Biracial Adult Children Raised by White Mothers:
The Development of Racial Identity and Role of Racial Socialization

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Drexel University

by

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in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

May, 2016
DEDICATIONS

• God the Father, God the son, God the Holy Spirit; all the glory and the honor goes to you.

• Mom and Dad; the two people responsible for my very existence. I love you both beyond words can express.

• My Gram; My 93 years young, Grandma. Thank you for always instilling the importance of education in me. You are appreciated and loved.

• Research participants; thank you for letting me into your world and sharing your experiences with me. I dedicate this dissertation study to each of you as well as all the other Biracials out there and the White mothers who are raising them.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

- Philippians 4:13
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lord, I thank you for your grace, mercy, salvation, love, direction, stability, strength, comfort, encouragement, protection and peace. I am grateful for you providing all of my needs and being my refuge, always. I love you more than anything!

Dr. Maureen Davey, I thank you for taking me under your wing, becoming my chair in my time of need and helping me complete this dissertation strong. You are a Godsend! I appreciate your patience, unconditional support and steady guidance, especially when I was uncertain and confused. I thank you for helping me with formulating ideas to enrich this study, which filled in gaps in existing literature and made this research more meaningful. You provided me with a good balance of check-ins, never micro-managing, always trusting that I would meet all deadlines. Also, I am fortunate you not only accepted my request to be my dissertation chair but also became another mentor for me. You sure do wear several hats when it comes to me, all of which I am grateful. Much appreciation for being my off-site AAMFT approved supervisor for my internship site as well as connecting me with many professional opportunities to help advance my career. I am blessed to have had the chance to work with you; thank you!

Dr. Roberta Waite, I am so thankful to have you as a mentor. We had an immediate connection in the fall of 2012 and we quickly learned our working styles were compatible. We made an exceptional mentor-mentee team. Thank you for all of the opportunities that I gained by working with you. You are valued beyond measure. I am blessed you decided to become my methodologist for this study. Also, I am incredibly fortunate to have had your dedicated assistance throughout this study. Thank you for working through the MAXQDA data analysis with me. I could not have been as successful as I was coding the data without your continual guidance. Your expertise was greatly appreciated.
Ms. Sheila Sawyer, thank you for challenging my thinking from the very first time I met you in 1995. You are such a blessing in my life. In high school, you gave me the gift of education and I am forever grateful. Thank you for: 1) teaching me 10th grade English/grammar, 2) educating me about African American literature/history during my senior year of high school, 3) editing my prospectus, 4) allowing me to use your home as my personal office when needed, 5) inspiring me to continue my education by pursuing a Ph.D., 6) offering me endless support with frequent pep talks at your kitchen table, 7) dinner dates when I was overwhelmed and needed a break, and 8) being my fitness partner in times of distress. Thank you for never giving up on me and always believing in me.

Dr. Stephanie Brooks, let us take a trip down memory lane and remember the doctoral interview, when you were impressed when I said, “Expect the Unexpected”. And surely that phrase captured my doctoral and dissertation journey at Drexel University. I thank you for agreeing to be on my committee during my first year in the program. I appreciated the time you took to review my document, the quality of feedback and thoughtful questions you have had throughout the dissertation process. Now, what do you say? Let us head to back to Paris for an encore!

Dr. Christian Jordal, I admire your wonderful style of teaching and the thought provoking questions you ask. Thank you for agreeing to be on my committee as my “racial identity” expert. I have appreciated the helpful suggestions as well as how you provided me with caring, critical feedback. Thank you for your invaluable contributions.

Big acknowledgement to the best dissertation committee ever! **Tips hat off and bows**

Here’s to all five of you. I could not have done it all without you! Thank you!

Mom and Dad, thank you for all your sacrifice, love, care, encouragement, support,
strictness and prayers. I imagine it was not easy raising me in the era that I was born. You both motivated me to study this topic. Without each of you, conceiving your one and only “love child”, yours truly (ME) I would not have had such a deep commitment to study these families. Thank you for all you have done, are doing and will do until the end of time. I love you, both!

To my family and friends, thank you to my relatives for supporting me, especially my grandmother who always believed in me, continuously supported my pursuit of higher education and always loves me. Also, I must say I have the best friends in the world! Thank you for being there for me during this doctoral program and especially during the dissertation process. I am blessed to have friends that understood, accepted and responded with kindness while completing my dissertation study, that was my main priority. Dearest friends, please know, I am incredibly grateful for the support offered (especially when I was experiencing stress) including: understanding, hugs, pep talks, check-ins, sleepovers, dining out breaks (the list is never ending). Particularly, Nyja Chambers and Nicole Tolbert, thank you for your endless support; you are my very best friends. For Xena Marie, my prayer-filled, dissertation cat (indeed my cat has a middle name), I appreciate you always keeping me company (often demanding pets here and there) while I read, wrote, typed and when I prayed for strength. Your presence made me feel supported, giving me the benefits of animal companionship.

To my church family, thank you to Pastor Milton Baxter and First Lady, Sister Joan Baxter, Mt. Carmel COGIC’s finest. I appreciated my church family and the prayer warriors (especially Mother Lenore Meeks and Reverend Dayna Spence) who attended Wednesday noonday prayer service, who prayed with me every week. My prayer partners helped get me through my toughest time in May 2014 when I wanted to quit the doctoral/dissertation process. Thank you for your prayers; all were heard and answered by God as well as deeply appreciated
by me. I love you all!

To my cohort at Drexel University, Laura Lynch, Aisha Mgeni, Allena Moncrief and Jody Russon, thank you all for your kindness. Thank you for challenging me. Thank you for allowing me to grow and witnessing my journey. I am grateful for each of you being there when I cried and struggled and wanted to give up and/or be finished with the program and dissertation. Most importantly, thank you for the special friendships I have developed with each of you.

Starbucks baristas, how can I begin thanking my Starbucks family? Starbucks became my home away from home. For the last two years, Starbucks was the place where I was most productive writing. Baristas Katie Spina, David Bernard, Eva, Dave x2, Pat, Zack, John, Molly, Dana, Jenn and Isaiah, the entire Edgemont, Pennsylvania Starbucks staff, thank you. Thank you for your hospitality which included: sweet treats, unique drinks, the exchanges of hugs, laughs, support daily and even a recent cosmetic repair to my car. I appreciated all of you inquiring about my dissertation and encouraging me to keep going. The generosity and care I received from you has truly warmed my heart. Considering I have spent more time with most of you than my relatives in the past 24 months, you all are more than my baristas; you are family to me. Each of you are hard-working and great at what you do, with big goals. Keep striving for your dreams and know you all have inspired me.

Dr. Harry Legum, you have been such a blessing to my academic and professional development. I thank you for educating and mentoring me during my Masters degree work at Bowie State University. I’m grateful for your faith in my abilities and reassurance, claiming I would become a doctoral student and attain a Ph.D. I also appreciate the introduction to the AABSS conference where we give presentations annually. Your charisma, determination, ethical sound research expertise, compassion and knack in mathematics has always inspired and
motivated me. I’ll forever remember your mantra, “Everything is going to be ok”.

Dr. Kenneth Hardy, although our dissertation chair- dissertation mentee relationship was not successful, I appreciated how much you taught me during the first part of the doctoral program. Because of you, I have a better sense of awareness and knowledge of myself in relation to others. Thank you!

To the Biracial adult children and White mothers who volunteered for this study, this study could not have been possible without each of you. I appreciated your time and willingness to not only participate but to give, be vulnerable and to share your experiences with me. I was moved by each of you and believe you are all beautiful and mightily resilient.
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ABSTRACT

Biracial Adult Children Raised by White Mothers:
The Development of Racial Identity and Role of Racial Socialization
Nicole Sara McKinney, M.A
Maureen Davey, Ph.D., LMFT

In the United States (U.S.), the birthrates of Biracial offspring have significantly increased among partnered/married White women and Black men. Racial identification has been historically categorized as “either/or” in the U.S. versus “both/and” which can make it difficult for Biracial individuals to racially identify. Prior research has focused primarily on racial identity development among younger Biracial children and youth and has not examined Biracial identity development across the lifespan. Moreover, few researchers have examined the influence of White mothers on their Biracial offspring’s racial identity development and racial socialization process. In order to fill these gaps, this dyadic qualitative phenomenological dissertation study was designed to retrospectively examine the racial identity and parental socialization experiences of eight Biracially identified male and four female adults and their White mothers.

This study followed the stages of transcendental phenomenology as described by Moustakas (1994). First a demographic self-report survey was completed (one for the adult child and one for the White mother) and a skin color scale that only adult Biracial children completed. Then, using a semi-structured interview guide eight Biracial adult children (4 females; 4 males who reported lighter skin and between 18 to 42 years old) and their White mothers were first interviewed separately (30 minutes each) and then interviewed together as a dyad. Interviews, emails, and telephone calls were transcribed verbatim; the 24 transcriptions were analyzed using conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and MAXQDA to identify dominant themes. During the second stage of analysis, findings were examined through the lenses of
Biracial identity development (Poston, 1990), parental racial socialization (Hughes and Johnson, 2001), and Rockquemore and Laszloffy’s (2005) continuum of Biracial identity perspective.

The following seven dominant themes emerged for the eight adult Biracial individual interviews: 1) Influence of White Mother on Racial Identity, 2) Colorism, 3) Racial Landscape of Biracials, 4) Views on Race, 5) Preference/Favoring Whiteness – Physical Attributes, 6) How Biracial children Deal with racism and, 7) Acceptance. The following four dominant themes emerged for the eight White mother interviews: 1) What Race is Your Child?, 2) Colorism, 3) Cultural Collision and, 4) Parenting a Biracial Child. The following four main themes emerged for the eight family interviews: 1) Responsibility and Recommendations for Socializing Biracials, 2) Closeness of Mother-Child Relationship, 3) Colorism and, 4) How the Interracial Family Functions.

Noteworthy, despite reporting a close relationship to their Biracial children, most White mothers did not initiate open discussions about race at home or engage in active parental racial socialization. Biracial adult children described reactive socialization experiences (first racial encounters in the community) and most reported not sharing these experiences with their White mothers. Instead they tended to reach out to teachers, siblings, peers, or processed these racial encounters by themselves. Despite not having open conversations about race at home or active parental racial socialization, there were stories of resiliency, love, and connection that can help to inform other interracial families, the field of family therapy, and training programs.

Findings suggest helping White mothers of Biracial children engage in proactive, creative (versus reactive) racial socialization practices could help to buffer children from negative racial encounters out in the community. Providers could inform couples about racial identity development, how to openly initiate and talk to Biracial children about being both Black and
White, and how to facilitate positive self-esteem. Training programs could also prepare culturally sensitive therapists to work with Biracial families.

Many cross sectional studies with Biracial individuals and their parents have been conducted (Biracial children, adolescents, and adults), however, to date no longitudinal studies have been conducted in real time with Biracial children and their White mothers over the life cycle. Longitudinal prospective studies with White mothers and their young Biracial children could help the field develop a better understanding of parental racial socialization practices, as well as Biracial identity development over time.
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Prevalence

Over the last fifty years, interracial relationships and marriages have been on the rise in the United States (U.S.) (U.S. Census, 2010). The rates of Black/White Biracial adults living in the U.S. has significantly increased by 134% since 2000 (Fusco, 2010; Wallenchinski & Brinkerhoff, 2012). In 2009, more than 7% of the 3.5 million babies in the U.S. were born to parents who self-identified as having two or more races (Morello, 2012; Saulny, 2011; Wallenchinski & Brinkerhoff, 2012). With the significant increase in the rates of Black and White coupling and marriage, the number of Biracial children living in the U.S. has also increased (Funderburg, 1994). Grieco and Cassidy (2001) reported approximately 11.5 percent of individuals in 2000 who self-identified as Biracial, reported having a Black and a White parent. Jones and Bullock (2013) reported that approximately 20% of the U.S. population self-identify as Biracial (Black and White Biracial combination). In 2010, the most significant increase was recorded for Biracially identified individuals. Noteworthy from 2000 until 2010, the number of Biracials living in the U.S. grew to over 1 million individuals (Jones & Bullock, 2013).

As a result of both the significant increase of interracial coupling and births of Biracial offspring, many in the U.S. are not sure how to racially identify this growing population. Some authors have suggested Biracial people tend to be awkwardly greeted during social encounters with questions such as, “What are you?” or “Who are you?” (Gaskins, 1999; McDowell et al., 2005; Williams, 2009). Not all questions regarding how one racially identifies are verbally asked, as awkward or sometimes insensitive non-verbal interactions have also been reported by
some Biracial individuals. In a review of the literature, McDowell et al. (2005) suggested overt messages are often conveyed from members of society through quizzical staring. Consequently, Biracials often report not fitting into the traditional racial categories in the U.S. (McDowell et al., 2005).

Yet to date, most researchers have focused on racial identity development among younger Biracial children and youth and have not examined Biracial identity development across the lifespan. This study was significant because few researchers have examined the influence of White mothers on their Biracial offspring’s racial identity development and parental racial socializations practices. In order to fill these gaps, this qualitative phenomenological dissertation study examined the retrospective racial identity and parental socialization experiences of Biracially identified male and female adults (18 to 45 years old) and their White mothers; eight families volunteered for this study (4 female and 4 male adult children 18 to 42 years old and their mothers).

Prior research suggests that when outsider observers are unable to racially identify a Biracial individual, a state of exclusion tends to occur which can lead Biracial individuals to disowning one of their races (typically their White heritage) and racially identify as Black so they can be accepted (Funderburg, 1994; Gaskins, 1999; Marbury, 2011; Morrison & Bordere, 2001; Nuttgens, 2010; O’Hearn, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). In this dissertation study, offspring born to a White mother and a Black father were referred to as “Biracials”. Some consideration for the selection of this term are discussed in the next section. Then, a brief summary of the literature, research questions, theoretical frameworks, and methodology are summarized.

**Definition of Key Terms and Concepts**
McClurg (2004) defined “Biracial” as first generation offspring of parents who have two different monoraces (e.g., White mother and Black father). For the purpose of this study, the term “Biracial” describes individuals who have one self-identified Black parent and one self-identified White parent. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2014), the term Biracial is defined as, “of, relating to, or involving members of two races (para. 1).” Black is defined as, “of or relating to any of various population groups having dark pigmentation of the skin”, and White is defined as, “being a member of a group or race characterized by light pigmentation of the skin” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2014, para. 3).

This study was designed to examine Biracial adults’ retrospective reports of racial identity development and their White mothers’ parental racial socialization practices. Thus, the role of fathers and siblings was not examined in this study. Additionally, the parental racial socialization practices of the Black fathers were not explored in this study. This decision was deliberate and was not a blind spot. The purpose for this choice was to maintain a narrow, specific focus, tailored to the influence of White mothers on the racial identity development of and parental racial socialization practices toward their Biracial children.

Summary of the Literature

Racial Identity

The first birth of a Biracial child in the U.S. who had a White and a Black parent was reported in 1620 (Nittle, 2013). In addition to have a genetic background that includes two races, a Biracial individual can also have two parents who grew up in different social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, as well as a host of other contextual factors, which can influence a Biracial person’s racial identity development. Racial identity development occurs over the lifecycle and includes racial discernment, self-understanding and awareness of self, and
self in relation to others (Rockquemore & Laszlofyy, 2005). McDowell et al. (2005) noted in a review of the literature that society tends to appoint racial group membership based on an individual’s skin color and phenotype. As adults, racial identity development of Biracials influences both social class and racial composition of social networks (Brunsma, 2005). Consequently, racial identification of Biracials is not a static process, but evolves over time, and is influenced by life experiences and social encounters (Marbury, 2011).

Unfortunately, Biracials in the U.S. tend to be invisible and are often pressured to adopt a monorace instead of accepting both their Black and White racial heritages citation. Despite the growing rates of Biracial births in the U.S. and more Biracial children in school, Biracial adults in elevated professional and business positions, they have not been fully recognized as Biracial and instead are often pressured to identify with one race over the other. Mainstream American folk ideology of the 19th and 20th century strongly endorsed the belief that Biracials were inferior and biologically weaker compared to individuals from one race (McClain, 2004). This racist belief combined with the historical legacy of slavery, segregation, and ongoing racial discrimination in the U.S. has led to negative stereotypes as well as overt and covert racial discrimination toward Biracials (Marbury, 2011; Moss & Davis, 2008). The belief that a Biracial individual is not Black or White enough, and rejection from one or both races can lead to less than optimal racial identity development and negative psychosocial and academic outcomes.

**Racial Socialization**

Racial socialization describes parenting and socialization practices that can help an individual develop their racial identity development (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Csizmadia, Rollins & Kaneakua, 2014; Stevenson, 1995). According to Stevenson (1995), racial socialization is “hypothesized as one key variable to link the literature in childhood racial awareness and young
adult racial identity” (pp. 49). Specific to Biracials, Marbury (2011) reported that home and community environments play important roles in racial socialization and healthy racial identity development. Prior research suggests open family discussions about race positively impact Biracials’ evolving racial identity development (Brown, 2003; Csizamadia, Rollins & Kaneakua, 2014; Marbury, 2006; Marbury, 2011; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Similarly, Pinderhughes (1995) noted that open conversations between parents and their Biracial children or lack thereof are important to understand.

Parental racial socialization describes how children learn behaviors, perceptions, morals, values, opinions and attitudes about their racial group from their parents (Csizmadia, Rollins & Kaneakua, 2014; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Hughes, Johnson, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson & Spicer, 2006; Stone, 2009). Sanders Thompson (1994) reported that parental racial socialization “transmits values, norms, morals, and beliefs from one generation to the next. The socialization process helps the individual become an active, functioning member of their society” (p. 175). Thus, parents convey attitudes, beliefs, and feelings associated with their culture, racial group assignment, any racial hostility towards their offspring through overt and covert behaviors, as well as verbal and non-verbal communication.

The parental racial socialization practices of White mothers of Biracial children are especially important in shaping the racial identity development of Biracial offspring (O’Donoghue, 2004). In general, mothers tend to be held more accountable for the behavioral and psychological outcomes of their children, whether the father is involved or absent from parenting (bell hooks, 1993; McKinney, 2015). Yet prior research suggests White mothers who have monoracial locations tend to struggle to raise their Biracial children because they are not aware of parental racial socialization practices and racial encounters their children could be
experiencing out in the community and at school (Csizmadia, Rollins & Kaneakua, 2014; McClurg, 2004; Moss & Davis, 2008; O’Donoghue, 2004; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Erickson (1963) and other prominent scholars reported that racial identity development begins in early childhood (preschool and elementary school) and is a lifelong process (McClurg, 2004; Moss & Davis, 2008). Harris (2002) conducted a quantitative pilot study and reported that in his sample of 328 school counselors, 43% reported Biracial youth struggle with their racial identity compared to children of other races. Biracial youth are especially vulnerable to racial identity confusion, which can lead to various negative emotional outcomes including (but not limited to): anxiety, depressive symptoms, academic underachievement, gender confusion, self-hatred, denial of true self identity and low self-esteem. In addition to emotional struggles, behavioral responses can include: alcohol and illicit substance abuse, suicidal behavior, delinquency, alienation and violence. The combination of negative emotional and behavior outcomes can lead to feelings of ambivalence toward family members, parental rejection, feeling marginalized in two cultures and racial identity issues (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993; Marbury, 2011; Pinderhughes, 1995; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Yet, to date little research has examined the retrospective experiences of Biracial adults; most studies have been conducted with younger samples of Biracial children and youth (Harris, 2002; Moss & Davis, 2008).

Considering the myriad issues Biracials could experience as children/youth (e.g., in the community, school, parents, extended family, educators, same age peers), Moss and Davis (2008) presented a case study and reported Biracials tend to experience a high rate of academic and behavioral problems. Morrison and Bordere (2001) similarly noted in their review that Biracials should have an opportunity to explore their dual racial heritages so they can avoid
negative psychosocial and academic outcomes because of racial identity confusion and discrimination experiences. This recommendation is supported by prior research that has reported Biracial youth who grew up in more supportive home environments where a child’s dual races (White and Black) was accepted, respected and embraced, tend to exhibit better self-regulatory, resilient and positive psychosocial and academic outcomes (Bowles, 1993; Gibbs, 1998; Marbury, 2011). Yet, Williams (2009) noted there is still little research examining Biracial childrens’ experiences at school, during adolescence and especially as adults.

Biracial children are often told that they are not Black or White enough by peers, family, and community members; this can negatively impact their psychosocial, academic and career outcomes. Consequently, Biracials who feel pressured to identify with one race over another can experience feelings of confusion, self-hatred and poor quality of life. Those who racially identify as Biracial often try to straddle racial lines by adjusting themselves based on their environmental context in order to avoid being rejected by others (Marbury, 2011). Thus, many Biracial individuals report feeling torn between two different races.

Scholars suggest Biracial adults in the U.S. face unique challenges that monoracial adults do not tend to experience (Ladher, 1984; Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007; Stone, 2009; Williams, 2013). Biracial adults are vulnerable to experiencing societal rejection from both races (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007; Williams, 2013). Other researchers have suggested self-identifying as a Biracial is an escape from identifying as a Black individual (Sundstrom, 2001; Williams, 2013), because individuals: 1) phenotypically look and pass for White, 2) identify as Biracial to receive some White privilege and power, and 3) avoid choosing between Black and White racial identification. Specific to this study, Biracial identity is not considered an escape
from self-identifying as Black but is an affirmation that Biracial identity is a unique separate racial category that should be recognized in the U.S.

Janet Helms (1993) noted the concept of race is derived from societally sanctioned phenotypic and physical features of people (Williams, 2013). Thus, individuals are often characterized by their phenotype or physical features, such as: 1) skin tone, 2) hair texture, 3) nose formation, and 4) lip shapes (Williams, 2013). Biracials are often assigned a racial category based on these external physical characteristics (phenotype and race). Yet, Williams (2013) suggested being part of a racial or ethnic group is not just based on one’s physical appearance, but also based on shared historical heritage, cultural expressions and approaches to attire, art, music, food, literature, and traditions. The tendency to racially identify individuals because of their physical characteristics is based on arbitrary, ambiguous, and biased views of physical characteristics (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007). Shih et al. (2007) suggested racial identity is the result of social interactions which does not translate directly to genetic or biological differences. Furthermore, race is socially and politically constructed, based on historical elements and physical characteristics relevant to the development of racial identity and racial socialization practices executed by parents.

Research Questions and Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this phenomenological qualitative dissertation study was to understand the retrospective experiences of Biracial adults and their White mothers regarding Biracial identity development and parental racial socialization practices. This study was designed to examine the following research question and two sub-questions: Primary question 1): What are the retrospective experiences among Biracial adults (ages 18 and older) and their White mothers regarding racial socialization practices and Biracial identity development?; Sub-
question 1): How has Biracial identity changed or not changed over time for Biracial adults?; and
Sub-question 2): Describe parental racial socialization practices among White mothers regarding
Biracial identity development of their children, specifically when Biracial children have had racial encounters out in the community?

**Theoretical Frameworks**

The two main theoretical frameworks that guided the development of this study were Poston’s (1990) Biracial racial identity model and parental racial socialization theory (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Additionally, Rockquemore and Laszloffy’s (2005) continuum of Biracial identity perspective was used as an overarching framework to examine Biracial identity development over time. These two theories and one framework focus on Biracial identity development from childhood through adulthood, as well as parental racial socialization processes among Biracials who have a White and a Black parent. Parental racial socialization practices among White mothers who are parenting Biracial children, especially when reactive socialization (experience of a negative racial encounter out in the community) occurs among Biracial children was under investigation. Reactive socialization refers to how a person of colors’ first racial encounter is interpreted and the long lasting impressions left (Marbury, 2011; Stevenson, 1995;).

Poston’s (1990) Biracial identity development model was among the first models to describe stages of Biracial identity development during childhood and adolescence. Yet, this model does not describe racial identity development across the lifespan, in particular during adulthood. Rockquemore and Laszloffy’s (2005) continuum of Biracial identity perspective describes Biracial identity development across the lifespan, and complements Poston’s Biracial identity development model for children and youth (Poston, 1990). This study focused on the
racial identity development of Biracially-identified adults and was designed to explore retrospective reports of Biracial identity development from childhood to adulthood.

Furthermore, the Biracial racial identity model and parental racial socialization as well as the continuum of Biracial identity perspective, along with the qualitative phenomenological methodology led to a better understanding of multiple perspectives (White mothers and their Biracial adult children) needed within the field of couple and family therapy (Dahl & Boss, 2005). The main tenets from these two models and one framework as well as points of tension and agreement between them are described in more detail in chapter two.

**Methodology**

The methodology used in this qualitative research dissertation study was transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology helps researchers understand the meanings and essences of phenomenon by focusing on shared experiences among participants. (Husserl, 1931, as cited in Moustakas, 1994; Husserl, 1913, as cited in Patton, 2002). The four stages of phenomenology described by Moustakas (1994) that guided this study included: 1) *epoche*: a disciplined effort by the researcher to set aside preconceived ideas, presuppositions, or any commitment to previous knowledge about the phenomenon, 2) *phenomenological reduction*: thoroughly describing the information about the phenomenon, 3) *imaginative variation*: searching for possible meanings of the phenomenon by exploring various means of reference, and 4) *synthesis*: integration of the description and interpretation of the phenomenon. The two strategies that were used to carry out the task of *epoche* are memoing and location of the researcher (Daly, 2007). Conventional content analysis was used during the *phenomenological reduction* stage (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique. In conventional content analysis, coding and categories are derived directly from the
data. A primary aim of this study was to explore the experiences of participants, so this approach to coding the data was chosen because categories were derived directly from the information shared by participants.

The sample for this phenomenological study included eight Biracial adults (4 females and 4 males between 18 and 42 years old) and their White mothers. The main method of data collection was in-depth interviews conducted either in-person, on the telephone or using the internet (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), and follow-up telephone calls and/or emails to confirm codes that emerged.

A demographic self-report survey and skin color scale (Massey & Martin, 2003) was also used to understand the socio-demographic context of White mother-adult Biracial child dyads. After first completing the two self-report surveys (one for adult Biracial and one for White mothers), Biracial adult children and their White mothers were interviewed separately (on average 30 minutes each) and then they were interviewed together (on average 30 minutes) as a family to better understand Biracial identity development and the role of parental racial socialization. Interviews, emails, and telephone calls were transcribed verbatim, and the transcriptions were analyzed using conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). MAXQDA (2010) was used to organize and analyze the adult Biracial-White mother dyadic qualitative data. During the second stage of analysis, findings were examined through the lens of Biracial identity development (Poston, 1990) parental racial socialization (Hughes and Johnson, 2001), and Rockquemore and Laszloffy’s (2005) continuum of Biracial identity perspective.

The following three strategies were used to increase the trustworthiness of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985): 1) triangulation, 2) peer debriefing, and 3) member checking. Findings were triangulated in the following ways: 1) multiple coders; and 2) triangulation of adult Biracial
childrens’ and White mothers’ individual data with their parent-child dyadic data. Member checking was another method used to increase credibility of the findings. After completing the data analysis, the researcher contacted all participants via email and asked if themes that emerged captured their experiences. Additionally, all the steps and procedures that led to the final research findings were documented with a clear audit trail and detailed memos. A more detailed description of the methodology and strategies used to increase trustworthiness are more fully described in the third chapter.

**Relevance to Couple and Family Therapy**

Biracial identity development and parental racial socialization practices is increasingly being examined in the U.S. (Baxley, 2008; Bird, 2009; Bowles, 1993; Funderburg, 1994; Gaskins, 1999; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Khanna, 2013; McKinney, 2014; Morrison & Bordere, 2001; Pinderhughes, 1995; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Yet to date most researchers have examined Biracial children’s or youths’ experiences. Few researchers have examined Biracial racial identity development across the lifespan and even less has focused on parent-adult child retrospective experiences. Biracials who have a Black father and a White mother have a unique experience trying to embrace both races which can help to advance the field of couple and family therapy and can inform the development of more culturally sensitive family-oriented approaches to care for this growing population in the U.S.

Additionally, McKinney (2015) described the dearth of empirical research that has examined parental racial socialization practices among parents raising Biracial children, especially parenting practices among White mothers (Kilson & Ladd, 2009; Lazarre, 1996). During the last few decades, parental racial socialization has been studied with many more mono-races, for example: 1) African American, 2) Mexican, 3) Japanese and 4) Latinos, but
especially among African American families in the U.S. The primary aim of studies with African American families has been to facilitate positive Black racial identity development (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson & Spicer, 2006; Root, 1996; Rotherham & Phinney, 1987). Parental racial socialization has been less often studied among Biracial individuals who have a Black father and a White mother, in particular the role of White mothers’ racial socialization practices. Furthermore, Biracial racial identification, racial discrimination, and parental racial socialization practices is a topic that is understudied in the field of CFT. Given the growing number of Biracials living in the U.S., it is important to examine how these factors may affect Biracials to develop culturally relevant clinical interventions that promote optimal clinical outcomes and well-being.
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two describes the two theoretical frameworks, Biracial identity development model (Poston, 1990) and parental racial socialization (Hughes & Johnson, 2001) and the continuum of Biracial identity framework (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005), which guided the development of this phenomenological dissertation study. There is a summary of the history of racial identification in the U.S. and its effects on racial identity development and racial socialization practices. Finally, a review of several bodies of literature that have examined the experiences of Biracial in the U.S. is summarized. First, a description of how race was historically and is currently categorized in the U.S. is provided.

The Inception of Race

In the U.S. race has historically been used as a hierarchical socially constructed method to assign access to economic resources and opportunities based on skin complexion and phenotype. Where did this concept of race come from? Race appoints unearned dominance among members sharing similar phenotypical characteristics over other groups who have similar traits. It is no secret that the race with the most power and privilege in the U.S. has historically been and continues to be individuals who racially identify as White or Caucasian. Starting in the 17th century, Blacks were viewed as subhuman and placed in positions of inferiority economically, socially, and politically (Brown, 2001). Bonilla-Silva (2001) acknowledges that race

…. as other social categories such as class and gender, is constructed but insists that it has a social reality. This means that after race—or class or gender—is created, it produces real effects on the actors racialized as ‘Black’ or ‘White’. (p.9)

This quote suggests that race was conceptualized as an either-or concept, for example, an individual is either Black or White. Yet White individuals tend to not see their race or culture as identifiable, making it difficult to acknowledge. This is because the White race is often viewed as the standard in the U.S. (e.g. behavior and appearance), the norm for how to live (Rockquemore & Arend,
Yet, purity of race, particularly the White race does not exist; nonetheless, racial categorization in America continues today as a way to uphold the belief that the White race is pure, conferring unearned power and privilege to some members of society (Pinderhughes, 1995).

The inception of race as a category began in earnest in the 18th century because of the intellectual Enlightenment movement (Baxley, 2008; Csizmadia, Rollins, & Kaneakua, 2014; Nagai, 2010). In order to claim Black slaves on their federal taxes, the American government created the U.S. census in 1790 and used a racial classification system (Nagai, 2010). At this time, many Blacks from Africa were enslaved and the Whites in power justified prejudicial attitudes and the dehumanizing mistreatment (e.g., whipping, hanging, burning, beating, shackling, burning, imprisonment, mutilation and branding) of Black slaves. Moreover, miscegenation laws were established to prohibit the mingling of the races, preserving the pureness of the White race (Rockquemore & Arend, 2002).

Miscegenation laws enforced racial segregation for the institution of marriage and intimate relationships by criminalizing interracial marriage and sex between members of different races. Scholars have suggested anti-miscegenation laws that forbade marrying between races were passed in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries; however, these laws did not prevent the White male plantation owners from raping Black female slaves and from fathering Biracial children (Brown, 2001; Childs, 2005; Daniel, 1992; Fryer, 2007; Williams, 2009; Williams, 2013). Meanwhile, many scholars have suggested White women who coupled with Black men during this era were subject to severe punishments including but not limited to: 1) banishment from the colony, 2) imprisonment, and 3) the penalty of becoming a slave to her husband’s master if residing in the state of Maryland (Fryer, 2007). Thus, interracial coupling and having Biracial offspring, outside of the sexual and, in some cases emotional, bonds of the male masters/slaves was banned among Blacks and Whites until the late 20th century. Yet, despite these laws interracial children were born and their Biracial identity was often rejected to protect the White race’s ‘purity’. The label “mulatto” (50% Black blood) was assigned to
many of these Biracial children, yet it was assumed they were racially Black (Brown, 2001; Daniel, 1992; Williamson, 1980).

Into the 20th century, the U.S. census classified Biracials as “mulattos”. It was not until 1930 that this racial category was removed from the U.S. census (Bird, 2009; Hochschild & Powell, 2008). Many Americans, especially Whites, described the emancipation of American slaves (1619-1865) and the Civil Rights Movement (1955-1968) as pivotal moments in Black history that resulted in Blacks gaining equality in the U.S. (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008). Yet some scholars disagreed with the assumption of equality among the races and suggested the abolishment of American slavery and the Civil Rights era only made racism toward Blacks more prevalent. Startling, the last recorded lynching of a Black man in U.S. was as recent as 1981 (Kornbluth, 1987).

Prior to the Civil Rights Movement, the Biracial categorization was based on where an individual lived and their employment, not by their racial bloodlines (Williams, 2013). After the Civil Rights era, Biracials began to more openly embrace and claim their dual racial heritages, identifying with both races (Williams, 2013). Some scholars reported this resulted in society questioning racial categorizations in the U.S. Census and asking for a change. This led to the addition of a multiracial category which first appeared in the 2000 U.S. Census. Approximately 7 million people racially identified as multiracials on the revised 2000 U.S. census (Csizmadia, Rollins & Kanerakua, 2014; Grieco & Cassidy, 2001; Miville, 2006; Williams, 2013). Although over the centuries, racial categorization practices have changed in the U.S., unfortunately racial inequalities still remain, and sadly racism is alive and well in the U.S (Csizmadia, Rollins & Kanerakua, 2014).

Bonilla-Silva (2014) noted with our current Biracial (African Black father and White mother) president in the U.S., Barack Obama, many refer to his presidency as proof that racism is now absent from the U.S. Some have also suggested that the U.S has moved beyond race and is now in a ‘post-racial’ era. Nevertheless, in spite of the achievements of President Barack Obama, a Biracial man of color leading the U.S, racially charged violence is still pervasive. In 2012, Trayvon Martin, a 17 year
old, Black male, during a family visit with relatives walked to a convenience store to purchase some candy (Blow, 2012; Lee, 2013). When he was returning to the home of his relatives, he was fatally shot in the chest by George Zimmerman, a non-Black Latino, claiming to be a member of Neighborhood Watch. Before shooting Trayvon, Zimmerman reported a suspicious Black man to authorities who then directed him to cease his pursuit. More recently, in 2014, another Black male, 18 years old, a recent high school graduate, Michael Brown, was fatally shot by a White officer, Darren Wilson near his home in Ferguson, Missouri (The New York Times, 2014). Eyewitnesses said the victim held up his hands, yet he was still shot several times and sadly died. Unfortunately, the murder rate of Black men by civilians or police officials is on the rise, like the murders of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. Given these recent racially charged events, Whiteness as a system in the U.S is next summarized.

**Whiteness as a System in the United States**

Bonilla-Silva (2014) suggests that in the U.S most Whites describe racism as prejudice among individuals, while many people of color (non-White persons) describe racism as systemic or institutionalized. Racism being defined as systemic or institutionalized, dates back to the history of how the U.S was first established. The ideology deeply rooted in the U.S was created by Whites as a social and political system to award (and keep for themselves) unearned systemic privileges to Europeans/Whites over non-Europeans /non-Whites (McIntosh, 2012; Pinderhughes, 1995). Centuries ago, Whites enslaved Blacks and treated them like property; racist organizations (e.g., Ku Klux Klan) violently killed Blacks via lynching with no punishments from law enforcement. Blacks were not viewed as human beings (Brown, 2001).

Racial social systems were established which were referred to as White supremacy and then spread nationwide reinforcing White privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Laws segregating Whites from non-Whites, especially Blacks, were passed stating that the races could not mix in neighborhoods, public school systems, public transportation, restaurants, even public restrooms and drinking fountains.
After slavery was abolished and integration took place, race riots erupted in the early 1900’s. In order to maintain social and economic control at this time, many Whites (workers, labor unions, general public) used constraints in the Southern regions of the U.S. Consequently, millions of Blacks migrated from the South to the Northern and Western states between 1910-1970. During this salient migration, human rights and civil rights were fought by Blacks. Although some strides have been made to rid the U.S of racism, others argue there is not enough progress to end injustice and inequality towards Blacks Americans citation needed.

The racial systems established by Whites to guarantee White supremacy were developed because Whites felt threatened by the abolishment of slavery and the Jim Crow laws (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Bonilla-Silva, 2001). After the civil rights era, the rates of imprisoning Blacks significantly increased representing nearly 1 million out of the 2.3 million incarcerated population (Criminal Justice Fact Sheet, 2015). The media has a powerful influence on public opinions. When Whites commit criminal activity, the media tends to search for a mental health illness or diagnosis as a contributing factor and/or justification. Yet, the same response is not typical when Blacks break the law. When Blacks commit a crime in the U.S., they are often labeled by the media as monsters and/or thugs, leading to a search for previous histories of arrests.

Currently five U.S states (South Carolina, Arkansas, Wyoming, Georgia and Michigan) have no racial hate crime laws (Hate Crime Laws in the U.S, 2013). Moreover, nine U.S states (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia) can request to have the Confederate flag (originating from the American Civil War) on their motor vehicle license plate (Liptak, 2015). Controversy over the Confederate flag, a flag that for some symbolizes slavery and oppression and Southern heritage and pride for others, continues to be debated in the U.S (Ferdman, 2015). Thus, current racism in the U.S leads to Blacks being as free as the system of Whiteness allows them to be. A definition of racism and White privilege is provided in the next section.
What is Racism and White Privilege?

Racism is a complicated, strategic, socially constructed system that has been embraced for many centuries to oppress a specific race (non-White) in the U.S. Lorde (1984) defined prejudice as, “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance.” (pp.115). Additionally, Killian (2013) said, “racial discrimination may be defined at concrete actions that adversely affect the personal safety, security, or social and economic opportunities of persons whose skin color or ethnic heritage differ from that of the perpetrator” (pp.8).” In the U.S, Whites benefit from racism (whether they are aware and/or have the desire to have it or not), while other races tend to suffer, especially Blacks (Lazarre, 1996). Racism is transmitted by racial acts and/or racial slurs that can operate from an overt or covert position. Cushing (2008) suggested there are different ways people can engage in racism: 1) some engage in liberal racism (denying racism exists), 2) others conduct subtle racist pretenses (avoiding interactions with people from different races than their own and/or drawing conclusions about people based on their race), 3) relying on White privilege. Below, Bonilla-Silva (2014) described how racism tends to be expressed by Whites in the U.S.

“More poignantly, most Whites insist that minorities (especially Blacks) are the ones responsible for whatever “race problem” we have in this country. They publicly denounce Blacks for “playing the race card,” for demanding the maintenance of unnecessary and divisive race-based programs, such as affirmative action, and for crying “racism” whenever they are criticized by Whites. Most Whites believe that if Blacks and other minorities would stop thinking about the past, work hard, and complain less (particularly about racial discrimination), then Americans of all hues could “all get along.” (p.1)

In general, it is easier to acknowledge one’s victimization as opposed to discussing positions of privilege, yet not acknowledging privilege perpetuates the established structure of domination and oppression in this country. Rothenberg (2012) noted White privilege is reinforced by racism, a social location that puts others at a disadvantage, yet at the same time is the other side of racism. McIntosh (2012) provided this experiential definition

“I have come to see an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an
invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks (pp.121).”

Thus, in a country where White is the prized race and Blacks tend to be undervalued, there is a concern for how Biracials can develop a healthy racial identity. This means negotiating identity development between two races in a society where Biracials tend to be assigned a Black racial identity, based on the “one-drop” rule.

**The “One Drop” Rule**

Demographic and census surveys encourage Biracials to select one race option when self-identifying. More specifically, starting in childhood Biracials are encouraged to dismiss their dual racial heritages and adopt what society assigns, which is often Black racial identity (Nuttgens, 2010). This rejection of one or in some cases both races (e.g., choosing the racial identification of “other”) invalidates Biracials because it encourages them to renounce part of who they are racially. In the U.S, the most frequent Black racial identification assignment given to Biracials is to the “lesser” racial group/ lower status Black parent, which many suggest protects the purity of the White race (Pinderhughes, 1995; Rockquemore, 1998).

Scholars suggested society has encouraged Biracials to racially identify with the race of their parent of color as far back as the mandated “one drop” rule/hypodescent/code noir (Black code) (Bird, 2009; Funderburg, 1994; Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Marbury, 2006; Nagai, 2010; Nuttgens, 2010; Pinderhughes, 1995; Rockquemore, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Williams, 2013). The U.S. adopted the “one drop” rule in the late 19th century and declared if any person has the smallest trace, even one drop of African blood running through his/her veins, that person is a member of the Black race. (Bowles, 1993; Brown, 2001; Marbury, 2011; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008; Roth, 2005; Williams, 2013). The “one-drop” rule originated out of the anti-Roman tradition of Northern Europe and continued among the early Dutch and English Americans (Williams, 2013). Brown (2001) suggested the “one drop” rule assigns Blackness to anyone who has any Black blood,
yet the same is not true for the White race. In order to be labeled White, one must be all White (Brown, 2001).

Thus, children born to a White and a Black parent were not always recognized or embraced as Biracial in the U.S.; they tended to be racially categorized as Black before the mid 1980’s. Prior to the 1980’s, the self-identification of Biracials who identified as both Black and White rather than exclusively Black was discouraged (Jones & Bullock, 2013). Yet, later in the 1980’s, researchers and scholars challenged the one-drop rule, which resulted in a shift from Biracials identifying as Black to now being pathologized if they dismissed their White race and refused to racially identify as Biracial (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). This resulted in heightened self-confidence for Biracials and a decrease of Biracials passing as Whites.

