White.

Some of the time the anger turned into violence. For example, Trevor described his response to racism as a youth:

I was standing on the street with my cousin and this kid rode by and called her the n-word and I walked up and punched him in the face...and then there was one time when this kid, he always tried to be the class clown, and this kid through it would be funny to call my grandparents the n-word in front of everyone. My dad told me to kick his ass, which was probably not the best idea, but when I was young I tended to handle racism with violence and fighting a lot.

Trevor, who has two sisters, discussed the gendered dynamics that may have been at play in his response to racism by noting that he thought girls were more likely to internalize and boys more likely to externalize.

Interestingly, most of the individuals who employed externalizing strategies as youth turned to social justice and activism as an outlet as adults. In the process of reflecting on his

experiences and responses to dealing with racism, Trevor noted that he was able to find an outlet for his anger in college through his involvement with student organizations that focused on addressing racism in institutions of higher education. This phenomenon is discussed further in the next section.

Education and Advocacy

Wei et al (2010) noted that one means people of color employ to address and cope with racism include education and advocacy efforts at the individual and societal level. Such actions include efforts to educate others about the negative impact of racism, helping others be better prepared to deal with and navigate racism, and efforts to illuminate and eradicate racism at the societal, or institutional, levels. Over half of the 21 interviewees (n=14) employed a coping strategy that was categorized as “education and advocacy.” Many of the interviewees discussed how activism and pursuing social justice agendas served as a coping mechanism for them.

Close to 80% of the individuals who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian noted involvement in activist and social justice efforts as a means of coping, while half of those raised with a Black parent/guardian present noted this coping method. Additionally, 77% of those who indicated their parents used color-blind or denial approaches to racial socialization and half of those who indicated their parents used more direct and modeling approaches to racial socialization reported involvement in social justice activities. Thus, individuals who noted their parents used color-blind or denial approaches more often discussed the use of activism, education, and social justice to respond to and cope with racism.

The reasons individuals noted for getting involved in activism also varied by the racial composition of the family. For example, individuals who were raised primarily by White parents or guardians often noted their desires to help as being fueled by their lack of support growing up. For example, Serena, a 22-year-old Biracial woman, who was raised by her White adoptive parents, was preparing to enter a masters program in public health when interviewed. Serena discussed her desire to work on public health issues in communities of color because of her realization of the disparities created by unequal access and service in the health care system for people of color; she stated:

Because of how I grew up I understand what it’s like to be the person who doesn’t feel welcome. That’s why I try to be inclusive in all areas. I think this shapes my goal to work on health care disparities for people of color.

Maggie, who works for an urban non-profit and spends much of time in doing social justice oriented work for communities of color, discussed her advocacy work as tied to privilege:

I realize I was very privileged. I feel like I was given the opportunities I was, like going to college and grad school and all that, because I need to be doing work to help others who haven’t been given those opportunities. Whether it’s my professional life or volunteer work where I’m reaching out to others who have been through adoption or people whose families are so poor their

parents can't keep their kids.... there is a blending of seeing my dad be a minister and take care of people, but then pairing that with the whole race, class, and adoption experiences. So I feel my career and the choices I've made are the way I minister to the world...I have to force myself sometimes in my professional life to be the person to push the harder conversation of 'why are we doing this' and 'who is this benefiting' and be an advocate and not just go along with the status quo. And sometimes it's easier than others. Having grown up with White parents and having light skin and all, I don't want to take those things for granted; I want to use them for good instead of evil.

Others spoke of their social justice orientation as tied to improving the future for upcoming generations. Trevor, who is currently a professor in Education, shared how he came to activist work and how such work helped him transition from dealing with racism by avoiding or fighting the perpetrators to being more open in calling out individual and institutional racism and striving for equal justice for communities of color.

College was an awakening...because there were so few Blacks and Chicanos and Filipinos we all kicked it together and we were always there for each other...I started taking ethnic studies classes where I started to connect with folks on campus who were activist and right around that time I-200 [the anti affirmative action initiative] came out and we started saying 'hey we need to do something!' We started a group and got really involved in rallies and marches and sit-ins and what not...the president of the college would deal with us by putting us on committees so we were able to have a voice. We were really active and I look back on it and it was nice to be around folks who stood up for what they thought was right; that pushed me to push my identity further. Now if someone says a racist comment I call them on it whereas in high school I'd probably try to ignore it or deal with it through fighting.

Karyn, a high school history teacher at a continuation high school comprised mostly of Black and Latino students, discussed her social justice approach to teaching as follows:

As a teacher, I strive to make up for some things...either what students haven't been through like about history outside the US or their own history. I think that is central to helping them have a healthy self-image. For instance in my class I really teach the histories of people of color and the working class...I think it's important because these histories are never taught and they need some exposure before they leave. It helps them think more critically about what is fed to them...It's important for me to teach the younger generation how to cope...it's less about me and more about preparing them. And part of that is that they understand what's been done before. Not just focusing on how people have

been victims of horrible things but how they have resisted these things.

As the above narratives illustrate, activism served as an outlet for dealing with personal experience of racism as well as the frustration from seeing how the continued presence of racism affects the larger society. For those who were prone to using externalizing behavior during their youth, this coping method served them particularly well later in life when they turned their anger towards racism they experienced to the larger goal of improving society for others.

Another means of coping with and responding to racism often discussed in the literature includes challenging or confronting individuals for their racist actions or beliefs (Pierce, 1974; Wei et al, 2010). Such efforts include directly calling out racism when heard or seen and not letting people get away with staying racist things around them. The individuals I spoke with varied in their approaches, methods and comfort levels with their abilities to address race and racism. While all believe it is important to address and bring an end to racism, some were more comfortable with how they do this than others. Jennifer who was a graduate student in public policy on the East Coast at the time of her interview, discussed her apprehension in directly calling out racism by saying:

Because of how I was raised, I think it's more difficult for me to call people out on racism; I've always been uncomfortable doing this. To this day I'm not comfortable calling people out. Because I've been so used to not saying anything about it [racism], it's still hard for me to talk about it. I can do it academically, but personally it's still hard.

Jennifer's comment illustrates an important point: the disconnect between theory and practice. Jennifer notes that in the academic world she is comfortable discussing and addressing racism but has difficulty when it comes to dealing with it in real life. Conversations about race and racism are easier to academize but often do not give people the tools necessary to combat and cope with racism in their daily lives. Thus, not only parents, but also educators have not fully supported Pierce's (1974) vision that all will be able to identify and call out racism; they have only done part of the job by helping people begin to identify racism, the harder task is helping people address racism when it is encountered. This is an important component, for both Whites and people of color, in bringing an end to racism.

Seeking Black Culture and Community

Scholars have noted that seeking social support is commonly used strategy among people of color to cope with a racist incident (Krieger & Sidney, 1996; Mellor, 2004; Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Swim et al., 2003; Thompson Sanders, 2006; Utsey et al., 2008). The individuals in one's social network can help model effective methods for responding to and coping with discrimination, help the individual realize that racism and discrimination are shared experiences, and help the individual to feel more connected to his or her racial or ethnic group (Harrell, 2000; Mellor, 2004). For individuals in this study, these social supports were discovered through immersing themselves in Black communities in adolescence and adulthood. Over half of the 21 interviewees (n=13) employed a coping strategy that was categorized as "seeking Black culture

and community”; of those 70% (n=9) were without the presence of a Black parent or guardian and half (n=4) were raised in interracial families with a Black parent or guardian, at least partially, present.

Cross (1991) describes Immersion-Emersion as a two-phase process of racial identity in which Black individuals become immersed in Blackness. The first part of this stage, which he terms immersion, is a period of intense Black involvement when individuals can experience rage at White people and their culture, guilt for believing what White mainstream society has told them about Black people, and pride in Black people and Black culture. In the second part of this stage, emersion is a time when individuals have greater control over their feelings and emotions and begin to internalize and reconcile the uneasiness with their new identity. For the individuals in this study, this immersion-emersion experience not only served to shape their identities, but as a way to cope with racism they experienced from growing up in racially complex families; this process was particularly salient for those who grew up without the presence of a Black parent or guardian.

Parent socialization approaches may also have had an influence on interviewees using immersion experiences as a means of coping; individuals who noted their parents used color-blind or denial approaches (70%) more often discussed the use of community seeking strategies to respond to and cope with racism in comparison to those who indicated their parents used direct and modeling approaches (50%). Jennifer, a transracial adoptee who noted her parents avoided discussion of race and racism, explains her desire to find community among other Black people by saying:

I went through this period in high school where I only hung out with Black people; I stopped hanging out with my White friends. Before I felt like being Black was a negative thing, but then I felt more normal around Black people.

Comments like Jennifer’s were common among those who were raised by White parents or guardians in primarily White communities. This sense of feeling more “normal” around other Black people was particularly salient given that this group of individuals often received messages that downplayed or denied their Blackness, in turn making them feel awkward and as if something was, as Sydney previously stated, “wrong with them.”

Joanna, who was raised by her White birth mother, describes how she sought out other Black people as a source of socialization:

Growing up I never had anyone or anything to help me feel comfortable with who I was so I was always searching. I never felt I fit in with the White community because something was different but I never really fit in with the Black community either. Everything I learned [about Black culture] I learned either TV or a book or through my friend and their families. I never learned anything through my family, it was either me seeking it out, me making friends with people and them teaching me and helping

me...they taught me to cook soul-food, how to do my hair and things like that.

Building upon the idea that social networks and community can help individuals feel more connected to a racial or ethnic group and activate a sense of racial identity, Karyn, who was raised by interracial parents, discussed her decision to identify as Black as situated in a global context of common experience.

I identify as Black, not African American but Black, because I feel like Black speaks to a larger experience that's not defined by nationality or anything else...I'm connected to other people in other parts of the world. I'm living the Black experience...by Black experience I mean racism and the struggles that you encounter because of your race or difference.

The concept of political race as described by Guiner and Torres (2002) is particularly evident in Karyn's explanation of her identity, not only on the local perspective but also at the global perspective. Such identities move beyond the person to a larger, political agenda in which commonalities are recognized among those who have been "raced" similarly.