**Racial Passing**

**Blacks Passing as White**

Some scholars suggested that racial passing began as early as the 18th century which describes when a person belongs to a race that is societally considered inferior in the U.S. (e.g., Black) and instead identifies himself/herself with another race that has a higher status in society (e.g., White) for economic, social, and political gain (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002). During the era of the Jim Crow laws, 1880-1925, the greatest number of Blacks passed for Whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Why would Blacks abandon their racial heritage and culture (clothing, dress, customs, food, language)? Identifying and passing as White brought many advantages and opportunities. At this time, Blacks had very few rights and opportunities (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Many financial advantages were not available to Blacks, restricting them to work in lower paying jobs (Bonilla-Silva, 2014), therefore, Blacks or Biracial individuals who could phenotypically pass for being White, often did. These Black individuals who passed as White left their families, friends, and communities behind, with the hope of gaining the same privileges afforded to
Whites in the U.S. Yet, later there was a significant decrease in passing because of the dismantling of segregation and the civil rights legislation (Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

Toure (2010) stated that Blacks who passed did not tend to reveal their passing to anyone; especially to their offspring. Sweet declared (2014) that a couple with one partner who “passed” tended to not take the risk of having offspring because the child may not “pass”, like they did. Moreover, if Biracial children did learn about their Black parent’s “passing for White,” and of not publicly acknowledging his/her Black heritage, this tended to have a negative impact on their racial identity development.

**Biracials Passing as Black or White**

Consequently when Biracials witnessed their Black parent passing for White, they often experienced confusion regarding how to racially self-identify. Unfortunately, Biracials tended to internalize the message that being Black means not being good enough that is perpetuated by the denouncing of Blacks by Whites in the U.S (Cross, 1971; Pinderhughes, 1995). This can lead to Biracials publicly attempting to deceive others by denying their Blackness after observing their passing parent who denied their Black racial identity. How Biracials racially identify themselves is never predictable. Storrs (1999) conducted a study with 27 mixed-raced women; participants identified as their minority race because of the one-drop rule. In contrast a year earlier, Korgen (1998) conducted a qualitative study and reported that Biracials were more likely to not identify as Black and racially identify as Biracial. Rockquemore and Arend (2002) surveyed a total of 259 Biracial college students over the course of five years (1997-2002) to examine how they racially identify. Results of this study reported that 61.3% racially identified as Biracial, 13.1% as Black, 3.6% as White, 4.8% as sometimes Black, sometimes White, sometimes Biracial (with social context as the determining factor) and 13% refused to racially identify with any race and reported they were human (Rockquemore & Arend, 2002).
Several years later, Khanna and Johnson (2010) conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 Black/White Biracial adults to explore experiences of passing for Black among Biracials. Out of the 40 participants, ranging between 18-45 years in age, 77.5% were female and 22.5% were male; all participants either enrolled in college or college educated. Results from this qualitative study suggested that most participants (n = 33) racially identified themselves as Biracial (multiracial or of the mixed race). Out of the seven participants who did not racially identify themselves as Biracial, 6 racially identified themselves as passing for Black and 1 reported passing for White. The one-drop rule becoming less popular and the greater embrace and pride of Blackness has contributed to the weakening of what was once a general law. Thus, in a society where it is difficult to determine the difference between Black and Biracial, Biracials tend to work towards “blending in” to feel accepted by both Blacks and Whites. Yet, most respondents in these studies reported they are Biracial, suggesting they want to be recognized as both Black and White, without attempting to pass for either race.

**History of Interracial Families**

In 1880, when it was first recorded, interracial marriage among Blacks and Whites was infrequent with only .1 percent among all White marriages and .5 percent for Black men coupling with White women (Fryer, 2007). The reason for this very low percentage of interracial marriages was because of laws that banned these unions. According to Fusco (2010), as early as the late 17th century, there were legal bans against the cohabitation, engagement in sexual relations, coupling, and marriage commitments of Black and White partners, also referred to as miscegenation. Contrary to popular belief, these legal prohibitions, referred to as miscegenation laws remained legal for decades.

Several authors described unsuccessful attempts by some U.S. states to guarantee the purity of the White race by citing the Supreme Court case of Loving v. Virginia (Baxley, 2008; Funderburg, 1994, Fusco, 2010). Richard and Mildred Loving were married in Washington, DC. When they returned to Virginia, they were arrested in 1958 (Baxley, 2010). Virginia was one out of 15 states in
1958 that still had anti-miscegenation statutes (Loving v. Virginia, 388 U.S, 1967). The court declared that all anti-miscegenation statues were in violation of the Constitution’s 14th amendment. Since this landmark case, interracial coupling among Whites and Blacks has dramatically increased and the births of Biracial children have soared (Baxley, 2008; Fryer, 2007; Funderburg, 1994; Wallenchinski & Brinkerhoff, 2012).

In 1960 prior to the Loving versus Virginia case, there were approximately 51,000 interracial marriages between Blacks and Whites. By the 1970s, however, 1% of the U.S population was comprised of interracial couples; and by 2000, the number of interracial couples in the U.S. increased to 5% with 403,000 interracial unions reported in 2006 (Brunsma, 2005; Kilson & Ladd, 2009; Martin, Cui, Ueno & Fincham, 2013; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2013), interracial marriage has increased by 28% between 2000 and 2010. Among these unions, two thirds were between a Black man and a White woman (Kilson & Ladd, 2009). More specifically, historical data suggests Black men and White women are coupling at higher rates with each passing decade. In 1980, there were 122,000 interracial marriages among Black men and White women (Kaba, 2012). This rate grew to a total of 150,000 unions in 1990 and rose to 363,000 in 2000 (Kaba, 2012; US Census Bureau, 2010). In 2010, rates significantly increased to 558,000 between Black men and White women interracially marrying and the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) declared overall interracial unions grew to 2.4 million in the U.S. (Kaba, 2012).

Theoretical Frameworks

The two theoretical frameworks, Biracial identity development model (Poston, 1990) and racial socialization (Hughes & Johnson, 2001) and the continuum of Biracial identity framework (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005), guided the development of this phenomenological dissertation study with Biracial adults and their White mothers. Below is a brief description of the two theories and continuum of Biracial identity framework followed by a summary of the congruencies and tensions between these three organizing frameworks.
Biracial Identity Development Model

Biracial identity development is a dynamic process that is constantly changing based on influential societal factors. In a review of literature, Williams (2009) reported that Black and White racial identity development models are valuable because they describe how Blacks and Whites arrive at their evolving stages of racial identity. Yet, Williams (2009) further theorized that these paradigms were equally flawed because of the lack of acknowledgement of Biracial identity development and multiracial, multicultural dimensions. Taking into account the Cross’ Black racial identity model which described Blacks moving from a subjugated to an affirming place of health racial identity and Helms’s White racial identity model that described Whites transforming from a location of power to self-introspection and accountability, how do Biracials develop their dual-raced, racial identity?

Poston (1990) developed a racial identity development model to help explain the process of racial identity development for Biracials in the U.S. (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Poston, 1990; Williams, 2009). Poston’s model included the following five stages: 1) personal identity, 2) choice of group categories, 3) enmeshment/denial, 4) appreciation and 5) integration (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Poston, 1990; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005).

The first phase of identity, personal identity described a state of complete oblivion and lack of awareness of Biracials’ two race, genetic composition. This stage happens at a young age for Biracial youth. Once Biracials realize they are genetically made up of two races (typically in early childhood), they may feel pressure to choose between their identifiable races and claim one specific race, defined as choice of group categories the second stage of Poston’s model (Poston, 1990). At this time, Biracials may go through a crisis and feel alienated while feeling compelled to racially identify with either their Black or White racial heritages. Marbury (2011) described the pressure Biracials experience to racially identify as one race instead of Biracial and noted it is transmitted from influential figures such as: parents, peers, community and/or society. If Biracials decide to align with one race over another, they may feel guilty, self-hatred and disloyal to the parent in which they chose
not to racially identify. Yet, experts suggested when Biracials associate with both Black and White races, and identify as Biracial, that is proof he/she fully embraces their racial identity (Marbury, 2011; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Williams, 2009). Poston (1990) said this period of acknowledgment occurs during the third stage, the *enmeshment/denial* phase.

From childhood through adolescence and throughout adulthood, Biracials are often described as inquisitive and yearning to learn and explore their dual racial heritage. Poston (1990) asserted the fourth stage, *appreciation*, describes when Biracials gain more extensive knowledge about their Black and White racial groups and value *both* races. Thus, for Poston (1990) the presence and expression of appreciation for being both Black and White facilitates Biracial individuals’ integrating both races into their self-defined racial identity. After transitioning and moving through the four Biracial identity developmental stages, Biracials reach the fifth and final stage of *integration*. Scholars suggested this is the last stage of the model and is expected to lead to a sense of “wholeness” for Biracials (McDowell et al., 2005; Poston, 1990).

Biracial identity development is a helpful model, however, it has yet to be fully examined or empirically tested (Poston, 1990; Williams, 2009). Poston (1990) critiqued his own model, and also recommended future research to test its assumptions. Thus, Poston’s (1990) model tended to focus on a step-by-step process, allowing for little ambiguity or tensions to navigate in earlier stages. It is unusual for Biracials to progress linearly through the stages in Poston’s model, considering each person has unique experience that shapes his/her racial identity (Williams, 2009). Experiences can allow for Biracials to move backward to an earlier stage of this model or to even skip stages. Additionally, Williams (2009) suggested Poston’s Biracial identity paradigm tends to assume low conflict while progressing through stages which is not optimal for the development of emotional well-being. Emotional well-being is important for Biracial who are developing their racial identity. In contrast, Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) theorized that Biracial identity development takes place on a continuum for Biracials, which is next described in their Continuum of Biracial Identity Model.
Continuum of Biracial Identity Model

Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) suggested Biracials tend to choose among various descriptions when racially identifying themselves in a society where they are often expected to solely racially identify as Black. In earlier qualitative research conducted by Rockquemore (1998), she interviewed 14 Biracial Catholic college students in the Midwest. Her findings suggested that Biracials in her sample tended to racially identify in the following four ways: 1) a border identity, 2) a protean identity, 3) a transcendent identity and 4) a traditional identity. According to Rockquemore (1998), a border identity involves a location between social categories where Biracials self-identify as Biracial. When Biracials move freely between social groups and self-identify as Black, White, and/or Biracial is defined as a protean identity. Differing from a protean identity, a transcendent identity consists of the negation of a racial reality where Biracials self-identify as no race. However, Biracials will self-identify as Black, White or Biracial only if pressured when racially identifying with a transcendent identity. The fourth identity option, a traditional identity includes Biracials acknowledging parents are different races and self-identify as either Black or White.

Later Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) conducted a cross-sectional quantitative survey study with a convenience sample of 177 Biracial adults. The survey questions asked about racial identification, racial composition of social networks, and personal discrimination held by Blacks or Whites towards Biracials. Results suggested Biracials racially identify themselves in the following six: 1) exclusively Black (13.1%, n = 22), 2) exclusively White (3.6%, n=6), 3) exclusively Biracial, (22.6%, n=38; border identity is recognized by others), 4) exclusively Biracial (38.7%, n = 65; border identity is not recognized by others and society assigns a this Biracial primarily as a Black person), 5) viewing themselves to have Biracial, Black, and White identities (4.8%, n =8; protean identity), and 6) a transcendent person (13.1%, n = 8). Hence, these empirical studies exploring the Biracial experience assisted in the formation of Rockquemore and Laszloffy developing the Continuum of Biracial Identity...
(COBI) model (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005) to acknowledge that Biracials may identify on a range between both Black and White races.

The COBI model (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005) used a blended continuum perspective with singular racial identification of Black or White races, one on each end with a blend of both races of racial classification merging together to encompass Biracial in the middle. Singular identity described Biracials who exclusively racially identify as Black or White with no acknowledgment of possessing both races (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Yet researchers suggested Biracials often label themselves as the race of the parent for whom they relate to the most (Marbury, 2011). Unlike other racial identity models, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) suggested a blended racial identity option exists and Biracial individuals can move fluidly between both races.

Some Biracials will embrace both their Black and White racial backgrounds; Biracials who openly acknowledge their dual raced heritage could also find themselves on the blended location of the COBI spectrum. Rockquemore (2002) suggested that besides the singular and blended identities associated with the COBI model, some Biracials could have a transcendent racial identity. Someone who has a transcendent racial identity does not tend to self-identify with any societally sanctioned racial category (Rockquemore, 2002). Thus, singular, blended and transcendent racial identities should be taken into consideration; Biracials can accept and identify with the racial identity assigned to them by society and/or freely choose if to self-identify as Biracial, Black, White or none of the societally sanctioned racial identities (Baxley, 2008; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Applying this lens to Poston’s Biracial Identity Development Model (1990) helped us to consider how complex Biracials identity development can be, that it is a fluid process, and develops throughout the lifecycle and not just during childhood and adolescence. Thus, Poston’s (1990) model and Rockquemore and Laszloffy’s (2005) clinical lens, along with parental racial socialization (Peters, 1993; Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Stevenson, 1996) helped to guide this study to examine Biracial identity development. Next parental racial socialization theory is reviewed.
Parental Racial Socialization

Parental racial socialization is a lifelong bi-directional process between parents and their offspring (Peters, 1993; Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Stevenson, 1996). Historically, racial socialization was used as a resilience promoting strategy for African American parents to help their Black children cope with racial discrimination and navigate racial stereotyping by larger society (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Hughes, 1993; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Hughes, Johnson, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson & Spicer, 2006; Peter, 1993; Root, 1996; Rotherham & Phinney, 1987; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, 1995; Stevenson, 1996). According to Stevenson (1995), racial socialization described, “the process of communicating messages and behaviors to children to bolster their sense of identity given the possibility that their life experiences may include racially hostile encounters” (p. 51).

Parental racial socialization describes parenting practices that help to prepare children to cope with racial barriers they may experience outside of the home environment. Parental racial socialization informed the development of racial identity, especially for Biracials. Two salient concepts described by Stevenson (1995) that are crucial for the healthy development of racial identity include: 1) reactive socialization and 2) creative socialization. Reactive socialization describes when an individual experiences a racial encounter that leaves a lasting impression, brings awareness and impacts the conceptualization of one’s racial identity (Chavez & French, 2007; Marbury, 2011; Stevenson, 1995). The second concept, creative socialization, describes when adults initiate conversations with Biracial youth about potential and expected future racial encounters so they are more prepared (Marbury, 2011; Stevenson, 1995).

Scholars suggested that monorace parents tend to use one of the following three parenting practices when addressing race with their Biracial children: 1) denying race is an issue and instead affirming the importance of humanity, 2) encouraging their Biracial children to racially identify as a minority/Black race, or 3) promote a Biracial identity (Moss & Davis, 2008). Researchers also suggested White mothers tend to rely on Black fathers of their Biracial children to explain racial
realities to their children (Kilson & Ladd, 2009; O’Donoghue, 2004). Additionally, White mothers tended to develop close relationships with their Black in-laws, relatives of the Biracial child’s father’s side of the family, and/or Black friends to better understand Black culture which helps to improve racial knowledge needed to transmit healthy racial messages to their Biracial children.

McKinney (2015) suggested a possible way to also encourage healthy Biracial identity development, the selection of toys. Purchasing toys (e.g., dolls and games) that represent both White and Black races versus only buying toys representing one race helps to convey the importance of both Black and White races. Some White mothers decide to adopt the customs of the Black culture that is both comfortable for them and beneficial to their Biracial children. These traditions may include: 1) learning about favorite foods; 2) learning how to cook Black food delicacies, 3) getting a tutorial on how to do/maintain a Biracial children’s hair, 4) learning how to care for Biracials skin, and 5) learning about Black history.

Since mothers are often the parent who tends to socialize their children, a White mother’s Whiteness will impact the racial identity development of Biracial children. Yet, there is a visible difference between a White mother and her Biracial child’s skin complexion, especially when out in society. Rollins and Hunter’s (2013) qualitative research reported that besides the opportunity for a bonding moment and sharing experiences, other benefits of White mothers engaging in open conversations about race with their Biracial children include: 1) fostering racial awareness, 2) clarification of racial differences, 3) reducing inconsistent messages, 4) minimizing ambiguity about racial identity, 5) increasing trust and family closeness, 6) increasing awareness of stereotypes, and 7) lessening the threat of stereotypical and conflicting racial messages received by society.

Kilson and Ladd (2009) wrote a book and stated that in the U.S, society tends to view Biracials’ Blackness and often White mothers have a similar view and expect that their Biracial children will either identify as Biracial or as Black. White mothers should try to convey positive racial messages while socializing their Biracial children about being Black and White to instill healthy racial
identity development. Thus, this dissertation study was designed to explore parental racial socialization strategies used by White mothers to promote healthy racial identity for Biracial children.  

Summary of Theories

Poston’s (1990) Biracial identity development model which includes five sequential stages of development that occurs in childhood and adolescence was used as an organizing framework. Yet Poston’s model (1990) does not attend to feelings of confusion and exploration or a more fluid process of Biracial identity development over time (adulthood), so the COBI model (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005) was also included. Parental racial socialization theory (Peters, 1993; Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Stevenson, 1996) was used as an organizing framework to examine how White mothers’ parental racial socialization practices impact their Biracial offsprings’ racial identity. In particular reactive socialization, when a Biracial experiences an encounter of racial discrimination outside of the home, will be retrospectively examined (Marbury, 2006; Marbury, 2011). This is important because racial barriers experienced during reactive socialization can have long lasting effects on Biracial identity development (Marbury, 2006; Marbury, 2011). Recognizing the influence of White mothers’ racial socialization parental practices is a gap in the literature that was examined in this dissertation study (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Furthermore, this is one of the first studies to examine Biracial identity development over time, by interviewing Biracial female and male adults and their White mothers.

Review of Substantive and Empirical Literature

This section summarizes findings from several bodies of literature to describe the experiences of Biracial offspring and their White mothers regarding Biracial identity development across the lifespan and parental racial socialization practices. First, a summary of racial identity development and White mothers’ roles in their Biracial childrens’ racial identity development is described. Then, a historical consideration of Biracial identity development, conceptual and theoretical scholarship is reviewed. This is followed by a review of the few research studies that have examined parental racial
socialization practices of Biracials from childhood to adulthood. This section concludes with a summary of the gaps in literature that this phenomenological dissertation study was designed to address.

**Racial Identity and Parental Racial Socialization**

Racial identity development for every racial group is complex and difficult to understand by others who are not a member of that particular racial group. Several authors suggested that many factors affect identity development in general, for example: gender, ethnicity, racial membership, family dynamics, historical features, community environment, temperament, sexual orientation and religious beliefs (Byrd, 2012; Hud-Aleem and Countryman, 2008). Each social location impacts identity development, oppression, health, power, and privilege. The purpose of this section is to define identity and racial identity, and to describe how White mothers help to shape the racial identity development of their adult Biracial children.

**The Process of Socialization for Biracials**

Some examples of the bi-directional factors that can impact racial socialization of Biracials includes: 1) home, educational, professional, social, political environments, 2) family, 3) members of society, 4) acceptance/rejection of interracial relationships, 5) acknowledgement/refutation of dual heritage, 6) economics, and, 7) geographic living location (Marbury, 2011). The purpose of this section is to provide a summary of salient factors that influence the socialization process of Biracials across the lifecycle. This summary will include the first awareness of race for Biracials, educational influences, significance of physical features and skin complexion, professional outlets, and adult relationships.

**First Awareness of Race for Biracial Youth**

Scholars suggested that during early childhood, racial identity emerges as early as age three and becomes most salient during adolescence (Marbury, 2011; McClurg, 2004; Nuttgens, 2010; Wright, 1998). Prior research suggested that by the pre-school age (three to four and a half years old), Biracial
children tend to label themselves as “tan” or “brown” when asked about their skin color and can identify a doll or a person in a photograph who shares similar skin color (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Morrison & Bordere, 2001; Pinderhughes, 1995; Wright, 1998). By the age of six, Biracials begin to understand they are racially labeled by their skin color (Pinderhughes, 1995). Additionally, scholars suggested a cognitive shift occurs by the age of seven (through age nine) that results in a refined racial identification where Biracial youth begin to racially identify as “Mixed, White or Black” and recognize racial differences between themselves and others (Baxley, 2008; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Pinderhughes, 1995).

Over two decades ago, Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, and Harris (1993) conducted a qualitative study and interviewed nine Biracial children (ages 5 to 15) and their parents (6 families total) during childhood and teenage years, in order to examine messages from parents, peers and how Biracials embraced both races. Out of the six families interviewed, each had one Black parent and one White parent, as well as one or two Biracial children between the ages of five to 15 years old. At least one parent from each of the six families was interviewed and all nine Biracial children were interviewed individually after their parent’s interview.

The following three major themes emerged from the parent interviews: 1) the use/nonuse of labels of their interracial family and Biracial children, 2) preparing their Biracial children for anticipated discrimination and, 3) the location parents chose to raise their Biracial children. The following three themes emerged from the interviews with Biracial children: 1) the inquiries or lack thereof of racial identification labels, 2) self-description of their physical appearance and, 3) learning of racial awareness. More than half of participants reported no one ever inquired about their racial background, suggesting many in the community automatically assumed that Biracials are Black. When asked to describe their physical appearances, eight of nine participants described their skin color and provided additional characteristics, often describing how they dress. Furthermore, most biracial children could not remember when they first became aware of racial categories or racial differences.
Khanna and Johnson’s (2010) research confirmed Biracials’ responses to members of society that inquired about their race requesting their racial identification would range from identifying as one label, such as “I am (insert race)” or “I am not (insert race)”. On the contrary, Biracials who are not as confident about themselves racially may respond in a different manner. Pinderhughes (1995) described Biracials who are uncomfortable with their biracial identity tend to express their discomfort as: 1) fantasizing they were solely from the White race, 2) defensively retreating to identifying with and claiming to only have a Black racial identity, or 3) the inability to choose between both of their Black and White races.

**The Educational Environment of Biracial Youth**

An area for future development is examining the educational environment because it tends to not include Biracial representation in school curriculum or course material, which implies that Biracialism inclusion is not appropriate (Funderburg, 1994). Biracials report wanting to see people who phenotypically look like themselves in their daily environment such as: school curriculum, television (news, sitcoms, movies), and magazines (Shih, & Sanchez, 2005). Scholars suggested that Biracials tend to search for other Biracials to understand where they fit in, to help them understand what is expected of them, and how others’ behave toward them in a society that tend to support monoracism (Shih, & Sanchez, 2005).

In a pilot study by Harris (2002), 328 school counselors in the southeastern section of the U.S. were quantitatively surveyed (201 White, 122 Black, 3 Asian, 2 Indian) about their perceptions of Biracial students. Each counselor (176 elementary, 89 middle and 63 high school) completed a 25-item self-report survey that asked about beliefs about Biracial students. Results suggested 66% of school counselor believed Biracials are not openly accepted by society. Some school counselors (7%) reported believing Biracial students should identify with their minority parent’s race (Black) and did not promote cultural diversity. School counselors who were employed at a school that had cultural diversity programs were more likely to believe Biracials who lived in racially diverse communities
experienced less problems. Overall, 93% of the school counselor participants believed their Biracial students should culturally identify with the races of both of monorace parents. Yet, 13% of male school counselor participants reported that Biracial students tend to have more academic problems compared to other students. Findings suggested schools need more cultural diversity programs; 45% of participants wanted supplementary information and preparation to better meet the needs of Biracial students. The next section describes struggles Biracial children have faced in school.

**Social racial segregation.**

While the ruling of the famous school desegregation decision of Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas in 1954, made the racial segregation of schools unconstitutional and eradicated school segregation based on race, research suggested racial segregation has existed for centuries and continues today in the U.S. (Fryer, 2007; Mouw & Entwisle, 2006; Williams, 2013). Williams (2009) reported in a review of the literature that Biracial adults who attended predominantly White schools as children often reported feeling badly about themselves. Whereas, Biracial students who attended schools that were majority Black, tended to report more positive feelings about themselves racially. Although, blended raced (Blacks and Whites) schools seem to provide Biracials with less stress, some Biracials report feeling pressure among their peers to choose between their Black and White heritages.

Researchers have also examined bullying among peers from dominant and minority peer groups for Biracial youth (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Nuttgens (2010) conducted a narrative case study, and reported that Biracials are often targeted and tormented at school by their monorace peers. Parents of Biracial children tend to expect their children to ignore racist taunts, racial discriminatory, and racially charged bullying (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Moreover, fear of persecution from classmates can lead to a decline in school attendance for Biracial youth (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Besides absences from school, scholars suggest additional consequences of bully victimization among Biracial are: 1) regression in educational learning level, 2) deterioration in friendships, 3) social isolation and rejection and 4) physical illnesses and mental
disturbances (could be linked to psychosomatic behavior) (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003).

**Educator’s influence.**

Baxley (2008) published a literature review that examined parents of Biracial offspring; parents reported that teachers tend to not know how to support their dual-raced children’s healthy racial identity development. Parents reported that school educators should address race, ethnicity, physical differences, history and other contextual factors of Biracials in schools (Williams, 2009). Chiong (1998) and other researchers suggested educators and school counselors at worst tended to encourage Biracial students to racially identify with the race that is considered the “underdog,” primarily the minority parent of color and/or the one who has the lowest social economic status (Baxley, 2008; Harris, 2002; Pinderhughes, 1995; Williams, 2009). In the Chiong (1998) study, 30 public school teachers (22 White, 7 Black, and 2 Asian) in urban and suburban schools were interviewed to explore the cultures and backgrounds of the teachers, their reactions to school forms and school materials in addition to their perception of multiracial children. Findings suggested teachers generally perceived multiracial students belonging to the minority racial group based on the students’ physical features. Teachers in this study also noted they found interracial students more favorable compared to Black students, had higher expectations, offered more encouragement, and motivation compared to what they offered their Black students.

Gaskins (1999) who collected the poetry, essays, and life stories of 80 young people and published a book capturing the voices of mixed race young people, shared experiences of a Biracial adult Maria Barner, age 21 at the time of the interview. Maria shared that when she was in the fifth grade, she racially identified herself as “other” on a test. Maria’s teacher (who was racially Black) asked why she selected “other” and insisted that she change her response to “Black.” Years later, in the ninth grade, Maria filled out both Black and White on questionnaire that asked for her racial category for a national science exam and was told by her teacher she made a mistake on the test by
selecting two racial identities, and that she had to choose only one race. Maria’s White mother joined diversity boards after this incident. With the support of Maria’s mother and connections with the community, Maria’s experiences in school resulted in a “multiracial” racial category option added to questionnaires in her school district.

Moreover, Biracial youth are very impressionable during childhood and in school settings; teachers influence children regarding their academic, social and psychological development. It is possible educators inadvertently project their personal opinions about Biracial children’s’ racial identity onto youth. For example, a teacher may make the assumption that a child is Black based on the child’s skin complexion when in reality the child may be Biracial. Scholars suggested conducting in-service trainings to provide teachers with resources regarding how to navigate race relations in school, to support racial identity development for both monorace and Biracial children and adolescents (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Fusco & Rautkis, 2012).

Research conducted in White schools, suggests that some teachers grouped Black and Biracial students together and reported having lower-opinions of Black academic achievement and even worse views of Biracial students compared to White students (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007; Williams, 2009). Steele and Aronson (1995) reported that teachers who have negative stereotypes that Black students do worse academically is damaging for both Black and Biracial students and will impact their academic performance. Yet, in some cases, stereotypes can motivate Black and Biracial students’ academic performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995); students may become confident, self-motivated students because they are driven to prove these negative established stereotypes as wrong. Moreover, many Biracials successfully pass from grade level to grade level; yet Biracials tend to be viewed as less deserving of academic minority scholarships compared to other minority and White students (Sanchez & Bonam, 2009). Thus, confirming that prejudice is still present in some U.S. schools, despite how much society insists racism has been eradicated.
Educators may be unaware of the importance of addressing diversity in the classroom which can lead to daily activities, lesson plans, or teaching materials that do not honor multiculturism, and specifically Biracialism (McClurg, 2004). In a review of literature, McClurg (2004) reported that despite the lack of acknowledgement of Biracials in educational curriculum, and a shortage of interracial families on TV and in books, Biracial youth can still prevail and advance through their academic career without seeing individuals and families that represent them. Yet, Moss and Davis (2008) suggested in their case study, there is an absence of Biracials from school curriculum, popular culture, and media may result in identity distortion for developing Biracial students. In addition to under development in the area of cultural diversity of Biracial students, educators may unintentionally perpetuate competitive feelings between Biracial youth and their White peers. For example, teachers could compare students’ of color responses in class to White students in the class. This microaggression can have lasting negative effects on Biracial children and may fuel self-hatred, feelings of inferiority and/or racial identity confusion.

Biracial students may encounter microaggressions in the classroom. Moss and Davis (2008) conducted a case study with school counselors and identified the following obstacles while working with Biracial students: 1) lack of training of racial identity issues, 2) no personal experience with being Biracial, 3) not aware of the importance of racial identity, 4) uncomfortable addressing racial identity concerns, 5) lack of acceptance of Biracial students by self and/or others (Moss & Davis, 2008). Taking into consideration these obstacles in the schools, (e.g., comparisons educators facilitate in the classroom, encountering bullying in social circles and certain teachers lacking cultural awareness), the well-being and racial identification of Biracial youth can become compromised.

**Significance of Physical Features and Skin Complexion**

Skin complexion and physical features are often focused on in the U.S. The physical features of Biracials tend to attract the attention of others. The reactions Biracials receive from outsiders can impact racial identity development across the lifecycle. Some of the physical attributes that draw the
attention of others are: 1) skin complexion, 2) hair texture, 3) facial features and 4) body type.

Phenotype assigns racial group membership, whereas the previously mentioned physical attributes contribute to the process of Biracials’ access to privileges granted (McDowell et al., 2005). Scholars suggested there is a level of mystery associated with Biracials’ appearances as Biracials are often asked, “What are you? How do you wash/style your hair?” in addition to other curious inquiries about their physical composition can send Biracials in a state of feeling inadequate (Gaskins, 1999; Kilson & Ladd, 2009; McDowell et al., 2005; Williams, 2009). This section summarizes research studies that have examined racial encounters Biracials face regarding their physical attributes and the affect these experiences have on racial identity development. Analyzing gender specifically of these influences will be examined also.

**Biracial females.**

For many decades, name calling has been a source of bullying for Biracial females. Scholars have reported derogatory terms peers tend to call Biracial females which can include: zebra, mixed zebra, red-faced dog, half-White monkey, Black-eye pea, Oreo, and mulatto (Funderburg, 1994; Lyles, Yancey, Grace & Carter, 1985; Senna, 1998;). In the case of the personal narrative of Seelhoff’s school aged daughters, they struggled with feeling excluded, harassed and marginalized by their White female peers and often felt inferior (Seelhoff, 2006). For Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) social invalidation and oppression from peers can lead to psychological distress and social isolation for Biracial females. Such exclusion and bullying may result in a negative impact on the mental health, specifically self-esteem of Biracial females (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003).

The tension of colorism among light complexion (choose one or the other—not both—seek parallelism) and dark skin toned Black and Biracial females can lead to emotional struggles, pain, and disconnection between these females of color. Scholars asserted this controversy between lighter and darker skin shades within the Black race dates back to the history of American slavery (Nagai, 2010; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003). The conflict of self-hatred and being accepted or rejected by others
based on the color of one’s skin complexion within the Black female community is labeled as within race oppression. Hall (1997) stated that within the Black community in the U.S., fair skin complexion tends to be favored and to receive more racial privilege when compared to darker skin complexion. Lighter skin color, thin lips, a petite sized nose, and straight hair are prized when compared to darker brown skin shades, full lips, a wide nose and kinky, “nappy” hair (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003).

In her book, Marbury (2011) suggested that hair texture plays a key role in the racial self-identification of Biracial females. Centuries ago Black women had similar hair coarseness among one another comparable to White women having related hair types within their race (Funderburg, 1994). The United States of America’s system of whiteness describes White women’s hair typically is long, lustrous, beautiful, and fast growing, flowing hair citation. If Black or Biracial females have similar hair types and textures to White women they are labeled as having “good hair” (Funderburg, 1994). Thus, hair can quickly separate Biracials from Blacks and Whites. Biracials may have a good grade of Black hair, yet their hair might not exhibit similar traits to Whites. Biracials then can feel like an outcast because they do not quite fit in with either race’s hair normality.

Moreover, blending Black and White races has created confusion for some White mothers regarding how often to wash and manage their Biracial child’s hair. Kilson and Ladd (2009) reported that White mothers who do not know how to care for their Biracial daughter’s hair that resembles that of the Black race, may take care of their Biracial children’s hair based on their own hair care. This can be emotional harmful for Biracial daughters’ racial identification. Washing a Biracial daughter’s hair daily that has the texture of the Black race, will dry out the hair, leaving it feeling brittle and matted. Matted hair for Biracial daughters can be painful during grooming, and often the damaged hair must be cut off. Clearly, White mothers who lack knowledge about how to care for their Biracial daughters’ hair should ask relatives of their child’s father’s family for guidance (Kilson & Ladd, 2009). When White mothers are not able to check in with Black in-laws (e.g., single White mothers), they should seek guidance from Black friends, research on the internet or learn from trial and error. Thus, hair care
is an important part of the female appearance. A lack of knowledge about proper hair care for Biracial females can lead to struggles with healthy racial identity development, self-esteem, and confidence in friendship building.

**Biracial males.**

Prior research suggested Black males are often targeted, arrested and detained, at times with no reasonable cause based on their Black phenotype skin color (Hall, 2001). In a review of literature, Oliver (2003) suggested the media often portrays Black men as drug dealers, robbers, and uneducated when referencing them. News broadcasters will loosely use the terms “criminal, dangerous, thug” when assigning a label to men of color (Oliver, 2003). These unsolicited stereotypes facilitate a battle within Black and Biracial men to unconsciously perpetuate or utterly reject this racist notion (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007).

Literature suggested Biracial males who have a biological Black father, tend to identify with their fathers’ race as Black, regardless if their father was an active parent in their upbringing (Marbury, 2011). Yet, prior research also confirms Biracial males who are not viewed as “Black enough” and/or do not feel accepted based on skin complexion, tend to identify with the negative, racist assumptions of the Black culture (Marbury, 2011). Funderburg (1994) noted in her book that describes Biracial participant narratives by Lise Funderburg, Biracial males tend to struggle with their racial identity development. For example, Biracial adult male Valur Edvardsson (age 25 at time of the interview), was born in Iceland and moved to the U.S. in his youth (Funderburg, 1994). When he moved to the U.S., Valur racially self-identified as White because his hair was long (down his shoulders), and he grew up with younger White siblings. Valur reported he had to learn how to be Black from his Black male peers. Nomathombi Martini (age 19 at time of the interview), a Biracial adult male was called names such as: White boy and White boy Noma (Funderburg, 1994). He was often questioned about why he spoke so properly (talked White) and did not use street talk like other Blacks in the neighborhood. In the case of Joseph Marable (age 31 at time of the interview), he shared a different
experience during his upbringing regarding his curly hair (Funderburg, 1994). Joseph was not teased but told his curly hair was too long. Joseph said school peers felt he believed he was better than them because he was cute and had curly, good, hair.

Given many Biracials have physical features of Blacks, the negative assumptions assigned by society to Blacks are often bestowed on Biracials (McKinney, 2014). For example, the nation elected Barack Obama, a Biracial man into office as the most important governmental position to reign as President of the United States of America (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Csizmadia, Rollins, Kaneakua, 2014).

Yet with power, comes much responsibility. In the case of President Obama, when the American people agree with the decisions he is making, they categorize him as Biracial, covertly acknowledging he is more than just Black yet refusing to racially identify him as White. When President Obama appears to be in opposition to many Americans, the public tends to identify his race as Black.

**Professional Environments Impacting Racial Identity Development**

Hardy (2012) described the experience of Blackness, uncensored as,

“Blackness as an experience means standing in the midst of a double bind, where both one’s passivity and assertion in response to being defined, for example, often renders the same outcome. Essentially, you are double-bound, “damned if you do, and damned if you don’t.” (p. 116).

This experience tends to occur when Blacks are in White places (workplace, school, and other community locations), and Biracials can also relate. Like Blacks, Biracials often experience this “double-bind” feeling prior to decision making and/or interacting in White places.

Furthermore, race is often in the forefront of Biracials’ minds. Robert Allen (age 25 at time of the interview) reported in an interview that, “there’s not a day that goes by that I don’t think about race” (Funderburg, 1994). Higher education and/or workplace dynamics can impact how Biracials tend to perceive themselves which can cause a racial identity crisis. Between desiring to excel in their career, Blacks may perceive Biracials as “kissing up” or “being Uncle Toms” in order to get ahead and/or neglecting their Blackness by adopting a White way of living within the workplace.
Funderburg (1994) asserted that when Biracials hold a high status in employment where Blacks (and other minorities) are scarce, Whites in the workplace tend to expect Biracials to humbly oblige to be the spokesperson for their half-Black racial identification when racial issues arise. Yet, in some cases, Whites can easily overlook Biracials half-Whiteness and without hesitation view Biracials as Black.

**The Influence of Adult Relationships**

Professional relationships with classmates, educators, co-workers, clients, and bosses are not the only connections Biracials have in adulthood. Maintaining family bonds, long-standing childhood friendships, and the development of romantic relationships also impact Biracial identity development. Stable relations from late adolescence into adulthood are important; having empathic, understanding, and safe relationships facilitates exploration of racial identity and well-being.

For some Biracials, it may be effortless to mingle and navigate among diverse groups of people based on their exposure to both Black and White races during their childhoods and adolescence. In contrast, Biracials who experience discrimination in their own family, may experience trauma and feel unsafe both in their families and out in the community. As adults, Biracials may have difficulty connecting to the race that oppressed them at home while growing up. For example, researchers reported this tends to occur with White mothers (and extended White family) and be experienced as Whiteness is valued, racial undertones, and a lack of acknowledgment of White privilege. According to prior research this can lead to Biracials experiencing to the following: 1) feeling easily disposable, 2) less valued, 3) like an outcast, 4) worthless and/or, 5) feeling the pressure to raise people’s expectation of Blacks (Kilson, 2001; Marbury, 2011; Shih, Bonam, Sanchez & Peck, 2007; Williams, 2013). If Biracials were not prepared for possible racial encounters or discrimination, they may struggle with their racial identity development and well-being.

Kilson (2001) examined the experiences of Biracial adults post-civil rights era. In this qualitative study, 52 participants who were born between 1958-1970 volunteered for the study. Twenty-nine of the participants were of Black and White Biracial racial combination and 23
participants had one Black parent and the other parent was either of the Asian, Native American, or Middle Eastern heritages. Results suggested most participants racially identified as Black, some as Biracial, and a few as White. The few participants who racially identified as White reported growing up in predominately White neighborhoods, which contributed to their comfort with racially passing and identifying as White. Participants who racially identified as Biracial reported their racial identity changed over time, often influenced by the social context. Biracials tended to view not belong to one race as a liability. This negative view led to the experience of the following: 1) fearing rejection from Blacks and/or Whites, 2) feeling pressure to educate Blacks and Whites, 3) combating racism, 4) handling workplace discrimination, 5) exoticism and, 6) dating concerns.

Kilson’s (2001) qualitative study suggested Biracials tend to gravitate toward racially diverse people in friendships and close relationships. Like other races, Biracials tend to seek a romantic partner with whom they share common interests. Funderburg (1994) reported that many Biracials date and get married based on their level of comfort and choose a spouse who reflects their personal racial identity affiliation. In addition to gravitating toward prospective spouses who share the same racial identity, Biracials tend to be attracted to potential partners who exhibit dualism. Research suggested dualism refers to embracing two identities including but not limited to: 1) race (Biracial), 2) culture (Bicultural), 3) political views, 4) religious affiliations, 5) education choices, and 6) career pursuits (Funderburg, 1994). Biracials who partner with significant others who are committed to dualism will likely solidify the connection in the romantic partnership, positively racially socializing and strengthening Biracials racial identification.

Many theoretical, conceptual, and personal narratives have been published on this topic. The purpose section was to review the theoretical and conceptual literature that has focused on the common struggles among Biracials living in the U.S. Unfortunately, there are few empirical studies that examined Biracial identity development over time and parental racial socialization practices. For example unlike prior studies with African Americans, there are no valid and reliable Biracial identity
measures or parental racial socialization measures for parents who are raising Biracial offspring. The next section summarizes the few empirical studies conducted with Biracial children, adolescents, adults, and their parents.

**Summary of Empirical Literature**

This section summarizes the few scholars who have examined Biracial identity development and parental racial socialization practices. At the end of this section, a summary of the gaps is described which this study was designed to address.

**White Mothers of Biracials Parental Racial Socialization Practices**

Home is often a safe haven for Biracial children and is often described as the place where they report feeling most protected, welcomed and accepted. Parents are the first teachers for Biracial children who socialize them about what it means to be Biracial. Parental racial socialization describes how parents teach their Biracial offspring children (either overtly or covertly) about behaviors, perceptions, morals, values, opinions and attitudes about their evolving racial identities (Hughes, Johnson, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson & Spicer, 2006; Stone, 2009).

Parental racial socialization researchers have suggested how parents’ socialize their Biracial children will affect how they understand and navigate their racial location in society (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Csizmadia, Rollins & Kaneakua, 2014; Thompson, 1994). Unfortunately, Marbury (2011) suggested the world (e.g., the macroenvironment) is where identity confusion and racial identity struggles tend to take place among Biracial children and adolescents. The environment Biracials grow up in influence their Biracial identity development and feelings of security and comfort.

Recent research conducted by Csizamadia, Rollins and Kaneakua (2014) examined racial socialization among families of Black-White Biracial children. In the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) study, 293-kindergarten age, first generation Biracial children along and their parents volunteered for this study. Among parent participants, 80% (n = 269) were White mothers. Parents were interviewed to examine: 1) child’s race, 2) gender, 3) single parenthood,
4) marital status, 5) region, 6) ethnic-racial socialization practices, 7) parent’s age, and 8) parental warmth. Csizmadia, Rollins and Kaneakua (2014) distributed the following two self-report measures: 1) familial ethnic-racial socialization (e.g., “How often does someone in your family talk with (insert child’s name) about his/her ethnic/racial heritage?”) and 2) child racial identification (e.g., parents identify the race of their child using one or more racial category options).

Findings suggest the socialization of Biracial youth is associated with the age, geographic location, social economic status, married versus single relationship status, and co-parenting versus single parent homes of the parents. Specifically, parents with higher social economic status tend to report more parental racial socialization of their Biracial children. Results also suggest parent participants who racially identified their children as Biracial, were five times more likely to racially identify their children as Biracials compared to parent participants who racially identified their Biracial children as White. Additionally, parent participants who racially identified their children as Biracials were three times more likely to do so compared to parent participants who racially identified their children as Black. Csizmadia, Rollins and Kaneakua (2014) also reported 80% of parent participants reported having open discussions about race with their Biracial children, as often as several times a week to several times a year.

Rollins and Hunter (2013) reported similar results in their face-to-face qualitative interviews with 73 mothers from various races who biologically mothered Biracial children. Among the 10 Biracial heritage combinations in this study, 73 mother participants were interviewed, 32.9% (n = 24) were White mothers of Black and White Biracial children. Seventy-one percent of mothers of Black and White Biracial children reported engaging in conversations about racial socialization with their Biracial children.