International travel, specifically to African and Caribbean countries, was a priority for many of the participants, including Karyn, who expressed a strong desire to expose themselves to diverse others and understand the Black experience on a larger, more global level. This phenomenon was particularly salient among those who spent the majority of their lives in a segregated, predominantly White community. During the time of the interviewees, three of the interviewees traveled to Ghana during college, and two traveled to Caribbean countries after college. Several others mentioned goals of traveling abroad in the near future. Diana explains her experiences traveling to Ghana:

I went to Ghana before I graduated and I had to confront a lot of things about race. It was interesting there to be perceived completely as White; like the fact that there were actually Black people in America at all, and even if there were I was not one of them. It was the whole 'back to Africa' myth... It was part of the search for 'where does the Black part fit in?' and I stopped hiding in the pretend Hispanic thing or the pretend White thing and I was going to figure out this Black aspect so I went to Africa but it wasn't there.

The interviewees who traveled to Ghana and the Caribbean each mentioned similar experiences with regard to race and skin tone. While their desire was to connect more with Black communities globally, they were again confronted with feeling unsure about their identities as Black people. Such experience pushed them to think more complexly about race and how perceptions and definitions differed in different contexts.

Connected to efforts to immerse themselves in Black communities, interviewees also discussed the use of friends and social networks to cope with experiences of racism, particularly

as adults. Most often this was talked about in relation maintaining a core group of friends of color who could empathize with their experiences. Maggie discussed how her recognition of racism shaped the communities she involves herself in:

...it's definitely shaped a lot about where I choose to live and what I expose myself to. I can't imagine living somewhere where didn't have a critical mass of Black people, or even Latino people. I don't want the feeling of like I'm in the minority.

Currently, 85% of interviewees live in diverse or predominantly Black communities and discussed how their choice of living situation was a conscious effort to be in a diverse area which provided communities of people of color to socialize with and a refuge from the racism they experience in their lives. As Diana points out, "I feel like in the last 5 years it's become a non-negotiable for me to have a meaningful Black community that is a social network. So I have intentionally built up that network of friends."

It is interesting to think about this method of coping in light of interviewees' previous descriptions about feeling excluded from Black communities earlier in life. Such efforts to immerse themselves in Black communities often served as a self "re-socialization" experience. This type of re-socialization speaks to the changing, and negotiated nature of culture in that individuals developed their own understanding of themselves and their cultural identities as influenced, but not necessarily predefined, by the circumstances in which they grew up.

Chameleon Identities: Racial Identity as Fluid and Changing

Racial identity researchers have suggested that strong identification with one's racial or ethnic group can serve as a psychological buffer against prejudice and discrimination (Cross, 1991; Spencer, 1995; Stevenson, 1994). For multiracial individuals, biculturalism and situational identity have been described as adaptive coping mechanisms that help them navigate racialized environments (Collins, 2002; Harris & Sim, 2002; Jackson, 2007; Root, 1996; Stephen, 1992; Samuels, 2009a; Knaus, 2006; LaFramboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Miville et al, 2005).

The changing nature of identity was strongly present among interviewee's discussions of how they negotiated racially salient situations; three quarters of the interviewees (n=16) employed a coping strategy that was categorized as "chameleon identity." For example, interviewees described instances of changing how they racially identify depending on the context they are in and who they are around. As Lyndsey put it, "it's like this chameleon aspect of being mixed...whatever environment I'm in I can identify as that."

Interviewees raised in interracial families (88%) more often mentioned this theme in comparison to those raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian (70%). Individuals who noted their parents used direct or modeling approaches (90%) more often discussed the situational nature of their identity and changing how they identify as a way to navigate racially salient contexts in comparison to those who indicated their parents employed color-blind or denial approaches to racial socialization (70%).

The cyclical nature of identity was evident in interviewees' stories. For example, individuals would often note identifying one way in elementary school, another in high school,

and still another in college. For those interviewees who had been out of college for a while, another phase emerged and it was common for that phase to be reminiscent of a previous phase. Leilani who during the time of the interview identified as Black and Hawaiian, illustrated the changing nature of identity over time and how identities can often cycle back around throughout one's life.

As a kid I identified as 'American', then in high school I was Black, then in college, if you knew me well and were my friend, I was Black and Hawaiian, but I was Black or a person of color if you didn't know me well. Now I'm starting to explore my Hawaiian identity more and I identify as Black and Hawaiian.

Karyn, who identified as Black at the time of the interview, discussed her identity development process as both fluid and being tied to how others saw her and the assumptions that were placed upon her.

When I was in elementary I thought I was White and that it was easier if I was White and just one thing...then I got to junior high and was I like 'I'm not at all White and that's ok.' Then I was ok with being Black. Then in high school it was all about being biracial, then by the time I got to college it was like 'you *are* Black' and they (other Black students) will remind you of it. And I really started to identify that way too. It was that constant feeling of otherness and you must be Black and we need to place you in a category, so you're Black. And just because I identify as Black doesn't mean I reject my White side.

The previously mentioned comment by Leilani about how she identified one way if you were her friend, but another way if you were a stranger or just an acquaintance not only demonstrates the fluidity of identity, but also illustrates its contextual nature as well. Jesse, a 30-year-old woman of Chinese and Black racial background, who grew up with her Chinese birth mother and White stepfather, concisely summarized this point by saying, "In private you can be whatever you want, but in public you choose", meaning she could identify as Black and Chinese in her home, but may choose to identify as Black when she was in public.

The idea that identity is fluid and changing is an emerging perspective among scholars who study racial identity, particularly in the multiracial literature. In contrast to previous theories that embrace a stage model which assume that there is some developmentally appropriate choice, or end, that one should strive for, modern theories posit that identity is a fluid, multidimensional phenomenon in which individuals can cycle through various stages throughout their life or simultaneously maintain attitudes reflective of multiple stages (Parham, 1989; Helms, 1995; Samuels, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Research has consistently documented a situational identity among multiracial people (Collins, 2002; Harris & Sim, 2002; Jackson, 2007; Root, 1996; Stephan, 1992; Samuels, 2009a; Knaus, 2006), and Maria P.P. Root's *Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People* specifically affirmed the right for mixed-race persons to identify differently in different situations (Root, 1996).

It is important to note the role of skin tone in one's ability to claim different identities and how well this process is received by others. Those who were more phenotypically "Black" or "White" had a more difficult time claiming their dual heritages due to monoracism and monoculturalism, as was discussed in Chapter Four. However, many of these individuals were able to pull on their cultural knowledge of the multiple communities to navigate in different contexts. Many scholars have pointed out that this ability to learn and display different communication styles and patterns of interaction in different groups - processes also referred to as "code switching" - are assets that can help individuals navigate racialized environments (Jackson, 2009; LaFramboise et al, 1993).

Summary

The findings in this chapter speak to the plethora of methods individuals use to cope with racism and suggest that the method one employs is influenced by parents' efforts towards racial socialization. Table 1 summarizes individuals' coping strategies by parent/guardian racial socialization approaches and family racial composition.

Table 1. Coping strategies by parent/guardian racial socialization approaches & family racial composition

	Internalize	Externalize	Education & Advocacy	Seeking Black Culture (Immersion)	Chameleon Identity
Parent/guardian denied or avoided race & racism (n=13)	70%	NA	77%	70%	70%
Parent/guardian addressed race & Racism (n=8)	50%	NA	50%	50%	90%
No Black Parent/guardian present (n=13)	77%	NA	80%	70%	70%
Black Parent/guardian present (n=8)	40%	NA	50%	50%	88%

Interviewees who noted their parents denied the existence of racism, employed color-blind approaches or racial socialization more often reported coping methods such as internalization early in their lives and immersion and activism later in life. Interviewees who noted their parents used direct or modeling approaches to teaching about race and racism tended to note the use of “chameleon” or situational identities to navigate racism. These differences can be partially explained by the different needs of the interviewees. For those who were raised in without the presence of a Black parent or guardian, who most often had parents who employed denial or color-blind approaches to socialization, the immersion experiences often served as a means of compensating for what they were missing in their families; there may have been less need among those who were raised in interracial families with a Black parent or guardian at least partially present to seek out opportunities to find the “Black culture” they were not already connected to. Likewise, activism and social justice agendas may have been mentioned more by individuals who reported their parents’ efforts centered on color-blind approaches and denial approaches because, as was noted by Serena, they felt they did not have the support growing up and realized how much injustice was occurring in the larger society.

The use of situational identities more often employed by those who received direct and modeling approaches could be explained by the fact the majority of parents who employed direct or modeling approaches tended to be those with a Black parent at least partially present and thus individuals grew up with exposure to both races and cultures felt comfortable moving through different identities.

There were no discernable differences in the use of externalizing strategies between those who indicated their parents used color-blind or denial approaches to racial socialization and those who indicated their parents used more direct and modeling approaches to racial socialization. Although only a small proportion of interviewees employed the use of externalizing strategies, it is important to note their salience because their stories illustrate the ways in which maladaptive coping strategies, such as fighting and other forms of acting out, can be channeled into adaptive coping strategies; individuals found productive outlets for coping later in life via the use of education and advocacy. Providing such outlets for youth who may be exhibiting maladaptive coping strategies early on may help them turn to more adaptive strategies sooner in life and avoid some of the negative consequences of maladaptive coping.

The participants in this study expressed a collective desire to connect to a community of people of color, specifically Black communities. In essence, the interviewees in this study wanted to form friendships and relationships with others who could relate to their experiences as a person who was raced as “Black.” This was particularly salient for the individuals who were raised solely with White parents or guardians. All of the participants described efforts or ways that they were actively seeking such a community in their current lives and future plans. For many of the interviewees, these efforts included traveling and joining different racial or cultural groups in college and professional life.

While some responses to racism and coping strategies mentioned by the interviewees were more adaptive than others, the coping methods discussed by interviewees shed light on how to shape programs and policies that help foster the use of adaptive coping strategies such as providing outlets for activism, opportunities to connect with larger Black communities, and social support systems of individuals who can empathize with their experiences. In the next and

final chapter, I summarize the findings of the study, and further discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this study for policy and practice.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate: (1) the ways in which Cross Racially Raised individuals experience racism in educational settings, (2) the ways in which Cross Racially Raised individuals perceive their parents/guardians' efforts toward racial socialization, (3) the coping strategies Cross Racially Raised individuals employ to navigate racially hostile environments, and (4) the ways in which experiences of racism, coping strategies, or perceptions of parent/guardian approaches to racial socialization differ for multiracial individuals of African descent raised with a Black parent or guardian present in comparison to those raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian.