Similarly among African American families, Sanders Thompson (1994) surveyed 225 African American adult children 18 years old and older about the extent and type of conversations their parents had about race. Findings suggested that 79% (n = 178) of African American adult participants
reported their parents discussed race and identity development when they were children/youth. Taken together, Marbury’s assertion (2011) and these studies suggest parental racial socialization, similar to African Americans, tends to begin in childhood for Biracials.

Brown (2003) conducted a mixed-method dissertation study to examine the impact of family racial socialization and family structure on identity development among Biracials who have Black and White heritages. Thirty-five Black/White Biracial adults ranging from 18-53 years old completed the following two self-report assessments: 1) Phinney’s multigroup ethnic identity measure (MEIM) and 2) the racial socialization instrument (RSI). There was also an open-ended component and a self-report demographic questionnaire. Among the participants, 24 (68.6%) were female, 11 (31.4%) male with the majority 23 (65.7%) falling between the ages of 23-32 years old. The geographical location of this study included Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. Forty eight percent (n=17) of participants grew up in a two parent household and 34.3% (n =12) were raised by their mothers. Of the remaining participants, 5.7% (n =2) grew up in adoptive families and 5.7% (n = 2) were raised by their grandmothers. Out of the 35 participants, 20 (57.1%) had Black fathers and 15 (42.9%) had White fathers. Additionally, 57.1% (n = 20) of the sample had White mothers and 42.9% (n = 15) had Black mothers.

Results suggested parents’ racial discussions influence racial identity development of Biracial offspring (Brown, 2003). The average MEIM score for this sample was 3.10, median was 3.08, and mode was 3.58, suggesting moderate levels of racial identity development. In this mixed method study, discussions of race more often occurred with parents. Racial discussions were ongoing for 15 (42.9%) of participants. Six (17.1%) participants reported racial discussions were isolated in the household. In addition, six (17.1%) participants reported limited conversations with their parents about racial matters. Five (14.3%) participants reported regular discussions about race relations and three (8.6%) participants reported having no racial conversations with parents and other family members. Moreover, results suggested 13 (37.1%) participants reported having no discussions with other family members.
Seven (20.0%) participants said that conversations about race were isolated. However, six (17.1%) participants said discussions were regular. Yet, five (14.3%) participants shared racial discussions were limited, while only four (11.4%) participants reported such conversations were ongoing.

Another finding from the Brown (2003) dissertation study was that racial pride and identity messages were conveyed by relatives of participants’ during childhood. The RSI evaluates parental racial socialization styles participants received from primary caregivers who raised them. The RSI results suggested that among the five different parental socialization styles 10 (28.6%) reported an egalitarian style, 4 (11%) a monoracial Black style, 4 (11%) a monoracial style, 14 (40%) an integrative (Biracial) style and 5 (14.3%) reported another form. Thus, findings corroborated that racial discussions by parents (parental figures) have a significant impact on Biracial identity development.

Stone (2009) conducted a qualitative, phenomenological, dissertation study. She explored parent and child influences on the development of Black and White Biracial identity. Parents (White mothers) of Biracial adult children (including siblings from same interracial family) and their Biracial adult children retrospectively described major influences on Biracial identity development. The final sample included 10 White mothers and 11 of their adult Biracial children (ages 18-40 years old) living in the northern pacific area of the U.S (Oregon). Specifically, nine dyads included 9 mothers and one Biracial adult child and a triad that included a mother and two of her Biracial adult children were interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured with White mothers and adult Biracial children both individually and together, with the exception of one dyad who interviewed together the entire time. Among the 11 Biracial adult participants, nine were females, and two were males.

Four themes emerged that describe salient factors parents and adult Biracial children reported as influential for the development of Black-White Biracial identity. First, family interactions and multi-generational family relationships impact Biracial identity development. Second, White mothers described the importance of creating an open family environment for their Biracial children. A third
major theme that both parents and adult children described was the influence of American culture and society. Finally, family members’ perceptions and encounters with the outside world suggest that growing up Biracial is a unique phenomenon that needs to be explored in future studies.

Unlike the retrospective research studies that have been conducted, Marbury (2006) conducted a prospective (real time), grounded theory qualitative dissertation study to examine the racial socialization of Biracial adolescents, from the perspective of parents. Eight White mothers of Biracial adolescent children who were between the ages of nine to 17 years old at the time of study, residing in Ohio, Missouri, or Alaska volunteered for this study. Individual interviews and focus groups were conducted.

Themes that emerged suggested White mothers tend to have a little support from their families of origin regarding their choice to not only have an interracial relationship with a Black man, but conceiving and parenting Biracial children citation. White mothers’ also tended to report being color blind and not seeing skin color or race in their Biracial offspring. Additionally, participants reported the more sheltered the environment of their Biracial children was from negative outside influences, the better racial socialization outcomes for their children. These findings suggest White mothers play an important role in Biracial identity development and some might ‘shelter’ their children from Black culture and not utilize parental racial socialization practices that facilitate Black and White identity development in their Biracial children.

Similarly, O’Donoghue (2004) qualitatively examined racial identity development among White mothers of Black-White children. Eleven White women (40-58 years in age) who were in long-term marriages with Black men (ranging from 15-32 years) and who were mothers of Biracial children (between the ages 12 and older) at the time of study were interviewed. Findings suggested White women did not have a clear White racial identity. Participants reported it was difficult to identify with a particular racial or ethnic group because they considered themselves American. Thus, not identifying with a specific ethnicity or race informed how these mothers racially socialized their Biracial children.
Often these mothers reported supporting their children to identify more with their Black racial identity. White mothers reported using this parenting strategy because they assumed Black fathers of their Biracial children would help their children embrace the Black culture. These findings are similar to an earlier qualitative study by Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, and Harris (1993) who reported White parents were less likely to prepare their Biracial children for a discriminatory society. They reported that Black parents tend to develop a “color conscious, only the best survive” view of their Biracial children in the face of racism (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; O’Donoghue, 2004).

**Summary of Gaps in Literature**

The dissertation study was designed to extend the findings of prior studies, and qualitative dissertations. Few researchers have examined how parents racially socialize their Black-White Biracial offspring. Additionally, little research has examined Biracials’ prospective (in childhood/adolescence) and retrospective (adults recollections of childhood) views of their White mothers’ parental racial socialization practices. Noteworthy, reactive socialization has not been examined in any prior studies with Biracials; dyadic research with White mothers and their Biracial children to understand how their mothers helped them (or did not help them) navigate racial encounters experienced in childhood fills a gap in the literature. Siblings of Biracials in the existing literature were also scarce, therefore, siblings were also invited to participate.

Although, Brown (2003) examined the influence of families (parents and other relatives) on Biracial identity development, parents’ perceptions of their influence and children’s reactions were not previously examined. Thus, this phenomenological dissertation study was designed to explore White mothers’ recalled influence on their adult Biracial children’s racial identity development and parental racial socialization practices. It was also designed to explore Biracial adult children’s retrospective reports of their White mothers’ parental racial socialization practices.

Stone (2009) conducted a ground-breaking qualitative dissertation study and examined parent and child influences on the development of Black-White Biracial identity. There are similarities
between this dissertation study and Stone’s dissertation study, particularly regarding the methodology (transcendental phenomenology) and sample (White mothers and one or more of their adult Biracial children ages 18 and older). Stone planned to recruit both Black and White mothers, yet her final sample only included 10 White mothers of Biracial and their Biracial adult children. This phenomenological study only included White mothers. Additionally, Stone examined multi-generational familial patterns and in this study the influence of White mothers (not Black mothers or White or Black fathers), specifically Biracial adult children’s first racial barriers encountered in childhood/adolescence was examined. Finally, different theories informed the development of this study, Poston’s (1990) Biracial identity development model, parental racial socialization (Hughes and Johnson, 2001; Stevenson, 1995), and Rockquemore and Laszloffy’s (2005) continuum of Biracial identity perspective. Stone (2009) did not include a parental racial socialization theory in her study. Finally, in this study Biracial adult children self-identified their skin color which was not evaluated in the Stone (2009) dissertation study.

Research conducted by O’Donoghue (2004) described the difficulty White mothers may have attending to Black heritage while parenting their Biracial children regardless of whether a single parent or married. This suggested the need for more research on parental racial socialization practices among White mothers of Biracial children; this study focused on this phenomenon. Both married, divorced, widowed or single White mothers of Biracials were recruited for this study.

Additionally, Rollins and Hunter (2013) reported that Biracial children are often ill equipped by their monoracial parents and tend to receive parental messages that deemphasize race. Whether it is deliberate or unintentional, the lack of racial socialization for Biracial children from their White mothers is either, 1) a strategy, 2) an oversight or 3) lack of knowledge, all which are problematic for Biracial children. Rollins and Hunter (2013) suggested there is an absence of open conversations between White parents and Biracial children regarding navigating racist and discriminatory encounters with peers, at school, and in the community.
Summary

In the U.S., the birthrates of Biracial offspring have significantly increased among partnered/married White women and Black men. Racial identification has been historically categorized as “either/or” in the U.S. versus “both/and” which can make it difficult for Biracial individuals to racially identify. Researchers have primarily focused on racial identity development among younger Biracial youth; they have not examined Biracial identity development across the lifespan. Moreover, few researchers have examined the influence of White mothers on their Biracial offspring’s racial identity development and racial socialization process. The primary aim of this phenomenological qualitative dissertation study was to explore the retrospective experiences of Biracial adults and their White mothers regarding Biracial identity development over time and parental racial socialization practices. Using Poston’s (1990) Biracial identity development model, parental racial socialization (Hughes and Johnson, 2001; Stevenson, 1995), and Rockquemore and Laszloffy’s (2005) continuum of Biracial identity perspective, this qualitative phenomenological study explored the recalled parental racial socialization and racial identity experiences of four Biracially identified male and four female adults (ages 18 years to 42 years old) and their White mothers.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative dissertation study, transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) was used to examine the retrospective experiences of eight Biracial adults (ages 18 to 42) and their White mothers, referred to as phenomenology. After presenting the research questions and primary purpose of this study, a brief description of phenomenology and its premises are described. Then, the methodology and procedures used for sampling, data collection, data analysis, and how trustworthiness was established are described.

Research Questions

This qualitative dissertation study was designed to answer one primary research question and two sub-questions. The primary research question was: What are the retrospective experiences among Biracial adults (ages 18 to 45) and their White mothers regarding parental racial socialization practices and Biracial identity development? The two sub-questions were: 1) (For Biracial Adults): How has your Biracial identity changed or not changed over time? 2) (For White mothers) What role did you have regarding your child’s Biracial identity development and parental racial socialization practices (when their child first encountered racial discrimination)? These research questions were operationalized using specific open-ended questions and probes in the four interview guides (see Appendices F, G, H, and I).

Aims of Study

The primary aim of this phenomenological dissertation study was to examine the experiences of Biracial adults and their White mothers, exploring both their strengths and challenges. This primary aim was embedded in the need to challenge deficit-based perspectives of White mothers raising Biracial children. Additionally, this study was designed to generate new knowledge in an area that has not been focused on in prior research. Finally, unlike earlier studies that have focused on young children’s or youths’ Biracial identity development, this study explored adult Biracials’ and their White mothers’ retrospective reports.
Methodology

Phenomenology allows researchers to examine the meanings behind intriguing phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Richards & Morse; 2007; Wertz, 2005). Specifically, *transcendental (descriptive)* phenomenology was used to discover how this phenomenon was experienced by participants’ (adult Biracial children and their White mothers) (Chan, Fung & Chien, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994) phenomenology does not focus on explanations or analyses of a particular phenomenon, but on understanding how experiences (objects, people, actions, and events) are conceptualized in participants’ consciousness, preconscious and unconscious. Dahl and Boss (2005) noted the primary aim of phenomenology in couple and family therapy research is to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the social actor who has an immediate experience of it, in this study Biracial adults and their White mothers (Morse & Richards, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

**Participants and Sampling Method**

The final sample of Biracial adults and their White mothers included eight dyads. A non-probabilistic sampling approach was used, using the following three sampling techniques: 1) criterion sampling, 2) maximum variation sampling and 3) snowball sampling (Newman, 2003; Patton, 2002). Regarding *criterion sampling*, individuals who fit the following specific inclusion criteria were actively recruited:

- Being a Biracial adult whose father was African American and mother was White.
- Being 18 to 45 years of age
- Having a White mother willing to volunteer for the study

The exclusion criteria for this phenomenological study was:

- Younger than 18 years old
- Over the age of 45 years of age
- Not having an African American father and White mother
- Not having a White mother willing to volunteer for the study
No adoptees

The researcher interviewed participants across generations (for example, young adults (18-25), 20’s, 30’s, 40’s). Interviewing participants across generations facilitated examining the influence of historical factors regarding participants’ upbringing at home, school, and community.

Although salient contextual variables such as gender, self-identified race, current age, SES, parents’ marital status while growing up, demographic profile of community at school-age, number of siblings, and skin color are all important for understanding experiences among adult Biracial children, the social location of participants were not considered specific inclusion or exclusion criteria. In order to identify common patterns and central themes shared by a diverse sample of Biracial adults and their White mothers, *maximum variation* on these key demographic variables was utilized. This prevented, for example, the final sample including participants who were all from the same region in the U.S. (e.g., only Philadelphia) or who were all the same age or gender.

Participants were recruited using *snowball or network sampling* (Newman, 2003; Patton, 2002). This involved asking key informants (e.g., other Biracial adults and communities of interest) for potential Biracial adults and their White mothers and then increasing the sample by inviting current participants to recommend others who fit the specific inclusion criteria. In order to avoid recruiting participants in a coercive manner, key informants or current participants were asked to give the potential participant a copy of the recruitment flyer and the researcher’s contact information (see Appendix A). If an eligible individual was interested in participating, he or she had the option of contacting the researcher to volunteer for this study, without undue coercion.

**Data Collection**

**In-depth Semi-structured Interview Guides**

The author conducted in-depth, semi-structured, 90-minute, voluntary interviews with each White mother-adult Biracial child dyad. The goal of the in-depth interviews was to collect rich qualitative data from the points of view of individuals who were selected for particular characteristics
in relation to the topic; in-depth interviews are especially helpful to gain access to subjugated narratives and subjugated knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews followed interview guides (see Appendices F, G, H, I) to ensure all interviews [(Biracial adult (see Appendix F); married White mother (see Appendix G); single White mother (see Appendix H); and family interview (see Appendix I)] covered the same topics, while allowing White mother-adult Biracial children the freedom to discuss what was important or meaningful to them in relation to the phenomena under study (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Patton, 2002).

First the consent form was explained (see Appendix C), and then written informed consent was obtained from both the adult Biracial child and his/her White mother. Then participants completed the demographic self-report survey individually (see Appendix D for adult Biracial child’s demographic survey and skin color measure; see Appendix E for the mother’s demographic survey) and gave them to the researcher. When the interview was conducted over the telephone, the consent form and self-report surveys were first emailed to participants before the interview. During the interview, the researcher asked participants to review and sign the consent form, if they had not already done so. The researcher also asked the participants to complete the demographic surveys and mail or email them as soon as possible. Then, a semi-structured interview was conducted in the following three-part sequence: 1) adult Biracial child separately (see Appendix F); 2) White mother separately (see Appendices G and H) and, 3) White mother and adult Biracial child together to dyadically understand their experiences (see Appendix I).

Each interview took place during a convenient time and location (e.g., participant’s home or the researcher’s school office at Drexel University, Center City Hahnemann campus in Three Parkway, 7th floor, room 720). When geographic distance made face-to-face interviews not feasible, telephone interviews occurred which were audio-recorded. For adult Biracial children and White mothers who
live in different geographical locations, a three-way merged telephone call was used and a telephone
pick-up microphone was used to audio-record the interview.

Four out of the eight (50%) interviews took place at participants’ homes. Three out of the eight
interviews were conducted on the telephone. Additionally, for one of the eight interviews, the adult
Biracial child was interviewed in-person at Drexel University, Center City Hahnemann campus in
Three Parkway, 7th floor, room 720, while the mother was interviewed over the telephone because of
the geographical distance. The researcher took notes and wrote detailed memos describing the process
both during and after each interview; these notes and memos were transcribed and analyzed during
data analysis.

The average length of interviews was 120 minutes; thirty minutes was scheduled for each part
of the three-part interview. Although noted in the semi-structured interview guide, none of the
participants asked for a 15-minute break after the White mother interview, before starting the 30
minutes interview for the dyadic part of the interview. When one participant was interviewed, the other
took a break and left the room where the interview was occurring. All interviews were audio recorded
and transcribed verbatim by a hired transcriptionist. In order to preserve anonymity, before the
audiotape player was turned on, participants were asked to choose an alias or a pseudonym.

Data collection took approximately four months; from September 2015 until December 2015
eight parent-child dyads were interviewed. After coding the transcripts and analyzing the memos
taken before and after the interviews, theoretical saturation was reached after the seventh interview.
One additional interview was done with an eighth adult child-mother dyad to ensure theoretical
saturation was reached.

The semi-structured interview guide included eight open-ended questions, with probes for
Biracial adult children (see Appendix F), four open-ended interview questions with probes for the
mother interviews (see Appendix G for married mothers and Appendix H for married mothers), and
eight open-ended interview questions with probes for the family interviews (see Appendix I for family
Examples of questions asked during the adult Biracial child interviews are: 1) Please describe your first experience when you were made aware of having a Black father and a White mother.; 2) What are your personal thoughts about race?; 3) How has growing up with a White mother shaped your racial identity? Examples of questions during the parent interviews are: 1) Please describe what it is has been like raising Biracial children? (Probes: How would you describe your child’s racial identity?; What positive experiences and challenges have you had?) 2) Please describe the first time your child came to you about a racial encounter they experienced out in the community? (Probes: What was your response?; In childhood versus adolescence, did you discuss your child’s racial identity the same way or differently? Finally, examples of questions during the parent-adult child dyadic interviews are: 1) What does it mean to your family to be Biracial?; 2) How did your family talk about race at home when you were growing up when a racial encounter occurred out in the community?; and, 3) What experiences do you think influenced how and when your family talked about race together?.

**Informed Consent**

The adult informed consent form described the study and participants’ right to withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix C). Participants were made aware of potential risks by volunteering for this study. Additionally, through informed consent, the researcher clarified the explicit nature of the recording process and noted recordings were being used for research and education and not for promotional purposes. Furthermore, it was noted if any findings are published in the future, any personal identifiers will be removed to preserve participants’ confidentiality.

**Pilot Testing Interview Guide and Demographic Survey**

In the first phase of this study, both the semi-structured interview guides and self-report demographic surveys were pilot tested during two mock interviews with two Biracial adults and two White mothers who fit the study inclusion criteria, but who were not part of the recruited sample. The goal of these pilot interviews was to gather feedback about the clarity of questions in the interview.
guides, and to determine whether self-report surveys elicited the information that was being explored in this study.

**Demographic Survey**

After reviewing and signing the adult consent form, all participants filled out a brief self-report demographic survey (see Appendix D for adult Biracial and see Appendix E for mother survey). The demographic survey asked about background information including: gender, age, if raised by White mother, year of birth of White mother, years of formal education, highest level of education, employment status (occupation optional), geographical location now and during childhood, raised in a single parent or two parent household, and romantic relational status. This information was used to validate and/or contrast existing literature discussed previously in the literature review in chapter two.

**Skin Color Measure**

The adult Biracial child also completed a self-report skin color measure which was part of the demographic survey (see Appendix D). The New Immigrant Survey was designed to measure respondent skin color using a scale designed by Douglas S. Massey (one of the Principal Investigators) and Jennifer A. Martin (NIS Project Manager), based on an idea originally developed by Massey, Charles, Lundy, and Fischer (2003) in their work on the National Longitudinal Study of Freshmen. The scale is an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 to 10, with 0 representing albinism, or the total absence of color, and 10 representing the darkest possible skin. The ten shades of skin color corresponding to the points 1 to 10 on the Massey and Martin Skin Color Scale are depicted in a chart, with each point represented by a hand, of identical form, but differing in color. The scale was constructed with assistance from a graphic designer. The M&M Scale is for use by interviewers, who essentially memorize the scale, so that the respondent never sees the chart. This skin color assessment was used as a self-report measure for this dissertation study (see Appendix D for a copy of this self-report measure).
Both the consent and two self-report surveys were collected and stored in a locked filing cabinet inside the dissertation chair’s (M. Davey) office.

**Procedure**

After receiving approval from the dissertation committee and Drexel’s Institutional Review Board, recruitment flyers (see Appendix A) were emailed to key informants and were posted in public buildings on Drexel University’s campus and on relevant websites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram). Associates of the researcher distributed recruitment flyers and also posted them on social media websites, Facebook and Instagram. Six out of the eight dyads interviewed were recruited by word of mouth from associates of the researcher. One of the eight dyads was recruited by word of mouth by the researcher. One out of the eight dyads was recruited from an adult Biracial child expressing interest after seeing the recruitment flyer on Facebook. Once eligible, White mother-adult Biracial children was recruited and contacted by the researcher to volunteer for this study; an information packet was sent out immediately which included: 1) recruitment letter (see Appendix B) 2) the adult consent form (see Appendix C), and 3) the two self-report demographic surveys: one for adult Biracial child and one for mother (see Appendices D and E).

All interviews were audio-taped. The recorded interviews were stored as electronic audio files in a password protected computer that is accessible only to the researcher and her dissertation chair (M. Davey). All additional copies of the interviews were stored in a password-protected back-up drive. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist. Interview transcriptions and notes about the interview process were compiled by the researcher and then qualitatively analyzed using MAXQDA (2010). Electronic copies of the transcripts and all written materials were stored in a similar fashion as the audio-recorded interviews. All data was qualitatively analyzed following the steps that are described in the next section.

Research that is based on narrated material runs the inherent risk of generating emotional reactions among participants. In addition to signing the consent form that states all participants have
the right to withdraw at any time during the study, *processual consent* was done (Piercy & Fontes, 2001). Processual consent describes a process where the interviewer asks questions or makes statements during the interview to explicitly give participants an opportunity to not answer a specific question, to continue with the interview or to terminate it at any time.

At the end of the interview, each participant received a $25 gift card to either Best Buy or Macy’s. The researcher also asked if participants were interested in a follow-up telephone call or email to ensure the accuracy of descriptions provided by the participant referred to as member checking (Dahl & Boss, 2005; Richard & Morse, 2007). All eight dyads (16 participants) agreed to be later contacted to confirm their interviews were accurately captured. This is referred to as member checking which helps to improve the trustworthiness and credibility of the data; Creswell (2007) does note that not all participants will be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. After major themes and codes emerged (more than half of participants), the researcher sent all participants codes that emerged; this information was sent to participants who provided an email address, home address, or phone number. The researcher requested a response within two weeks of emailing the follow-up email. Five participants (three mother and two adult children volunteers) responded to the follow-up email and reported they all agreed with the themes that emerged and some reported the research was “very interesting.”

**Demographic Description of the Sample**

Eight adult Biracial children and their White mothers completed and returned demographic self-report surveys (see Table 3.1). Based on the demographic surveys, 50% (n = 4) of the adult Biracial children were male and 50% (N = 4) were female. Half (n = 4) reported growing up in a two-parent household and the other half (n =4) grew up in a single-parent household; ages ranged between 18-42 years old, with a mean age of 30. The youngest adult child was 18 years old and a senior in high school. Three adult participants were in their 20’s, three in their 30’s and one in his 40’s when the interview was conducted.
Seventy five percent (n = 6) of the adult child participants racially identified as Biracial and 25% (n = 2) racially identified as Black. Most adult child participants, 75% (n = 6) reported growing up on the East Coast and the remaining 25% were raised in the Midwestern region of the U.S. Six (75%) reported growing up in predominately White neighborhoods and two (25%) grew up in predominately Black communities. Similarly, the racial make-up of the schools adult children attended were White for more than half of participants (n = 5, 62.5%). Only two participants (25%) reported they were enrolled in racially diverse schools and one (13.5%) attended a predominately Black school. Engaging in Black organizations in both academic and community settings were reported by 37.5% (n = 3) of the adult child participants and included the following: 1) Christian sororities, 2) Christian praise dance groups (Praise dancing is primarily practiced by those of the Christian faith. Praise dancers could perform as background dancers for Gospel artists, in rallies, and marches), and 3) fraternities.

Approximately one-third, 37.5% (n = 3) identified their current relationship status as single, 13.5% (n = 1), dating, 25% (n = 2) coupled, and 25% (n = 2) married. Participants who reported being coupled or married when the interview was conducted, reported being in romantic relationships with Black partners. Additionally, two out of the eight participants (25%) are parents. One participant has children with a Black spouse and another has children from a previous relationship with a White partner. All adult participants with the exception of one were employed either full-time or part-time when interviewed; examples of participants’ careers include: cook, social worker – education coordinator, U.S. diplomat, and elementary school teacher. When self-reporting their skin color, most (n = 7, 87.5%) rated themselves as 4 out of 10, indicating a slightly lighter complexion than medium skin color. One adult child participant (13.5%) reported a 5 out of 10 on the NIS skin color measure suggesting his/her skin color is medium between light and dark complexions.

Based on the demographic survey, the mean age of White mothers was 50, with ages ranging from 39-65 (see Table 3.1). Among the four mothers who reported raising Biracial children with their
husbands, two mothers are now separated, one mother is divorced, and another is widowed.

Noteworthy, currently all 8 mothers are not partnered with their children’s fathers. Regarding managing their children’s hair, the four mothers of sons reported not keeping their sons’ hair short, often sending them to a barber shop. Whereas the four mothers of daughters gave mixed responses regarding comfort with providing hair care. These mothers shared they often sought advice from their children’s fathers, friends, family and teachers at school. Additionally, some mothers of daughters reported fathers helped with hair care and sometimes took their daughters to the hairdresser.

Five mothers (62.5%) reported having open conversations with their Biracial children about race; the remaining three mothers (37.5%) said they did not discuss race with their Biracial children. Different from the responses provided by adult child participants, most mothers 75% (n = 6) reported their children were raised in racially diverse neighborhoods and 25% (n = 2) said their children grew up in predominately White neighborhoods. Moreover, half of mothers reported their children were enrolled in racially diverse schools (N = 4, 50%) and the other half reported their children attended predominately White schools (N = 4, 50%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1</th>
<th>Family Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Adult Biracial Children</th>
<th>White Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Variable</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean/%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Racial Identification</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Biracial</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Highest Level of Education</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some technical school</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Technical school degree</td>
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<td>Some college</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
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<td>12.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
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<td>12.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Employment Status**

| Employment Status   | Full-time | 6 | 75% | 3 | 37.5% |
|                     | Part-time | 1 | 12.5% | 0 | 0% |
|                     | Unemployed | 1 | 12.5% | 1 | 12.5% |
|                     | Disabled | 0 | 0% | 1 | 12.5% |
|                     | Student | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
|                     | Retired | 0 | 0% | 3 | 37.5% |

**Region of the US currently residing**

| Region | East Coast | 5 | 62.5% | 6 | 75% |
|        | South | 1 | 12.5% | 0 | 0% |
|        | Midwest | 2 | 25% | 2 | 25% |
|        | West Coast | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |

**US region spent during childhood**

| Region | East Coast | 6 | 75% | 6 | 75% |
|        | South | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
|        | Midwest | 2 | 25% | 2 | 25% |
|        | West Coast | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |

**Type of household raised in**

| Type of household | Single-parent | 4 | 50% | 0 | 0% |
|                   | Two-parent | 4 | 50% | 7 | 87.5% |
|                   | Multiple-parent | 0 | 0% | 1 | 12.5% |

**Racial make-up of neighborhood**

| Make-up of neighborhood | Predominately Black | 2 | 25% | 0 | 0% |
|                         | Predominately White | 6 | 75% | 7 | 87.5% |
|                         | Diverse | 0 | 0% | 1 | 13.5% |

**Racial make-up of school**

| Make-up of school | Predominately Black | 1 | 13.5% | 1 | 13.5% |
|                   | Predominately White | 5 | 62.5% | 4 | 50% |
|                   | Diverse | 2 | 25% | 3 | 37.5% |

**Current relationship status**

| Relationship status | Single | 3 | 37.5% | 0 | 0% |
|                     | Dating | 1 | 13.5% | 0 | 0% |
|                     | Coupled | 2 | 25% | 2 | 25% |
|                     | Married | 2 | 25% | 1 | 12.5% |
|                     | Separated | 0 | 0% | 2 | 25% |
|                     | Divorced | 0 | 0% | 2 | 25% |
|                     | Widowed | 0 | 0% | 1 | 12.5% |

**Member of Black organizations**

| Membership Status | Yes | 3 | 37.5% | N/A |
|                   | No | 5 | 62.5% | N/A |

**NIS Skin Color Measure Rating**

| Rating | 4 | 7 | 87.5% | N/A |
|        | 5 | 1 | 13.5% | N/A |

**Had race discussions with child**

| Discussions status | Yes | N/A | 5 | 62.5% |
|                    | No | N/A | 3 | 37.5% |

**Area raised children**
Data Analysis

*MAXQDA* (2010), a qualitative software, was used to organize and analyze the qualitative data. First the individual (8 adult biracial child and 8 mothers) interviews were analyzed, by coding major themes that emerged; possible differences between the two groups were then examined. Then, the eight family interviews were analyzed, examining the similarities and differences between their experiences. Case summaries for each of the eight dyads were first written up to examine their stories in depth, and to triangulate their individual interviews (mother and adult biracial child) with the family interview.

All interviews were audio-taped with a digital audio recorder and then transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service after the interview was completed. The recorded interviews were stored as electronic audio files in a password-protected computer that was accessible only to the researcher, and the dissertation chair at Drexel University (Dr. Maureen Davey). Additional copies of the interviews were stored in a password-protected back-up drive as well as a password-protected computer. The transcription of the interviews and the descriptive data gathered from the demographic self-report survey and skin color measure were stored in a similar fashion. All data was qualitatively analyzed following phenomenological data analysis that is described in the next section.

Moustakas (1994) described four overlapping and recursive stages in a phenomenological research study: 1) epoche, 2) phenomenological reduction, 3) imaginative variation and 4) synthesis. These four stages guided the development and analysis of the qualitative data from this dissertation study.
Epoche

Moustakas (1994) used the term *epoche* to describe the blocking of biases, general beliefs, and assumptions of any kind about the phenomena under study. This surrender of previous knowledge helps qualitative researchers access an original viewpoint so they can experience the phenomenon and acquire new information. Although it is presented as a stage, epoche is better understood as an approach that has to be continuously utilized throughout data collection and data analysis phases of the research study.

A consistent effort to put aside preconceptions and ideas about adult Biracial children’s identity development and the role of White mothers’ parental racial socialization practices was done in the following two ways: 1) ongoing writing of reflexive memos (Daly, 2007) (used for increasing the researcher’s awareness of material gathered during the research process and reactions to them in attempts to distinguish between the researcher’s personal experiences and those of her participants; and 2) an acknowledgment and awareness of the location of the researcher (see Chapter Four below) that explains the social position of the researcher in relation to the topic under study. Epoche was also practiced during the interviews with participants. The researcher made sure all interviews reflected participants’ lived experiences, and not her own. As participants shared their experiences, the researcher presented her understanding of their narratives and allowed participants to confirm or disconfirm them *in the moment*. Finally, throughout data collection, the researcher wrote reflexive memos to describe what she observed, heard, thought and experienced.

Phenomenological Reduction

While epoche helps researchers maintain an open stance towards the phenomena under investigation, *phenomenological reduction* describes how information is gathered by the researcher while maintaining this open stance. Moustakas (1994) reported the process of phenomenological reduction requires the following four steps: 1) *bracketing*; freeing of preconceptions and biases; 2) *horizontalizing*; handling all information gathered with equal value and identifying *horizons*, or pieces
of data that appear to be more meaningful for the phenomenon under study; 3) *clustering the horizons into themes*; and 4) *organizing the horizons and themes* collected into intelligible clear description that explains the phenomenon under investigation.

During phenomenological reduction, conventional content analysis was used to identify the horizons and major themes. According to Heish and Shannon (2005) this can be achieved by following the following steps: 1) reading all raw data/transcripts several times to immerse oneself in each participants’ experience, 2) capturing and identifying key ideas, words, expressions of participants, 3) defining codes that capture the raw data/transcripts, 4) grouping codes into categories based on similarities among the participants, 5) organizing the codes and categories into meaningful clusters that captured emerging themes; and 6) once clusters were formed, definitions for each theme, categories and codes were generated. The researcher created codes for each the adult-Biracial child interviews, the mother interviews and the family interviews separately and developed overarching categories for the codes. After merging codes into categories for each of the adult-Biracial, mother and family interviews separately, the researcher developed major themes from the categories of codes by focusing on the dominant messages participants were expressing. A dominant theme was defined by at least half (50%) of participants reporting a theme. The computer software program, *MAXQDA* was used to organize and code the data.

**Imaginative Variation**

The third step is *imaginative variation*. The purpose of this stage is to provide possible meanings of the phenomenon using various frames of reference (Moustakas, 1994). In order to understand the major themes that emerged, the following three frames of reference were used: 1) Biracial Identity Development Model (Poston, 1990), 2) Parental Racial Socialization (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Stevenson, 1995) and, 3) the Continuum of Biracial Identity clinical lens (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). These three perspectives helped the researcher make sense of themes that emerged, in particular how racial identity development of adult Biracial children was
influenced by their White mothers, specifically retrospective reports of parental racial socialization practices. Seven dominant themes emerged among the Biracial adult participants, four dominant themes for the White mothers and four dominant themes emerged for the mother-child dyads.

**Synthesis**

During the fourth and final step of the phenomenological research process, *synthesis*, occurs when the researcher provides a description and explanation of the phenomena. Moustakas (1994) reported this final step requires providing rich descriptions of the essences and meanings attached to the phenomena at a particular place and time, from the vantage point of the researcher. The findings that emerged suggest Biracial adult children recalled their reactive socialization experiences, were not prepared in advance for racial encounters by their parents, especially their White mothers. None of the adult children remembered sharing their first racist experience with their mothers, instead they confided in teachers, peers, and siblings or internalized the event, not telling anyone. Another main finding of the study was that most White mothers did not have open discussions about race with their Biracial children, however, most mothers embraced some aspects of the Black culture while raising their children.

**Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) reported that establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research requires demonstrating findings are worth paying attention to, and have been achieved through a careful and rigorous process. Findings from this study are trustworthy; they met criteria in the following four areas: 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability and 4) confirmability.

**Credibility**

Qualitative researchers use several measures to ensure a study is credible and believable. The three techniques used in this study were: 1) member checking, 2) prolonged engagement and 3) triangulation. As described earlier, *member checking* is when a researcher contacts participants after gathering, transcribing and analyzing the data for a follow-up interview and at minimum to inquire by
email if themes that emerged capture their experiences (Daly & Boss, 2005; Richard & Morse, 2007). Participants were emailed or mailed the themes that emerged with a request to provide feedback within two weeks. Five (three mothers and two adult children) responded and confirmed the themes; some reported this study was “very interesting”.

_Prolonged engagement_ describes the continuous involvement of the researcher with participants throughout the research process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This was done by contacting participants at different points during the study (e.g., interviews and member checking), and asking participants for additional comments after data was coded.

A third strategy is _triangulation_. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested one way to reach triangulation is to have “multiple copies of the same type of source” (p. 305). The researcher interviewed eight Biracial adult children and their White mothers enhancing credibility (8 Biracial adult children transcripts; 8 White mother transcripts; 8 family interviews totally 24 transcripts). Additionally, triangulation of observers in this study involved having the committee chairperson review the study findings. The methodologist on the dissertation committee (Dr. Roberta Waite) was a second coder (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dr. Roberta Waite read the transcripts independently, asked questions regarding how themes and horizons emerged during regular meetings, which ensured the researcher had clarity about this process, and gave the researcher the opportunity to maintain epoche. The researcher also consulted with her dissertation chair (Dr. Maureen Davey) during the data analysis phase to verify the analysis was rigorous.

**Transferability**

Transferability describes the ability of researchers to apply their findings to other individuals or groups of people. A determining factor of transferability is the recognition of similarities between the sample interviewed in this dissertation study and the larger population of Biracial adult children and their White mothers living in the U.S. Given it was impossible to know ahead of time the characteristics of the final sample and contexts where the results can be transferred to, a detailed
description of the context of the research and demographic profile of participants is provided. This detailed description will help others decide if findings can be transferred.

**Dependability**

In qualitative studies it is expected the process of conducting research will affect participants and the phenomenon being studied. In order to improve dependability of the findings, the researcher fully described details about the design and the research process, which led to changes in participants and the phenomenon being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Confirmability**

The quality and trustworthiness of findings in qualitative studies is evaluated by linking the final product to the raw data (transcripts from interviews). After the study was completed, confirmation that the final findings were related to the experiences of the participants we conducted which is referred to as confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All steps during the study were recorded in an *audit trail* that is open to scrutiny. This included all written raw materials, reflexive memos, initial coding, and the categorization of all transcripts and written materials. How categories were identified and clustered into higher order themes, interpretation of results according to the theoretical frameworks, and the rationale behind any adjustments in the study were tracked using theoretical and operational memos (Daly, 2007) that were part of the audit trail.

**Limitations**

There were limitations in this qualitative, transcendental (descriptive) phenomenological dissertation research study. By focusing on Biracial adults who were raised by a White mother and a Black father and excluding participants who were raised by a Black mother and a White father, this study did not capture the experiences of all Black-White Biracial families. Similarly, by excluding Biracial adults with a White mother and a Black father who were not raised by their mothers and instead were raised by their Black fathers, their experiences were not captured.
Moreover, a limitation of this study was contextual factors regarding gender, age and the geographical location and experiences of mother-adult child dyads. Regarding age, the world is constantly changing, so the age (cohort) of participants’ limited the type of experiences they had based on the sociohistorical context (1960’s versus 1980’s, for example) during their childhoods. Among the eight Biracial adult children, one was in his 40’s, three were in their 30’s, three were in their 20’s and one was in her late teens (18 years old and a high school senior).

Additionally, geographical location was another limitation of this study. Most participants’ lived in the Northeastern region of the U.S. (four lived in Pennsylvania, one in New York and one in the Washington DC area) during their childhoods. The remaining participants lived in the Midwest region (one in Minnesota and one in Michigan) during their childhoods. Thus, adult Biracial participants’ experiences may not represent the experiences of Biracials in other geographical locations (e.g., the south and west coast regions of the U.S.).

A final limitation was the researcher’s gender and social class. The researcher is a female, middle class, Biracial doctoral candidate. As a fellow Biracial adult whose White mother raised her, she can connect to participants’ experiences. Yet, the researcher’s similar social location may have affected the comfort of some participants who did not share the same gender or social class, for example: 1) males, 2) males from an upper-class or lower-class background, and/or 3) females from an upper-class or lower-class upbringing. Despite potential differences between the researcher and participants’, her own personal experiences with the phenomenon coupled with her expertise as a couple and family therapist may have reduced this limitation.

**Obstacles**

This dissertation study addressed a significant gap in the literature, by retrospectively examining the experiences of White mothers and Biracial adult children’s racial identity development and parental racial socialization practices. The primary aim was to retrospectively examine the influence of White mothers’ parental racial socialization practices on their Biracial adult children’s
racial identity. Some participants were uncomfortable talking about encounters of racism with their White mothers, family, peers, educators, co-workers, and/or other members of society.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the researcher provided all participants with the option of withdrawing or stopping the interview at any time. During moments of discomfort, the researcher encouraged participants to take a break. Some techniques used including deep breathing exercises and encouraging participants to calmly reflect on their thoughts and feelings associated with their memories. The researcher additionally offered participants the option to skip questions, when answering them became too difficult.

Scholars suggest phenomenological researchers need to have self-awareness of their own preconceptions, thoughts, and memories associated with the phenomenon being studied (Chan, Fung & Chien, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In the next section, the researcher describes her own social location as it relates to the phenomenon being studied.
CHAPTER FOUR – LOCATION OF THE RESEARCHER

Author’s Voice

My motivation and unyielding dedication to this research was grounded in my own personal experiences as a Biracial woman raised by a White mother. First, please join me as I recall an experience in the late 1980’s. The year was 1988; I was a second grader in elementary school. My parents and I had just moved from Germany back to the U.S., because of my father’s military station transfer to Fort Meade, Maryland for the next three years. After returning to the U.S., there was a two-week wait before my father was assigned to military housing. Consequently, we temporarily lived with my maternal grandparents in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania; I attended the neighborhood, primarily White elementary school.

I recall being the new girl whom many mistook for “Rudy” from The Cosby Show television series that was popular back then. I have always had an outgoing, charismatic personality, so I easily made connections with others, especially a girl in my class named Shannon. I remember her as meek and mild, yet a friendly shy girl who was kind to me. Shannon and I became quick friends and spent recess time at school playing with each another. In little time we realized her family’s home was within walking distance of my grandparents’ home, so we started walking home from school with each another.

While I was enjoying my friendship with Shannon, Shannon’s best friend was not supportive of our developing friendship. I recall Shannon’s best friend always trying to exclude me, never acknowledging me; she seemed like a “mean girl”. On my last day of school after attending this school for two weeks, I came out of the stall in the girl’s bathroom and was aggressively greeted by Shannon’s best friend who cornered me and said that, “I was a dirty Black girl, and I wasn’t going to be anything in life because I was Black”. She then scurried out of the bathroom. After she left, I began processing (what would be, although I did not know it then) my very first racist encounter. After hearing such hurtful words, I cried. I could not believe this little girl could be so cruel to me; I
cried out of confusion. I cleaned my body daily, how could I be dirty? I cried out of shame. Shame for believing to be Black meant something bad, something unclean, something I questioned if I wanted to be accepted. I cried from a place of a lack of knowledge. How could someone who was not Black tell me what it meant to be Black? I cried because of my feelings of doubt. Who was I after all?

At that moment, I saw life through a colorful lens rather than the colorless frames I had been operating from as an 8 year old little girl. I remember being teary-eyed when I returned to class and being unable to focus for the rest of the day. When the teacher gave me a going away gift (a gold plated Mini mouse bookmark) I felt disconnected from the teacher’s generosity and unable to accept the gift from a place of gratitude and excitement (like children typically exhibit). When I returned home that evening, I was embarrassed as I told my parents what happened at school. Nonetheless, I demanded an explanation of what it meant to be Black. Afterall, I was under the impression I was both Black and White. I needed reassurance that being Black was not bad after all. The conversation I had with my parents focused on race, reaffirming that I was both Black and White, and there was nothing wrong with who I was racially. This was the only discussion about being Biracial that I can remember having with my parents during my childhood. Open conversations about race never happened at my home and were not initiated by either of my parents. Besides my White mother maintaining that everyone is the same regardless of his/her race and the one discussion that I initiated after the bathroom incident, race or racial identity was never openly discussed. Instead, my White mother raised me to treat people with respect because ultimately that is the way I want to be treated.