The findings of this research build upon other studies regarding the presence of racism in school and the larger society (Coutinho & Oswald, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 1991; Neblett, 2006; Noguera, 1995; Oakes, 1985), and reiterate previous findings regarding the racialized experiences of multiracial and transracially adopted individuals (McKinley, 2002; Patton, 2000; Samuels, 2009; Senna, 1998; Simon and Roorda, 2000; Root, 2001; Trenka, Oparah, & Shin, 2006). This study expands the discourse on racial socialization by illuminating differences in how parents racially socialize their children based on family racial composition. Because this research has revealed both positive and negative socialization experiences, there are many implications for how parents racially socialize their children, prepare and protect them from racism, and help foster a positive sense of self identity. In this chapter I summarize the significant findings from this study and discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this study.

Summary of Findings

Experiences with racism. Multiracial people are often lauded as being evidence of the waning significance and presence of racism; their mere existence supposedly symbolizes that increased interactions among the races has decreased racism. In reality, multiracial people help illuminate the ways that racism still exists and that efforts to classify people based on assumed racial characteristics which differentially include and exclude people are alive and well. Each of the interviewees I spoke with shared accounts of racism and discrimination they experienced in many areas of their lives; including personally mediated racism, institutional racism, exclusion from the Black community, intrafamilial racism, and monoracism. Some of the experiences echo Pierce's (1970) conception of racial microaggressions and prompted interviewees to question how much of their experiences were based on race. Others noted quite painful and blatant racial encounters both in school and in their families. While many of the accounts shared above focus on experiences these individuals had as children or youth, individuals also shared accounts of racism they recently encountered as adults, either in college or on the job. Given such experiences, it is clear that racism and discrimination is still a very salient aspect in the lives of people of color and thus, it is important for families to provide space and resources for their children to cope with such experiences.

Racial socialization. It is important to note that many Black individuals who grow up in families with Black parents in predominantly White communities and schools have a similar experience in terms of racism and being one of the only Black people; thus many of the experiences with racism in school are not unique to the Cross Racially Raised population. However, what is unique is the role that family plays in helping individuals navigate this racism. For example, studies have found that Black parents living in predominantly White neighborhoods felt that their active participation in the racial socialization of their children was more imperative than if they resided in a Black community (Tatum, 1987; Thornton et al, 1990); whereas in this study, multiracial Black individuals who grew up without the presence of a Black parent or guardian, who often lived in predominantly White neighborhoods, tended to have less racial socialization to prepare them for racism.

As the narratives show, family approaches to addressing issues of race and racism vary greatly. Perhaps the most important finding regarding the ways in which families did or did not address the incidents of racism their children encountered was that racial socialization processes varied by the racial composition of the family. Participants who were raised in a situation where there was at least one Black parent noted their families spoke with them about race, overtly or covertly socialized them to be aware of the racism that existed, and sometimes took protective measures to counter the impact of racism, whereas individuals who were raised by White parents or guardians in which there were no Black parents or guardians present had the opposite experience. These differing experiences led to two different comfort levels of talking with their parents about race. The participants who noted their parents were open to conversations about race and racism more often told their parents when racial incidents occurred, while those whose parents did not talk with them about race internalized their experience, leaving them feeling unprepared to deal with racially charged incidents and uncomfortable talking with their parents about such incidents.

While this study did not seek to address *why* some families were more open to addressing race and racism than others, previous literature and theory on racial identity development and cross-racial dialogues may offer some insights on this issue. As Stevenson (1994) notes, fear is a central factor in why people do not talk about race: the fear that talking about racism will make their child angry or bitter, the fear that children are not able to understand, and the fear that such discussions will inhibit children from fulfilling their potential, are but a few reasons scholars have noted Black parents choose not to talk to their children about race (Stevenson, 1994; Spencer, 1984; Thornton et al, 1990). For White people, these fears are augmented by the fear of seeming racist and having to acknowledge their privilege (Frankenberg, 1993; Helms, 1993; McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 2003:). Similar to Bonilla Silva's (2006) notion of "color-blind racism," Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton (2008) note that "strategic color-blindness" is one way that Whites try to appear unbiased by avoiding discussions about race and racism. However, this avoidance of the reality of race, and the implications it holds, actually perpetuates racism and its negative impact on people of color by maintaining the racial status quo. As Stevenson notes, "the fear of dialogue paralyzes our ability to move beyond racial tension" (p. 191). Not talking about race allows one to circumvent having to challenge the current racial structure, their position in the racial structure, and underlying assumptions that uphold those structures.

As social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) points out, individuals will seek out others like themselves to improve self-esteem. Often, for people of color this is found in the

family. As these stories illuminate, if one does not have a family that resembles them, it may be difficult to find such solace and may even exacerbate feelings of exclusion. An individual's ability to develop a positive sense of themselves as a person of color and cope with racism that affects their lives can be negatively impacted if parents deny their child's race, perpetuate negative attitudes toward Black people - either subtle or overt - or let fear of discussing race and racism inhibit them from addressing the racism their children face.

Raible's (2005) theory of transracialization may be one way in which parents in cross-racial families can overcome their apprehension about addressing race and racism and support their children in dealing with racially charged situations. As Raible notes:

Transracialization implies transcending the limits imposed by the process of racialization. If racialization teaches us to fear the racial Other, transracialization draws the Other closer. Whereas racialization exerts strong pressure to keep the races separate, transracialization intentionally crosses color lines. While racialization is based on historic notions of racial superiority, transracialization transforms such notions through its explicit anti-racist orientation.