Since my first memorable, racist encounter, I have learned that despite America professing to be a country that embraces racial differences no one is exempt from being impacted by those differences. After my childhood bathroom confrontation, I embraced being Biracial, nothing more, nothing less. I am both Black and White, and I proudly claim and own both heritages. Yet, in America, phenotypically, people tend to view me as a Black woman. Like the saying goes, “If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and talks like a duck, then it’s a duck, right?” Despite biologically
having a White mother, society sees me as a Black woman. I recognize the assumed Black racial identity that society tends to label me with, however, I identify as a Biracial woman. Thus, knowing outsiders tend to categorize me as a Black woman rather than inquiring about my racial identity, fuels my passion for advocating for Biracials.

The journey of racial identity development for Biracials is a passionate topic of research for me. With the few Biracial researchers in the field writing about the Biracial experience, who can better discuss and examine this topic better than I can? Furthermore, after years of observing and experiencing my own personal racial encounters, I believe society still has a system of segregation that negatively impacts Biracials. There is a lack of racial identification categories in the United States Census Bureau (United States Census, 2013). Yet, the United States Census (2013) now has the option of selecting two or more races. The inability to choose different racial combinations implies a lack of acceptance for individuals who have a Black and White racial heritage.

Selection of Methodology for Researcher

As one of the first legally integrated generations of the Black and White race in the U.S, my interest in the racial identity development of Biracials comes from my own journey with racial identification. Similar to the participants I interviewed, I racially identify as Biracial, yet in society I am often racially labeled as Black. During my journey to define who I am racially and what that means, I have realized that my mother’s White racial identity played a covert, yet pivotal role in my development.
CHAPTER FIVE - RESULTS

The Moustakas (1994) four-step data analysis plan described in the previous chapter informed this chapter’s structure for summarizing the qualitative findings that emerged. After reviewing the interviews with the individual adult Biracial children, their White mothers, and the family interviews, the qualitative results were organized into the following five sections: 1) dyadic case study summaries, 2) adult Biracial child interviews, 3) White mothers’ interviews, 4) comparison between the interviews of adult Biracial children and mothers, 5) family interviews. Table 5.1 below summarizes how the data analysis plan corresponds to specific sections in this chapter. During each step of the data analysis, a specific type of interview (e.g., adult Biracial child, mother, family) was the primary unit of analysis.

Table 5.1

**Results Sections and Units of Data Analysis**

| Step | Data Analysis Groups | Primary Unit of Analysis | Chapter Section |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1    | Individual & Family Interview for each case | Interviews with the adult Biracial child, mother and the family for each case | Family Case Studies |
| 2    | Individual Interviews with Adult Biracial Children | Interviews adult Biracial children | Dominant Themes of Adult Biracial children |
| 3    | Individual Interviews with White Mothers | Interviews with White Mothers | Dominant Themes of White Mothers |
| 4    | Analysis within the family: Comparing Adult Biracial children and White mothers | Individual Interviews with Adult Biracial children, White Mothers compared to dyadic family interview | Comparison of Dominant Themes in Individual Interviews and Family Interview |
| 5    | Interviews with Family | Dyadic Interviews Adult Biracial child and White Mothers | Dominant Themes of Families |
The overall structure of this chapter is divided into seven sections, which are described in Table 5.2 below. The first section summarizes the results of the skin color measure that adult Biracial adults completed. In section two a brief case study for each of the eight adult Biracial child-White mother dyads is provided. Sections three to seven describe the major themes (half or more participants reported the theme), subthemes, and codes that emerged after conducting the phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994) of the 24 transcripts with the sample of 8 families. The qualitative findings are organized according to the major themes that emerged from the following three types of participant categories: 1) adult Biracial children, 2) White mothers, 3) adult-child/White mother dyad. The dominant themes that emerged were then compared and contrasted. Additionally, differences and similarities between the dominant themes for adult Biracial children and mothers are also described. Quotes from participants are included to illustrate the themes and subthemes, however, pseudonyms that participants chose were used to maintain confidentiality. Finally, the seventh section (member checking) describes study participants’ feedback to the dominant themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Table 5.2

*Chapter 5 Results Section Outline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Skin Color Measure Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family Case Summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Adult Biracial Child Dominant Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mother Dominant Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comparison of Adult Biracial Child and Mother Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Family Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Member Checking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Skin Color Measure Results**

The Skin Color Measure (Massey & Martin, 2003) is scored on a 10-point Likert scale; self-reported scores of 1 indicate the lightest possible skin color and scores of 10 indicate the darkest possible skin color. Among the eight adult Biracial children, seven reported scores of 4 out of 10 on the Skin Color Measure. One participant reported a score of 5 out of 10 on the Skin Color Measure, however, during the face to face interview this individual seemed to have the lightest skin color compared to the other 7 participants. Overall, Biracial adult children tended to report light to medium skin color.

**Case Summaries**

This section summarizing the eight case studies serves the following three purposes: 1) to understand the individual experiences of the eight adult child-mother dyads; 2) to triangulate individual interviews of the adult children, and White mothers with the family interview data to check if there were aspects of their experiences they did not want to share when they were interviewed together; and 3) to demonstrate how saturation was reached by describing frequently occurring impressions derived from the memos in the “Personal Reactions” section after each family case summary. While writing up the case summaries, common themes that emerged for each family were noted. Additionally, self of the researcher reflections were provided to illustrate the bracketing process used during the interviews and data analysis and to explain how the families affected the researcher.

Table 5.3 below provides an overview of the eight families who volunteered for this study. Each participant chose a pseudonym to protect her/his confidentiality. The table is organized based on the order of the interviews (e.g., family 1 was interviewed first). Table 5.3 also describes the length of each interview, the adult child’s age, and the family’s experience.

The family case studies are organized using the following four subheadings: 1) demographics, 2) family’s story, 3) skin color results, and 4) self of the researcher reflections.
Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Mothers’ Marital Status</th>
<th>Length of the Interview</th>
<th>Adult Child’s Gender</th>
<th>Adult Child’s Current Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1AC 1M</td>
<td>Michael Sam</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>AC: 18 mins M: 23 mins F: 17 mins Total: 58 mins</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2AC 2M</td>
<td>Nicole Lin</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>AC: 23 mins M: 16 mins F: 13 mins Total: 52 mins</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3AC 3M</td>
<td>KC Mom</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>AC: 39 mins M: 30 mins F: 41 mins Total: 65 mins</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5AC 5M</td>
<td>Lynn Mary</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>AC: 20 mins M: 17 mins F: 10 mins Total: 47 mins</td>
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<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6AC 6M</td>
<td>Brayden Bonnie</td>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7AC 7M</td>
<td>Dee Nana</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>AC: 33 mins M: 15 mins F: 20 mins Total: 68 mins</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>8AC 8M</td>
<td>Ann Alicia</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>AC: 33 mins M: 32 mins F: 29 mins Total: 94 mins</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note M=Mother Interview; AC=Adult Child Interview; F=Family Interview

**Interview #1: Michael and Sam**

**Demographics:**

Michael is Biracial male who was 25 years old when he was interviewed. He was raised in a two-parent household, by his Black father and White mother who were married during his childhood. He is his mother’s only child but also has three Black siblings (two older and one younger) by his father. Michael attended some college and is now a full-time cook and is currently single. Michael’s
mother, Sam, was 64 years old at the time of interview. Sam attended technical school and obtained an Associate degree. Sam is currently retired and estranged from her husband, Michael’s father. Michael and Sam live in the Northeastern region of the United States in a suburbs outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A family friend of the researcher who reached out to the mother, Sam, recruited Michael and Sam. I interviewed Michael and Sam at their home in a suburb outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Family’s Story:

Michael’s parents were married during Michael’s childhood and adolescence. During Michael’s individual interview, he said he racially identifies as “mixed – mostly Black and White”. Michael recalled his first racial encounter with peers at school when he was 14 years old. His Black peers “were just talking about me having a White mom and generally they just said she was a piece of shit and all this other stuff”. Michael said he never shared this experience with his parents. Yet, he did talk to his White teacher at school, right after the incident occurred. Michael said his teacher was supportive but did not do anything because she did not personally witness the incident at school. Michael reported he embraces being both Black and White, but feels more accepted by Whites. Michael also said that race was not discussed in his home by either his mother or his father. He has three close friends, two are White and one is Black but Michael noted his Black friend is more White despite racially identifying as Black. Michael reported that his father is his role model; he also said his mother shaped his racial identity by helping him pick his friends and talk comfortably to both races. Moreover, Michael said he feels closer to his mother, Sam and not as close to his dad.

During Sam’s (his mother) individual interview she racially identified Michael as “Biracial”. Sam said a challenge she experienced while raising Michael was his diagnosis of ADHD. She said her family and friends were supportive of her relationship with a Black man and the birth of her son, Michael. Sam also admitted that at first she was afraid to tell her father about her relationship because she was pregnant before getting married. Yet as Sam shared more details, she said her father said
“Well you know how difficult it’s going to be to raise a Black child”; she admitted her father’s family “were just in a different thing”. While describing Michael’s race, two times Sam referred to him as “special” in lieu of a racial label. Similar to Michael, Sam reported they have a close relationship. Despite Michael not sharing his first recalled racial encounter at school with his mother, Sam remembered a racial incident that took place when Michael was approximately 7 to 8 years old.

Michael came home one day and said, “Somebody called me a nigger.” and then asked, “What’s a nigger?” At that time, Sam provided her young son with a definition and demanded he never use the word, ‘nigger’ again. Additionally, when asked about Black culture Sam may have embraced while parenting Michael, she described learning how to make some of the classic Black food dishes and was always a “U.S history buff” so she was aware of Black history and the historical legacy of slavery. Yet, Sam said she does not see race and did not buy race specific toys for Michael because he did not play with G.I Joes or toys where race was evident. Furthermore, Sam reported she would brush and pick at Michael’s hair and sometimes would take scissors to his hair; other times Michael’s father would take him to the barber shop for a haircut.

During the family interview, Michael and Sam confirmed they have a close relationship. Sam revisited the first time she remembered Michael coming home to ask about “What’s a nigger?” after being called that by peers at school. Yet, Michael did not disclose his first racial encounter (which he described in his individual interview) during the family interview. They both agreed that race was not openly discussed at home during Michael’s upbringing. Similar to Sam’s individual interview, Sam said if Michael had questions about race or wanted to talk about race she/they (she, Michael’s father and Michael) would have had open conversations. When discussing family conversations about racial privileges and differences between Michael and Sam, both agreed they did not talk about the differences and privileges between them. Yet, Michael and Sam both admitted to having feelings of disgust; they do not understand why different races react in a particular manner (e.g., rioting). Michael and Sam both agreed that problems in society are not about race but about intelligence, yet their
explanations covertly highlighted Blacks residing in inner cities as a main issue. Often their responses suggested colorblindness. Despite not having open discussions about race at home with Michael, Sam recommended that White mothers raising Biracial children have open conversations and help Biracial children understand and be proud of being both Black and White.

**Skin Color Results:**

Michael self-reported a score of 4 out 10 on skin color measure. A score of 1 indicates the lightest possible skin color; whereas a score of 10 suggests the darkest possible skin color. Thus, Michael views himself as slightly lighter than a medium skin complexion. After interviewing him in-person, his self-reported skin color response seems to be accurate.

**Self of Researcher Reflections:**

Michael and Sam were the first adult Biracial child and White mother dyad interviewed. While interviewing Michael, Sam went to a room in the back of their apartment. Michael was polite, pleasant and seemed quiet and introverted, yet was open during the interview. While interviewing Michael, he seemed very perceptive and attuned to issues of race. Yet, I was surprised when he reported feeling more comfortable with Whites versus Blacks, especially since he talked about being raised by both parents and the importance of having an equal amount of time to focus on both races. Additionally, Michael’s insight about race was evident by his comments suggesting an invisibility of White culture, while at the same time Whiteness is the norm. Michael’s comments suggest covert expressions of shock about being viewed as Black and being racially profiled, as if he was not Black. I could understand why Michael may have been surprised because he feels more accepted by Whites compared to Blacks. Michael’s closing statement during his individual interview was profound and powerful – he used the analogy of a hybrid to describe his race.

Michael’s mother, Sam was open during her interview. She was eager and willing to answer all questions and to share her experiences. I was surprised her parents were prejudiced and at first did not accept her interracial relationship with Michael’s father. I was surprised because my own parents
(White mother and Black father) did not have that experience with their parents when they got together. My mother did not remember anyone in her family disowning her or expressing concern besides my maternal grandmother telling my mom while she was pregnant with me that did she think about how she would raise a Black baby in a world that was prejudiced despite her family not being prejudiced. A few closing statements during the family interview also stood out for me. Michael described the importance of “bridging the races” and Sam stated that parents should just “go with it” and raise their children so they are comfortable and know both of their races.

**Interview #2: Nicole and Lin**

**Demographics:**

Nicole is a Biracial female who was 25 years old when she was interviewed. She was raised in a two-parent household, by her Black father and White mother who were married during her childhood and adolescence. Nicole has three siblings, a younger Biracial brother whom her parents had together, an older White sister from her mother’s previous relationship and an older Black sister from her father’s previous relationship. Nicole earned a Master’s degree and is a full-time Social Worker-Education Coordinator. She is dating a Black man. Nicole’s mother, Lin, was 58 years old at the time of interview. Lin attended some graduate school, but is currently disabled. She is now separated from her husband, Nicole’s father, whom she had been married to for 28 years. Nicole and Lin live in a Midwestern region of the U.S. in the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan. Nicole and Lin were recruited by a doctoral student at Drexel University who reached out to her friend (Nicole) to see if she and her mother would be interested in volunteering for the study.

**Family’s Story:**

Nicole was first interviewed individually. At the beginning of Nicole’s interview, she racially identified as “Biracial, both African American and Caucasian”. She said this means she is equally White and Black. Nicole said her first racial encounter occurred in Elementary school. Her classmates were making jokes and teased her saying, “Oh, you’re White, you’re White”. Nicole reported she was
not sure if she could celebrate Black History Month. She did not go home and discuss these racial encounters at school with either of her parents. In fact, Nicole could not recall a time when race was ever talked about during her childhood. In addition to feeling conflicted about whether she could celebrate Black History Month, Nicole said she embraced more of her African American culture than her White culture because she did not know what it meant to be White.

Nicole reported while growing up no one looked like her, either people (relatives and friends) had lighter or darker skin complexions. Nicole said although she should have “the best of both worlds” as a Biracial, she often “felt torn” between being both White and Black. Nicole said she and her mother, Lin, have a really good relationship and are close. Nicole’s closest friends are African American, regardless of what city she lives in, she tends to gravitate towards Black friends. Yet Nicole’s role models have changed over time. As a child, Nicole’s role models were her two older sisters, one is White and another is Black (each of Nicole’s parents had a child from a previous relationship before they got married). During college, Nicole’s role models were her sorority sisters (predominately a Black, Christian sorority) and the singer Alicia Keys who is Biracial. In addition to being part of a Black sorority, Nicole was involved in the Praise Dance Group (a Christian form of spiritual dance in which dancers express the word and spirit of God).

Next Nicole’s mother, Lin, was interviewed on the telephone because she lives in Michigan. Lin racially identified Nicole, as “mixed” and described raising Nicole as “a joy...she has been everything to me”. She describes Nicole as a “go-getter”. Lin said challenges raising Nicole involved hearing derogatory remarks from outsiders (e.g., “Oreo” and stares she received from strangers). Lin recalled Nicole’s first racial encounter when she was called an “Oreo”. Lin talked to her daughter; she shared that Nicole’s father is Black and she is White and the same as everyone else. Lin she said that she “tried to just downplay it”. Additionally, Lin remembered Nicole coming home one day and saying the “N” word (‘nigger’) after hearing it from other people. Admittedly, Lin shared she “whacked” her and demanded that she never say that word again because is a “terrible word”.

Moreover, Lin stated race was not discussed openly at home; she said, “it was not a major issue” throughout the interview.

During Lin’s individual interview, she openly shared how her parents were not supportive of her decision to marry a Black man and having Biracial children (Nicole and her younger brother). Nicole did not meet her maternal grandparents until she was between 10 to 12 years old. Despite Nicole not having the opportunity to meet her maternal grandparents until adolescence, Lin shared she had the support of her sister as well as her mother-in-law. Lin described adopting the Black culture, especially the music and food. She purchased Black and White baby dolls for Nicole. Additionally, Lin noted that Nicole’s father often took care of her daughter’s hair. Lin braided Nicole’s hair, but because Nicole and her father had similar hair texture, he helped her manage Nicole’s hair; he was good at it. Nicole also went to the hairdresser. Like Nicole, Lin reported that they have a very good relationship, implying they are close.

The family interview was conducted over the telephone; the interviewer and Nicole were together in a conference room and spoke to Lin who was on a speakerphone. Nicole and Lin reported being an interracial/Biracial family “does not come into play”. They confirmed the family did not talk about race at home, however, they could recall whenever race was discussed, it was done either in a joking manner to diffuse the tension or while recalling memories of Lin and Nicole’s father’s experiences courting. When revisiting Nicole’s first racial encounters recalled by Lin, Nicole remembered saying the “N” word but did not remember coming home and sharing that someone called her an “Oreo”. Similar to their individual interviews, Nicole and Lin confirmed their close relationship with each another. Even with a good relationship, they stated they have yet to have conversations about privileges and differences based on their races. Although race was not openly discussed at home, Lin and Nicole said race should be discussed at home so children can learn there are no differences between races.
Skin Color Results:

Nicole self-reported a score of 4 out 10 on the scale of skin color measure. A score of 1 indicates the lightest possible skin color; whereas a score of 10 indicates the darkest possible skin color. Thus, Nicole views herself as slightly lighter than a medium skin complexion. Nicole’s self-reported skin color response seems to be accurate.

Self of Researcher Reflections:

Nicole and Lin were the second adult Biracial child and White mother dyad interviewed. I interviewed Nicole in-person on Drexel University’s campus in the Couple and Family Department, 3-parkway, Room 720. This was the first interview in which I interviewed a participant over the telephone. The mother, Lin was interviewed over the telephone because she lives in Michigan.

During Nicole’s interview she described being Biracial as the “best of both worlds”, which is often what I say as a Biracial. She shared that although that is a benefit, a limitation is also “feeling torn”. I could absolutely relate to this feeling. I found it fascinating that she has two older sisters, one White and one Black from her parents’ previous relationships. I could not imagine having a White sibling considering my awareness of White privilege in the U.S. I do have half siblings who are Black, but that is not strange because with the historical ‘one drop rule, we are all considered Black in the U.S. They have Black skin, like me. Additionally, Nicole made a comment about knowing her mother was White but felt “she was a different kind of White because she was comfortable with African American culture”. This belief about her mother resonated with me, as I also view my mother this way. I did not realize my mother adopted Black culture until I was spending time with other Whites/White mothers who cooked differently than my mom, and were not as culturally aware or sensitive.

I felt sad that Lin’s mother was not supportive of her partnering with a Black man and having Biracial children (as she had Nicole and Nicole’s younger brother). Lin mentioned her father was prejudiced as well. Lin shared that Nicole and her brother did not grow up knowing her parents (their maternal grandparents); I could not imagine not knowing my maternal grandparents.
It was also interesting that Lin discussed how her daughter came home saying the “N” word, got spanked, and was told by Lin to never say it again. Yet Nicole did not mention this event during her individual interview. When this same event was brought up during the family interview, Nicole immediately remembered it. Nicole and Lin each gave insightful closing remarks about wishing they talked about race with each other and Lin describing the importance of talking about race with Biracial children. Lin also said there is no difference between races but there are people who believe differently.

**Interview #3: KC and Mom**

**Demographics:**

KC is Biracial female who was 29 years old when interviewed. She was raised by her White mother in a single-parent household. KC has two siblings, an older Biracial brother and a younger Biracial brother from her mother. KC earned an Associate’s degree and is currently unemployed. She is married to a Biracial male; they live in Philadelphia. KC’s mother was 56 years old when she was interviewed. Mom attended some college and currently works full-time; mom is currently in a relationship with Black man. KC and Mom live in the Northeastern region of the U.S. in a suburb outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. KC and Mom were recruited from a family friend who reached out to KC about volunteering for my study.

**Family’s Story:**

KC and Mom were interviewed at Mom’s home. KC was first individually interviewed while Mom went to a back room in her apartment. KC racially identifies as “Black or African American” because that is how everyone else tends to view her. KC recalled her first racial encounter was between the 3rd to 5th grade when a White classmate asked if she was adopted because she had a White mother. KC stated that her mother did not discuss race at home; she never explained that Mom is White, and her dad is Black. KC embraces being Biracial and identified one downside is the stereotypical
questions that come up. She gave examples of these types of questions, for example, when her Black mother-in-law asked if she could cook since she has a White mother.

KC said the benefits of being Biracial are the blending of cultures/heritages that she can embrace. KC also reported she has experienced and observed Whites being treated better than Blacks. Despite not speaking about race openly at home, KC reported she and her mother have a close relationship; even her childhood friends felt close to her mother. Since it was difficult for her mother to care for her hair, KC said a guidance counselor in elementary school and a case worker helped with the hair care regimen. Two of KC’s closest friends are Black and a third close friend is Biracial; they are her closest friends because they got her “weird”. She defined her “weird” as “I am a weird person. I’m very energetic at times. I am very crazy and it could be a good crazy. It could be a bad crazy.” KC feels accepted and “gets along with everybody”. When identifying who her role models were growing up, KC said her role model was her older brother.

Mom was interviewed next; KC stepped outside while Mom was interviewed. Mom racially identified KC as “Biracial”. When asked about challenges experienced while raising KC, Mom recalled when another mother asked if KC was adopted, similar to KC’s first recalled racial encounter. Yet, Mom could not remember a time when KC came home and shared a racial encounter that took place out in the community. Mom described receiving little support from her family and the community. Additionally, Mom shared that she and her father were estranged for a period of time because he was “really angry” she chose a Black partner. Similar to KC, Mom said they have a close relationship. Mom stated she talked to KC about race, and recalled some topics including, wondering how KC’s future husband would look, the difference between fashion and hair care. Mom admitted she struggled to care for KC’s hair and received help from others. In addition to KC’s hair care, Mom knew how to care for KC’s skin with lotion. Moreover, Mom reported she felt more accepted in the Black community compared to her White community. She stated “I love their music, I love the dance, I
love the men, which doesn’t always make a lot of people happy…” When Mom selected toys for KC, she purchased both Black and White baby dolls.

During the family interview, KC and Mom said they never focused on being a Biracial family at home. They often joked about race and gave some examples in the context of their family. KC and Mom confirmed they feel close to each other. Yet, they do not recall openly discussing racial privileges between them, but Mom said they talked about differences when they came up. KC recommended “open communication” for White mothers of Biracials and Mom suggested, “keep in mind the experiences that your child is going through is something different that you’ve never had to go through before, so you can’t belittle their feelings and you can’t push aside, because it may not be fine tomorrow.”

Skin Color Results:

KC self-reported a score of 4 out 10 on skin color measure. A score of 1 indicates the lightest possible skin color; whereas a score of 10 indicates the darkest possible skin color. This means, KC views herself as slightly lighter than a medium skin complexion, which seems to be accurate.

Self of Researcher Reflections:

KC and Mom were the third family interviewed. The interview occurred at Mom’s home in a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania suburb. KC and Mom were warm, energetic and welcoming. KC was entertaining and forthright while sharing personal experiences during the individual interview. She seemed confident, had a sense of humor and was animated. I could not help but smile during this interview. I experienced Mom similarly to her daughter. Mom disclosed many personal experiences, (some of which were painful) with such grace and dignity. I sensed Mom had a “take me as I am attitude” illustrating her confidence and strength while sharing her story, especially when discussing the estrangement from her own father and how her family is racist. Witnessing these recalled painful experiences made me feel sad; I felt compassion for this mother. When interviewing KC and Mom together, I had fun and enjoyed it, which at times did not feel like an interview but instead a discussion
among close friends and family. Additionally, I was surprised that as close this mother and daughter seemed to be during the family interview, they did not have open discussions about race, as they seemed to talk about everything else in an open way. Furthermore, I was honored KC and her mother invited me into their lives and home.

**Interview #4: Geronimo and Charlotte**

**Demographics:**

Geronimo is a Biracial male who was 36 years old when interviewed. He was raised by his White mother in a single-parent household. Geronimo has one older, Black half-sister from his father’s first marriage, four White step-siblings (one older female, two younger males and one younger female) and several other siblings from his mother’s fourth marriage whom he did not grow up with. Geronimo has some Graduate or professional school education and currently works full-time. He is married to a Black woman. Geronimo’s mother, Charlotte, was 61 years old at the time of interview. Charlotte earned a Master’s degree and is a retired Special Education Consultant and is currently married to a White man. Charlotte lives in the Midwest region of the United States and Geronimo lives abroad. Geronimo and Charlotte were recruited by a friend who posted my recruitment flyer on social media.

**Family’s Story:**

Geronimo and Charlotte were interviewed over the telephone because of their geographical locations. Charlotte was interviewed before her son, because Geronimo had not yet finished all of the forms (consent form and self-report skin color, and demographic survey). During Charlotte’s individual interview, Charlotte racially identified her son as “Biracial”. She described openly talking to her son about race and encouraging cultural awareness while raising her son. She encouraged him to learn different languages, Ebonics, and was thoughtful when she chose a church to attend, Presbyterian versus Baptist. Charlotte had the support of both of her parents when she decided to date Geronimo’s father. Charlotte’s father thought it was “very cool” and wanted to tell the whole world that his
daughter was doing something radical by being romantically involved with a Black man. Charlotte recalled Geronimo’s first racial encounter when he was in third grade; classmates called him a “nigger”. Charlotte said that there was only so much talking with school staff about these types of negative racial encounters before she took matters into her own hands and decided to move her family, removing him from that school. She adopted traditions of the Black culture, including the openness (e.g., directness and transparency when speaking with others), music (e.g., blues), history. Additionally, Charlotte described the toys she selected for Geronimo during his upbringing, which tended to represent diverse races (e.g., Fat Albert) and musical instruments including, “from the rain forest, maracas, and the rain shaker sticks and drums”. Regarding hair care, Charlotte used products for his coarse hair and took him to a barber who was familiar with caring for African American hair.

Once Charlotte finished her individual interview, Geronimo completed the required forms and was ready to complete his individual interview. Geronimo racially identifies as “Biracial African American”. His first recalled racial encounter occurred when he was 7 or 8 years old; he was on a Little League baseball team and one of his teammates asked if he was adopted. This first racial encounter was similar to KC’s in dyad #3 as both she and Geronimo were asked by peers if they were adopted. Geronimo believes his mother remembers this racial encounter too, since she was at his baseball game. Geronimo described many racial, racist, culturally aware experiences in the U.S. and countries abroad, suggesting he has had exposure to diverse races and cultures, and has a high level of cultural awareness and sensitivity. He said he has never been rejected by any race; he was part of the Black Student Union in high school and joined a historically Black Fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha in college. According to Geronimo, culturally adapting is one of the benefits of being Biracial and discrimination is a downside of being Biracial. Reporting discrimination as a downside of being Biracial and also explaining he has not ever been rejected by any race, suggests an incongruence in Geronimo’s responses, similar to other participants’ interviews. Geronimo said he and his mother have a great relationship; she had a strong influence on his racial identity development. He reported his
closest friends are White and Biracial. Kirby Puckett (Black, former Minnesota Twins, Major League Baseball player), teachers and a counselor in high school were Geronimo’s identified role models while growing up.

Due to the time differences, Geronimo and I rescheduled the family interview until the following day after the individual interviews were completed. Geronimo and Charlotte defined what it means to be a Biracial family; they embrace more than one culture and their family has been very accepting. Their family did openly discuss race with extended family members. Additionally, race tended to be discussed when something controversial came up during conversations. Charlotte and Geronimo confirmed they both feel close to each other; their bond was evident throughout the family interview. Similar to their individual interviews, Charlotte and Geronimo openly discussed their experiences, identified race and cultural issues, concerns and areas for growth, the role of the media and society. Charlotte was the first mother to offer recommendations to other White mothers who are also raising Biracial children; they should get to know “Black artists and authors and role models that are not just Caucasian.” She noted that this world is comfortable with “equal recognition” and described how derogatory stereotypes affect Biracials. Talking about race relations, having a relationship that crosses racial boundaries, awareness of the geographical influence of the area where a family lives were some of the recommendations Charlotte and Geronimo offered.

Skin Color Results:

Geronimo self-reported a score of 4 out of 10 on the skin color measure. Thus, Geronimo views himself as slightly lighter than a medium skin complexion. Due to the interview being conducted via the telephone, I was unable to observe the skin complexion of Geronimo.

Self of Researcher Reflections:

Geronimo and Charlotte were the fourth dyad interviewed. After viewing my recruitment flyer on social media that a friend posted to her account, Geronimo reached out to my friend and provided his contact information. I followed up with Geronimo via email and telephone, and explained the
study to him. After Geronimo and Charlotte agreed to participate, an interview was scheduled. I interviewed Geronimo and Charlotte over the telephone because of the geographical distance. The mother, Charlotte, was interviewed first because Geronimo was not ready and was still reading over the informed consent and filling out the demographic and self-report skin assessments. Thus, unlike the first three interviews Geronimo’s interview took place after his mother’s interview. I was impressed with how open and willing Charlotte and Geronimo were regarding sharing their experiences during their individual interviews. It was a joy speaking to the both of them as they seemed racially and culturally aware. They gave a lot of details about their experiences. I especially appreciated the encouragement they gave each other to each share their experiences or to add to responses already provided during the family interviews. It was unfortunate I interviewed them over the telephone; I would have enjoyed meeting them in-person.

My heart went out to Geronimo when he described a racial incident that occurred when he was in grade school in the bathroom; the boys turned off the lights and physically attacked him. This took me back to a racial encounter I had in the bathroom during second grade when I learned I was a person of color. Unlike the first three mothers interviewed, Charlotte’s family was supportive of her marriage to a Black man and her Biracial son Geronimo. Since each went over the scheduled thirty minutes and spoke for almost an hour during their individual interviews, the family interview was rescheduled for the following day at 3pm EST, 9pm Pretoria, 2pm CT. The family interview took 90 minutes; I appreciated how open Geronimo and Charlotte were during the family interview. The closeness of their relationship and the love they share for each other was evident.

**Interview #5: Lynn and Mary**

**Demographics:**

Lynn is a Biracial female who was 33 years old at the time of interview. She was raised by her White mother and Black father in a two-parent household. Lynn has an older Biracial brother and a younger Biracial brother from her parents. Lynn earned a Bachelor’s degree and works full-time as an
Elementary School Teacher. She is partnered with a Black man. Lynn’s mother, Mary, was 58 years of age at the time of interview. Mary earned an Associate’s degree and is currently unemployed. Mary is currently divorced from Lynn’s father. Lynn and Mary live in the Northeast region of the U.S. in a suburban outside of Buffalo, New York. I recruited Lynn and Mary to participate in this research, as I know Lynn personally (previous classmate).

Family’s Story:

Lynn was first interviewed on the telephone because she lives in New York. Lynn racially identifies as “Black and White, mixed, Biracial”. Lynn could not recall a specific racial encounter during her childhood. However, Lynn described an incident that occurred in her senior year of high school that she was not sure was related to race. Her family moved from Pennsylvania to New York; she attended a predominantly White school. Lynn said her classmates were not friendly, she ate lunch alone and did not feel accepted by them. Lynn stated “it’s not that people outright, racially discriminated. I feel they weren’t really accepting maybe because of my race, but not confirmed.”

Lynn reported she does not see race; she has friends of all different races, Black, White and mixed races. She also said she has never felt accepted by one race over the other, as her mother’s side of the family and her father’s side of the family have always accepted her. Lynn explained that she has never experienced one race being treated better than another; however, she did talk about White privilege and Blacks being discriminated in the media. Moreover, Lynn described experiencing how Blacks and Whites live, their cultures/traditions, being exposed to each other’s races, music, and different styles as some of the benefits of being Biracial. She did not describe experiencing any of the downsides of being Biracial. Lynn said she and her mother have a “regular typical daughter mother relationship” as they are close to each other. Her three closest friends are Biracial (Black and White), White and Biracial (Puerto Rican and Black). Lynn had many role models while growing up, they were
all family members. Her parents were influential as well as her paternal grandmother who was a teacher; Lynn is also an Elementary school teacher in a predominately Black low-income neighborhood.

Lynn’s mother, Mary, was interviewed over the telephone because like Lynn she lives in New York. Mary reported she racially identifies her daughter as “mixed”. Hair care and styling was the only challenge Mary experienced while raising Lynn. Mary said she and Lynn’s father decided how they would raise their children and talked about race prior to their children being born, especially since they experienced stares and sneers from outsiders as a couple. However, they did not have open discussions about race at home with Lynn nor their other children, similar to Sam (mother) from dyad #1, Mary believed if Lynn had questions about race she would ask them. Mary affirmed she adopted “everything” about the Black culture and felt where they were geographically located helped as everyone was not “vanilla or Caucasian”. Mary said Lynn asked for Barbie dolls and baby dolls of various races, Black, White, Indian; Lynn did not gravitate toward a specific race when selecting dolls. Mary’s recommendation for raising Biracial children was to, “Raise them as you would raise any child. I don’t think that Biracial children, at least in my experience being raised any differently than if it was two White people, one Italian person, one Irish person. Let them expose them to their cultures from both sides of the family. Certainly, just raise them with lots of love and understanding and a lot of patience.”

Like Lynn and Mary’s individual interviews, the family interview was conducted over the telephone because Lynn and Mary both live in New York. Mary said she feels very blessed that their family is Biracial/interracial because she has “the best of both worlds”. Lynn agreed with her mother’s views regarding what it means to be a Biracial/interracial family. Similar to their individual interviews, Lynn and Mary reported their family does not openly discuss race with the exception of making jokes. Both confirmed they do have a close relationship and believe there are no privileges or differences between them; Mary stated, “I’m pretty sure we’re pretty much equal," and Lynn affirmed her
mother’s belief about equality. Mary also said if there was a racial encounter, her recommendation for White mothers raising Biracial children is to make sure the father is present, because a Black father’s support is very important.

**Skin Color Results:**

Lynn self-reported a score of 4 out 10 on the skin color measure. Thus, Lynn views herself as slightly lighter than a medium skin complexion. Despite the interview being conducted over the telephone, since I know Lynn personally, I can confirm Lynn’s self-reported skin color response is accurate. Additionally, since Lynn is a previous classmate of mine, I bracketed my own assumptions, I also memoed as well as triangulated the results of this case with two coders (R. Waite and M. Davey).

**Self of Researcher Reflections:**

Lynn and Mary were the fifth dyad interviewed. The interviews took place over the telephone due to geographical distance. Often during the interviews there was change in tones as Lynn and Mary took long pauses, which tended to occur after thought provoking questions. I was shocked to find out that Lynn could not recall ever having a racial encounter out in the community. Each adult child participant interviewed before them could recall at least one racial encounter experienced in the community, and their mothers tended to remember the same encounters or additional ones. Lynn’s mother, Mary, confirmed Lynn’s lack of recall of a racial encounter by stating she could not remember a time when Lynn came home to report a racial encounter took place.

I was shocked about the absence of racial encounters and open conversations about race at home. I could resonate with this experience, as I only recall talking about race during my upbringing one time. The only time race was talked about in my home was when I had a racial encounter in the community and asked what that meant; my parents told me I was White and Black, I was both and that I was fine and perfect the way I was. Other than that occurrence, I cannot remember any other racial discussions in my home until I was in middle school. Thinking about how there were few racial discussions in my own home encouraged me to think about how unprepared I was entering Drexel’s
PhD program when discussing racism and privilege. I felt unprepared; my eyes were opened during the first two years of the program. Thinking back on my personal reflections of this particular interview, each interview (adult child, mother, family) was much shorter than previous interviews. I believe the reason for the shorter lengths of these interviews was because there were no recalled open discussions of race reported by Lynn or her mother, Mary.

**Interview #6: Brayden and Bonnie**

**Demographics:**

Brayden is a Biracial male who was 42 years old at the time of interview and is a father of two children. He was raised by a White mother and a Black father in a two-parent household; his parents were married during his upbringing. Brayden has an older Biracial brother, a younger Biracial brother and a Biracial sister from his parents. Brayden earned a Master’s degree and works full-time. He is currently single. Brayden’s mother, Bonnie, was 65 years of age at the time of interview. Bonnie earned a Master’s degree and is a retired Nurse/Educator. Bonnie is currently widowed. Brayden and Bonnie live in the Northeast region of the U.S. in a suburban outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Brayden and Bonnie were recruited by a friend of a friend.

**Family’s Story:**

Brayden and Bonnie were the sixth dyad interviewed. The interviews took place at Bonnie’s home. They were friendly, hospitable and I quickly felt welcomed; they also have a beautiful dog!

Brayden was first interviewed in the living room area of their home. While he was participating in the interview, Bonnie went to the second floor of her home. Brayden racially identifies as Black, and usually does not say he is Biracial. He mentioned a few times that he “thinks people can just figure it out,” he is “not big on explaining” his “ordeal to people”. Brayden recalled his first racist encounter in the third grade when a classmate told a joke about the difference between Black and White and used the word “nigga”. He remembers discussing this racial encounter with his brothers. Brayden stated that he and his mother did not have open conversations about race. He felt more
accepted in the Black community. Yet, Brayden acknowledged he “knows both sides pretty equally” referring to Black and White races. Brayden described several instances of racial profiling and racist encounters. He said the benefits of being Biracial are “… you get to understanding everything. You really, really get to see both sides of both worlds very clearly”. Yet, he also shared that a downside of being Biracial is that there are times when you will “doubt and you wish maybe you were something else”. Brayden said that his mother did not influence him regarding racially identifying as Black. Brayden did say his mother was open and thinks she does not identify with race when asked how his mom helped him understand race. He openly shared that his closest friends are White, Black and a mixture of races; it has never been about race regarding how someone becomes his friend. While growing up, Brayden’s role models were athletes, “Michael Jordan, Isaiah Thomas, Dominique Wilkins, all the good ballers”. Brayden is a member of a historically Black fraternity Omega Psi Phi incorporated.

Bonnie was next interviewed with no break (she declined a break) in between interviews. Similar to Bonnie, Brayden went to the second floor to provide privacy for his mother. Bonnie made it very clear during her interview that she does not see race, and typically does not until others point it out to her. After asking Bonnie three times how she racially identifies Brayden, Bonnie finally racially identified Brayden as “Black”. She described some challenges raising Brayden (and her other children) was he got in trouble at school. Similar to Mary who was the mother from dyad #5, Bonnie and Brayden’s father (Bonnie’s husband) talked about how they would raise their children regarding racial identity prior to getting married. Yet, they did not have open discussions about race with their children. Bonnie also said reactions to dating her husband, which her father did not approve of led to Bonnie and her father becoming estranged for many years. She said her father felt this way because of his race and education worried if her husband could financially provide for her. Bonnie said she did not talk to Brayden about race and could not remember a time when he came home reporting a racist encounter out in the community. However, Bonnie was able to recall her daughter’s (Brayden’s younger sister)
first racist encounter in the community; her daughter came home crying after a classmate said she was adopted because Bonnie (her mother) was White. Bonnie shared she supported her daughter by having a “good conversation” with her and telling her “I’m your mother”. Moreover, Bonnie explained she and her husband racially socialized their children based on gender by stating, her husband taught the boys, “You don’t upset your mother so you don’t tell her a lot of stuff that’s going on.” Furthermore, Bonnie said she embraced the music of Black culture and explained that she managed Brayden’s hair by keeping it short.

During the family interview, Brayden returned to the living room to sit with Bonnie and reported being a Biracial/interracial family is not an issue with their family or with anybody else. Brayden and Bonnie agreed they did not have conversations about race at home. However, Brayden and his brother were expected to talk to their father about racial issues, whereas Brayden’s sister spoke to Bonnie about any racial concerns. Brayden and Bonnie confirmed they felt close to each other during the family interview. Despite Brayden and Bonnie explaining they did not discuss racial privileges and differences with each other prior to participating in the interview, Brayden shared “I assume she has the privileges of a White woman which are more than I’ve ever had” during the family interview.

**Skin Color Results:**

Brayden self-reported a score of 5 out 10 on the skin color measure. Brayden views himself as a medium skin complexion equally between the lightest and the darkest of complexions. I thought Brayden had a lighter skin complexion (either a score of 3 or 4) compared to how he self-reported his skin color. In my opinion Brayden was the adult Biracial child participant who has the lightest skin color among all participants interviewed in-person.

**Self of Researcher Reflections**

Brayden and Bonnie were the sixth dyad interviewed. Brayden and Bonnie were interviewed at Bonnie’s residence in a suburb outside of Philadelphia, PA. I enjoyed interviewing Brayden and
Bonnie. They were open and eager to participate in the study. Brayden was a gentleman and made sure I was not lost and walked me to my car when I finished the interview. During the interview when Brayden spoke, I was often intrigued by experiences he was disclosing. He did not feel he was eloquent (as his mother, Bonnie agreed) because he was tired after a long day of work but I did not experience him that way; he was articulate and clear. Yet, after reading back over the transcripts, Brayden tended to give closed-ended response (yes or no) and at times provided contradictory answers to questions. I found Bonnie to be open; she tended to provide more detailed responses when questions were not focused on race. When race was involved, Bonnie tended to have much shorter responses. Bonnie stated many times that she did not discuss race with Brayden so I imagine, discussing race during the interview might have been uncomfortable for her. I observed the closeness of Brayden and Bonnie’s relationship, even the protectiveness of Brayden not upsetting Bonnie.

**Interview #7: Dee and Nana**

**Demographics:**

Dee is a Biracial male who was 32 years old at the time of interview. He was raised by his White mother in a single-parent household. Dee also has a younger, Biracial sister. Dee has some graduate/professional school experience and works full-time. He is partnered with Spanish/Peruvian woman. Dee’s mother, Nana, was 59 years of age at the time of interview. Nana has some college experience and is currently divorced. Nana lives in the Northeast region of the U.S. in a suburb outside of Washington DC and Dee lives in the Southern region of the U.S. outside of Miami, Florida. Dee and Nana were recruited from a friend of a friend.