The findings of this study suggest a lack of transracialization among parents raising multiracial Black children without the presence of a Black parent or guardian. For example, Diana and other's comments about their White mothers not wanting to be "ignored" and not being able to "see past their privilege" speaks to the lack of transracialization. Likewise, the "hair stories" that many of the women shared about how their mothers did not want to, or make any efforts to, "deal with" their child's hair speaks to the racial and cultural blind spots that can occur when parents or guardians do not make efforts to cross color lines and understand the needs of their child of color; efforts that must occur even if it makes them uncomfortable.

Responding to and coping with racism. One of the most salient aspects that arose in discussions about responding to and coping with racism was that methods for coping changed across time. For example, Trevor externalized through fighting as a child but as a young adult turned to activism as a means of coping, which he has used since college. Similarly, Sydney thought that through hard work and good grades she could assimilate into the predominantly White community she grew up in so she would not stick out as the only Black girl, but once she was in college chose to immerse herself in Black culture and community. For the most part, interviewees who noted their parents denied the existence of racism and employed color-blind approaches towards racial socialization more often reported coping methods such as internalization early in their lives and immersion and activism later in life.

Such experiences are characteristic of Sue and Sue's (2003) five-stage model of racial/cultural identity development. The model hypothesizes that people of color in the earlier stages of racial identity development tend to prefer the dominant culture to minority cultures (e.g.: assimilation). As a result, they may feel ashamed because they are being discriminated against and attribute the cause of discrimination to their own inferiority or feel hopeless about how to deal with discrimination (e.g.: internalization). In the middle stages of racial identity development, people of color may start to realize that racial discrimination exists, begin to

endorse a minority culture, and view their psychological problems as products of oppression and racial discrimination. In this stage people of color may become aware of their emotion and employ maladaptive coping strategies such as violence, anger, and other externalizing behaviors, or adaptive coping mechanisms such as seek support from others for validation and advice regarding how to deal with discrimination (e.g.: seeking culture and community). In the later stages of racial identity development, people of color may engage in more introspection and self-exploration and commit themselves to addressing racial discrimination and focusing their efforts towards educating people both within and outside their community to become better prepared to address and deal with racial discrimination (e.g.: education and advocacy).

Another commonly mentioned aspect of coping and responding noted by interviewees was their use of situational identities and sense of bicultural competence. Interviewees who noted their parents used direct or modeling approaches to teaching about race and racism tended to note the use of “chameleon” or situational identities to navigate racism.

Scholars focusing on the development of multiracial people have more frequently begun to note bicultural competence as an asset to individuals. LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) developed the *Model of Bicultural Competence* which outlines the skills involved in effectively navigating two cultures: (1) *knowledge of cultural beliefs and values* includes the degree to which an individual is aware of the history, institutions, rituals and everyday practices of a given culture; (2) *positive attitudes toward both majority and minority groups* occur when the individual recognizes and holds each cultural group in positive regard; (3) *bicultural efficacy* is the belief that one can live effectively within two groups without compromising one’s sense of cultural identity; (4) *communication ability* includes an individual’s effectiveness in communicating ideas and feelings to members of a given culture both verbally and nonverbally; (5) *role repertoire* encompasses the range of cultural or situationally - appropriate behaviors an individual has developed; and (6) *a sense of being grounded* embodies the extent to which an individual has established stable social networks in both cultures. Jennifer’s comments illustrates her sense of bicultural competence:

I think I’ve come a long way; I’ve grown. I have a deep understanding of both cultures and communities (White and Black). I’ve been pretty immersed in Black community since college, but I feel able to negotiate both worlds because she grew up with White people for so long.

While instilling a sense of bicultural competence may not have been a conscious, deliberate goal of their parents, the ability to navigate in multiple racial and cultural contexts was something that interviewees developed as a result of their struggles to fit in and be accepted. Thus, although it was a potentially positive outcome, it was not always associated with positive experiences along the way. Individuals often went through tumultuous struggles with identity and maladaptive coping methods as youth to get a more comfortable sense of themselves and their abilities as adults. Because bicultural competence is thought to be a positive navigational method, it is imperative that parents, both adoptive and birth, take more deliberate means to socialize and support their children in ways the promote this.

Theoretical Implications

This research holds many theoretical implications for the study of racial socialization. First, while much of the research on racial socialization has focused on Black families raising Black children, this research expands conceptions of who is raising Black children, challenges long-held monoracial assumptions of family contexts, and illuminates differences in how parents racially socialize their children based on family racial composition.

Second, while most studies have conceptualized racial socialization as a unidirectional process in which parents transmit knowledge to their children, this study posits that racial socialization is a bidirectional process in which individuals are active participants in their socialization and development of coping skills. As such, the use of reflective qualitative interviews with adults elicited the individuals' agency in developing coping skills. For example, many of the individuals who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian went to great lengths to seek out communities of people of color and develop cultural identities that differed from the ways in which they were raised. While these efforts may not have always been pleasant or easy, they were often eye-opening to the individuals, particularly with regard to their initial early experiences with Black communities. This notion of re-socializing the self speaks to the agency individuals developed in finding ways to cope with and address racism on the individual and structural level as well as develop a positive sense of identity.