**Family’s Story:**

Dee and Nana were the seventh dyad interviewed. Each was interviewed on the telephone because of the geographical distance. Dee was first interviewed; he racially identifies as “Biracial”. Dee could not recall a specific example when he knew he was Biracial; however, he mentioned he was teased about having “curlier hair and darker skin”. Dee later shared several racial encounters out in
the White community when he witnessed one race being treated badly by another. The earliest event dated back to when he was 12 years old, visiting his father, and attending summer camp; A White camper called him the “N” word and Dee “turned around and socked him”. He was suspended from summer camp for a week and nothing happened to the White camper who called him the “N” word.

Dee’s three closest friends are of various races, one is Pakistani, one is Black and one is Peruvian. Dee reported his mother is his best friend; they have a good relationship. Growing up, Dee said his role model was the wrestler, Hulk Hogan. Additionally, he sees the human race, and might see different cultures but does not see different races. Yet, Dee reports embracing both races, sharing the benefits of being Biracial is “better skin, better hair, and better eyes... the introduction to multiple or additional cultures or being better cultured.” He also talked about the downsides of being Biracial as “…the fact that your skin might be a little bit darker than somebody else’s, the fact that you might face discrimination”.

Nana was next interviewed on the telephone after Dee’s interview ended. Similar to Sam, the mother from dyad #1, Nana described challenges raising Dee was because he was diagnosed with ADHD. Nana noted that Dee being accepted and graduating from college and going onto graduate school was a moment of pride for her as a parent. Nana racially identifies Dee as “mixed” and reported she did not receive any support, (e.g., emotional, financial) from her family because Dee’s father was Black. Nana’s mother said years after Nana had Dee, “I never realized how hard it would be to raise mixed children in this world”. When asked if Nana could recall a time when Dee came home reporting a racial encounter that occurred out in the community, Nana could not remember any racial encounters. She reported that she and her son have a very good relationship. Regarding toys, Nana said she bought her son wrestling figures of different races and tended to keep Dee’s coarse hair short. Unlike other mothers interviewed, Nana was the first mother who did not report adopting any traditions or customs of the Black culture.
After concluding Nana’s interview over the telephone, I called Dee on a second phone line and merged the call to have the family interview using a three-way telephone call. Dee and Nana agreed they view their family as “normal” and not a Biracial/interracial family. They also confirmed that their family does not talk about race, however, there have been a few times when they discussed race regarding family issues or issues out in the community. Dee and Nana said they have talked about the privileges and differences between the two of them in the context of Nana and her ex-husband (Dee’s father’s) relationship, but not specifically about the differences between Dee and Nana.

**Skin Color Results:**

Dee self-reported a score of 4 out 10 on the scale of skin color darkness measure. Dee views himself as slightly lighter than a medium skin complexion. Since Dee’s interview was conducted over the telephone, I was unable to observe if his self-reported skin color response was accurate.

**Self of Researcher Reflections:**

Dee and Nana were the seventh dyad interviewed. Due to geographical location, the three-part interview was conducted over the telephone. I wish I had the opportunity to interview this dyad in-person. Between Dee’s curiosity during the interview about me and his mother’s changes in tone when describing the lack of support she received from her family, a face-to-face interview would have enhanced the interview because I would have had the opportunity to examine nonverbal and verbal communication. Hearing about the support Nana did not receive from her family was sad for me to hear. Nana and Dee often described how they both do not see race; I was curious if they do see race but it is too difficult to openly talk about it with each other. Given that Nana was rejected by her family because of the race of her ex-husband and her Biracial children, I could understand why Nana would not want to see race or openly talk about it at home. I admired her strength to follow her heart, marrying her ex-husband, and having more than one Biracial child.

**Interview #8: Ann and Alicia**

**Demographics:**
An eighth and final interview was conducted to be sure theoretical saturation was reached with Ann, a Biracial female who was 18 years old (youngest participant in the study) and a senior in high school at the time of interview. She was raised by her White mother in a single-parent household. Ann has a younger fully related older Biracial sister and a younger Biracial brother by her mother. Ann is a senior in high school and works part-time; she is single. Ann’s mother, Alicia was 39 years of age at the time of interview. Alicia earned a Technical School degree and works full-time as a Print Tech. Alicia is currently in a relationship with a Black male. Ann and Alicia live in the Northeast region of the U.S. in a suburban outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Ann and Alicia were recruited by a family friend who knew Alicia.

Family’s Story:

Alicia and Ann’s father were not married when they raised her; Ann grew up in a single parent household for most of her childhood and adolescence. During Ann’s individual interview she said she racially identifies as “Black and White” and said people are surprised to learn that her mother is White and her father is Black. Ann said people tend to believe it is the other way around (her mother is Black and father is White). She did not discuss why people have this belief and only shared that people make assumptions. Ann could not remember when she first realized she was Black and White and could not remember her first racial encounter as a child. She believes she always knew she was Black and White. Ann did recall some racial encounters in high school, for example, White peers using the “N” word as well as accusing her of stealing items that were missing at school.

During the family interview she did not discuss these encounters with her mother. Ann described their relationship as good. Additionally, Ann said she and her mother are not very close; her younger sister is closer to their mother. Despite reporting not being close to her mother, Ann noted that if she ever wanted to discuss anything associated with race she feels comfortable enough to ask her mother questions and believes her mother would be available to talk. Additionally, Ann said she embraces being both Black and White, and does not feel more accepted by one race over the other.
Ann said having a White mother helped to shape her racial identity. She stated, “that’s why I act more White according to my friends because I am Black and White but I didn’t grow up around the Black culture.” Moreover, Ann’s friends are mostly White and she is most physically attracted to White boys. Ann identified her teachers as role models as she spends most of her time at school.

During Alicia’s (mother) individual interview she described Ann’s racial identity as. “I don’t. Her racial identity to me is Ann”. Later when asked if people ask about her daughter’s race, Alicia replied “...it’s White and Black. It’s a combination.” Alicia said a challenge raising Ann was parenting and integrating her (and Ann’s siblings) into the Black community, “some of the cultural things that I can’t provide for them”. Alicia reported her family “has been pretty much supportive” of her having Biracial children. She believes her family was shocked when she became pregnant with Ann because of her age and being unwed, not because she was pregnant with a Biracial child. However, as she shared more experiences during that time of her life, she said, “maybe just something they (her parents) wouldn’t have wanted” as Alicia’s mother commenting, “Oh, we’re going to have to worry about maybe the kids not being accepted by this side or that side” of the family. Additionally, despite Black culture not being her experience, Alicia adopted traditions of Black culture. When asked about recalling a time when Ann came home and reported a racial encounter out in the community, Alicia could not remember a time. During Ann’s childhood, Alicia admitted Ann had White dolls, and on one occasion when a Fisher Price White family toy set was unavailable for purchase, Alicia bought the Black family set. Furthermore, Alicia mentioned that there was a lot of trial and error with Ann’s hair care regimen.

During the family interview, Ann and Alicia confirmed their “decent” relationship. They both said they could not recall a racial encounter Ann experienced in the community. Similar to dyad five, Ann and Alicia did say that race was not openly discussed at home unless issues or jokes came up. When discussing any conversations about racial privileges and differences between Ann and Alicia,
they could not recall anything; however, Ann desires hair like her mother’s and Alicia wishes she had her daughter Ann’s “butt”.

**Skin Color Results:**

Ann self-reported a score of 4 out 10 on the scale of skin color measure. Thus, Ann views herself as slightly lighter than a medium skin complexion which seems to be an accurate response.

**Self of Researcher Reflections:**

After interviewing my seventh dyad, Dee and Nana, theoretical saturation was reached. I decided to interview one more family, this eighth interview, to be sure theoretical saturation was reached. I interviewed Ann and Alicia at their home in a suburb outside of Philadelphia, PA. They were very hospitable, to the point where I sat and spoke with them for a couple hours after the interviewing process.

While interviewing Ann, I was incredibly moved by her openness and willingness to share her experiences. I was deeply touched when she described racism she has experienced from friends, for example, when something goes missing she gets accused of stealing it or even when she is having conversations with White friends and they speak cruelly about Blacks. Learning Ann felt that she could not speak up and advocate for herself or for Blacks was heartbreaking to me. Especially seeing her cry; I just wanted to wrap my arms around her and hug her tightly.

During Alicia’s interview, I was surprised to learn that Alicia described her daughter as an “introvert” that was not open. I experienced Ann differently during her individual interview. Ann initially displayed her introverted side, as she seemed shy and unsure of how to answer some of the questions, often saying “I don’t know” before providing her response to questions. However, as time passed, Ann quickly warmed up and our conversations flowed better. Yet, during the family interview, I experienced Ann as withdrawn and holding back with her mother. Ann and Alicia described their relationship as good, yet described a lack of closeness which was evident during the family interviewed. I was touched during the family interview when Alicia asked if she could directly ask her
daughter, Ann questions. No family asked one another questions. Alicia’s questions were attempts to connect with and better understand Ann’s perspective. One of Alicia’s questions was inquiring about the origination of Ann’s taste in fashion, Alicia stated “…just for Ann is with taste in clothing perhaps, where did that come from?” Another question included, “What would you have liked me to do differently”. I felt honored to witness and observe Alicia’s attempts to understand and connect to her daughter regarding race. My hope is that this interview was the start of a deeper bond between Ann and Alicia and more open conversations about race. In the next section, dominant themes that emerged from the individual interviews with the eight Biracial Adult children are summarized.

**Biracial Adult Children Dominant Themes**

The experiences of Biracial adult children are organized into the following seven dominant (more than half reported them) themes that emerged: 1) Influence of White Mother on Racial Identity, 2) Colorism, 3) Racial Landscape of Biracials, 4) Views on Race, 5) Preference/Favoring Whiteness – Physical Attributes, 6) How Biracial children Deal with racism, and, 7) Acceptance. Within each of these seven dominant themes, 28 sub-themes also emerged. A summary of the 28 sub-themes is provided using illustrative quotes from the Biracial adult children. An overview of the seven dominant themes and 28 sub-themes are summarized in Table 5.4 below. A theme was defined as dominant if more than half of participants (4 or more out of the 8 Biracial adult children) reported it. The “theme frequency” column of table 5.4 notes the frequency and number of adult Biracial children who mentioned each theme during the individual interviews.

Table 5.4

<table>
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<th>Level</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Theme Frequency/Number of Biracial Adult Children’s</th>
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<td>Dominant Theme: Influence of Mother on Racial Identity Development</td>
<td>32 Total Segments: All 8 Biracial adult children</td>
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<tr>
<td>101 Subtheme</td>
<td>Close Relationship with Mother</td>
<td>12 Segments: 7 out of 8 Biracial adult children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Michael, Nicole, KC, Geronimo, Lynn,</td>
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<tr>
<td>102 Subtheme</td>
<td>Lack of Talks of Race with Mother</td>
<td>Brayden, Dee</td>
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<td>200 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant theme: Colorism</td>
<td>55 Segments: All 8 Biracial adult children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201 Subtheme</td>
<td>Derogatory Names Called</td>
<td>7 Segments: 5 out of 8 Biracial adult children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202 Subtheme</td>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>10 Segments: 5 out of 8 Biracial adult children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203 Subtheme</td>
<td>Colorblindness</td>
<td>9 Segments: 5 out of 8 Biracial adult children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204 Subtheme</td>
<td>Skin Color</td>
<td>29 Segments: 7 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204A Category</td>
<td>Darker Skin; Less Regard</td>
<td>8 Segments: 4 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant Theme: Racial Landscapes of Biracials</td>
<td>50 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 Subtheme</td>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>5 Segments: 4 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 Subtheme</td>
<td>Work/School Environment</td>
<td>5 Segments: 4 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>303 Subtheme</td>
<td>Romantic Partners</td>
<td>5 Segments: 5 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>304 Subtheme</td>
<td>Black Organizations</td>
<td>7 Segments: 3 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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<td>305 Subtheme</td>
<td>Closest Friends</td>
<td>16 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>306 Subtheme</td>
<td>Role Models</td>
<td>12 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>400 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant Theme: Views on Race</td>
<td>99 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401 Subtheme</td>
<td>What Race Are You?</td>
<td>16 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>401A Category</td>
<td>Biracial – Mixed – Black &amp; White</td>
<td>7 Segments: 6 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401B Category</td>
<td>Black (Non-Dominant Subtheme)</td>
<td>4 Segments: 2 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>402 Subtheme</td>
<td>Thoughts About Own Race - Self</td>
<td>24 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>403 Subtheme</td>
<td>Thoughts About Race</td>
<td>20 Segments: 7 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404 Subtheme</td>
<td>Thoughts About Being Biracial</td>
<td>Dee, Ann</td>
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<tr>
<td>404A Category</td>
<td>Downsides of Being Biracial</td>
<td>39 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404A1 Category</td>
<td>Teased – Made Fun of (Non-Dominant Subtheme)</td>
<td>28 Segments: 7 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Michael, Nicole, KC, Geronimo, Brayden, Dee, Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404A2 Category</td>
<td>Discrimination – Racial Profiling</td>
<td>5 Segments: 3 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Nicole, Geronimo, Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404A3 Category</td>
<td>Feeling Conflicted – Torn – In the Middle</td>
<td>9 Segments: 6 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Michael, Nicole, KC, Geronimo, Brayden, Dee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404B Category</td>
<td>Benefits of Being Biracial</td>
<td>8 Segments: 6 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Michael, Nicole, Geronimo, Lynn, Brayden, Dee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404B1 Category</td>
<td>Best of Both Worlds – Races – Cultures</td>
<td>8 Segments: 6 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Michael, Nicole, Geronimo, Lynn, Brayden, Dee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant Theme: Preference/ Favoring Whiteness – Physical Attributes</td>
<td>33 Segments: 7 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Nicole, KC, Geronimo, Lynn, Brayden, Dee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 Subtheme</td>
<td>What it Means to be Black</td>
<td>14 Segments: 6 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Nicole, KC, Geronimo, Brayden, Dee, Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>502 Subtheme</td>
<td>What it Means to be White</td>
<td>12 Segments: 6 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Nicole, KC Lynn, Brayden, Dee, Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant Theme: How Biracial Children Deal with Racism</td>
<td>30 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>601 Subtheme</td>
<td>From School Environment</td>
<td>11 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>602 Subtheme</td>
<td>From the Community</td>
<td>5 Segments: 4 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Nicole, KC, Geronimo, Dee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>603 Subtheme</td>
<td>Respond with Compassion (Non-Dominant Subtheme)</td>
<td>1 Segments: 1 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quote: Geronimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>604 Subtheme</td>
<td>Respond with Denial - Dismissal</td>
<td>6 Segments: 6 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Michael, KC, Geronimo, Lynn, Brayden, Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>605 Subtheme</td>
<td>Respond with Action – Expression – Anger</td>
<td>7 Segments: 4 out of 8 Biracial Adult Children Biracial Adult Children Quotes: Nicole, KC, Geronimo, Dee, Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant Theme: Acceptance</td>
<td>28 Segments: All 8 Biracial Adult Children</td>
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</table>
First Dominant Theme: Influence of White Mother on Racial Identity

The first dominant theme, influence of White mother on racial identity, describes how Biracial adult children describe how their White mothers influenced the development of their racial identity. There are three questions in the interview guide (see Appendix F) that asked how growing up with a White mother shaped racial identity, their understanding of race and racial identity, and relationships with their White mothers. All eight Biracial adult children described how their mothers shaped their racial identity in a total of 32 segments (see table 5.4). For example, KC shared how her mother influenced her racial identity:

My mother, being a single parent, she was both sometimes off race. Sometimes she was my mother, she was my father and she was my best friend. Her acceptance and her openness to talk to me about things if I had a problem, no matter what it was, whether it was racially motivated, socially motivated - her and I had some pretty in depth conversations at a very young age about a lot of different things. She never lied to me. She never misdirected me. She was always very honest with me about whatever it was. Like I said, whether it was racially, socially, whatever it was, she was always open...I think that she shaped the woman that I am today. Obviously there are outside stressors and factors, but without her and her ability to just be that woman, not even mother, just that woman to me who I could go to, whether it was me, whether it was friends, whether it was my brothers, and talk to her and not ever feel judged or belittled or self-conscious in any way; I would never feel stupid if I was asking her something that was above my maturity or outside my understanding, I never had that.

Similar to KC, the remaining seven Biracial adult children described how their White mothers influenced their racial identity development. Most said their White mothers were supportive, kind,
loving and modeled how to behave as well as how to treat others. Thus, their responses focused more on how their White mothers taught them how to be good people in general versus who they were racially. Brayden shared how his White mother helped him understand his racial identity:

_She hasn’t… She’s open. I think that she doesn’t identify with the whole race thing. I think they both wanted us, both my parents and my mom wanted us to grow up understanding both or not to even identify with race. I don’t think that they wanted us to think that we had to choose it or think that we were one way or the other. I think they just wanted us to be happy children and I think that that’s probably universal theme. I know that to be true. They didn’t really want us to worry about that that much._

This dominant theme was further divided into the following two subthemes: a) _close relationship with mother_, and b) _lack of talks about race with mother_.

**Subtheme One: Close Relationship with Mother**

The _close relationship with mother_ subtheme describes feelings of closeness between Biracial adult children and their mothers. As summarized in Table 5.4, this subtheme appeared 12 times among seven out of the eight Biracial adult children; overall they reported having close relationships with their White mothers. For example, Michael and Lynn said the relationship with their mothers was close. Nicole, KC and Brayden described in more detail what closeness means; they could share everything with their mothers. Dee noted how his mother is more than his mother:

_She’s like my best friend. My parents divorced when I was two and my mom has made me and my sister the center of her world for the past 32+ years. To me she’s an amazing mom and she’s been a great friend and helping me kind of maneuver through life on top of that._

Similar to Dee’s experiences, Geronimo described the love and gratitude he has for his mother:

_Oh, I feel like my mom and I have a really great relationship… So, yeah, we get along really well… And now with the perspective of age, and being able to look back at what my mom went through, and seeing how much she provided for me, you know, it makes me love her all the more. Because she’s always been a committed person in my life and willing to do whatever she can to make things happen for me, whether or not, as I got older, to go and travel and see parts of the world that she had seen, or, you know, just encouraging me to push myself academically, even when the subject matters I started to study became beyond her reach to assist me with… We can sit down and talk for, you know, hours about family gossip, or whatever it might be._
Unlike Dee, Geronimo and the other five Biracial adult children who reported close relationships with their mothers, Ann did not describe the relationship with her mother as close. Ann said, “I guess it’s good… I don’t think we’ve really ever been really close”. Despite the reports of closeness among Biracial adult children participants and their mothers, having open discussions about race were notably absent.

**Subtheme Two: Lack of Talks About Race with Mother**

The *lack of talks about race with mother subtheme* describes the lack of or no open conversations about race at home. As summarized in Table 5.4, five of eight Biracial adult children talked about this experience in seven segments. Michael, Nicole, KC and Lynn each said there were no conversations about race and racial identity development at home while they were growing up, at least none they could recall. Nicole mentioned that race, culture or anything associated with race was not discussed at home which resulted in drawing her own conclusions about race:

> I don’t remember us ever talking about race, culture, or anything like that at home. I don’t remember it being a topic of conversation at all… Because as I mentioned, it wasn’t something that we talked a lot about at home, so I felt like I kind of had to form my own opinions and my own thoughts about it, so I think I took from my own personal experiences.

Brayden also explained:

> My parents were very vague about a lot. They didn’t really - my dad didn’t speak much on it… I never really talked race with my mom that much.

Brayden was one of three Biracial adult children participants (Nicole and KC also) who reported having a close relationship with his mother; they shared everything with each other. In contrast, this subtheme describes the lack of open conversations about race at home. This implies some adult Biracial children felt they could talk openly with their mothers about topics, but not racial identity or racial encounters out in the community. This absence of discussions about race at home implies colorism was experienced, which is the second dominant theme.

**Second Dominant Theme: Colorism**
The second dominant theme, *colorism*, describes how Biracial adult children reported a lack of seeing or avoiding seeing race at home. There were no specific questions in the interview guide (see Appendix F) that asked about colorism, however, this theme emerged spontaneously. All eight Biracial adult children described experiences of colorism at home in a total of 55 segments (see table 5.4). The following four subthemes emerged under this dominant theme: 1) *derogatory names called*, 2) *hair*, 3) *colorblindness*, and 4) *skin color*.

**Subtheme One: Derogatory Names Called**

The *derogatory names called* subtheme describes offensive names Biracial adult children recalled being called by peers and out in the community. As noted in Table 5.4, this subtheme appeared seven times among five out of eight Biracial adult children. “Half-breed, half-Black, darkie, hi-yellow and nigger” were among some of the painful names that Michael, Geronimo, Brayden, Dee and Ann were called while growing up. Ann the youngest participant (age 18), Dee (age 32) and Brayden the oldest participant (age 42) all said *nigger* was one of the derogatory terms used by White peers in their communities. This suggests the derogatory term, *nigger*, is still used in American society.

**Subtheme Two: Hair**

The *hair* subtheme describes how Biracial adult children experienced hair care at home. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged 10 times among five out of eight Biracial adult children. KC, Dee and Ann described the textures of their hair as *curly*. In addition to describing their hair texture, they also mentioned: 1) type of hair products used, 2) hair styling/hair care options (e.g., weave, dreads, hair relaxers, wrapping hair), and, 3) outsiders’ fascination with their hair (e.g., wanting to touch it).

Nicole’s responses suggest an association between hair care and the Black culture:

*The way that I take care of my hair is closer to Black culture than it is to White, so they understand the products I use, they understand if I say, “I wrapped my hair,” vs. the White culture.*
Moreover, Brayden noted how Whites are often curious about the hair of Blacks and often want to touch it, which was experienced as an invasion of personal space and insensitive for him:

*Can-I-touch-your-hair type shit? You know what I mean? What do you mean can you touch my hair? No. Get away from me.*

**Subtheme Three: Colorblindness**

The *colorblindness* subtheme describes avoiding or not acknowledging race at home. This subtheme emerged nine times among five out of eight Biracial adult children. Lynn shared:

*I have grown up in a mixed family. I never saw color. It was to me, I accepted a lot of people. I never disliked people because of their race. I had friends who were White, I had friends who were Black, I had friends who were mixed. Other races and everything. I just feel like to me, I don’t see races, I just see people as who they are. It doesn’t really concern me if they’re Black or white or mixed or anything.*

Thus, Lynn said she does not see race. Dee expressed a similar view explaining that he does not see race and instead sees the human race:

*I’ll take it back to one of my colleagues used to say to me when these discussions used to come up in the workplace. There’s one particular race he sees and that’s the human race. That’s kind of like what I see. Obviously, I might see different cultures but I don’t see different races.*

Unlike, Lynn and Dee Michael, KC and Brayden mentioned colorblindness regarding struggling with their careers. Michael talked about colorblindness when he mentioned a friend who is Black. Yet, Michael labels this friend as “White” because of his friend’s parents’ attitudes about Blacks in the community. KC talked about her previous job as a telemarketer; she thrived in that position because she does not sound like a, “*stereotypical African American woman*”. Moreover, Brayden explained:

*They don’t get that we’re equal… that Black people are just as smart as them, just as talented as them if given the opportunity. There’s no difference. We’re all men under the one. That’s it. That’s zero. That’s my thing. You are as you measure and your actions point you to be but not because someone’s Black doesn’t really make a difference in anything unless they do different. It’s more based on the action and the character of a person rather than the race of the person. I know that to be true. It’s not even just a guess. I know that. I’ve been around it long enough.*
Subtheme Four: Skin Color

The skin color subtheme describes how adult Biracial children feel about their skin color. As mentioned in Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged 29 times among seven out of eight Biracial adult children (all participants except Michael). For example, Nicole explained:

*I know growing up the thing that I didn’t like about being both was that, other than my brother, no one looked like me. Like half of my family was lighter than me, the other half of my family was darker than me and I feel like me being Biracial, the chances of me walking into a room where there are people that look like me are way less likely than if I were a part of any other race. I didn’t really realize that until more in my adulthood because before, I just identified more with African American culture and people so I felt like if there were Black people in the room, that I saw people like me in the room. But as I got older and kind of embraced being Biracial a little bit more, I was like, “Wow, there’s not really a lot of people like me, literally.”

Geronimo, Brayden and Ann similarly talked about their skin color; they are not White and are not Black, but are light-skinned. Ann noted how people often think she is a White person with a tan. KC shared a similar belief, regarding how her brother’s skin color was light enough to pass for White. KC said:

*My older brother, even though he’s Biracial, looks Caucasian and then you have little brown me. It was the first time I ever thought I was different, that it wasn’t normal…*

Geronimo and Dee felt different because individuals with darker skin are treated differently in the U.S, often experiencing a harder time. The skin color subtheme included an additional category, darker skin/less regard. At least half reported that having a darker skin complexion leads to less regard in the U.S. The category darker skin/less regard emerged in eight segments among four out of eight participants (KC, Geronimo, Dee and Ann). Dee shared:

*…the fact that your skin might be a little bit darker than somebody else’s, the fact that you might face discrimination or something along those lines, just in general.*

Similar to Dee, Geronimo said:

*You know, the darker tone, the skin, the more likely someone is to give you less regard.*

Ann (the youngest participant) shared that:

*I guess that White people are better than other races.*
This suggests Ann has internalized the negative view that individuals with lighter skin are better than or deserve more regard compared to individuals with darker skin in the U.S.

Dominant Theme Three: Racial Landscapes of Biracials

The third dominant theme, racial landscapes of Biracials, describes the racial make-up of their communities, neighborhoods, schools, work places and social circles. Seven questions in the interview guide (see Appendix F) asked this. All eight Biracial adult children described the racial make-up of their communities in 50 segments. This dominant theme was divided into the following six subthemes: 1) siblings, 2) work/school environment, 3) romantic partners, 4) Black organizations, 5) closest friends, and 6) role models.

Subtheme One: Siblings

The siblings subtheme describes the races of participants’ siblings. According to Table 5.4 this subtheme was reported five times among four out of eight Biracial adult children. Despite all participants having siblings, only half of participants mentioned their siblings during the interviews.

Nicole said:

One of my sisters is White and the other one is Black. Both my mom and my dad had daughters before they met each other so I have a White sister, a Black sister, and then my brother and I are Biracial.

KC noted that she has two Biracial brothers (Black and White), one older and one younger. Dee also has a sibling, a Biracial younger sister (Black and White). Dee stated:

I mean I have a sister who is two years younger than me. I don’t know if that plays into anything at all, but you should be aware of that as well.

Interviewer: Is she biracial?

Dee: Yes.

Geronimo reported he has an older sister who is Black and several step-siblings that are White.

Subtheme Two: Work/School Environment

The work/school environment subtheme describes the racial make-up of the work/school environment while growing up. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme was mentioned five times
among four out of eight Biracial adult children. Nicole, Geronimo and Brayden described the schools they attended as predominately White.

Geronimo said:

*I mean, there was a time where, in one of those small communities that we had lived in that was predominately White, I was probably one of the two darkest-skinned students in the school. And, for whatever reason, one of the kids took it upon themselves to attack me in a bathroom just because, you know, I was different.*

Lynn said her work environment is predominately Black and described how working in a Black environment has impacted her:

*In my career, I work in the city schools, so the population is predominately Black, low income families and everything. I think one thing that the children look to me as being more like them, just because they see more of my skin color, they don’t realize that I’m mixed until they ask me, but being able to—I think that has actually helped me because they look to me as, even though I didn’t grow up in a low income family, they still see me as being more like them. It helped me more with them, trusting me more, they don’t give me a lot of problems that they may give some of the White teachers who they really don’t connect with. I know their music, I know the lifestyles of the years just being, the experience of being a teacher of low income, I know what some of them go through even though I haven’t experienced it myself. I understand some of the things they go through. I’m able to connect with them more and I’m able to build strong relationships with my students just because they see me as being Black, they see my skin color.*

**Subtheme Three: Romantic Partners**

The *romantic partners* subtheme describes the race of Biracial adult children’s romantic partners. As noted in Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged five times among five out of eight Biracial adult children. At the time of the interviews, Nicole was coupled with a Black man. KC shared that she is married to a Biracial (Black and White) man in her interview. Geronimo is married to a Black woman and stated:

*And then I also think about another friend of mine that I had seen after I returned from working abroad for a couple of years. And she’s like, “Oh, what have you been up to?” And I was like, “Oh, well, I’ve been back for a few weeks now, and I’m dating somebody new.” And she’s like, “Oh, yeah, who’s this?” “Well, actually, you know the person.” And I said my wife’s name, and her jaw almost hit the ground. She’s like, “Wait a moment. You went from dating European White girls to the African queen? Are you serious?”*
Brayden is currently dating but mentioned that the mother of his children is White. Ann reported she is not currently in a relationship, however she is attracted to White boys and has dated Black adolescents before. Ann said:

Ann: Not really. I mean all my friends are into Black guys so I guess - I don’t know.

Interviewer: What type of men do you gravitate to?

Ann: White.

Interviewer: You’re attracted to White men?

Ann: Yeah. I have dated Black men before though.

Subtheme Four: Black Organizations

The Black organizations subtheme describes Black organizations at school or in the community which participants were been part of while growing up. Based on Table 5.4, this subtheme was mentioned seven times among three out of eight Biracial adult children; although this is a non-dominant theme (less than half of participants reported it) it was included because it describes the influence of the Black community. Nicole was part of a Praise Dance Group and a Christian sorority that was predominately Black in college. Nicole shared:

Yeah. It was a Christian sorority. It was predominantly African American. I joined my freshman year of college and then was active until the point that I graduated… I was in the Praise Dance Group, but that was kind of it because my sorority kept us pretty busy, so other than that, that was kind of the only thing I was involved in.

Geronimo was a member of Black Student Union in high school; Brayden and Geronimo are both affiliated with historically-Black fraternities. Brayden is a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity incorporated. Geronimo belongs to Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity incorporated. Geronimo received support from his fraternity:

I went through college and joined a fraternity, a historically black fraternity, and a lot of acceptance there. And camaraderie and the brotherhood…I was given scholarships by rotary, and I was recognized by another historically Black fraternity as an up-and-coming high school student, and they’re the ones that really got me thinking about joining a historically Black fraternity, even though I chose the one that is probably the primary rival. And, as an older man now, when I meet brothers of that fraternity, we always give each other a good ribbing.
about the choices we’ve made along the way. But all in, you know, still in good fun and the spirit of brotherhood.

Subtheme Five: Closest Friends

The closest friends subtheme describes the race of Biracial adult children’s closest friends. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme was mentioned by all eight Biracial adult children participants in 16 segments. Ann, the youngest participant (age 18) used the term colored, (a term referring to Blacks that is not used often today) to describe the race of her friends:

Ann: Yeah. I mean I don’t really have any colored friends, most of my friends are White, so.

Interviewer: When you say colored friends?

Ann: Like any race.

Interviewer: Any other race besides White?

Ann: Uh-hmm.

Similar to Ann, Michael said that his friends are mostly White also:

I have two White friends and one Black friend that I consider my closest friends… Well, my Black friend is more like a White person… his parents are both Black, but they’re upstanding Black people in the community… his dad was a State Police Officer and his mother is a gym teacher at the high school.

Different from Michael and Ann, Nicole’s closest friends are Black. Moreover, the remaining five participants (KC, Geronimo, Lynn, Brayden and Dee) identified their closest friends as having various races such as: Black, White, Pakistan, Biracial (Black and White, Black and Puerto Rican) and Peruvian.

Subtheme Six: Role Models

The role models subtheme describes the races of their chosen role models. This subtheme was mentioned 12 times among all eight Biracial adult children. Role models identified by participants included: 1) parents, 2) grandparents, 3) teachers, 4) professional athletes and 5) celebrities. Michael said his father was his role model:
I didn’t really have any celebrity role models. It was mainly my dad who was my role model because he was always working hard and he had the strong work ethic. He was the one who was like, “Don’t be lazy, get up and do something. Go outside.”

Similar to Michael, Lynn shared that her father was a role model as well as other family members:

I would say, I look up to a lot of my family members, my parents I look up to. My dad was a member of the community, was well known around time. My grandmother has always been in my life and I looked up to her and the things that she values. She is a teacher as well, and kind of brought me to my education and I had a lot of close family members who were also educated that I looked up as I got older, wanting to go into that direction as well. A lot of family members. I don’t remember any celebrities that I looked up to, famous people. Nothing that stands out a lot.

In addition to identifying their parents as role models, KC and Nicole reported their siblings as role models. KC shared that her older brother was someone she looked up to:

Honestly, as dorky as it sounds, I wanted for a long time I wanted to grown and be just like my big brother. We are so far apart in age. Like I said, he is 36 now and I’ll be 30. So I’m 29 when he turns 36, so we’re 7 years apart. He was so much older than me that I wanted to grow and be just like him. I sang like him, I went through singing. I was in the chorus, I took voice lessons, I was in recitals because that’s what he did. I joined Color Guard because that’s what he did. Now granted I made my own way through all of those things. I still do Color Guard now, I’m still marching and he’s off being a Broadway star, so I found myself in that and what made me, me but that was my guideline. I looked up to him so much. His father passed away, then my father passed, so my whole - I just wanted grow and be just like him. Don’t ask me why, that’s just the way it was. He was the one person I looked up to.

Similar to KC, Nicole said her two biological older sisters, her sorority sisters, and the singer Alicia Keys are her role models:

I know once I got to college my role models a lot of the times were my sorority sisters, but that was in college. Growing up my sisters were, and they don’t look like me… I do remember when Alicia Keys came out, I looked up to her a lot. I was like, “Whoa… she’s Biracial.” I thought that was the coolest thing in the whole entire world. I remember looking up to her a lot. I was getting my hair done like hers and I had all her posters up, so I definitely looked up to her.

In addition to parents, siblings and extended family members, Brayden, Dee and Geronimo said professional athletes were their role models while growing up. Brayden said he played basketball as a child/youth, and looked up to the NBA (National Basketball Association) players:

…I was a guard so I thought I’d be a basketball playing guard. I liked some of the runners…
Michael Jordan, Isaiah Thomas, Dominique Wilkins, all the good ballers. Grew up playing basketball, watching basketball. Some of the college guys like Chris Jackson, Shaq around this time was big, those guys.

Dee said the former professional WWF (World Wrestling Federation) wrestler, Hulk Hogan, was his role model, in addition to his mother:

_Hulk Hogan was my biggest role model and I think that’s because I was in front of the television a lot growing up in a single parent household. With my activity level and aggression, I think I kind of moved towards sports and entertainment that could keep my attention. My mom wasn’t the best at understanding, I think, the need to insert positive male role influences, whether through the media, television, or whatever have you, to the degree that it stretched beyond what could keep me entertained for a couple of hours, as opposed to helping me kind of grow and see a vision for myself. As an adult, I think both her and I have recognized that and I laugh at times when she asks me who my role model was as a kid… I’d also say that my mom was one of the bigger role models in my life just in regards to the way that she treated people and her work ethic. I just felt that my mom, when I was little, wasn’t always necessarily dealt a fair hand and I just kind of always saw her as a person who was able to maneuver through life while staying positive and doing the right thing and struggle or no struggle she always figured it out. I always took a lot of pride in that as a child, as well. So between Hulk Hogan and my mom, I would tell you are the people that I looked up to the most._

Geronimo’s role models were former MLB (Major League Baseball) player, Kirby Puckett, his high school counselor, and relatives:

_I think, as a younger kid, I was always really excited about the Minnesota Twins baseball players, and my favorite player was Kirby Puckett. Because he would come in hang out in the north Minneapolis neighborhood. And we’d go to the same barbershop and so, you know, you could see, like, my favorite baseball player. He’s just chilling, getting his haircut. About to go sit in the same seat. He just always had a smile and, you know, something good to say, and he knew the people in the shop because he was part of the community. So, that was something for me. Then, I think more when I got into high school, there were different teachers that really helped engage me, and see me sort of on to the right path, and became responsible for some of the other friendships that I made through high school… A counselor at my high school, … got me involved in tutoring some of my fellow students. But, it really sort of pulled me into a larger community within the school that I think was really great, and she’d been such a source of energy for all of us students of color, you know, to engage us and say, “No, you’re going to go to college. Don’t tell me you’ve got other plans. Because that’s what’s going to happen and then we’re going to find a way for that to happen for everyone that wants it.”… So, yeah, as a child growing up, it was, you know, you had the folks in your family that would stand out for you, just because of their values and that things that you appreciated that they did when you looked at the community and sort of outside of the family. There’s … a handful of folks that really had an impact._

Ann, a senior high school student, shared that her teachers were her role models:

_I guess my teachers mostly because I spent of my time at school. Yeah, I guess my teachers._
Dominant Theme Four: Views on Race Dominant

The fourth dominant theme, views on race, describes how participants racially identify themselves, their thoughts and feelings about race, and being Biracial. There are eight questions in the interview guide (see Appendix F) that ask about views of race. All eight Biracial adult children described their views in 99 segments. This dominant theme was divided into the following four subthemes: 1) What race are you?, 2) Thoughts about own race - self, 3) Thoughts about race, and 4) thoughts about being Biracial.

Subtheme One: What Race Are You

What race are you? describes how participants’ racially identify themselves. According to Table 5.4, this was mentioned 16 times by all eight participants. There were two categories identified under this subtheme for how participants racially identified themselves including: 1) Category one: Biracial – mixed – Black and White and 2) Category two: Black. Six out of the eight participants (Michael, Nicole, Geronimo, Lynn, Dee and Ann) racially identify themselves as Biracial – mixed – Black and White (Category one). While KC and Brayden racially identified themselves as Black (Category two).

This subtheme also describes a common question they have been asked as Biracials “What are you?” KC, Lynn and Brayden reported they tend to respond to this type of question when asked by community members to identify their race. KC noted that recently she was asked this question by her husband’s family:

because when you see a Biracial person, for people to ask you - my husband’s family, literally, two months ago they were like, “So what are you?” I was like, “What?” and they’re like, “You know, are you...” I was like, “I’m mixed,” and they were like, “With what?”

Similarly Lynn said:

When people ask me what are you, I’ll tell them I’m mixed, Black and White.

Brayden explained his response when others inquire about his race and expressed:
so if you ask me, “Oh, what are you?” “Black.” “What are you? What is your race?” I say, “I’m Black.” They say, “Oh, you’re Black. Okay. So you mean half, half?”

Additionally, participants described how their race is viewed by others. Michael noted:

Like even though you’re mixed, they see the Black side of you.

KC also explained how others view her:

It’s just to me how everyone else views me. It’s not rationally how I view myself in the world. I just feel like when you’re filling out paperwork or documenting anything, they always want to classify you that way. From a really young age it was either you were Black or you were White. Biracial was always something that was politically correct later on.

**Subtheme Two: Thoughts About Own Race – Self**

The thought about own race - self subtheme describes how participants feel about themselves and racially identify. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme appeared 24 times in descriptions by all eight Biracial adult children. Dee said, “I was always pretty confident in understanding who I was or what makeup I was” when expressing how he feels about himself. Additionally, Dee and KC have affirming views and noted the beautiful physical attributes Biracials tend to possess.

KC said she embraces who she is, loves herself and being Biracial. Similarly, Lynn said, “I love it...” when describing how she feels about being Biracial. Brayden said he has no problem being Biracial. Brayden also noted he does not tell others he is Biracial, because he racially identifies as Black. He does not feel the need to explain his race to others. Brayden shared:

I usually don’t say Biracial. I just leave it as Black and then - it’s assumed. I don’t get into - I’m not big on explaining my ordeal to people

Unlike others, Michael described his personality as more White, despite racially identifying as Biracial:

If I would have to define it, I would say I’m more White; my personality is more White… I don’t know. It’s how I hold myself. In nowadays in society, you can look at people and everybody has a judgmental attitude toward certain races, stereotypes. If I’m putting myself towards the stereotypes then I feel like a White person.

Similar to Michael, Ann said she “acts more White likely because she did not grow up around Black culture.
Nicole waivered between identifying with being Black or White. In spite of exposure to Blacks and Whites during her childhood, Nicole was not sure if she knows what it means to be White.

Consequently Nicole embraces the Black culture more than White culture:

I think that I experience it differently depending on where I am. I feel like when I went to college that’s when I became aware of the fact that I was both Black and White, which is weird because – I don’t know I think it’s just weird. But where I went to school for college was predominantly White, because where I grew up was predominantly Black. I think that I embraced more of my African American culture than I did my White culture because I don’t think I really knew what that meant.

Similar to Nicole, Geronimo identifies more with Black culture but at the same time acknowledges his White heritage:

Well, I look at it from the standpoint of, you know, my dad’s Black and my mom's White. And, it's clear that I have a darker skin tone and raised in the United States, so, I definitely identify with -- in the mindset of African-American and being in the Black community, but then also that aspect of growing up in and around White communities through my mom's side of the family.

Subtheme Three: Thoughts About Race

The thoughts about race subtheme describe how participants feel about race in general.

According to Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged 20 times among seven out of eight Biracial adults (all participants except Nicole). KC shared:

I think that in a world where everyone focuses so much on color nowadays, whether it’s a positive thing or a negative thing, I think it is the first thing that people look at now. It might have been the first thing they were looking at then but it wasn’t as openly discussed.

Lynn and Dee have different views compared to KC, however, Lynn and Dee have similar beliefs about race; they do not see race. As mentioned earlier, Dee said he only sees the “human race”.

Michael reported feeling discouraged while discussing race because of the discrimination that continues to exist in the U.S. Brayden talked about racial profiling and racial injustice and his sadness that Whites continue to get treated better than Blacks. Ann also said that Whites are the better race. For example, Geronimo noted:
So, the idea of race is something that can be, at times, very upsetting, but then, part of cultural identity. So, when I look at that, I think, well, yeah, it’s clear that we have color divides in the U.S., and that there’s a great deal of privilege that folks will not acknowledge. When I say that, I’m saying, you know, White privilege that will not necessarily be acknowledged. And you will often hear the argument of, you know, reverse racism, or favoritism given because you’re Black or different. You know, woe is me, the White man that can’t get along for all the opportunities lost to Black folks.

Subtheme Four: Thoughts About Being Biracial

The thoughts about being Biracial subtheme describes participants’ beliefs and feelings about being Biracial. As noted in Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged 39 times among all eight Biracial adult children. Nicole, Geronimo and Dee share similar views about being Biracial; they are equally Black and White. Dee said he does not “lean toward one side or the other in regards to feeling embraced”.

Nicole also explained:

For me that means that I’m equally both so just as much as I’m White, I’m Black just as much, so they’re equal.