Third, Cross Racially Raised individuals help illuminate sources and influences other than family that serve to socialize individuals to race (e.g. teachers, peers, other adults, extended family), particularly if parents were not the primary socializers regarding race in this context. For example, Maggie and Joanna discussed learning about aspects of Black culture and found a sense of community among her friends' parents. Likewise, Hayley discussed building a close relationship with a good friend's father who has served as a Black male role-model in her life since college.

Additionally, the experiences of Cross Racially Raised individuals illuminated what happens when parents did not talk about race and racism and the outcomes of being socialized primarily in one of Boykin and Toms' (1985) domains of mainstream, minority, and cultural socialization. For example, individuals who were raised without the presence of a Black parent or guardian, who also more commonly noted receiving racial socialization messages and strategies that downplayed or denied the existence of racism, also more often reported the use of internalizing coping strategies in their youth. Such findings hold implications for larger psychosocial and developmental phenomenon for people of African descent in general, regardless of the racial composition of their families.

Implications for Policy and Practice

On a practical level, this research holds implications for the role that schools can play in helping children develop skills necessary to cope and remain resilient in the face of racism, particularly if the immediate family is not offering those supports. Ultimately, this research can help shed light on how schools, educators, and parents can help children develop and deal with the potential challenges of being Black in a society that devalues their race. This research also has the potential to inform existing and future programs for parents and caregivers by

illuminating the potential protective qualities of racial socialization for children of African descent, in turn helping to facilitate the development of appropriate services and intervention strategies targeting mental health and psychosocial development among youth and their families.

Many individuals, both those raised in adoptive homes and those raised in birth families, often stated they felt their parents did the best they could given the resources they had. It is important to remember that the individuals I interviewed are all adults and some of these experiences happened many years ago. However, some of the adults that currently work with children and youth often note seeing similar dynamics of family racial socialization occurring today, particularly the focus on color-blind racial socialization for transracial adoptees.

While growing up as a multiracial Black person in a family without the presence of Black parents or relatives presents challenges for all involved, all hope is not lost. Research on transracial adoptive families increasingly supports cultural competence among transracially adoptive parents and suggests that some White adoptive families believe addressing issues of race and racism is a reality of parenting children of color (Carstens & Julia, 2000; Feigelman & Silverman, 1983; Friedlander, Larney, Skau, Hotaling, Cutting, & Schwam, 2000; Huh & Reid, 2000; Lee, Yoo, Weintraub, and Su, 2002; Steinberg & Hall, 2000; Vonk & Angaran, 2001). A better understanding of families such as these can help create a model for racial socialization in transracially adoptive families and help shape currently existing and future training programs for families. While training of biological families is not as feasible as training for adoptive parents, a number of support programs for parents and guardians of monoracial and multiracial children of color do exist, thus, this research can help inform the many social and educational programs and policies designed to support families of color in general.

Education professionals can also play a role in helping children address and combat racism through ensuring that their curriculum is not only multicultural, but that their classrooms create a space where people from all background feel safe when race salient topics arise, such as MLK or slavery discussions. Additionally, many of the interviewees I spoke with noted that the school did nothing to stop the racism that was occurring. Educational professionals at all levels need to take a proactive role in talking about racism and discrimination before it occurs and openly addressing it when it occurs, no matter how subtle it may be. Additionally, the presence of tracking reflects the class and racial inequalities of US society and helps to perpetuate inequalities, stereotypes, and low expectations for students of color. Finally, recalling Jennifer's story of how her career counselor questioned her ability to perform on college entrance exams, professionals at all levels of the education system should strive to become more culturally competent individuals who do not perpetuate the racism that students receive from peers or the larger society.

Future Research

This study focused primarily aspects of family racial composition, experience with racism, racial socialization, and methods for coping with and responding to racism. Future research should more deeply investigate additional aspects of vulnerability level such as gender and socioeconomic status as well as developmental outcomes such as mental and physical health, biculturalism, and relationships. A larger sample would allow for more quantitatively-based statistical analysis in which one could further investigate and categorize the initial findings and

themes that emerged from this study as well as additional variables. Future work could further delineate the components of racial socialization in cross-racial families and the specific factors identified within specific settings that affect individual outcomes.

Additionally, a deeper investigation regarding the connection between social class and family racial composition is needed. While not the focus of this study, it is worth noting that many of the individuals interviewed who were raised primarily by White parents or guardians tended to come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in comparison to those who were raised in interracial families with a Black parent or guardian present. A larger scale, quantitatively based follow up study would allow one to make inferences about this confound and delve more deeply into the intricacies and intersectionality of social class and parent/guardian race.

Another area of future research could focus more specifically on intrafamilial racism. This study and many others have illuminated this phenomenon as a reality in the lives of multiracial and transracially adopted people. A study that focuses specifically on this experience and how it shapes the lives, perceptions, and long term development of multiracial and transracially adopted people is needed.

Finally, additional research on the initial findings of re-socialization and outside sources of socialization such as peers illuminated in this study would better help scholars and practitioners understand the role of agency in racial socialization.

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APPENDIX A:
Detailed Table of Participants

Name	Age	Raised by	Racial Mix	Self Ascribed Racial Identity	Geographic Location (time of interview)
Ana	29	White birth mother	Biracial (Black-Egyptian F/White-Native American M)	Mixed or biracial	Midwest
Diana	30	White birth father	Biracial(Black M/White F)	Biracial	East Coast
Freedom	28	Adopted by White family	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Biracial	Midwest
Gina	29	White foster parents (when older)	Multiracial (Nigerian F/Indian M)	Black	Bay area
Hayley	28	White birth mother	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Half Black half White	East Coast
Jennifer	23	Adopted by White family	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Black	East Coast
Jesse	31	Chinese Mother/White stepfather	Biracial (Black F/Chinese M)	Black	South
Joanna	33	Greek/Italian mother	Multiracial (Greek-Italian M/Black-Native American F)	Greek, Italian, Black, Indian	Bay area
Julie	28	Black father/White mother	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Black and White	Bay Area
Karyn	30	Black father/White mother	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Black	Bay Area
Kathryn	34	White mother (also Black father, White aunt/uncle)	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Black and Jewish	Bay area
Katrina	25	Black father/White mother	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Human	Bay Area
Lauren	22	Black father/White mother	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Black	East Coast
Leilani	32	Black father/Hawaiian mother	Biracial (Hawaiian M/Black F)	Hawaiian and Black	Southern California
Lyndsey	20	White stepfather	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Black	Bay Area
Maggie	30	Adopted by White family	Multiracial(Black F/ Latina-White M)	Afro-Columbian or Afro-Latina	Bay Area
Maria	35	Adopted by White family	Multiracial (Black F/Filipina-White M)	Black	Bay Area
Serena	22	Adopted by White family	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Black	Midwest
Sydney	31	Adopted by White family	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Black and White	Bay Area
Tracey	24	Adopted by interracial family (Black mother White father)	Biracial (Black F/White M)	Multiracial	Bay Area
Trevor	32	White father/Black mother	Multiracial (Black-Native American M/White F)	Black	Midwest

APPENDIX B:

Interview Protocol

Dimension 1: Family Background and Approaches to Racism

- 1) Tell me about your family and the people who raised you
 - i. About the place raised
 - ii. If adopted, age at adoption/placement
 - iii. Relation of people who raised (bio parent, bio relative, adoptive parent, other guardian)
 - iv. Parents occupation, income, other SES factors
- 2) When did you first become aware of race?
- 3) Growing up, how did your family handle issues of race and racism
 - i. What messages about race and racism were communicated in your family?
 - ii. What did they do when racist incidents occurred?

Dimension 2: Experiences with Racism in School

- 4) Tell me about your educational experiences
 - i. Where did you go to school – how parents picked school
 - ii. How were your grades
 - iii. Experiences with teachers
 - iv. Thoughts on what learned/curriculum
 - v. How were your friendships and relationships
- 5) What is your most memorable experience with racism in a school context?
- 6) How did you handle that situation?
 - i. How did you cope with it?
- 7) How or from whom did you learn to cope with it?
- 8) How did your family handle incidents of racism when you were in school?

Dimension 3: Impact of Family Approaches to Racial Socialization

- 9) Now, as an adult, tell me about your views on race and racism
 - i. Where live
 - ii. Work/occupation
 - iii. Perceptions of other Black people?
 - iv. Relationships
 - v. How cope with racism
 - vi. Racial identity?
 1. If forms were to do away with check boxes for indicating your racial/ethnic identity and just had a blank line to fill in, how would you fill it in?

- vii. If in or attended college – what was college like for you in terms of racial identity and development?
- viii. If not attend college – what did you do after HS and what was that like in terms of racial identity and development?
- ix. If have kids, what is your approach to addressing race and racism with your children?

10) How, if at all do you think your experiences with race and racism in school shaped your views and decisions as an adult?

- i. Career?
- ii. Where live?
- iii. Perceptions of other Black people?
- iv. Relationships and friendships?

11) In what ways do you think your family's approach to race and racism shaped how you now view race and racism?

- i. Perceptions of other Black people?
- ii. Relationships and friendships?
- iii. Racial identity?

12) How, if at all, do you think your experiences differ from what youth today are experiencing in terms or racism and family dynamics/approaches to addressing race?

13) What, if anything, do you think schools could do to better prepare children to cope with and address racism?

14) Anything else you would like to add that I didn't ask?

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Notice

Participants Needed!

Exploring the Educational Experiences of multiracial Black People Raised in White and Interracial Families

Greetings!

I am recruiting multiracial adults (18 to 35 years old) of African or African American descent who were raised by White or interracial parents/guardians (by birth or adoption) to participate in an interview study about experiences with racism in academic settings and parent/guardian approaches to addressing race and racism.

All participants will participate in one interview lasting approximately 90-120 minutes; some participants may be asked to participate in follow up interviews. Participants will be asked questions about family background, experiences with racism, parents/guardians' views on race and racism, and strategies for coping with racism.

I am a PhD student in the School of Education at UC Berkeley. My personal experiences, as well as learning about the experiences of others who grew up in similar situations, has led me to pursue this topic as my doctoral research. By sharing your voice and experiences, you can help raise critical awareness about the complexity of family dynamics and support efforts to improve the lives of future African/African American descent individuals who grow up in similar contexts.

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in this study, please contact Cyndy Snyder at snyderc@berkeley.edu.

Cyndy R. Snyder, MA
Policy, Organizations, Measurement, and Evaluation
Graduate School of Education
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720
snyderc@berkeley.edu