Under this subtheme, the following two categories (each category including relevant sub-categories) emerged: 1) Category one: downsides of being biracial, 2) Sub-category one: teased-made fun of, 3) Sub-category two: discrimination - racial profiling, 4) Sub-category three: feeling conflicted – torn - in the middle, 5) Category two: benefits of being Biracial and, 6) Sub-category one: best of both worlds-races-cultures.

The subtheme thoughts about being Biracial was further broken down into the Category, downsides of being Biracial as at least half of the participants reported struggles being Biracial. The category downsides to being Biracial emerged in 28 segments among seven out of eight participants (all except Lynn). During the interview, participants described their views regarding the disadvantages of being Biracial. KC shared:

I felt like a science project because I came from a White mother.
Other difficulties noted by KC included not belonging because he did not feel “Black enough” at times. Michael suggested Biracials voiceless and forced to adapt depending on who they are around as a disadvantage and mentioned:

*Because you change your tone of voice and everything when you’re around different types of people.*

The three sub-categories describing the downsides of being Biracial reported were: 1) Sub-category one: teased - made fun of, 2) Sub-category two: discrimination - racial profiling and 3) Sub-category three: feeling conflicted – torn - in the middle,

The first disadvantage of being Biracial was being teased – made fun of (sub-category one) by others. Ann explained:

*Being made fun of, I think that’s the only thing… Like when people make racist joke and they think that - because most of my friends treat me like I’m fully White and so they make Black jokes and I act like it doesn’t offend me or hurt me but it does.*

Geronimo and Nicole were also teased. Nicole said:

*I would say around Black History Month, because I remember being teased and then feeling like, “Can I celebrate Black History Month?”*

A second downside of being Biracial was reported by Michael, Nicole, KC, Geronimo, Brayden and Dee was the negative experiences of discrimination - racial profiling (sub-category two) and being the subject of racism. Michael shared:

*I mean I have walked past somebody’s car and they locked the door. You can assume that it’s that reason… There is one other thing. When looking at it, the racial injustice. If somebody is going to be hurtful towards you or something, it’s always going toward Black. Like even though you’re mixed, they see the Black side of you. Like I was pulled over one time for not stopping completely at a stop sign. He came back after bringing me my license back and he said, “I’m surprised you have such a clean record.”*

Dee also shared:

*Whereas in the White community, I’ve been judged before and I’ve had acts of discrimination and racism I’d say towards me to some degree and to some extent.*

Sub-category three, feeling torn - conflicted - in the middle” was the third disadvantage identified by participants. Nicole said:
I don’t think I really started to make those connections until later, but when I think about White people and sometimes the negative connotations just when it comes to racism and that kind of thing, I think when I’m defensive about that, I think it’s because I’m thinking about my mom. “Well my mom is sweet, my mom’s not like that, my mom’s not racist, and my mom’s not that.” Which my mom can’t represent a whole demographic of people, but I think that’s part of why I kind of feel torn because I go back to my mom. I don’t know. I think that’s part of why I feel torn sometimes.

Brayden also shared:

Downside, I don’t know. You do have your time where you doubt and you wish maybe you were something else. I know I’ve probably have that in my life. There was even a time where I hated White people for that side of it. Not my mother but just in general.

During the interviews, several participants talked about Category two: the benefits of being Biracial. This category emerged in eight segments among six out of eight participants (all participants except KC and Ann). Michael, Nicole, Geronimo, Lynn, Brayden and Dee shared similar views about the benefits of being Biracial, identifying their exposure to two races/multicultural, and learning how to adapt and fit in between races/cultures. Geronimo reported the ability of adaptability is a benefit to being Biracial. Geronimo shared:

the adaptability thing has been the biggest thing. So therefore, like I said, I can sort of cross those lines with less concerns, and it gives me different worldviews and outlooks.

Lynn said being exposed to the Black and White cultures is an advantage to being Biracial and stated:

I think that some of the good things are being able to see the way that both Black people and White people live, whether their culture or their traditions or being exposed to different music, being different styles within that.

While describing the benefits of being Biracial, sub-category one, the best of both worlds – races – cultures emerged, for example, Nicole shared:

I feel like I kind of have the best of both worlds where I feel like I can empathize with both, especially when it comes to everything that’s going on in the world when you talk about social justice and those kinds of issues. I feel like I can understand the feelings and the challenges of people that are African American and the feelings and the challenges of people that are White or Caucasian. I feel like I’m in the middle and can kind of relate to both, or just kind of understand both.

Brayden also stated:
The best is you get to understand everything. You really, really get to see both sides of both worlds very clearly. I grew up both my parents in the house so I was privy to both.

Dominant Theme Five: Preference/ Favoring Whiteness – Physical Attributes

The fifth dominant theme, preference/favoring Whiteness – physical attributes, describes the physical attributes reported by Biracial adult children which often favored being White. There were no specific questions in the interview guide (see Appendix F); responses emerged naturally. Seven out of eight Biracial adult children participants (all participants except Michael) described favoring Whiteness when describing the physical attributes of Biracials in 33 segments. For example, KC compared her hair to the hair texture of her mother’s:

…I didn’t have a weave. I got my hair relaxed because my mother had silky straight hair and I wanted to be like my mom but outside of that, I had nothing else that was stereotypical Black child syndrome. I didn’t have weaves, I didn’t use grease, I didn’t have cocoa butter.

Dee also said Biracial children tend to have “better” physical attributes:

I just always found that Biracial children, I think, everyone feels that just about the 99th percentile of Biracial children are beautiful children. But it’s their skin, their hair, their eyes... The benefits are better skin, better hair, and better eyes.

Dee did not define what better meant during the interview, however, it seems that “better skin, better hair and better eyes” are the preferred physical features of Whites. The lighter the skin complexion of Biracials, suggests a preference for White features. The concept of better hair can be associated with “good hair”, a term often used by Blacks which suggests a preference for being White. Additionally, better eyes implies Biracials with lighter colored eyes is preferred. Ann described her preference for being White while describing her own physical attributes:

Just my hair being curly or I guess sometimes my skin color because some people do think I am a mixed race. I guess my nose too because some people think I have a big nose, like a Black person nose but I like my nose.

This dominant theme was further divided into the following two subthemes: 1) What it means to be Black, and 2) What it means to be White.

Subtheme One: What it Means to be Black
The *what it means to be Black* subtheme describes what it means to be Black. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged 14 times among six out of eight Biracial adult children (all participants except Michael and Lynn). Collectively, participants mentioned stereotypical physical attributes (e.g., using cocoa butter on skin, weave hair styles, getting hair relaxers, greasing hair scalp), music genre (e.g., hip hop), the lack of resources and opportunities in urban areas, the stereotyping/racial profiling when applying/interviewing for employment and not receiving handouts is what it means to be Black. KC described what it means to be Black:

*I had nothing else that was stereotypical Black child syndrome. I didn’t have weaves, I didn’t use grease, I didn’t have cocoa butter… In the same respect, I did get my hair relaxed and I did use different hair products than my white friends… I did have different music taste than my white friends, even though it wasn’t as seeped in hip hop, rap genre as my friends, it was definitely more than my White friends."

Ann talked about what it means to be Black regarding stereotyping/racial profiling. Ann explained:

*I guess some people think that Black people are illiterate and can’t read or write like White people can."

**Subtheme Two: What it Means to be White**

The *what it means to be White* subtheme describes what it means to be White. As mentioned in Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged 12 times in six out of eight Biracial adult children (Michael and Geronimo). Ann shared that her White friends told her she acts White:

*I guess acting White, what other people see as being polite and not listening to rap music and using bad language or fighting and having nicer things but that’s not really how it is."

In addition to the stereotypes associated with Whites and Blacks, Lynn and Brayden acknowledged White privilege and how Whites tend to get treated better than Blacks. Dee and KC discussed how Whites tend to receive less harsh consequences for crimes or sometimes no repercussions at all when compared to Blacks. KC shared a personal experience:

*In high school I partook in recreational fun of the herbal type and I always felt I was safer with my Caucasian friends because they only ever got detention or a day in school suspension if they were caught. However, my African American friends, if they were caught, it was always much*
firmed, always much firmer. So that’s my own personal experience. Whether it was widely known, that was just what I saw and so, I would never partake with my African American friends, ever but with my Caucasians friends, why not? I felt safer. I didn’t feel like I was going to get in as much trouble if I got caught, which I never did because I’m awesome.

Dominant Theme Six: How Biracial Children Deal with Racism

The sixth dominant theme, how Biracial children deal with racism, describes encounters of racism and how they were handled out in the community. Six questions in the interview guide (see Appendix F) ask about racial encounters and their reactions to them. All eight Biracial adult children described racial encounters in 30 segments.

This dominant theme was divided further into the following five subthemes: a) from school environment/peers, b) from the community, c) respond with compassion, d) respond with denial - dismissal, and e) respond with action - expression.

Subtheme One: From School Environment/Peers

The from school environment/peers subtheme describes experiences of participants who reported racial encounters in a school setting and/or from peers. As noted in Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged 11 times from all eight Biracial adult children. Brayden described an encounter with female peers who were romantically interested in him in high school:

Brayden: What I experienced in high school was that there were girls that thought more highly of me but weren’t going to take that out because they know Black guy, ain’t bringing him home to daddy. Even a half Black person, that’s a little too much. I understood that later in life. So I discovered it around ten, eleven, twelfth grade but I understood it completely around twelfth, freshman year.

Interviewer: What sense did you make of that, why they didn’t bring you home to dad?

Brayden: Well yeah, their dad’s racist or just doesn’t want their daughter with a Black child and not even the result of the Black child which is probably what they’d love in the end but not that. It wasn’t that thought, it was just like, “Black ain’t what we want. That’s not the norm so we’re not going to be the ones that take that trip, walk down that road.”

Ann described an encounter with her peers:

Ann: Like when people make racist joke and they think that - because most of my friends treat me like I’m fully White and so they make Black jokes and I act like it doesn’t offend me or hurt
me but it does.

Interviewer: When you say that your friends treat you that you’re White, how do you know that you’re treating you like your White?

Ann: They say that I don’t act ghetto, whatever that means but - I listen to country music and I think that’s a White thing to do. I don’t fight so that’s a White thing to do. I’m not really loud and stuff like that.

Subtheme Two: From the Community

The from the community subtheme describes the community as a place where participants experienced racism. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged in five segments among four of eight of the Biracial adult children (Nicole, KC, Geronimo and Dee). Geronimo shared a racist encounter in the community where he was asked if he was adopted:

But I remember distinctly being at a Little League baseball game that my mom had signed me up for, and one of my fellow teammates, you know, looking over at us and trying to figure out sort of what the deal was. And, I can’t remember the name of the show anymore, but he was trying to ask, “Like, so, are you like on that show —” I want to say it was Gary Coleman, where he would say, “What you talking about, Willis?... But the point being, he was trying to find the word “adopted” in his vocabulary and we must have been 7 or 8 at the time. And it’s like, “No, I’m not adopted, that’s my mom.”

Additionally, Dee described a racial encounter with a friend when the police approached them:

I remember one time when I was 16-years-old and I was driving with my Pakistani best friend and we left high school early to go play basketball and we got pulled over on Cinco de Maya. We were like 15, 16-years-old. The cop came to the window and it was like 3:30 in the afternoon. He was like, “Have you guys been drinking? What are you guys up to? Where are you guys going?” We were going to play basketball. So things along those lines you experience and you look back and kind of point towards the fact that it’s because you might be a darker skin tone or a different culture as opposed to the other people that are acting in those types of ways, if that makes sense.

Subtheme Three: Respond with Compassion

The respond with compassion subtheme, a non-dominant subtheme, yet a salient one describes one participant’s experience responding to a racist encounter with compassion; Geronimo said:

Geronimo: I mean, there was a time where, in one of those small communities that we had lived in that was predominately White, I was probably one of the two darkest-skinned students in the school. And, for whatever reason, one of the kids took it upon themselves to attack me in a bathroom just because, you know, I was different.
Interviewer: Physically attacked you? Verbally?

Geronimo: Yeah, physically attacked me. Yeah, they turned off the lights and battered me against the wall. And the lights came back on and everybody ran out the room, but that’s what happened. And, for no good reason, other than, you know? He called me “Darkie.” So, that was pretty – yeah.

Interviewer: And how old were you --?

Geronimo: At the time –

Interviewer: -- at the time?

Geronimo: 9 or 10.

Interviewer: 9 or 10.

Geronimo: Somewhere in there. And, I don't know that I found it to be necessarily traumatizing, so much as, you know, shocking that something like that could happen, or would happen. You know, as an adult looking back on it, like, I don’t necessarily feel any anger around it. But, I think, I more feel sorry for the fact that those fellow students of mine were raised in that way.

Subtheme Four: Respond with Denial – Dismissal

The respond with denial - dismissal subtheme describes denying or dismissing racial encounters as racially driven. Based on Table 5.4, this subtheme appeared six times among six out of eight Biracial adult children (all participants except KC and Dee). Lynn described an encounter when her family relocated back to her hometown when she was a senior year in high school and began attending a school that she previously attended:

One of the things, when I moved around a lot and… coming back here my senior year, I wouldn’t necessarily say it was a problem, but I noticed that when I went back to the school I was at, it was predominately White and a lot of people already had friends. I had actually known a lot of people, but I would say they wouldn’t say anything outright towards me, they just weren’t really accepting towards me. When I came back and I moved back, I really didn’t—I went to school, but I really didn’t associate with people. I just kind of was on my own. I ate lunch on my own. It wasn’t very accepting, but it’s not like people outright, racially discriminated. I just feel they weren’t really accepting maybe because of my race, but not confirmed.

Lynn denied any racism associated with this event. Similarly, Ann (18 year old and youngest participant) noted how she does not talk to her mother about racial encounters, because Ann tends to
“brush off” racism:

_Interviewer:_ Okay. Why do you think you haven’t went to her?

_Ann:_ I don’t know, probably because I just brush them off and I don’t really think about them.

**Subtheme Five: Respond with Action – Expression**

The *respond with action* subtheme describes how taking action helped them cope with racism. As mentioned on Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged seven times by four of the eight Biracial adult children (Nicole, KC, Geronimo and Dee). Dee explained how he handled a racist encounter that occurred in the community by taking action:

*I remember being in summer camp once when I was about 12-years-old, but I was visiting my dad in Florida and some White kid called me the “N” word and I turned around and socked him. I ended up getting suspended and kicked out of the summer camp for a week and nothing happened to him. I think it was a feeling of being unfair, in that regard. Even though I know the physical action to the verbal action is probably more inline, but those are the types of things.*

Geronimo shared how he became angry speaking out when others confronted him about his racial identification, insisting he is not Black:

*I do know there have been times where my anger has been flared when somebody has tried to tell me, “But you're not Black.” And so, it’s like, well, hang on a second. Not only am I Black by the measures of law that have been put in place in the United States, you know, but I’ve grown up in the Black community even as much as I’ve been a part of the White community. I've grown up in the Black community, and I do strongly identify in that regard, but not to the point where I would turn away from my mom's side of the family, where it's my White family.*

**Dominant Theme Seven: Acceptance**

The seventh dominant theme, *acceptance*, describes where (e.g., people, places, and inside themselves) Biracial adult child participants found acceptance. Two questions in the interview guide (see Appendix F) ask which racial groups participants felt most accepted. All eight Biracial adult children identified sources of acceptance in 28 segments. This dominant theme was further divided into the following five subthemes: a) *acceptance from family*, b) *acceptance of self*, c) *acceptance from White community*, d) *acceptance from Black community*, and e) *acceptance from friends.*
Subtheme One: Acceptance from Family

The acceptance from family subtheme describes acceptance received from family members. As noted in Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged fives times among four of the eight Biracial adult children (Michael, KC, Lynn and Geronimo). KC said she felt accepted by her family at home:

*Honestly, I think the fact that at home it was just who I was. There might have been distinctions made about me in another way but it was never about my color. I might have insecurities about myself for other reasons but it was never about my color, ever. At home, I know that if there was anything that ever came up that was like that, at home it never mattered. So I think it was just the support and understanding, the acceptance that existed in the four walls of my house - it was a home base… So just open communication and acceptance that existed at home I think is what really helped me be able to take on whatever happened outside of the home because I did spend so much time out.*

Similarly, Lynn reported her relatives accepted her:

*I was always accepted by my mom’s family just as much as my dad’s family.*

Subtheme Two: Acceptance of Self

The acceptance of self subtheme describes self-acceptance. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged in eight segments among five out of the eight Biracial adult children (all participants except Michael, Nicole and Lynn). Collectively, participants talked about how they embraced who they are racially. Dee feels lucky to be Biracial:

*I think the experience is more towards the idea that I’m not necessarily both, but I’m something that’s not Black or White, I guess. How do I see it? I see it as an earlier adaptation to what I think the world is coming to in regards to the mix of different races. I feel lucky that I’m made up of two particular types of races.*

Geronimo accepts who he is and talked about how being Biracial is a part of his reality:

*I embrace it because it's also part of my reality. It's not something you can get away from, it's not like, you know, if I close my eyes, and I can’t see you, it doesn't mean that you can't see me. So, in that respect, I don't know that I give it that much thought,*

Subtheme Three: Acceptance from White Community

The acceptance from White community subtheme describes feeling accepted by the White community. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme was mentioned three times by three out of the eight Biracial adult children (Michael, KC and Ann). Although this is a non-dominant theme (less than half
of participants reported it), it was salient so it was included here. Michael shared how he feels more accepted by Whites compared to Blacks:

 Mostly I find that White people are more accepting, especially now, our generation is more accepting of everybody. Black people still hold that – if you’re not like me or if you’re not doing what I’m doing – they hold like racial distance towards everybody else that’s not Black.

Similarly, Ann expressed feeling accepted by the White community. She also reported that her social circle is more White because there are not many Blacks in her community or at her school:

I guess more White because I hang out with them more because there’s not many Black people to hang out with…

Subtheme Four: Acceptance from Black Community

The acceptance from Black community subtheme describes feeling accepted by the Black community. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged in seven segments by four out of the eight Biracial adult children (Nicole, KC, Brayden and Dee). For example, Brayden reported feeling at home in the Black community:

I felt at home in Black communities. When I did go to college I more aligned myself with the Black kids. I don’t know. That’s because the White people…they were just off. They were just so hickedy-dickedy

Likewise, Dee shared how he feels more accepted by the Black community compared to the White community:

I think that I’ve always felt more accepted by my Black friends growing up or the Black community. I say that just based off of – I don’t know if it’s – I don’t want to say empathy or sympathy towards social constructs that we learn about in school, but I’ve always felt like I’ve never been mistreated or judged in my 32 years of existence by the Black community because I was lighter skinned. Whereas in the White community, I’ve been judged before and I’ve had acts of discrimination and racism I’d say towards me to some degree and to some extent.

Subtheme Five: Acceptance from Friends

The acceptance from friends subtheme describes feeling accepted by friends. According to Table 5.4, this subtheme emerged in five segments among four of the eight Biracial adult children
(Michael, KC, Lynn and Geronimo). For example, KC described how her friends got her “weird” and she felt accepted by them:

_Honestly, it was anyone who got my weird. I am a weird person. I’m very energetic at times. I am very crazy and it could be a good crazy. It could be bad crazy. The girl from L.A., her and I became friends in second grade. We were just weird together. My girlfriends who I met in 4th grade and 10th, that I already said the other Black girl and the other Biracial girl, we were just crazy girls together. They got my weird. The other girl who actually lives in L.A. too, the one white girl, we bonded over our misery. Even though that sounds dark and miserable, it was. I was really dealing with a lot of my self-identity issues that were like my weight and how that - middle school was a very rough time for me, very dark because probably when I was going through a lot of the ‘not dark enough’ or ‘not Black enough’ with Black kids, with White kids, and my father died when I was nine so that resurfaced right around puberty and all that weird stuff that happened. Her parents were going through a divorce, so it was a very dark time for both of us and we both made it work. I think that’s what made our friendship last so long is because the weird was just that. It was the darker side of my crazy and she got that. Her and I were friends, and we’re still very good friends. Just that she lives 3,000 miles away kind of makes it a little difficult but I talk to her regularly, both of them who live in L.A. It’s funny, they both live in L.A._

Finally, Michael seeks out friends who accept him:

_Yeah, so he had a little more social stability in his life. But the one White friend is Italian. It’s like I said, people accepting people for who they are and that’s what I look for in a friend._

**White Mothers’ Dominant Themes**

The experiences of White mothers are organized into the following four dominant themes that emerged: 1) What Race is Your Child? 2) Colorism, 3) Cultural Collision and, 4) Parenting a Biracial Child. Within each of these four dominant themes, 14 sub-themes emerged, and 14 categories. A summary of the 28 sub-themes and 14 categories is provided using illustrative quotes from the Biracial adult children. An overview of the four dominant themes, 28 sub-themes, and 14 categories are summarized in Table 5.5 below. A theme was defined as dominant if more than half of participants (4 or more out of the 8 White mothers) reported it. The “theme frequency” column of table 5.5 notes the frequency and number of White mothers who mentioned each theme during the individual interviews.
Table 5.5
White Mother Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Theme Frequency/White Mothers’ Quotes in this Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant Theme: What Race is Your Child?</td>
<td>9 Total Segments: All White Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 Subtheme</td>
<td>Biracial</td>
<td>6 Segments: 6 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Sam, Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Mary, Nana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102 Subtheme</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2 Segments: 2 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Charlotte, Bonnie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant theme: Colorism</td>
<td>29 Segments: 7 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Sam, Lin, Mom, Mary, Bonnie, Nana, Alicia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201 Subtheme</td>
<td>Colorblindness</td>
<td>20 Segments: 6 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Sam, Lin, Mary, Bonnie, Nana, Alicia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202 Subtheme</td>
<td>Skin Color</td>
<td>9 Segments: 6 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Sam, Lin, Mom, Mary, Bonnie, Alicia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 Dominant Theme</td>
<td>Dominant Theme: Cultural Collision</td>
<td>109 Segments: All White Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 Subtheme</td>
<td>How Parents Deal with Racism</td>
<td>56 Segments: All White Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301A Category</td>
<td>Acceptance – Positive Reactions from Family and Community</td>
<td>15 Segments: All White Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301B Category</td>
<td>Prejudice – Racist Reactions from Family</td>
<td>17 Segments: 6 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Sam, Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Mary, Nana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301B1 Category</td>
<td>Estrangement from Family</td>
<td>4 Segments: 4 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Lin, Mom, Bonnie, Nana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301C Category</td>
<td>Racism from Community</td>
<td>11 Segments: 6 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Mary, Bonnie, Alicia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301D Category</td>
<td>Racism Toward Biracial Child</td>
<td>13 Segments: 5 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Sam, Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Alicia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301D1 Category</td>
<td>Offensive – Derogatory Names Given to Biracial Child</td>
<td>5 Segments: 4 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Sam, Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Alicia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301D2 Category</td>
<td>Downplay it</td>
<td>2 Segments: 1 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Lin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301D3 Category</td>
<td>Took Action</td>
<td>3 Segments: 3 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Sam, Lin, Charlotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 Subtheme</td>
<td>Racial Environments of the Family</td>
<td>5 Segments: 4 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Lin, Charlotte, Bonnie, Alicia</td>
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<tr>
<td>303 Subtheme</td>
<td>Biracial Hair – Hair Care</td>
<td>19 Segments: All White Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 Subtheme</td>
<td>Selections of Toys for Biracials</td>
<td>11 Segments: All White Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>305 Subtheme</td>
<td>Visiting with Black &amp; White Families</td>
<td>5 Segments: 3 of 8 White MothersWhite Mother Quotes: Lin, Mary, Bonnie</td>
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</table>
Dominant Theme One: What Race is Your Child?

The dominant theme *What race is your child?* describes how White mothers racially identified their children. There is one question in the interview guides (see Appendix G for married White mothers and Appendix H for single White mothers) that asks how mothers racially identify their children. According to Table 5.5, this was mentioned nine times by all eight mothers. The following two subthemes emerged: 1) Biracial and, 2) Black.

Subtheme One: Biracial

The *Biracial* subtheme describes how mothers racially identified their children as Biracial. According to Table 5.5, this subtheme was mentioned six times by six participants. Sam, Mom and
Charlotte reported racially identified their child as “Biracial”. Whereas, Lin, Mary and Nana asserted their Biracial child’s racial identity as “mixed”. The term mixed is another way to describe Biracial.

Lin stated:

*Well, I say she’s mixed.*

Mom declared:

*I describe it as Biracial.*

Similarly, Charlotte said:

*I would describe his racial identity as really Biracial. I think he has a strong understanding of both the pros and cons of a lot of family that's White. I think he identifies more with his African-American or Black heritage.*

**Subtheme Two: Black**

The *Black* subtheme describes how mothers racially identified their children as Black. Based on Table 5.5, this subtheme appeared twice by only two White mothers. Bonnie racially identified her child as Black:

*Black.*

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, Charlotte racially identifies her child as Biracial; however, she acknowledges that her child racially identifies as Black:

*I think he identifies more with his African-American or Black heritage. It waivered back and forth depending on friends that he hung out with, travel opportunities.*

Unlike the other seven mothers that racially identified their child, Alicia did not racially identify her child as any race:

*I don’t. Her racial identity to me is Ann. It’s hard to describe because, like I said, I don’t really identify her as White or I don’t identify her as African American or Black. She’s just a beautiful mix of everything which I ultimately feel everybody is. Whether your skin color reflects it or not, everybody’s a mix of something.*

Alicia’s opinion of not seeing the color of her daughter’s skin color is a demonstration of the concept of colorism. Colorism will be discussed in further detail, as noted as the dominant theme to follow.
Dominant Theme Two: Colorism

The second dominant theme, colorism, describes how most White mothers reported a lack of seeing or avoiding seeing race. There were no specific questions in the interview guides (see Appendix G for married White mothers and Appendix H for single White mothers) that asked about colorism; this theme emerged while conducting the interviews. Seven mothers (all except Charlotte) described experiences of colorism in a total of 29 segments (see table 5.5). The following two subthemes emerged under this dominant theme: 1) colorblindness, and 2) skin color.

Subtheme One: Colorblindness

The colorblindness subtheme describes avoiding or not acknowledging race. This subtheme appeared 20 times among six out of eight White mothers (all except Mom and Charlotte). Sam said she told her son his father was dark, she was White, and her son was in between. Thus, Sam seems to see skin color differences in her family. In contrast to her statement, as a mother she told her young son to not see skin color and instead look for the good in people:

*Starting when he was little, if he ever questioned anything like, “Why am I dark and you’re light,” I would just tell him that that’s the way God made us.” I said, “Your daddy’s dark, I’m white, and you’re in between, which makes you special.” We used to tell him, “Just remember that you have to look for the good in a person and not their color.”*

Similarly, Bonnie described her husband as very dark, but did not identify him racially as a Black person:

*I never had a racial difference. That was one of my big problems. It was an ‘aha’. My husband was very dark and I guess I never saw him as Black until sometimes we would walk into a place where there were no other Black people, then I would realize what people were looking at or conversely, going into one of his family gatherings and I would be the only White person there. Otherwise, I didn’t see any racial difference. We had the same outlook on things.*

Subtheme Two: Skin Color

The skin color subtheme describes White mothers views and experiences of skin color. According to Table 5.5, this subtheme was mentioned in nine segments among six out of eight Biracial adult children (all except Charlotte and Nana). Some mothers talked about the skin color of their
children in relation to their other Biracial children (Mom and Bonnie). Sam and Lin talked about skin color in the context of not looking at one’s color and saying “there is no difference”. Alicia and Mary mentioned skin color regarding their children having lighter skin and how they believed their children benefitted. For example, Alicia explained:

_Maybe in this world it’s good that they can pass for a lighter shade in some circumstances because it seems like societally there’s a lot of stereotypes still but they can still bring that silent, “Hey, well you know I do have Black in me. If you’re proud of what I am, this speaks for my race on this side also instead of just sort of throwing me in a box.”_

Additionally, Mary stated:

_Honestly, everything else, we really had no challenges. I don’t know if it’s because she was necessarily light skinned. I think that could have been a reason why I didn’t have any challenges at least from an outsiders, but from just me personally, none at all._

**Dominant Theme Three: Cultural Collision**

The third dominant theme, _cultural collision_, describes what happens when White women partner with Black men (and conceive Biracial children) leading to two cultures colliding. White mothers reported their experiences merging their White culture with Black culture, including unanticipated surprises, such as racism from family and unsure about hair care of their Biracials children. There were no specific questions in the interview guides (see Appendix G for married White mothers and Appendix H for single White mothers) that asked about cultural collision; this theme emerged naturally. All eight participants described this theme in a total of 109 segments (see table 5.5).

The following six subthemes emerged under this dominant theme: 1) _how parents deal with racism_, 2) _racial environments of the family_, 3) _Biracials hair – hair care_, 4) _selections of toys for Biracials_, 5) _visiting with White and Black families_ and 6) _adopting Black culture_. In addition to these six subthemes, eight categories also emerged under the first subtheme, how parents deal with racism.

**Subtheme One: How Parents Deal with Racism**
The *how parents deal with racism* subtheme describes racist encounters White mothers and their Biracial children experienced in the context of family and in the community. Participants explained how they responded and described positive reactions from family members under this subtheme. This subtheme emerged 57 times in all eight White mother interviews (see Table 5.5). Within this subtheme, the following four categories (some including sub-categories) emerged: 1) Category one: Acceptance – positive reactions from family – community, 2) Category two: Prejudice – racist reactions from family – interracial marriage and Biracial child, 3) Sub-category one: Estrangement from family, 4) Category three: Racism from the community, 5) Category four: Racism toward Biracial child, 6) Sub-category one: Offensive – derogatory names given to Biracial child, 7) Sub-category two: Downplay it, and 8) Sub-category three: Take action.

Category one, *acceptance – positive reactions from the family – community* describes being accepted by relatives and the community. Based on Table 5.5, this category included 15 coded segments from all eight participants. All participants reported some family members initially accepted their interracial relationships and/or Biracial child or later as time passed. Charlotte described how her mother and father were supportive from the beginning and remained supportive:

*Well, my mom was someone who embraced everybody. It was my dad, similarly, but he was more, I would describe as, being cool…Actually, I don't know how to describe that difference very well, in my father. But my father is a Presbyterian minister. Ministers are like teachers, they put on performances sometimes to bring a congregation along, or, as a teacher, to persuade people in the right direction, or lessons…What I'm trying to say is more, that his is less, it's more superficial. It's, like, "Oh, that's very cool, and let me tell the whole world about it," and it's less about how much I love the person and more about the fact that I'm doing something a little more radical than what, maybe, other people are doing. I didn't marry my son's father to be cool. I married him because I happened to fall in love with him. I was open to falling in love with any type of person because I had exposure at a very young age.*

Mary said her family was also supportive:

*Everybody really accepted—first of all, if they didn’t accept my marriage, I don’t think that would have been an issue of them accepting Lynn or not. They would not have been part of my life. All my family were very accepting of her.*
In contrast to category one, category two, *prejudice – racist reactions from family – interracial marriage and Biracial child*, describes experiencing racism from relatives because of the interracial relationship with a Black man and/or having Biracial children. This category was mentioned 14 times by six out of the eight participants (all participants except Charlotte and Mary) (see Table 5.5). Nana noted that she did not know her parents were racist until she started dating her late ex-husband:

*I didn’t think – you know I grew up and our household never had any issues at all with Blacks or anything like that until I mentioned my ex-husband and then it was like everything hit the roof and they were very racist, my mother especially. My dad said mean things too, but growing up I never saw anything like that. There were a few Blacks in my classes and things like that, but never in the home. Until it hit home I guess it’s a totally different story with that generation, my parents.*

Mom shared her grandmother’s response when she gave birth to her first Biracial child;

*Her grandmother thanked God that Mom’s child looked White:*

*My other side of the family, my grandparents were the ones that would sit on the porch and call Black people the names that you just don’t like to hear. In actuality, my grandmother’s first response with my oldest son being born was, “Thank God he looks White.”*

Under this category, one sub-category emerged, *estrangement from family*, which was mentioned by four participants (Lin, Mom, Bonnie, Nana) in four segments. These mothers shared experiences of forced separation from relatives due to family member(s) not supporting their interracial relationship and/or Biracial child. For example, Lin said:

*My mom and my stepfather, not so much. They really didn’t get to know Lin and her brother until really their sister’s wedding. She got married in the Bahamas and until then, they really didn’t get to know Nicole until then. She was probably about 10, 12 or something like that.*

Similar to Lin, Bonnie also experienced a cut off from her family. She and her father had a falling out for several years:

*After the initially - my father didn’t come to our wedding. After we reconciled which was when the kids were little because I don’t even think they know that my dad didn’t speak to me for a couple of years, after we reconciled we were always included in everything.*

Category three, *racism from the community* describes racist encounters in the community that included stares and negative comments from outsiders. Referencing Table 5.5, this category emerged
Bonnie discussed a racist encounter while looking for a pastor to marry her:

_Bonnie:_ When I went to talk to the pastor about planning the wedding… he said, “No, I can’t marry you here.” He says, “You can get married anywhere else you want but,” he said, “I’m not marrying you…and not in our church. The Parishioners won’t stand for it.”

_Interviewer:_ Was that about…

_Bonnie:_ Yes, it was about race. He counseled me that I should not have children because some will be Black and some will be White and they will hate each other for their color.

Charlotte also described a racist encounter:

_But I had some experiences where I was teaching, at that time, he was just a baby, and I invited his father and he brought our son with him to a -- I was teaching at a post-secondary school where I was teaching art, but it involved modeling too, and I was in a show. When they discovered that my husband was Black, they went and cancelled all of my engagements. It's not wild, but it also, compared to what happened day in and day out with people's prejudices, primarily towards African Americans, it was a small thing. That happened, but most often the people that I met didn't show, or didn't do something that would hurt me. If that makes sense._

In addition to mothers experiencing racism in the community, five participants (all except Mary, Bonnie and Nana) reported observing _racism toward their Biracial children_ (category four) in 13 segments (see Table 5.5). Under this category, the following three sub-categories emerged: 1) Sub-category one: _offensive – derogatory names given to Biracials_ and whether participants reported 2) Sub-category two: _downplaying it_ or 3) Sub-category three: _taking action_ while witnessing their Biracial children encountering racism. Sub-category one was mentioned by four out of the eight participants (Sam, Lin, Mom and Charlotte) in five segments. The two derogatory names included, _oreo_ and _nigger_. Sam mentioned:

_When he was smaller, yeah. Because he came home one day and said, “Somebody called me a nigger.”_

Charlotte also described derogatory name calling, _nigger_, toward her Biracial child:

_I would think they were calling him nigger, certainly that one. It was that one._
Despite sub-categories two and three being reported by less than half of participants, these sub-categories were included because they are salient. According to Table 5.5, sub-category two was described in two segments by Lin:

**Lin:** I think the Oreo thing, yeah.

**Interviewer:** What was your response when she came home saying somebody call her an Oreo?

**Lin:** From what I can remember just daddy’s Black and I’m White and the same as anybody else. I tried to just downplay it. There is no difference.

*Taking action* (sub-category three) was expressed three times by three participants (Sam, Lin and Charlotte) (see Table 5.5). Charlotte explained how she handled a time when her child was experiencing racism in school:

At one point I was seeing someone in, why I can’t think of the suburb -- it was a suburb. At the school they were tenable. The staff would not intervene. It was predominantly a White staff, oh my goodness. He would tell me that the kids were calling him names and the staff wasn’t intervening.

**Interviewer:** Did he mention what type of names they were calling him?

**Charlotte:** I would think they were calling him nigger, certainly that one. It was that one.

**Interviewer:** It must have been incredibly painful for your son to come home and tell you that and you don’t have the support of the school when you try to do something about it.

**Charlotte:** Well, I did move then.

Additionally, Sam mentioned how she defined the term *nigger* when her child came home:

**Sam:** He must have been about seven or eight and said, “Somebody called me a nigger.” He said, “What’s a nigger?” Okay this is a hard one. I said, “In my vocabulary a nigger is trash, White or Black it doesn’t matter. You can be a White nigger, you can be a Black nigger, but there is no place in this society for that word.” I said people try and be cruel, just ignore them, just because you aren’t the same color as them.

**Interviewer:** How did Michael handle that?

**Sam:** He said, “Okay.” I said, “Don’t you ever go calling anybody that.”

*Subtheme Two: Racial Environments of the Family*
The racial environments of the family subtheme describe the racial environments of White mothers’ families. Lin and Alicia shared they had Black friends; Lin said:

*I had a lot of Black friends and I have Black friends still.*

Additionally, Bonnie said her child attended a predominately White school. When making a decision about the best places for the family to worship, Charlotte described her uncertainty regarding joining a Presbyterian or Baptist church service:

*I didn't know for sure which church I was going to take him; I took him to a Presbyterian church and that was predominantly White, and then I took him to a Baptist church, and that was predominantly Black.*

This subtheme was mentioned five times by four of the eight White mothers (Lin, Charlotte, Bonnie and Alicia) (see Table 5.5).

**Subtheme Three: Biracials Hair - Hair Care**

The Biracials hair – hair care subtheme describes White mothers’ descriptions of the hair texture of their Biracial children. Mothers described how they cared for their Biracial children’s hair. This subtheme emerged 19 times in all eight White mother documents (see Table 5.5). Many mothers described their child’s hair as having a coarse texture with curls (Mom, Charlotte, Mary, Nana, and Alicia). For example, Mom explained the nature of her Biracial child’s hair and hair care:

*I could braid. I couldn’t do French braiding or any of that, but I could put pigtails and ponytails in, so we did that. When it came time to getting the knots out, we would stand in the shower, I would stand in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt behind her in the shower and wet her hair and we would comb through it. It was so much easier to do when it was wet. The curls would just relax and detangle it. Then we fell in love with a fourth grade teacher who took her under her wing and knew that it was a good thing because we had not had a very good experience with the elementary school.*

Mary described her child’s hair texture and how she cared for the hair:

*I know some people would comment or say, oh, my goodness—about her hair. She’s got such long, beautiful hair. I remember I always want to have it fixed just so. I thought some children I can see them with all of the French braids and everything and as silly as it sounds, I wish I could do that and I couldn’t do that, so I would pretend to French braid her hair so she would like some other—maybe Black children if you will…I don’t know if this could have been a problem for her. I just wanted to let it dry naturally, the curly and stuff—it was more curly and she liked it when I blew dry it or put it in braids or pigtails or something… Oh, very well. We*
kept it very long. She wanted it long for a long time and we just would usually put it back, pulled it back. I never had such long, beautiful hair. I wanted her to wear her hair down and stuff, but she’d say oh, mom it’s hot or it’s cold or whatever and she wanted to pull it back… So, as she got older, obviously, she would do it whatever she wanted to do with her hair and she never had to put any specific products in her hair or anything like that. She was blessed with good hair.

Subtheme Four: Selections of Toys for Biracials

The selections of toys for Biracials subtheme describes the types of toys and races of toys that White mothers reported purchasing for their Biracial children. According to Table 5.5, this subtheme was mentioned 11 times by all eight White mothers. Bonnie was the only mother who did not say her Biracial child played with toys that attended to race. She said her child played with “basketballs, footballs and trucks”. The remaining seven mothers all reported buying their Biracial child diverse person-centered toys (e.g., Barbie dolls, Cabbage Patch dolls, wrestling men, GI Joes). Alicia bought a Fisher Price dollhouse for her Biracial child and talked about the differences between Black and White race families:

Interviewer: What types of toys did you buy Ann growing up?

Alicia: Here’s one. My sister actually - the Fisher Price dollhouse. It was the big, grandiose thing. We went to Toys R Us and they only had the Black family for the dollhouse. Found it interesting that it was a dad and a mom with a minivan and twins as opposed to the white family, it was just a mom and a dad and an individually infant. There was…

Interviewer: That is really interesting.

Alicia: Which I thought was cool though because it had a double swing and they’re like little extra - but I was just like, “Why is it?”

Interviewer: How did you make sense of the differences?

Alicia: I couldn’t really. I mean I looked at it as almost as if they were saying the Black family had more children than - that’s a very dummed down observation. I couldn’t figure out why exactly Fisher Price would do so. Why wouldn’t it be just identical? She chuckled about it and my reaction was, yeah, they are half Black so there’s nothing wrong with purchasing a Black family. It doesn’t matter.

Moreover, Mom bought her Biracial child White and Black baby-dolls. She mentioned how a relative of her child’s father bought their child a Black doll:
She had Black baby dolls and she had White baby dolls. She had a Black Cabbage Patch, she had a White Cabbage Patch. She had them all, and to this day she still has those stinkin’ Barbie’s out in my storage area. Her daddy bought her the car, the stupid swimming pool. She has all of them; the Black dolls, the White dolls, they’re all still here in my storage… You know it’s funny because, I don’t even remember who is was; somebody in his family bought her a Black baby doll. It was like, “I bought this for her so she has a Black baby,” and I’m like, “And you are way behind the game babe, because she done already got three of ‘em.”

Subtheme Five: Visiting with White and Black Families

The visiting with White and Black families subtheme describes how White mothers talked about their Biracial child visiting with the White and Black sides of the family. Based on Table 5.5, this subtheme emerged five times among three out of the eight White mothers (Lin, Mary and Bonnie).

Although non-dominant, this subtheme is described because it is salient regarding the dominant theme, cultural collision. Mary explained:

I tried to instill both traditions, like maybe around holiday time or something. We were at her dad’s house and his family and his parents and stuff and at my family’s. Just the traditions and mostly I’d say it was just food related, southern style cooking and things like that and family and just family oriented and on my side of the family, the same thing. That’s it.

Likewise, Lin shared:

Yeah, and then my sisters were so – they loved Nicole and you know, picnics and things like anybody else. We got together and usually everybody came over our house or we went over there for Christmas or Easter.

Subtheme Six: Adopting Black Culture

The adopting Black culture subtheme describes if White mothers embraced the Black culture. Additionally, this subtheme includes White mothers who embraced the Black culture and traditions.

According to Table 5.5, this subtheme was mentioned in 12 segments by seven out of the eight White mothers (all participants except Nana). Sam, Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Mary, Bonnie and Alicia all reported enjoying Black music (for example, Blues and Motown). For example, Mom said:

You know, I feel more comfortable in the Black community and I think it’s because I was openly accepted and I see the acceptance in the Black community much easier than I saw the acceptance in the White community. But I love their music, I love the dance, I love the men, which doesn’t always make a lot of people happy, but… I mean I’ve lived that life for my children for so many years that that’s just my comfort zone.
Additionally, Sam, Mary and Alicia all cooked and served food from the Black culture.

Charlotte mentioned enjoying reading the works of Black authors as well as admiring the openness of Blacks:

*Probably the openness. How to describe that? I mean… As the blues, I love the blues. I'm still learning about the various people that contributed to our history, Black people. Not just, like, Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks, but I'm always looking for authors and artists, Attica Locke… Now you know I'm on the spot, but my preference actually is, more often than not, to find Walter Mosley, to find Black authors. As an educator, I really want more Black authors as part of the curriculum. We have such a White European standing that I think it's difficult for, it's not just difficult, it's not fair to White or diverse cultures.*

Similar to Charlotte, Sam learned about Black history as she shared she is a “US history buff”.

**Dominant Theme Four: Parenting a Biracial Child**

The fourth and final dominant theme for White mothers, *parenting a Biracial child*, describes how White mothers reported parenting their Biracial children. They discussed parenting strategies and how they racially socialized their Biracial children. The closeness of their relationships with their children was also described, as well as positive and challenging experiences raising a Biracial child.

There were nine questions in the interview guides (see Appendix G for married White mothers and Appendix H for single White mothers) that asked about parenting a Biracial child. All eight participants described this theme in a total of 72 segments (see table 5.5).

This dominant theme included the following four subthemes: 1) *Close relationship with Biracial child*, 2) *Parenting strategies executed*, 3) *Experiences with raising Biracials* and 4) *Socialization – racial socialization*.

**Subtheme One: Close Relationship with Biracial Child**

The *close relationship with Biracial child* subtheme describes which of the mothers described having a close relationship with their Biracial children. Additionally, this subtheme describes whether mothers reported having race motivated conversations with their Biracial children or not. According to Table 5.5, all eight White mothers mentioned this subtheme in 20 segments. All mothers except Alicia
shared having a close relationship with their Biracial child. Mary described a close relationship with her Biracial child:

Oh, I think it’s great. I really do. As we grow older, we just grow closer together. Growing up as a young daughter, we did things as a family and mom and daughter things too. I think our bond is very strong. We can talk about anything and everything. I know she knows that and hopefully, we have talked about a number of different issues, but our communication is very open.

Likewise, Nana said she had a “very good relationship” with her Biracial child:

We have a very good relationship. He’s a little controlling of his mother, but he’s great. I wouldn’t trade him in for the world. He really looks after me and my sister, too much though. I think he should back off a little bit. But he feels responsible because growing up in a single parent household, he being the male feels like he’s responsible for me... But I think we have a great relationship.

Within this subtheme, the following category and sub-categories emerged: 1) Category one: Race conversations with Biracial child, and 2) Sub-category one: No race discussions – believed child would have asked questions.

Category one, race conversations with Biracial child was reported six times from four out of the eight mothers (Sam, Mom, Charlotte and Nana). When asked if Mom had conversations about race with her Biracial child when she was younger, Mom said “always:

Always. Because they knew that there was not that comfortableness with my father. And some of it with my grandparents. They were aware of that... We used to talk about, “So what do you think your husband is going to be like?” I will tell you her husband is not anything that she ever thought he would be. We would talk about the difference between fashions that the Black cultures would wear as opposed to the White culture. The hair, especially because I am most definitely not the one to take care of her hair. I had straw, straight lanky hair that just did nothing but lay there. And my answer to that was a ponytail. I was also an athlete so I didn’t give a hoot, whereas hers, oh my goodness! Tight, tight, tight beautiful curls everywhere and I just didn’t know what to do with it so we would talk about the different things that we could do. That poor child, I can’t tell you how many times I burned her with a straightening iron. She’s got scars to this day I’m sure, on her ear, on her neck.

Charlotte also reported having conversations about race with her children. She reported having some open discussions about race, including her experiences with others in the community as well as encouraging her son to speak different languages and learn different cultures:

We'd have open conversations, but there was a point where he was suggesting maybe, and he
was in high school, or junior high, I think junior high still. He talked about possibly speaking only Ebonics, and I said I would opt for being well-versed in the language that’s a business language, and educational language. And then I think it’s a plus if you are versatile in Ebonics. Then, of course, in my side of the family, German was a language that I spoke, another language. I wanted him to have that as an option too, as many languages as possible, because you can learn the cultures much better if you have possession of the language… I think I started out tell him, when he was younger people would always ask me, I think he was still in a stroller, or something, they would ask me, "Where did you get that cute baby? I was a little put-off by that. "Where do you think I got the cute baby? At the cute baby store down the street." I carried him and I had him. I wouldn’t always tell strangers his, I wouldn’t tell them his dad is Black. I would be okay if they thought maybe he was Italian or Mexican. I didn't want to have those conversations with them and I didn't want them to judge him on who I was or who his father was, so I told him about that. I think he may have been five or so.

Despite most mothers reporting having good relationships with their children, reporting they were able to talk about everything with their children while they were growing up, half of the mothers said they did not have conversations about race with their Biracial children. Thus, sub-category one, no race discussions – believed child would have asked questions emerged in four statements from four out of the eight mothers (Sam, Mary, Bonnie and Alicia). Sam, Mary, Bonnie and Alicia all felt that if their Biracial children had any questions about race then, they would ask them. For example, Sam stated:

No. I always told him, “If you have any problems about it let us know and we’ll discuss it.” He just seemed very well acclimated to everything. He just didn’t care.

In agreement about trusting her Biracial child(ren) would ask about race, Mary said:

I think that if they would have brought something up, we certainly would have been open to it, but it just never happened. I think Lynn knew that her dad was Black and her mom was White and if she had any questions, I think that she would have said something.

Subtheme Two: Parenting Strategies Executed

The parenting strategies executed subtheme describes the parenting approaches White mother participants reported with their Biracial child. This subtheme describes the types of conversations regarding parenting between White mothers and the fathers of their Biracial children. Based on Table 5.5, this subtheme emerged in 16 segments among seven out of the eight White mothers (all
participants except Charlotte). Nana said that she raised her child as a “normal kid” when asked about the parenting strategies she implemented:

You know, I don’t think I did. I just raised him as a normal kid. I don’t think I tried to have him identify as being Black or White, to tell you the truth. Maybe I just was oblivious. I just raised my kids as my kids so I didn’t like encourage him to – I didn’t have them experience a lot of the Black culture growing up. I mean they had Black friends. I let them choose their own friends.

Sam talked about similar strategies as Nana:

In this day in age just let them be their own person and if they have questions regarding the races to explain it to them but don’t try to make them into one race or the other. Let them go their own way. They’re going to decide what they’re going to do and they may decide being Biracial is what they enjoy being and they don’t care if you’re White or you’re Black. Just don’t try to make them into a White child because it doesn’t work. Don’t try to push them in any one direction, just let them be their own person. When they have questions answer those questions truthfully and not biased.

Moreover, within this subtheme, one category emerged: 1) Category one: Parents discussions in how to raise children. This category highlights the conversations White mothers had with their Black male partners about how they would raise their Biracial children. Also, this category was mentioned four times by Bonnie and Mary who were both married when they raised their Biracial children. Bonnie said:

We talked and fought more about it prior to getting married…My concern and my husband’s was bringing children into a world, this was in the 60s, that would be prejudiced. Would they be singled out in school or how would they be able to get along in the world and they already had children that were both grade school and high school age.

Similar to Bonnie, Mary said:

When we decided to marry and raise our kids, naturally we had some concern, or raise Lynn, we had some concerns what it would be like for them growing up…Obviously, we did talk about it. Before we had kids, I was just pregnant, how people would react, or they would be flat out insensitive to your kids. We were worried about that and I didn’t know what type of experiences to expect, but fortunately, we really didn’t experience any, at least not that was made aware of it. Maybe there were people out there that were talking behind our backs or something, we never felt it, not from family or from neighbors or anything like that. I feel very blessed not to have experienced that.

Subtheme Three: Experiences with Raising Biracials
The experiences with raising Biracials subtheme describes the challenging and positive experiences White mothers encountered raising their Biracial children. This subtheme was mentioned in 21 segments by seven of the eight White mothers (see Table 5.5). Within this subtheme, the following two categories emerged: 1) Category one: challenging experiences and 2) Category Two: Positive Experiences. All mothers described having challenging experiences (category one) in which was reported in 13 segments. Sam and Nana both said their Biracial child was diagnosed with ADHD which was a challenge for them. Alicia stated:

*Challenges are just integrating them within the Black community, some of the cultural things that I can’t provide for them. Again, with our current situation, having Black in the family and going to their family functions. Just whether it’s food or just maybe traditions, you know, different things that have been a challenge for me. I just have been ignorant to them being the white mother but I’m open, so maybe just feeding that side of her, her being.*

Mom also identified a challenge because outsiders assumed her Biracial child was adopted:

*I think the biggest challenge was I was asked frequently if she was adopted. We were at a skating party, it was her birthday party and a mom stood right beside me and said, “So is she adopted?” Yeah, that was one of the challenges.*

In addition to challenges, mothers also described positive experiences (category two) raising their Biracial children. All mothers, except Sam and Bonnie described positive experiences raising their Biracial children in eight segments. Mom noted:

*The benefits are that I expanded my understanding and knowledge of people because I will tell you, I was raised in a very, very prejudice… I didn’t understand it at the time and I didn’t realize it was a prejudice household until I got out on my own. I took opportunities to get to know people that I was never allowed to get to know at that time. It was fun.*

Charlotte also described what it meant to raise her Biracial child and said it was a positive experience:

*I would say all of the experiences were positive because having a child is – I mean, if I didn't have a reverence for life, I certainly developed it while I was pregnant. He is my heart, walking around. But, in a Biracial sense, I grew up in a family, like I had an aunt who was married to a Black man, and cousins that were married to Black women. Most Black people were always very accepting of me.*

**Subtheme Four: Socialization – Racial Socialization**
The socialization – racial socialization subtheme describes how White mothers socialized in general and how they racially socialized their Biracial children. According to Table 5.5, this subtheme emerged 15 times among seven out of eight White mothers (all participants except Charlotte). Bonnie explained how her Biracial child was socialized:

_I’m hoping their father directed them… I guess maybe in conversation if you said anything - no, I think he was pretty much socialized when he went away to college and their father taught the boys, “You don’t upset your mother so you don’t tell her a lot of stuff that’s going on.” So I’m closer with my daughter, yes, but not with the boys. That seemed to be the rule of thumb, don’t upset your mother… Unless they brought it to their father because - I think they’re well socialized… They were pretty much accepted by my family. We’re a close family unit and most of our socialization was in family things. I didn’t feel that they were thought of any different at school, at school gatherings and I’m talking mostly about grade school because they went to a church school. So I think they were very well accepted and very well integrated and it didn’t seem to be an issue._

Mom also shared how she racially socialized her Biracial child:

_So I felt that it was necessary and important to their development to understand what it is to be a Black child as well as a White child. I tried to enforce that… I felt it was important that they be themselves. I also wanted them to get to know that other part of their racial background._

**Comparison of Biracial Adult Child and Mother Dominant Themes**

The Biracial adult children and White mothers provided similar descriptions about racial identification. How each Biracial adult child racially identified themselves matched how their mothers racially identified them, with the exception of one family. Mom, mother of KC racially identified her daughter as “Biracial”, whereas KC reported she racially identifies as “Black”. Noteworthy, mothers, Bonnie and Alicia were asked several times during their individual interviews before they were able to racially identify their children.

In addition to racial identification, Biracial adults and their White mothers described racial identity development during their individual interviews. Racial socialization is a vital contributor to the racial identity development of Biracials. Nevertheless, half of the mothers (Sam, Mary, Bonnie and Alicia) believed if their child had any questions about race they would have asked. In the absence of
initiating racial discussions with their Biracial children, these mothers encouraged their children to
form their own opinions about race. Nicole, daughter of Lin said:

Race wasn’t something that we talked a lot about at home, so I felt like I kind of had to form my
own opinions and my own thoughts about it, so I think I took from my own personal
experiences.

Additionally, mothers, Lin, Mary and Bonnie reported embracing cultural traditions of the
Black and White races, often visiting with relatives on holidays. Brayden agreed and talked about
being socialized “in family things”. Additionally, mothers, Mary and Bonnie reported discussing race
with their husbands prior to having Biracial children. Yet, mother, Lin did not report talking to their
husbands about race before having children.

In terms of the role of racial socialization, there was a difference in responses between adult
children and their White mothers. Most mothers (Sam, Mom, Charlotte, Nana and Alicia) reported on
their demographic questionnaire and during their individual interviews that they talked about race to
their Biracial children. When asked if she had conversations with her child about race, Mom replied,
“Always.” In contrast, KC, the daughter of Mom, said race was “never” discussed:

Race was never something that we discussed at home because it was just our family; it was
never something that was separated and brought to light.

Similarly, Sam said she did talk with her son, Michael about race during his childhood. Yet
similar to KC, Michael said:

No, I never had a conversation growing up. It was never really brought out into the limelight,
it was something I just naturally grew up with.

Nana, mother of Dee reported having open conversations about race with son, Dee. Yet, Dee
said his mother racially socialized him to be human, with a lack of acknowledgment of race:

I guess just like simple parenting conversations. My mom is a very loving person, she’s a very
kind person. So just kind of modeling the way that she is towards everybody and not really
kind of judging. I’ve never in my life heard my mom speak out or talk down about anybody, or
any other type of person for the color of their skin, their background, or anything along those
lines. So that degree, in terms of how she’s helped shape my view of race, just in conversation
and just being a good parent kind of helped me or always taught me that it doesn’t really
matter what the color of your skin is.
Nana later acknowledged she did not encourage Dee to racially identify as Black or White:

*I never felt that I pushed him to be Black and I never pushed him to be White, I just let him be who he was... I just raised him as a normal kid. I don’t think I tried to have him identify as being Black or White, to tell you the truth. Maybe I just was oblivious. I just raised my kids as my kids so I didn’t like encourage him to – I didn’t have them experience a lot of the Black culture growing up. I mean they had Black friends. I let them choose their own friends.*

Hence, Nana’s approach gave her son, Dee the freedom to draw his own conclusions about race. Nana’s passive socialization practices can lead to a lack of creative socialization (proactive preparation for negative racial encounters).

Reactive socialization emerged based on responses provided by the adult children and their mothers. Adult Biracial children were asked about their first racial encounters and if they discussed them with their mothers. Most adult children (all except Lynn and Ann) recalled their first racial encounters, often not choosing to discuss them with their White mothers. Michael (Biracial adult child) remembered his first racial encounter at the age of 14 when peers were harassing him about his mother “being a piece of shit” and teasing him for being Black. Michael did not talk to his mother and instead talked to his White teacher. Similarly, in third grade, Brayden (Biracial adult child) recalled experiencing his first racial encounter when a White classmate called him a “nigga”. Brayden said he did not discuss this with his mother, and instead told his brothers.

Lynn could not recall a specific racial encounter during her childhood. However, Lynn discussed an experience that occurred during late adolescence when her family relocated during her senior year of high school. Lynn remembered not feeling welcomed by classmates at the new school. Her mother, Mary was aware of her feelings of exclusion with other students, however, Mary did not believe Lynn’s lack of feeling welcomed by classmates was race related. Mary, like Lynn could not remember any additional occasions when her daughter, Lynn described racial encounters out in the community. Like Lynn, Ann could not recall any negative racial encounters out in the community. In
contrast, Ann’s mother, Alicia remembered Ann sharing being teased at school by Black children; classmates said Ann was not Black enough.

Moreover, some mothers (Bonnie and Nana) could not recall their children coming home and talking about any racial encounters at school or in the community. Whereas, other mothers (Sam, Charlotte and Lin) were able to recall racial encounters not shared by their children during their individual interviews. Mothers, Sam and Charlotte remembered their children coming home and describing being called “nigger”. Sam recalled an earlier racial encounter than that of her son, Michael. Sam shared that when Michael was ages 7 or 8, he came home and said someone called him a nigger. Charlotte also remembered a different encounter than her son, Geronimo. Charlotte shared that in third grade Geronimo was called a “nigger” by a classmate. Like mothers, Sam and Charlotte, Lin remembered that her daughter, Nicole came home and reported that someone at school called her the derogatory name “Oreo”.

In the next section dominant themes that emerged after coding the family interviews are summarized.

**Family Interviews’ (Biracial Adult Child and White Mother) Dominant Themes**

Experiences shared during the family interviews are organized into the following four dominant themes that emerged: 1) Responsibility and Recommendations for Socializing Biracials, 2) Closeness of Mother-Child Relationship, 3) Colorism and, 4) How the Interracial Family Functions. Within each of these four dominant themes, 9 sub-themes and 1 category emerged. A summary of the themes is provided using illustrative quotes from the families. An overview of the four dominant themes, 9 sub-themes, and 1 category are listed in Table 5.6 below. A theme was defined as dominant if more than half of participants (4 or more out of the 8 families) reported it. The “theme frequency” column in table 5.6 notes the frequency and number of participants who mentioned each theme during the family interviews.

Table 5.6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Theme Frequency/Adult Biracial Child &amp; White Mother Dyads’ Quotes in this Chapter</th>
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<td>For Therapy</td>
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Dominant Theme One: Responsibility and Recommendations for Socializing Biracials

The first dominant theme, responsibility and recommendations for socializing Biracials, describes how White mothers and adult Biracial children believe Biracial children should be socialized, based on their personal experiences. Three questions in the interview guide (see Appendix I: Family with White mother and Biracial adult child) asked about parenting a Biracial child. All eight families described this dominant theme in a total of 43 segments (see table 5.6).

Biracial adult child, Brayden described how his father taught him to not always directly address racism:

*When I came back and even just - my dad’s thing was always be careful. You are different, you need to have different set of standards that come behind that and - well one time, I don’t know if you know this, mom, I beat the shit out of this kid for calling me a nigga and this was in - I was in eleventh grade. We didn’t like each other, that was just the reason. That was my last reason to beat him up and then my dad - it got well known because I busted this kid up a little bit, and then dad said to me, he said, “You know, you don’t always have to take that route. You don’t always have to address the race thing. Sometimes you got to let that go.”*

Racial socialization and parenting practices were discussed by White mothers and their adult Biracial children during the family interviews; some adult children said their parents did not prepare
them for experiencing racism out in the community. They described what they needed as children or imagined they would have needed while experiencing racial encounters out in the community. Dee (adult child) said:

*I don’t think there’s anything in particular that can be said except a real talk in terms of understanding that there are going to be ignorant people out there and just trying to not shield anything. If those conversations ever did happen when I was younger, that’s probably where my mom would’ve taken it. She wouldn’t have sugar coated how difficult life was. So I think a real conversation of understanding and explaining.*

Like Dee, Nicole (adult child) said parents should prepare Biracial children for racially motivated encounters out in the community. This suggestion to plan ahead is defined as creative socialization (preparing children for racist encounters in the community), a process often implemented by Black parents to prepare their children. Nicole said it important to understand differences between cultures:

*I almost feel like it has to be kind of a balance of there is no difference; however, unfortunately, there’s people that will make those negative comments and letting them know the reality of what can happen. Because I think that you have to kind of have a secure identity in knowing who you are and I think while it’s important to note that there’s not a difference, I think it’s important to know the unique characteristics of both sides of your culture. So for me, it’s important to know what makes my mom’s culture unique and then what makes my dad’s culture unique and how I have the privilege of having both of those. I think it’s kind of that balance of we’re all people, we all bleed red, but at the same time we all have unique characteristics, unique cultures, and that mixes things up.*

Lynn (adult child) said when she experienced racial encounters as a child she would have wanted her questions to be answered (e.g., why this type of an event occurred), as well as wanted to receive support and reassurance from her parents:

*I agree with maybe hearing it from both sides about why this did happen, but then just making sure--supporting that the child feels supported and being able to open to talk. We didn’t talk about it, but it was because it didn’t happen, but if it did, just being supportive, understanding that the whole side of my family are still here for me and they still love me no matter what.*

Brayden (adult child) talked about the importance of White mothers being honest with their Biracial children. In addition to being honest, Brayden stressed the importance of White mothers being honest with themselves, especially if they are not prepared to handle conversations about race with
their Biracial children. Brayden recommended seeking resources to help educate and prepare White mothers for having these often difficult conversations with their Biracial children at home:

_Honesty is everything. Honesty and love is everything. Just people be open, be honest and if a parent is incapable then they should look to another resource to see about helping - help somebody sort it out._

Moreover, White mothers (Sam, Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Mary and Alicia) described how to support Biracials when they experienced racially motivated encounters out in the community. Some mothers said they would have supported their children, given the opportunity. Alicia (mother) described how she would support her daughter, Ann if she experienced racism by reminding her of their family’s core values. Additionally, Alicia said she would let Ann know was not her fault:

_If she would come home with some kind of issues, I’d handle it how I see fit to her with all those core values. Well, maybe this person’s going through some kind of struggle. It was unacceptable what had happened, however, it’s not anything you have done. Consider it being maybe somebody else’s issue._

Mom (mother) had a different view compared to Alicia. Mom described the importance of not ignoring or dismissing your child, when he/she wants to talk about a racial encounter even if the White mother does not fully understand it because of her own White privilege:

_One of the things I was going to say is the mom has to keep in mind that the experiences that your child is going through is something different that you’ve never had to go through before, so you can’t belittle their feelings and you can’t push aside, you can’t, “Oh just forget it. It’s going to be fine tomorrow,” because it may not be fine tomorrow. Because I haven’t had to deal with it doesn’t mean it’s not an important event._

Thus, some White mothers felt unprepared to have open conversations about race. Mary said having her daughter’s (Lynn) father present when Lynn experienced a racist encounter was helpful. Mary admitted she was not prepared to understand these types of racially motivated encounters as a White mother:

_First of all, I would make sure that her father was present, because I wouldn’t necessarily know--I know she would have her feelings and such, but I wouldn’t necessarily know what it would have been called, what it would have felt like to have been called a derogatory name that I could imagine what it is._
Lin (mother) recommended that White mothers “talk about it” when racially charged events occur to their Biracial children:

I guess just to talk about it, get it out in the open, and just address it for the child to let the parents know so the parents can let them know that there is no difference.

Sam, (mother) made the following recommendations for socializing Biracial children:

Just go with it. Make sure your child is happy and has that connection with the Black side of the family, the White side of the family, and the Hispanic side of the family whatever. Go with it. Make sure that they know and they are comfortable with all facets of their family, their friends, and everyone else. Because there’s always going to be good people, there’s always going to be bad people. Just try and keep your child focused on the good in people.

Charlotte identified several ways White mothers can prepare themselves for racially socializing their Biracial children. Charlotte suggested White mothers become familiar with Black culture and become a part of the Black community so the community can provide support when their children have racial encounters:

I hope White moms can have been somewhat exposed to so many of the Black artists and authors and role models that are not just Caucasian… And I know something else that can be a real challenge… risking yourself … as a parent, to reach out to somebody of color, that might better be able to help talk about the situation, or to get their perspective, or to say, “Hey, this happened to my child. What are your thoughts?”

For Charlotte, being connected to the Black community and to her Black in-laws as well as having an amicable relationship with her child’s father (despite the divorce) helped her raise a healthy Biracial child. She remembered that Geronimo was conceived out of love. Charlotte encouraged other White mothers to focus on what is best for their children:

Yeah, being able to reach out to the other community. I shared that I always felt able to reach out to your father, in spite of differences that we had. And in spite of differences in how to raise a child and discipline a child, there was an effort to remember that the child was created in love. So regardless of our differences, focus on what do you wish and dream for your child? Do you wish that they can go where they want, anywhere they want to go, that doors will open, that they can earn a living by legal means?

In this quote Charlotte recommended that White mothers focus on what is best for their Biracial children. If the needs of Biracial children are not put first, (especially during the childhood and
adolescence), it could lead to problems later on and the need for therapy. In the next section, one subtheme is described: 1) For therapy.

**Subtheme One: For Therapy**

The *for therapy* subtheme describes views about therapy to help interracial families. According to Table 5.6, this subtheme appeared in 15 segments in six out of 8 family interviews (all except Michael & Sam and Nicole & Lin).

Mary (mother) said the stress of being a single mother could lead an interracial family to seek out therapy. She said Biracials in single-parent households may struggle with racially identifying with one race over the other because of the lack of exposure to both races at home. Mary noted:

*I think if there’s single parents, if they come from a single parent household that might be tough for somebody, because they would just see the views of whatever parent they’re with. I think that could be a challenge that somebody might face if they’re living with their White mother or with a Black father, of not being able to identify with both sides.*

Similar to Mary (mother), Geronimo (adult Biracial child) said some Biracials could racially identify with one race over the other which is why it is important to teach children about the racial backgrounds of both parents. Geronimo said:

*..being able to address a family’s needs I think is becoming somewhat more manageable in terms of talking about what those experiences are. And I think challenging the family to look into the family history, or to look into that community’s history, to pull out information that will help them understand a little bit more about their specific identity, so that they’ve got something to work with and understand. If it’s a Biracial kid raised in a predominately White setting, then they’re going to behave more like their White contemporaries, as opposed to a Biracial kid raised in a predominately Black setting. They’re going to behave more like their Black contemporaries. So encouraging and pushing that family to acknowledge to the child, this is the world today. There are things we can do and be concerned about, but if you make good decisions, hopefully life will go well for you. And these are the communities that you can draw into, and find those open spaces where people are encouraging the community being together.*

In contrast, Bonnie and her son, Brayden described other reasons interracial families might need therapy:

**Bonnie:** *I don’t know. Maybe they think there’s prejudice when they not be. What are the kids’ perceptions of things? Do they have a lot of friends? Do they have friends? Are they sticking to the way they see themselves as Black and will have*
all Black friends or White, have all White friends? There’s just - I don’t know. I don’t know what issues. They might have a lot or maybe just issues with growing up and feeling valued and like Brayden said, loved.

Brayden: Yeah, that’s what it is.

Bonnie: Like, “Oh, they didn’t pick me for the team because I’m not Black enough,” or, “Because Black kids play ball well.” I don’t know.

In addition to why interracial families may seek out therapy, some families described how best to reach this population. Media campaigns were described as a viable way to raise awareness; Lynn stated:

I think of being aware and making it-- making it aware that these support systems exist. I don’t know the best way. I guess maybe through some sort of media or something, but making sure that people know that these exist--that the support services exist.

Charlotte (mother) also talked about using the media to educate interracial families about therapy to help them cope with experiencing racial encounters out in the community. Additionally, Charlotte (mother) said school could help screen and refer Biracials who need therapy:

Media seems to be a huge job. Although now everybody’s watching streamlining, I just think that people still want ways to entertain themselves, but I would like to say through the school, too… -- schools always seem to have the dilemma of funding, or the excuse.

Furthermore, Mom (mother) said professionals could provide psycho-education to White mothers:

I think for you as a professional trying to help a biracial family, I think by encouraging… It’s never too late for a parent to assert themselves as such, and I think the older the child is the more difficult it will be, but it’s never too late to do that.

**Dominant Theme Two: Closeness of Mother – Child Relationship**

The second dominant theme, *closeness of mother – child relationship*, describes the quality of the mother-adult Biracial child relationship. Three questions in the interview guide (see Appendix I Family with White mother and Biracial adult child) asked about the quality of the relationship between White mothers and their adult children. Seven out of eight families (all participants except Nicole & Lin) reported having a close relationship in a total of 26 segments (see table 5.6).
Sam and her son, Michael described their relationship as close, confirming the closeness described during their individual interviews:

*Michael:* We spend a lot of time together.

*Sam:* We’ve always spent a lot of time together due to the nature of work and everything. We get along well together... We are close. As I said, he was my rock for a while there.

Similarly, Mary and her daughter Lynn both confirmed their close relationship, which was also described during their individual interviews:

*Mary:* Like I said I before, we’re close. We live close to each other, so we spend holidays and I’m lucky to be there for those special times, but then also on a daily basis, or regular basis, not daily basis, we’re just a phone call away or whenever Lynn needs something she knows that I’m here for her 24/7. And we’re really blessed. We’re really open in our conversations. I think and the older we get we get we realize what we’ve meant to each other. And I still think there’s that boundary of being a mother and a daughter and understanding that. We’re friends, but there is also.

*Lynn:* Oh, yeah, she’s still my mother at the same time.

*Mary:* I’m her best friend, but I’m still her mother.

Despite the closeness reported by White mothers and their adult Biracial adult children, many reported they did not have open conversations about race or racism, in particular open conversations initiated by the White mothers. This dominant theme also including one subtheme: 1) Racial Conversations. This subtheme describes whether or not racial conversations took place between mothers and their children.

**Subtheme One: Racial Conversations**

The *racial conversations* subtheme describes parental racial socialization practices reported or not reported by mothers and their adult Biracial children during the family interviews. This subtheme also describes when/if families engaged in racial conversations and what was discussed. According to Table 5.6, this subtheme was mentioned in 13 segments by seven out of eight families (except for Nicole & Lin).

Geronimo (adult Biracial child) reported that conversations with his mother, Charlotte were
very open; they often spoke openly about race:

I’ve always felt that I could turn to my mom, and talk about things, and definitely when you get the controversial issues that are in contemporary news, you know, “Black Lives Matter,” and what we’re seeing in terms of the potential for police discrimination, and how widespread the justice system’s corruption and abuse can be stated to be. Those are the types of conversations we can have with a greater ease than you might be able to have with others.

Different from Geronimo (adult biracial child), Mom (White mother) reported that her family tended to make jokes to diffuse the tension whenever conversations about race took place at home:

…it allows us to joke about things that a typical white family can’t joke about or a typical Black family can’t joke about because it’s racist or it’s this or that. I’ve had people pull, “It’s because I’m Black,” and I’m like, “Yeah so are my three kids, so try again.” To us we were just us. I wasn’t White, they weren’t Black. It was just mom and kids loving everybody.

Within this subtheme, one category emerged: 1) Discussions of Differences in Racial Privileges which appeared five times among four out of the eight families (Lynn & Mary, Brayden & Bonnie, Dee & Nana and Ann & Alicia). Nana (mother) and her son, Dee (adult child) said they may have discussed racial differences between them, however, Nana could not describe any specific racial conversations but was confident they did have them at home. Dee was certain that he and his mother talked about race and described what life may have been like for his mother while she dated his father.

Dee felt his mother was “more welcomed” by the Black community versus her White community and could have lost privileges with her White community because she was romantically involved with a Black man:

* Nana: We might have. Have we Dee?

* Dee: Yeah, we have.

* Nana: But I can’t really pinpoint what conversation, but we probably have.

* Dee: You know it’s more difficult just day-to-day dealing with some issues that I’ve dealt with vs. some issues growing up. Even then I feel like she kind of – I mean dating and marrying a Black man in the 1970s wasn’t necessarily the easiest thing to do socially either. So she was right there in the thick of it, with just about everybody else kind of involving herself with a Black man. I look at it as, as soon as my mom decided she was going to marry and have children with a Black man I think she was probably going to be more welcomed by the Black community and then
probably, to some degree looked down at by the White community. Do you know what I mean? Do you see what I’m getting at? ..She was in when she married my dad or had children with my dad.

Interviewer: So it sounds like she was in with the Black community? But then would it be fair to say she was kind of out with the White community?

Dee: Yes, it would be fair to say that, yeah. I think while she might not be directly discriminated against or not discriminated against, her kids stood the chance of being discriminated against and I think that was kind of her stake at that point, when she made the decision to have children. So when you ask me if we’ve ever sat and talked about privilege, there was privilege maybe for my mom up until she decided to marry and have children with my dad. After that the privilege was gone because one way or the other she was going to feel it, whether it was the fact that she was married to a Black man or her kids were mixed.

Nana: But I don’t really feel like I’ve lost privileges. I mean yeah I was very welcomed into the Black community, especially with my ex-husband’s family. I never felt any discrimination. I lost privileges with my own immediate family, but I never in the community, especially up here where we live now, ever felt discriminated by the White community.

Nana described race-driven discord between family members when she decided to become romantically involved with a Black man. Yet, White mothers of Biracial children never lost their White privilege, as they are still recognized as Whites in society. Brayden (adult Biracial child) talked about the advantages of White privilege when describing racial differences between he and his mother, Bonnie. Brayden said they never talked about racial privileges and how they were different for each of them. Yet, during the family interview, Brayden openly talked about having different experiences and opportunities because of his race:

Brayden: No, I never talked about that. I mean, I don’t know. I assume she has the privileges of a White woman which are more than I’ve ever had, you know what I mean? There might be something that she understands for herself as that’s what it is but it’s not the same for me. I think you understand that; it’s never been the same for me. As I said, for you, I was never given anything and I was never - it was always I had to jump through a different set of hoops and everything changed at every level for me. Whether the reasons was the side or the other, but it just always seemed like that.

Alicia and her daughter, Ann described specific physical attributes attributed to their race. Alicia (mom) adores Ann’s “butt” – stating that Ann’s backside represents what is valued in Black
culture regarding feminine beauty, because it is voluptuous. Whereas, Ann described their differences
in hair texture, desiring the fine, easy to manage hair that her White mother, Alicia has:

Ann:        I don’t know.
Alicia:     I wish I had her butt. She’s got a butt. I don’t know what…
Ann:        Yeah, I’m not sure.
Alicia:     Strange because I really don’t look at them different from me… Well yeah, I like that butt and I attribute that to her Black side just because you all are blessed with some nice butts but I don’t know.
Interviewer: So what conversations have you two ever had about these racial privileges or differences?
Alicia:     Nothing besides the butt. She’ll tell me I have no butt. You know what I mean?
Interviewer: Oh, so you guys are…
Alicia:     Yeah, it goes back to their butt. No. Wait, you have said something.
Ann:        Your hair.
Alicia:     Maybe.
Ann:        Probably.
Interviewer: What is it about mom’s hair?
Ann:        I don’t know, just easy to style and stuff like that.
Interviewer: So does that mean yours is harder to style?
Ann:        Yeah, I guess. It takes more work to do it. It’s more expensive. I don’t know. It seems like everything is more expensive to do.
Alicia:     It’s interesting though because everybody loves her hair when it’s curly. She may not favor it and she’s gotten a little more used to wearing it but there was a time when she would totally not wear her hair curly. If she was going out anywhere that she thought she might be seen, she would not go curly. Last year…
Ann:        Yeah, now I really don’t care.
Alicia:     Priorities, I think, have just shifted a little bit where it’s I got to get to work and I don’t have time to do my hair because I’ve just done my homework or…
Interviewer: Did you know why she wanted to stop wearing it curly during that time? Did you ask her?

Alicia: No, I didn’t. I just figured she - because I have curly hair naturally too. Obviously not like I can - I can sleep on mine, wake up and refresh it. Hers will probably have to be wetted in order for it to be wearable curly but yeah, I didn’t really ask her why. I just figured she didn’t favor the curls.

Interviewer: Was there a reason why you stopped wearing it curly?

Ann: I don’t know. I just didn’t like it curly. I don’t know how to explain it. It was…

Interviewer: Uneven?

Ann: That and it’s like having to wet it and then brush it and then wash it, and then you’re washing it too much, then you need to stop washing it. I don’t know. Whether it’s curly or straight, it still takes a lot of time to do.

Dominant Theme Three: Colorism

The third dominant theme, colorism, describes how families handled discrimination and prejudice due to skin color and race. This theme highlights colorism regarding the preference for White/lighter skin tones versus darker skin complexions. The acknowledgment of race or lack thereof also emerged in this theme. Three questions in the interview guide (see Appendix I Family with White mother and Biracial adult child) asked about the relationship between the mother and child. All eight Biracial adult child and White mother dyads mentioned this theme in a total of 26 segments (see table 5.6). This dominant theme includes the following three subthemes: 1) Racial judgments – Whites not knowing what to do about race, 2) Skin color, and 3) Colorblindness.

Subtheme One: Racial Judgments

The racial judgments – Whites not knowing what to do about race subtheme describes views about race in the U.S. Some participants talked about how Whites tend to not know what to do or how to talk about race. According to Table 5.6, this subtheme was mentioned six times by five out of the
eight families (except Michael & Sam, Nicole & Lin and Dee & Nana). Mom (White mother) described the difficulty a child could have self-identifying in a world that is racially driven:

Nowadays – I think this is what I already said. I think a child trying to self-identify in a world where everyone is so heavy on color now. Like I said, everyone is solid before, but right now with what’s going on in the world today and how much with Black Lives Matter vs. All Lives Matter and how people are – I’ve seen memes [image postings with brief captions that are copied and spread rapidly by Internet users on social media websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest etc.] of White people want to remember Pearl Harbor and 9-11 and all these things but want you to dismiss slavery. All of these kinds of racially motivated things that are getting put in front of our children every day, hundreds of times a day, especially if they are social networking, it’s in their faces all of the time. That’s going to cause a lot of questions. Just the things that we see now like the dress for example, the clothing. Pull your damn pants up; you don’t have walk around with your pants down around your butt. But they’re using that as their identity as opposed to… Like they’re using that to say, “Hey, I’m this,” when in actuality, you’re just like we are, you just are looking for your… My kids will tell you I’m old. At 56 I’m old, but I see things differently today than I did 20 years ago.

Charlotte (mother) said some Whites do not support oppressing another race and actively fight for equality. Charlotte also said some Whites do not know what to do or what to say when witnessing racially driven encounters:

I was thinking, I think it’s Tim Wise who has written White Like Me, and one of the things he said…. is to also start recognizing …some of the more famous people, for example the name I couldn’t come up with yesterday when I was talking to you, Sarah Grimke. Some of the Quakers, some of the people, White people, who embraced that life should not be one race suppressing another race, and stood up and did something about making this world better. Add the list to them too, I was thinking there were certain White people that also went on the march. It’s just that sometimes, as a White person, you don’t really know, what should I do? You understand, by your faith, by as a person, how you might feel if someone did something personal towards you, but how do you go about changing that? So it’s nice to reflect on other White people have done something, and maybe you can embrace some of that.

Despite Alicia (mother) and her daughter, Ann saying they do not have a close relationship, they seemed to connect on a deeper level during the family interview. Alicia was not sure how she could have racially socialized Ann, because she does not feel comfortable discussing race unless Ann first brings it up. During the family interview, Alicia (mom) actually took a risk and asked if there was something she could have done differently to racially socialize her:

Alicia: Can I ask a question based on that… to educate me from Ann’s perspective? Because I have said that I - we didn’t really discuss race.
It was never really a forefront issue until it was and then we would discuss it. What would you have liked me to do differently? I don’t know how I could have - like I told…

Ann: I don’t think anything really because it’s not going to change the way people think.

Alicia: Yeah, you’re right. I mean it could.

Racial privileges and differences between White mothers and their Biracial children were not often talked about at home especially conversations initiated by White mothers. Consequently Biracials talked about not being prepared for racial encounters in society. Yet, Brayden (adult child) talked about not stereotyping people based on race as there are good people across races.

Brayden said:

In my particular life I’ve been blessed knowing that there are a lot of good White people. Racism that exists should not be placed on everyone, all of the White people that burden. But there’s particularly a lot of racist White people, whether they know it or not, and that’s a given. That doesn’t cloud my view of anything. Yeah, there’s a lot of jerk-off Black people too. Same thing but racism is a different thing. It’s a totally different capacity. Anger and frustration I can understand coming from Black people more than White people, and not all White people but just enough. I just think that people need to know. There’s good people in every race, it’s not stereotypical. Stereotypes are useful. They are there for a reason, you just can’t blanket everything.

Subtheme Two: Skin Color

The skin color subtheme describes how family members view skin color and outsiders’ negative views of skin color. Noteworthy, White mother participants, Sam and Alicia reported that skin color is not an issue. According to Table 5.6, this subtheme was mentioned in eight segments by three out of eight families (Michael & Sam, Geronimo & Charlotte and Ann & Alicia). Although less than half reported this theme, it was reported here because it seems salient. Alicia and Ann describe how Alicia’s family’s racial identity and views of skin color impacted interactions with their extended family, friends and societal members:

Alicia: It did bring up a thought for me. When we’re out, I look like the oddball.
Ann: Because she’s the only fully White one. Especially when my step dad’s kids are here because I think - are they fully Black?

Alicia: No, they’re interracial too but they’re darker.

Ann: They’re a little bit darker than us so it’s looks like there are three different sets of people…

Alicia: Yeah, and I’m the, of course, lily White. It’s like, “Where’d they pick her up?” So yeah, I feel like the odd ball sometimes.

Interviewer: How do you handle that? Does that affect the way you interact at all?

Alicia: No. Maybe, I don’t know, I’m just strange in that way. I don’t know. I really don’t care. I truly don’t. If somebody looks at us and like, “Oh, what’s - I feel like the apple and I’m fine with it, like, “Yeah, this is my squad. These are my people.” There was a time that I was dating a White man and I know that Ann had…

Ann: We felt weird.

Alicia: Yeah.

Ann: Just because…

Alicia: They were the darker of the group.

Interviewer: Who is “we”?

Ann: Me and my sister. Well I don’t know about my brother but…

Interviewer: Okay. Why did you feel that way?

Ann: I don’t know. It looked like we were adopted or something, I don’t know.

Alicia: She said it looked like they were adopted. She did say that. She absolutely did.

Biracial adult child, Geronimo discussed skin color while noting the “little Black doll and a little White doll” experiment:

Where they’re just soaking in this information, and you show them a little Black doll and a little White doll, and they say, “Which one is the good one?” And almost universally it’s going to the lighter shades, or the White doll, or the White princess, the White prince, and those are the stories that seem to, in American culture, predominate, especially for images of what good is, or should be. …these kids are growing up with that to be right is to be White, to be better is to be White, and how much that precipitates then throughout our society. And so I think with regards to my girls, we try to actively show them more images that look like them, more stories
that have little girls in it that look like them, or little boys in them that look like them, and sort of the whole spectrum of shades, of color.

Although Geronimo focused on skin color and negative messages from society, White mother participant, Sam said skin color is not important to her:

It wasn’t important to me, like race. Just like it isn’t now. Like I said before, it’s who the person is and not the color of their skin.

Likewise, Alicia (mother) believes that race and skin color is not an issue:

Again, race, to me, is not an issue.

Sam’s and Alicia’s lack of acknowledgement of skin color suggests colorblindness. The next theme describes avoiding or not seeing skin color and/or race.

**Subtheme Three: Colorblindness**

The colorblindness subtheme describes not seeing or avoiding seeing race or skin color.

According to Table 5.6, this subtheme appeared in 12 segments among six out of the eight families (except KC & Mom and Brayden & Bonnie).

Sam (mother) said she was taught to not see color as a child:

There are going to be bad people in the world; Whites that are bad, Blacks that are bad, Hispanics that are bad but there are a lot of good people in the world that are all of the above. You can’t let one instance color your whole perspective of that race whether it’s White, Black, or Hispanic. As I said, when I was growing up, it was around but it wasn’t as blatant as it is nowadays. Because when I was growing up, “Hey, let’s play football,” you know. It didn’t matter what color you were. We went out and we played football. It’s just the way it was. We didn’t see the color, but we weren’t taught to see the color.

Similar to Sam not seeing skin color, Lin (mother) said:

I guess just to talk about it, get it out in the open, and just address it for the child to let the parents know so the parents can let them know that there is no difference.

Moreover, Mary (mother) believes she and Lynn (Biracial daughter) are equal which Lynn agreed with during their family interview:

Mary: I’m pretty sure we’re pretty much equal. I feel very equal and I think Lynn does too, don’t you?

Lynn: Uh-huh, yes.
Additionally, Nana (mother), reported giving her Biracial son, Dee “all the love and support” he needed and encouraging him to discuss any racial encounters with her. Nana said she told Dee “not to worry about it” and told him he was “more special than they are”. Nana said she focused more on providing love and support at home versus initiating open conversations about race with her son:

You know like I said earlier, I just tried to give me kids all the love and support that they need. I don’t what I would say if he came home. I’d probably tell him not to worry about it and he’s more special than they are, but I don’t really know. I don’t know if they haven’t experienced a lot of that because their father wasn’t around so we didn’t have that like Black/White kind of person in the house where they’d come home and his father might’ve told him something totally different than what I would say to him. So I don’t know what kind of advice except tell your kids you love them. That’s pretty much my big things.

**Dominant Theme Four: How the Interracial – Biracial Family Functions**

The fourth dominant theme, *How the interracial – Biracial family functions*, describes how family members interact with each other, and with extended family and community members.

Participants described how they racially defined their immediate family, when, and how they discussed race. Most said they felt accepted by their families. There were five questions in the interview guide (see Appendix I Family with White mother and Biracial adult child) that asked about how the interracial – Biracial family functions. All eight families described this theme in a total of 35 segments (see table 5.6). This dominant theme includes the following three subthemes: 1) Feeling accepted, 2) How the family is racially defined, and, 3) How the family talks about race.

**Subtheme One: Feeling Accepted**

The *feeling accepted* subtheme describes feeling accepted by relatives and members of the community. According to Table 5.6, this subtheme appeared in 14 segments among four out of eight families (Nicole & Lin, KC & Mom, Geronimo & Charlotte and Dee & Nana).

Charlotte (mother) described feeling accepted by her White family when she partnered with Geronimo’s father:

So being in the Midwest, up north, you have, well, hopefully more people that aren’t intolerant, in the time period of somebody dating across the color lines. For me, it’s one of those things, I’m thinking back to it now, knowing that sort of the late ‘60s is sort of the height of the Civil
Rights Movement, and the ‘70s trailing just there after, and knowing I was born in the late ‘70s, it’s like, oh, I feel like my family was somewhat on the forefront in some respects. So, yeah, for me, I’ve had very good aspects, and I don’t think I’ve had as much of the discrimination or negative aspects that others, that you may hear of, where a family has chosen not to support the mother or the father because of who they dated, and who they had a child with. And I’m thankful that that sort of story is not my story.

Unfortunately, not all mothers were accepted by their families of origin. Mother, Nana and her son, Dee spoke of feeling “pre-judged” and uncertain if the reason was race related:

Dee: Family wise, I think that we might have been pre-judged, but not necessarily based on race. With my mom’s family I’d say we could’ve been, not judged but looked at like kind of our destiny was already written for us in terms of where we would end up in life. I think that again, that might be a double-edge between the fact that my mom was raising two Biracial kids by herself… Then I think on my mom’s side, we were again pre-judged to some degree on where we would end up and it wasn’t until we started growing up and doing the right things that it was kind of like, “Okay, we were kind of wrong maybe.” Not necessarily wrong, but maybe like we can take a deep breath and we don’t have to worry about them anymore.

Nana: I agree with Dee, I think they probably did think that. But I don’t know if they pre-judged or they looked at me as being too lenient and letting them get away with murder and that they were going down the wrong path. I don’t know if it was so much of them being mixed or that I wasn’t a strict enough mother. I don’t know, but they turned out perfect. They’re very successful and it’s funny, but they did judge me more so with the raised I raised Dee and Michelle just because I was a single mother and probably being too lenient. Yeah the Black issue might have come up with them or they thought that, but it could be 50/50. I’m not really sure.

Mother, Mom talked about racial tension she recalled experiencing from her brother who she said, “puts on the appearance of acceptance of my children”. Mom shared being “loved no matter what” by her brother, but described a racial encounter experienced by her brother’s friend:

My dad’s side of the family though, I mean my youngest brother who was adopted himself, just recently as in the last couple of years puts on the appearance of acceptance of my children. Like we went to my grandmother’s funeral and my father was insistent that we all sit at the table at the after meal. It was my brother and his wife, my other brother and his wife, my sister and her husband and us. We were sitting at another table and my father came and made us sit here and my brother made his wife get up and move away from the table. His wife one time said something to the kids when they were doing pictures about, “We really need to start seeing each other more often.” and one of my kids said to her, “Have you talked to your husband about that because I’m thinking he’s not going to want that.”… It’s funny because my family is split on my dad’s side. I have a brother, he loves us no matter what. He lives down South where nigger is an accepted word. The first time my youngest and I went there, everybody who was invited to the party was under strict instructions, “You are not allowed to say that word for any reason.” Unfortunately, the one women who got hot and heavy into conversation and it just kind of flowed and they were gone. Like he put them out of their home right away.
During the family interviews, mother participants, Lin and Mom reported being accepted by their child’s Black friends. KC (Biracial adult child), Mom’s daughter, said her friends often confided in her mother because their parents dismissed them:

> I saw so many of my friends who came to my mom for guidance because their own parents would dismiss them.

Moreover, Lin (mother) and Nicole (her adult child) described feeling accepted by Nicole’s friends/peers:

> Lin: On holidays, Nicole’s friend, a lot of them who are Black, come over. A lot of Nicole’s friends also call me mommy, so I’m the mommy of many.

> Nicole: I know that my friends would say, “Oh my mom’s Black. She’s basically Black.”…that was kind of like their way of saying she was accepted, I guess.

In addition to feeling accepted by Nicole’s friends, Lin talked about being labeled as a “sista” (implying she is a Black woman despite being White) by a member of the community. Lin reported being accepted in the Black community, despite being a White woman:

> One time and this guy called me – he said I was Black or something and I said, “I’m finally Black.” Oh he called me, “Sista.”

Dee (Biracial adult child), also felt he and his family were accepted by the Black community and being embraced with “open arms:

> So I say that because again, in regards to how outsiders looked at us, I feel like the community always welcomed us with open arms. We were the family that everybody wanted to be around and hangout with.

Being accepted or not accepted by family, friends and the community affects how Biracial families define and view themselves. The next subtheme describes how and why participants racially defined their family.

**Subtheme Two: How the Family is Racially Defined**

The *how the family is racially defined* subtheme describes what it means to be an interracial or Biracial family. According to Table 5.6, six out of the eight families (except KC & Mom and Brayden & Bonnie) mentioned this subtheme in nine segments. Family dyads, Sam and Michael, Lin and
Nicole, Nana and Dee and Alicia and Ann reported they consider themselves an interracial/Biracial family. Mother Sam and her son, Michael said being a Biracial family does not matter much and does not make any difference:

*Michael:* I don’t really think it means too much.

*Sam:* It really doesn’t make a difference.

*Michael:* It hasn’t changed our perception of anything.

Similarly, mother Lin and her daughter Nicole said being an interracial/Biracial family does not “come into play” and is not openly discussed at home. Lin and Nicole said, “family is family”:

*Lin:* Well, family is family to me. That’s how I feel about it, so the Biracial part doesn’t really come into play, that’s kind of how I feel.

*Nicole:* I think I’d have to agree. I think that we all just spend time together. Like I said, it was a long time before I realized, “Oh these family members are White and these ones are Black,” because it’s not something that would come up for us. I think in our family, being an interracial family, is almost like any other family. It’s not something that we talk about much or I feel gets in the way of anything. I think we spend time together like any other family would.

Mother Alicia said she does not view her family “as anything else than what it is”:

*I don’t know. Maybe it’s just I don’t see our family as anything other than what it is. Maybe I should… To me, it’s just our family.*

Family dyads, Charlotte (mom) & Geronimo and Mary (mom) & Lynn said interracial families are “the best of both worlds”. Mary (mother) reported she did not talk about race at home with her child, yet when defining her family she reported feeling “very blessed” that her family is Biracial – interracial:

*Mary:* I feel very blessed that it’s Biracial or interracial. I’ve got the best of both worlds.

Similar to Mary, Charlotte (mother) said being a Biracial/interracial family brings “the best of both worlds”. Charlotte and her son, Geronimo reported having open conversations about race during their individual interviews and during the family interview described what it means to be Biracial/interracial:
Charlotte: It means that we embrace more than one culture, I guess, to start out. Really, brings the best of both worlds.

Geronimo: Yeah, I would agree, in that we’ve had very good experiences, and our family’s been very accepting of, I guess, that aspect.

Charlotte (mother) and her son, Geronimo was one of the few families who reported openly talking about race at home. The next subtheme describes how families talk or do not talk about race at home.

**Subtheme Three: How the Family Talks About Race**

The how the family talks about race subtheme describes whether and how families discuss race at home. This subtheme appeared 14 times among six out of eight Biracial families (except: Nicole & Lin and Dee & Nana). Biracial adult child participant, KC said her family often talked about race using jokes:

> We joked about it, we laughed about it because everyone else, like I said, sees us that way. But we’ve always just been a family… I think we’re very desensitized to a lot of the jokes because they’ve been around for so long and I don’t realize it until someone new comes around and like, “Oh right, this is just my mom and this is my family,” and we’re totally joking.

Alicia (mother) and her daughter, Ann also use jokes to talk about race at home:

> Alicia: Like I said, maybe she can answer this better. She can think of an instance or maybe something that sticks out because like I said, to me, I didn’t know what was happening unless, again, they bring it home. In the later years, they chuckled about it like, “You should have heard this joke today.”

> Interviewer: Who is “they”?

> Alicia: Just the girls.

> Ann: Yeah, just people at school.

Additionally, Alicia (mom) does not initiate conversations about race at home; Ann raises the topic first. Family dyads Sam & Michael, Mary & Lynn and Bonnie & Brayden reported also reported not openly talking about race. Sam (mother) and her son Michael reporting not having open conversations about race at home. Like Alicia (mom) and Ann, Sam (mom) felt that Michael would
ask about race, if he needed to talk about it:

Michael: We never really talked about it.

Sam: We didn’t talk about it a whole lot because it didn’t come up. If he would’ve questioned something, we would’ve sat down and talked about it with him.

Likewise, Mary (mother) and her daughter Lynn did not talk about race at home:

Lynn: I don’t think that we really ever have any racial conversations. It never really comes up as kind of typical that I know of, or that I remember too much.

Mary: We never really discuss it, with Lynn and I, we’ve never really discussed racial things.

Additionally, Bonnie and son Brayden reported that race was only discussed when a child (e.g., Brayden’s sister) first brought it up. They also said Brayden’s father told Brayden and his brothers to not bring race concerns to their mother and instead talk to him about it:

Brayden: I don’t know, Mom. Do you talk about race with…

Bonnie: No.

Brayden: Probably nobody but me.

Bonnie: No, I said more than your sister. Your sister used to bring things to me.

Brayden: Oh my sister, you used to talk with sister?

Bonnie: Yeah, but you guys didn’t.

Brayden: I wasn’t around when my sister was - if she was at the age to voice things. That was more when I was away at school.

Bonnie: Oh yeah, you were. She used to bring home tales from St. Joes and when somebody told her I wasn’t her mother, she came home crying.

Brayden: Oh whoa! Well she has a different set. I didn’t even know that. That’s something that I don’t even know.

Bonnie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Sounds like you both are learning new things.

Brayden: Yeah. That’s why I always open this kind of stuff up, mom. It’s just like we could figure it…

Bonnie: Your sister used to talk to me. You guys kind of didn’t.

Brayden: Well, we were boys. We wouldn’t say shit.
Bonnie: Your dad used to tell you don’t upset you mother.
Brayden: Yeah.

Member Checking

After the individual and family interviews were analyzed using content analysis, a summary of themes that emerged in both the individual and family interviews were emailed to each participant for member checking. Each Biracial adult child received a draft with the dominant themes that emerged during the Biracial adult children interviews and the family interviews. The White mother participants received the dominant themes that emerged during their individual interviews and the family interviews. The first email was sent out on March 1, 2016 to the following participants who provided email addresses: one (Michael & Sam), four (Geronimo & Charlotte), five (Lynn & Mary) and seven (Dee & Nana). The researcher sent the document in the postal mail to the mother, Lin of dyad two’s home address since Lin did not have an email address. Biracial adult child, Nicole from dyad two was emailed the document. The researcher emailed the document to mother, Alicia and reached out to Biracial adult child, Ann from dyad eight. The researcher attempted to contact Biracial adult child, KC and mother, Mom from dyad three via the telephone to follow up; the researcher did not receive any return calls. Thus, participants from dyad three were not able to be reached. Dyad six, Biracial adult child Brayden and mother Bonnie were sent emails on March 3rd 2016.

In the email, the researcher asked participants: 1) if the findings from the individual and family interviews captured their experiences, 2) if there was anything missing or inaccurate, and 3) if there was anything that surprised them. Two Biracial adult children participants (Geronimo and Dee) and three White mothers (Sam, Lin and Charlotte) responded to the member checking. Biracial adult child Geronimo stated that, “...quickly scanning the themes look appropriate.” Similarly, Biracial adult child Dee reported that, “At first glance, this look amazing.” Moreover, White mother participant, Charlotte’s said, “I would agree with the results... find your research very interesting.” Another mother volunteer, Sam noted, “I think you touched upon most experiences. As I told you most
experiences I encountered were of the positive nature!” Unlike other participants, Lin followed up with her feedback by calling the researchers. Lin’s telephone voicemail message stated, “I agree with the themes... thank you for including me, this is very interesting.”
CHAPTER SIX – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological dissertation study was to retrospectively examine the racial identity and parental racial socialization experiences of Biracially identified male and female adults (ages 18 to 45 years old) and their White mothers. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight White mother-adult Biracial child dyads (8 adult Biracial children interviews; 8 White mother interviews; 8 family interviews). Four adult Biracial children were male and four were female; half reported growing up in two-parent homes and the other half grew up in single-mother homes. Ages ranged from 18 to 42 years old and the mean age was 30; one was 18; three were in their 20’s, three in their 30’s, and one in his 40’s when interviews were conducted. Most (n=6) reported growing up on the East coast; the remaining two grew up in the Midwest. Most reported growing up in predominantly White neighborhoods (n=6); two grew up in Black communities and in racially diverse schools. The White mothers’ ages ranged from 39 to 65; currently all mothers are not partnered with their children’s fathers.

Researchers have prospectively explored racial identity among children and Biracial youth (Funderburg, 1994; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Khanna, 2013; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Kilson, 2001; Korgen, 1998; Marbury, 2006; McClurg, 2004; McKinney, 2014; Moss & Davis, 2008; Rockquemore, 1998; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Williams, 2009; Williams, 2013). Scholars have also examined White mothers’ experiences raising Black/White Biracial children (Banks, 2009; Cushing, 2008; Lazarre, 1996; Kilson & Ladd, 2009; McKinney, 2015; O’Donoghue, 2004; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Few researchers have retrospectively explored how White mothers shape the racial identity development of their Biracial offspring, in particular the role of parental racial socialization (Stone, 2009) which this dissertation study was designed to examine. Furthermore, this study filled a gap by exploring how White mothers helped their Biracial children navigate racial encounters out in the community, in particular parental racial socialization practices.
The Biracial Racial Identity Development model (Poston, 1990), Parental Racial Socialization (Hughes and Johnson, 2001), Continuum of Biracial Racial Identity (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005) and Transcendental Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) were the two theories and one framework used to examine the experiences of a convenience sample of eight Biracial adult child-White mother dyads who volunteered for this phenomenological qualitative dissertation study.

The following seven dominant themes emerged after using thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to code the eight adult child interviews: 1) Influence of White Mother on Racial Identity, 2) Colorism, 3) Racial Landscape of Biracials, 4) Views on Race, 5) Preference/Favoring Whiteness – Physical Attributes, 6) How Biracial children Deal with racism and, 7) Acceptance. The following four dominant themes emerged after using content analysis to code the eight White mother interviews: 1) What Race is Your Child?, 2) Colorism, 3) Cultural Collision and, 4) Parenting a Biracial Child. The following four main themes emerged after using content analysis to code the eight family interviews: 1) Responsibility and Recommendations for Socializing Biracials, 2) Closeness of Mother-Child Relationship, 3) Colorism and, 4) How the Interracial Family Functions.

A comparison of themes provided the structure for this discussion chapter. Additionally, in each section, findings are compared and contrasted to prior studies and considered using the Biracial Racial Identity Development model (Poston, 1990), Parental Racial Socialization (Hughes and Johnson, 2001) and the Continuum of Biracial Racial Identity framework (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005). Before describing the main study findings, first a summary of the two theories and one framework along with implications for Biracial families are summarized. Then, findings that emerged for the following groups of participants are compared and contrasted: 1) Biracial adult children and White mothers, and 2) individual and family interviews. Finally, how the eight families described Biracial identity development, parental racial socialization practices, and recommendations for other families raising Biracial children are summarized. Following a discussion of the findings, contributions to CFT research, clinical implications, limitations, recommendations for future research,
final personal reflections, and conclusions are presented. First, findings are considered using the Biracial Racial Identity Development model (Poston, 1990), Parental Racial Socialization (Hughes and Johnson, 2001) and the Continuum of Biracial Racial Identity framework (Rockquemore and Brunsma, 2002).

**Biracial Racial Identity Development**

The Biracial Racial Identity Development model was developed by Poston (1990) to explore the process of racial identity development among Biracial individuals (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Poston, 1990; Williams, 2009). This model includes the following five sequential stages: 1) personal identity, 2) choice of group categories, 3) enmeshment/denial, 4) appreciation, and 5) integration (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Poston, 1990; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). The first stage, *personal identity* is the starting point for all Biracials; it describes when there is a lack of awareness of one’s Biracial identity. This stage tends to end in early childhood when Biracial children/youth interact more often with peers because they tend to have more racial encounters out in the community. At the conclusion of this stage Biracials begin to realize they are genetically made up of two races.

In this dissertation study, most (n=6) Biracial adult children (all except Lynn and Ann) could recall a specific event or racial encounter when they first became aware of their racial identities. Lynn and Ann reported always knowing about their Biracial identity. Michael, Nicole, KC and Brayden, described first learning about their Biracial identity after experiencing racial encounters with classmates at school. Geronimo and Dee experienced their first racist encounters in the community with peers. Nicole, KC and Brayden reported experiencing a racial encounter in elementary school, and Michael shared his occurred in early adolescence. Geronimo was seven years old when he first experienced a racial barrier while participating in little league baseball practice in the community. Dee was 12 years old when he experienced a racial incident while attending a summer camp.
Today Biracials still tend to be viewed as Black in U.S society because of the historical one-drop rule (Pinderhughes, 1995; Rockquemore, 1998; Williams, 2013). For example, adult children, KC and Brayden racially identified as Black. Brayden reported he identifies as Black to avoid explaining his Biracial identity to outsiders and KC said she identifies as Black because outsiders racially categorize her as Black. Thus, KC and Brayden racially identifying as Black was described as a way to avoid intrusive questions from outsiders. KC and Brayden’s decision to racially identify as Black illustrates societal pressure to choose a racial identity that outsiders can more easily identify based on physical appearance (skin color and phenotype), which is described in stage two of Poston’s model, choice of group categories (Pinderhughes, 1995; Poston, 1990). Both KC and Brayden did not disclose any feelings of guilt or disloyalty because they racially identify as Black versus Biracial. Yet, Brayden did recall a time when he, “hated White people” (excluding his White mother), and felt more connected to the Black community, the third stage of Poston’s model, enmeshment/denial (Moss & Davis, 2008; Pinderhughes, 1995; Poston, 1990).

Most Biracial adult children reported appreciating and valuing being Biracial. Collectively, they described being content with: 1) being part of two cultures, 2) both traditions, styles and personalities, 3) adaptability and blending in with other races of color, 4) having unique physical attributes; and 5) embracing social justice. Poston’s fourth stage, appreciation (Poston, 1990) was evident when Biracial adult children described gaining knowledge about their race and appreciating it. Not only did most seem to embrace being Biracial but they also reported having peers of various races. All participants reported having friends and acquaintances that reflect diverse races and associating with friends who racially and phenotypically look like them. This stage of appreciation tends to lead to a sense of “wholeness” which is the final stage described by Poston, integration (McDowell et al., 2005; Poston, 1990).
Continuum of Biracial Racial Identity

Since Poston’s model (1990) does not describe growth beyond childhood, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) developed the Continuum of Biracial Racial Identity (COBI) model to consider how Biracials transition into adulthood. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) suggested Biracials will choose among various descriptions when racially identifying themselves in a society where they are often viewed by outsiders as Black. As noted earlier, Biracial adult participant KC racially identified herself as Black because of societal pressure to identify as one race, either Black or White:

'It’s just to me how everyone else views me. I just feel like when you’re filling out paperwork or documenting anything, they always want to classify you that way. From a really young age it was either you were Black or you were White. There was no in-between, so for me, that’s literally all it is. Biracial was always something that was politically correct later on.'

According to Rockquemore’s (1998) research there are four types of identities Biracials tend to identify with: 1) border, 2) protean, 3) transcendent, and 4) traditional identity. Six out of eight Biracial adult children participants ($N = 6, 75\%$) (Michael, Nicole, Geronimo, Lynn, Dee and Alicia) self-identified as Biracial, or border identities. No one reported moving freely between social groups or altering how they identify between Black, White, and/or Biracial, which is a protean identity. Additionally, no one reported having transcendent identities (having no racial identity). KC and Brayden ($N = 2, 25\%$) did report having traditional identities, racially identifying as Black. A traditional identity means Biracials acknowledge that their parents have different races, yet self-identify with one race, either Black or White.

These four identities (Rockquemore, 1998) in addition to a second empirical study conducted by Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) led to the development of the Continuum Biracial Identity Model (COBI) (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). The COBI model endorses a blended continuum perspective that includes a singular racial identification of either Black or White, one on each end, to identifying with both races where they blend together to include Biracial in the middle (see Table 6.1 below).
Brayden reported a singular identification because he identified as Black (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). He did not want to explain his race to others which was an “ordeal ...” and reported his race is “assumed” to be Black by outsiders. Additionally, Brayden noted how his skin color is something that cannot be escaped. He is keenly aware of his Blackness when attending meetings at the workplace, and spending time with his White peers. Brayden said his Blackness is often mentioned by his White coworkers (e.g., talking about his hair). Similar to Brayden, KC racially identifies as Black, especially when outsiders ask her racially identify herself.

Despite racially identifying as Black, Brayden and KC seem to move fluidly between Black and White races, depending on the context. Hence, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) suggested a blended racial identity option where Biracials move fluidly between both races, the blended part of the COBI spectrum. The remaining six Biracial adult participants (Michael, Nicole, Geronimo, Lynn, Dee and Ann) racially identified themselves as blended according to the COBI model. Participants, Michael and Alicia seem to move fluidly between both races, yet gravitate towards the White race.

Michael believes he has more of a “White personality”. Whereas, Ann (18 year old) reported her classmates said she acts more White. Ann does not know what it means to be Black because she was not part of a Black community as a child, and currently has no relationship with her father or her
father’s side of the family. Additionally, Ann shared that at work Whites do not always believe she is Biracial and tend to think she is a White person with tan skin. Michael’s and Ann’s experiences illustrate a changeable shift from a blended location to a White racial identity position on the COBI spectrum (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Moreover, Ann reported that both at school and at work, Whites tend to focus on physical features that society associates with the Black culture (e.g., her nose and curly hair), suggesting Ann should identify with the Black race on the COBI spectrum.

Similar to Ann, other adult Biracial participants reported experiences that suggest an ability to move fluidly between the Black and White races, in particular the Black racial location. Nicole racially identifies as Biracial, but tends to identify more with Black culture. Nicole reported she does not fully understanding what it means to be White. Similar to Brayden and KC, Geronimo said he is aware that society tends to see him as a Black man, even though he racially identifies as Biracial. Although Lynn (an elementary school teacher) also racially identifies as Biracial, her students tend to see her as a Black individual, which she believes facilitates good rapport she has with her Black students.

In addition to singular and blended identities, Rockquemore (2002) noted that some Biracials may decide to not self-identify with a societally sanctioned racial category, which is a transcendent racial identity. All Biracial adult participants self-identified with a race; therefore, none of the participants seem to have transcendent racial identities. Although Dee racially identified as Biracial, he does not see race but sees the “human race”. Thus, Biracials can accept and identify with a racial identity assigned to them by society and/or freely choose to self-identify as Biracial, Black, White or none of the societally sanctioned racial identities (Baxley, 2008; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005).

**Parental Racial Socialization**

Scholars have asserted that parental racial socialization is a bi-directional process between parents and their offspring to help prepare children to cope with racial barriers they may encounter in
society (Peters, 1993; Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Stevenson, 1996). In this dissertation study, among the four White mothers who were married, two mothers (Mary and Bonnie) talked to their husbands prior to having children about how they wanted to raise their Biracial children. Yet, despite having open conversations before having children, both Mary and Bonnie did not openly talk to their Biracial children about race. Mary thought if her daughter, Lynn experienced a racial encounter then her Black husband would have guided her through the process. Likewise, Bonnie said she hoped her Black husband would openly talk to their son, Brayden about race. Thus, parental racial socialization practices adopted by Mary and Bonnie were similar to findings reported by O’Donoghue (2004), which concluded White mothers tend to rely on Black fathers to explain racial realities to their Biracial children.

According to Stevenson (1995), the following two domains are essential for the healthy development of racial identity: 1) reactive socialization and 2) creative socialization. Reactive socialization describes when a child experiences a racial encounter that leaves a lasting impression, leading to awareness, and influencing a child’s conceptualization of his/her racial identity (Chavez & French, 2007; Marbury, 2011; Stevenson, 1995). Seven out of eight Biracial adults (except Lynn) could remember racial encounters that occurred outside of their homes during childhood, or reactive socialization. Lynn remembered a difficult time fitting in with classmates when she was an adolescent, but was not sure it was race related.

Creative socialization describes when adults (e.g., parents, caregivers) initiate open conversations with their offspring about potential and anticipated future racial encounters so they are more prepared for racial encounters out in the community (Marbury, 2011; Stevenson, 1995). Yet, most Biracial adult children reported their White mothers did not initiate open discussions about race at home.

As suggested by Moss and Davis (2008), monorace parents tend to use one of three parenting strategies when addressing race with their Biracial children: 1) refuting race is an issue, 2) encouraging
a child to racially identify as Biracial/Black, or 3) encouraging Biracial identity development. In this study, White mothers, Sam, Lin, Mary, Bonnie, Nana and Alicia reported using the first parenting approach; they tended to deny race was an issue and instead talked about the importance of humanity and being a good person (Moss & Davis, 2008). The second parenting practice was utilized by two White mothers, Mom and Charlotte as they encouraged their Biracial children to racially identify as Biracial/Black race (Moss & Davis, 2008). Finally, Charlotte was the only White mother who frequently initiated open discussions about race with her son, Geronimo, the third parenting approach (Moss & Davis, 2008).

In addition to parenting practices, White mothers may also encourage healthy Biracial identity development by providing a racially diverse selection of toys (McKinney, 2015). Seven out of eight White mothers (except Bonnie) purchased toys (e.g., Barbie’s, Cabbage Patch dolls, wrestling men, GI Joe’s) that represented both White and Black races. Bonnie was the only mother who did not purchase White and Black toys. She said this was because Brayden played with universal toys like “football, basketballs and trucks”.

Most White mothers (except Nana) reported embracing customs of the Black culture because it was beneficial for their Biracial children. Sam and Charlotte (mothers) learned about Black history and literature. Mothers, Sam, Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Mary, Bonnie and Alicia learned about popular Black foods and learned how to cook them. Mothers Lin and Mom struggled to care for their daughters’ hair. Mom got hair care lessons from her daughter, KC’s elementary school teacher. Lin said her husband often took care of their daughter, Nicole’s hair. Mothers, Lin, Mom and Alicia felt unprepared and overwhelmed regarding proper hair care for their daughters’ curly, thick hair. In contrast, Mary (mother) said her daughter Lynn had curly “good hair” which was more manageable. In addition to hair care, skin care for Biracials can be a challenge for some White mothers. Mom, mother of KC said she learned how to care for KC’s skin by asking for advice from her Black partner.
Additionally, her daughter KC reported she did not use cocoa butter, which tends to be typical in Black culture.

Although most White mothers who volunteered for this study did not initiate open conversations about race with their Biracial children, many did encourage their children to embrace Black culture. The main study findings in comparison with prior studies will next be summarized.

**Summary of Main Study Findings**

In this section, two main findings are summarized: 1) reactive socialization experiences recalled by Biracial adult participants, and 2) despite having a close mother-child relationship, the absence of open conversations about race. First, summaries of main themes that emerged for the Biracial adult children and the White mothers are presented. Then a comparison of the Biracial adult children and White mother themes are made in the context of prior studies. Finally, a comparison of the family and individual themes that emerged are presented, in the context of prior studies.

**Biracial Adult Children Individual Interviews – Dominant Themes**

Experiences of Biracial adult children are organized into the following seven dominant themes: 1) Influence of White Mother on Racial Identity, 2) Colorism, 3) Racial Landscape of Biracials, 4) Views on Race, 5) Preference/Favoring Whiteness – Physical Attributes, 6) How Biracial children Deal with racism, and, 7) Acceptance. Within each of these seven dominant themes, 28 sub-themes also emerged. In this section, the seven dominant themes are summarized and considered using the two theories and one framework and prior studies.

**Influence of White Mothers on Racial Identity**

Brown (2003) concluded in a mixed-method dissertation study with 35 Biracial (Black/White) adults between 18 to 53 years old that Biracial identity formation tends to be influenced by parents who initiate open conversations with their children, in addition to the family structure. Seven out of eight Biracial adult children participants (except Ann) described feeling close to their White mothers. Most reported their mothers taught them how to be good people (morale, ethical) but did not initiate or
seemed open having conversations about their developing racial identities. This finding is similar to a qualitative study that reported some adult children could not recall their mothers talking about race or racial identity development at all (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). This finding is different from a similar phenomenological dissertation study with 10 White mothers and their 11 adult Biracial children; a main finding was that White mothers of Biracial children did engage in open conversations about race with their Biracial children (Stone, 2009). Additionally, Brown (2003) examined perceptions of racial socialization among 35 Biracial young adults (high school age); 57.1% had White mothers, 42.9% had Black mothers, 57.1% had Black fathers 42.9% had White fathers. Biracial young adults reported 42.9% of Biracial parents had ongoing discussions about race, 17.1% reported limited talks about race, 14.3% regularly talked about race, and 8.6% had no race conversations at home (Brown, 2003). We want to note that it is possible that because Black mothers (42.9%) were among some of the families in this study (Brown, 2003), more open conversations about race were reported by these Biracial children. Thus, most (7 out of 8) White mothers (and Black fathers) in this study did not racially socialize or utilize creative socialization practices their Biracial children.

**Colorism**

Colorism describes a lack of seeing race and avoidance of race discussions at home. Despite some adult Biracial children being taught by their White mothers to not see color, five out of eight Biracial adult children (Michael, Geronimo, Brayden, Dee and Ann) reported being called derogatory names such as: 1) half-breed, 2) half-Black, 3) darkie, 4) hi-yellow, and 5) nigger (Funderburg, 1994; Lyles, Yancey, Grace & Carter, 1985; Senna, 1998). In a study by Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, and Harris (1993) when asked to describe their physical appearances, eight out of nine Biracial participants used their skin color and the way they dressed as a description. Four out of eight participants (Nicole, KC, Dee and Ann) in this study said they have Afro-centric physical characteristics like hair texture, facial features, and skin color during their individual interviews. Michael, KC and Geronimo reported experiencing negative racial encounters at work. Unlike prior studies, the self-report NIS (New
Immigrant Survey) skin color measure was used to assess skin color among adult Biracial children. Most (all except Brayden) rated themselves with a 4 out of 10 (1 is the lightest and 10 is the darkest skin tones), suggesting slightly lighter skin complexions than medium skin color tones. This theme suggests that despite most being taught to not see race and/or to not have open conversations about race at home, most had Afro-centric physical features and experienced negative racial encounters out in the community. Yet many reported not reaching out to their White mothers to help them process and cope with these negative racial encounters; instead participants found support with siblings, teachers, and peers outside of their homes, which is described in the next theme.

**Racial Landscapes of Biracials**

The racial make-up of the communities, neighborhoods, schools, and work environments helped to shape racial identity among participants (Bryd & Garwick, 2006; Funderburg, 1994; Fusco & Rautis, 2012; Williams, 2009). All reported affiliating with racially diverse family members, friends and significant others, at work, in academic environments, and in their communities. Kilson (2001) conducted a qualitative study and reported Biracials tend to gravitate toward racially diverse social circles similar to findings from this study. Different from Anglin and Wade (2007) who reported Biracials tend to have a more difficult time adjusting to college life, Nicole, Geronimo and Brayden reported developing relationships with racially diverse peers who helped them adjust to college life (Poston, 1990; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Participants in this study joined Black organizations in college, for example: 1) Christian Praise Dance Groups, 2) fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha Incorporated, and 3) fraternity Omega Psi Phi Incorporated. Unlike Shih and Sanchez (2005) who suggested Biracials tend to have few role models who look like them in their immediate environment, participants in this study found role models who look like them. Moreover, adult Biracial children identified role models of different races (e.g., parents, grandparents, teachers, professional athletes, and celebrities), who helped them develop a positive Biracial identity (Poston, 1990). Although most White mothers and many Black fathers did not have open conversations about race at home, many Biracials
were resilient and found positive role models (both in the media and in their communities) who helped them develop their Biracial identities.

**Views on Race**

Adult child participants described their beliefs and feelings about race, racial identity and being Biracial (Poston, 1990). Most racially identified as Biracial and felt equally Black and White. Similar to a qualitative study conducted by Korgen (1998), Biracials are more likely to racially identify as Biracial. Since most participants described themselves as equally Black and White, they seem to identify with the blended position on Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) Continuum of Biracial identity model. Yet, KC and Brayden stated that at times they racially identify as Black because outsiders tend to view them as Black; this helps them avoid questions about their Biracial identity. Several scholars have stated Biracials tend to be asked by outsiders, “*What are you?*” or “*Who are you?*” (Baxley, 2008; Gaskins, 1999; McDowell et al., 2005; Williams, 2009). Similar to other studies (McCain, 2004), KC and Brayden racially identify themselves as Black when questioned by strangers in order to avoid uncomfortable questions about their racial identity.

Nicole reported she was unclear about what it meant to be White when she was a child. Nicole’s uncertainty fits with stage three, *enmeshment/denial* in the Biracial Racial Identity model (Poston, 1990), which can lead to feelings of confusion. This led Nicole to connect to the Black community to avoid feelings of confusion about her racial identity. The importance of White mothers racially socializing their Biracial children about Black culture has been emphasized in the literature, yet it is assumed Biracials will automatically know what it means to be White because they are being raised by White mothers (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; McIntosh, 2012). Additionally, White mothers’ lack of knowledge about what it means to be White or what it means to be Black, can leave White mothers unprepared to racially socialize their Biracial children (Marbury, 2006; Stevenson, 1995). Hence, this speaks to whiteness as a system in the United States of America and the likelihood White mothers’
oversight of their White privilege and racial advantages associated with not having to be concerned about race (McDowell, 2015; McIntosh, 2012).

Moreover, when expressing their views about race, Michael and Brayden described discrimination, racial profiling and racial injustice that currently occurs in the U.S; they said Whites are often treated better that Blacks in the U.S. Many reported there are benefits as well as disadvantages of being Biracial. KC said not being “Black enough” and feeling like a “science project” is a downside of being Biracial, leading to some straddling racial lines to avoid rejection (Marbury, 2006). Several participants reported being teased because of their Biracial identity. Another disadvantage of being Biracial was the forced adaptability to different racial social circles. This illustrates a shift that occurs according to the Continuum of Biracial Identity perspective when Biracials move to a singular identification of Black or White because of the context and how comfortable they feel in that environment (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005).

Furthermore, Nicole reported feeling torn between the Black and White races, and was often “in the middle” when she was a child, suggesting stage two, choice of group categories in Poston’s (1990) model; Biracials often feel pressure to choose between two races (Marbury, 2006; Stone, 2009). Participants also identified some benefits of being Biracial. Most described being exposed to both the Black and White cultures as a positive experience. This included the various physical features inherited from both parents, adaptability, as well as getting immersed in the history, music and cuisine of the White and Black cultures. As Biracials gain more knowledge about their two cultures, they enter stage four, appreciation in the Biracial identity development model (Poston, 1990).

Preference/Favoring Whiteness – Physical Attributes

Seven out of the eight (except Michael) reported some physical features that are White. KC said she does not wear weave hairstyles and wants her hair to be straight like her White mother’s (Marbury, 2006). Scholars have described Black versus White physical attributes including: 1) skin tone, 2) hair texture, 3) nose and 4) lips (Rockquemore & Laszloffy 2003; Williams, 2013). Ann
described said she has a “Black nose”. When describing what it means to be Black, participants described myriad stereotypical physical features and other practices such as: 1) using cocoa butter on the skin, 2) wearing weave hairstyles, 3) getting hair relaxers, 4) greasing the scalp, 5) listening to hip hop music, 6) lacking resources and opportunities, and, 7) being a recipient of racial profiling when applying for/interviewing for employment. Finally, participants said the following is what it means to be White in our society: 1) automatically granted White privilege, 2) being polite, 3) getting treated better than Blacks, 4) receiving less harsh consequences or no repercussions compared to Blacks (Williams, 2009).

These responses that make up this theme confirms the research of McIntosh (2012) which reported that Whites do not have to think about race, or unpack their privileges. In the U.S., a social construct was developed and executed by Whites which prevents them from experiencing racial boundaries and borders (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; McIntosh, 2012). McDowell (2015) reports this limits mobility of those with less power and resources (e.g., Blacks and other minority races) keeping them at a disadvantage which benefits those with more power and resources (e.g. Whites), who in turn continue to gain advantages. Thus in the U.S, the system of Whiteness tends to oppress those who are races other than White, referring to a bias to favor and demonstrate a preference for Whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; McIntosh, 2012; Robinson-Wood 2015).

How Biracial Children Deal with Racism

All Biracial adult children described racial encounters and feelings of isolation because of their race at school. Several scholars explored Biracials’ experiences in the classroom and how they influence racial identity development (Baxley, 2008; Harris, 2002; Moss & Davis, 2008; Mouw & Entwisle, 2006; Williams, 2009). None of the adult child participants who could recall their first racial encounters (all except Lynn and Ann) shared these experiences with their White mothers. Most were vulnerable because their parents did not prepare them for racial encounters (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Marbury, 2006; Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Stevenson, 1996). Consequently, most adult children were
also not prepared to navigate racism and racial discrimination in the community (Pinderhughes, 1995; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Nicole, KC, Geronimo and Dee described racist encounters by peers and by police officials (Hall, 2001; Oliver, 2003). When participants experienced racism they either responded with compassion, denial/dismissal and/or action-expression. They tended to not discuss any racist encounters with their White mothers; instead they took action, confided in others (e.g., siblings, peers or teachers) or internalized the negative event. Prior research suggests when Biracial children keep racial discrimination to themselves, they are more vulnerable to experiencing distress, often internalizing negative messages received by outsiders about their racial identities (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993; McClurg, 2004; Rollins & Hunter, 2013).

**Acceptance**

Biracial adults described when and with which groups they felt most accepted. Michael, KC, Lynn and Geronimo reported feeling accepted by their families. This finding was similar to prior studies conducted with Biracials (Marbury, 2006; Stone, 2009). Five out of eight (except Michael, Nicole and Lynn) found acceptance within themselves. Self-acceptance comes from a sense of “wholeness” and reflects the last stage, integration in Poston’s (1990) development model.

Kilson (2001) concluded Biracials adults’ not belonging to a single race, can lead to fears of rejection from Blacks and Whites. This can lead to Biracials working hard to blend in so they feel accepted by both Blacks and Whites, family members, as well as social and professional circles (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Different from prior research, Biracial adult children Michael, KC and Ann reported feeling accepted by the White community (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Kilson, 2001). Additionally, Michael, KC, Brayden and Dee reported feeling accepted by the Black community. According to the Continuum of Biracial Identity perspective (COBI), feeling accepted by Black and White communities suggests Biracials are able to move fluidly between both racial groups (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Moreover, Michael, KC, Lynn and Geronimo also felt accepted by their racially diverse friends (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005).
White Mother Individual Interviews – Dominant Themes

Experiences of White mothers are organized into the following four dominant themes that emerged: 1) *What Race is Your Child?*, 2) *Colorism*, 3) *Cultural Collision* and, 4) *Parenting a Biracial Child*. Within each of these four dominant themes, 14 sub-themes emerged, and 14 categories. The four dominant themes will be summarized and then considered regarding the two theories, one framework, and prior studies.

**What Race is Your Child?**

All White mothers racially identified their children as Biracial and used one or more racial categories (Csizmadia, Rollins, Kaneakua, 2014). Five mothers identified their children as Biracial, Charlotte identified her son as Biracial and also noted that he racially identifies as Black, Bonnie identified her son as Black, and Alicia said she does not see her daughter’s race, and instead views her as a human being. Yet if asked by outsiders, Alicia identifies Ann as Biracial. This is similar to Kilson and Ladd (2009) who reported White mothers of Biracials who had children from 1960 and later tend to expect their Biracial child to racially identify as Biracial or Black. Alicia not acknowledging her daughter’s race is similar to Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, and Harris (1993) study that White parents tend to not use racial labels to identify their Biracial children.

**Colorism**

Colorism describes colorblindness, which can lead to the avoidance or lack of acknowledgement of race; most White mothers in this study described beliefs supporting colorism. Mother participants, Sam and Lin said, “there is no difference” when asked about race, illustrating their White privilege. Similar to this finding, Snyder (2011) reported White parents did not talk to their children about race and instead were more likely to focus on egalitarian messages that emphasized “there is no difference; everyone is equal”. As previously mentioned, this nation was built on racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; McIntosh, 2012). White mothers could use their privilege to decrease inequities for their Biracial offspring (Cushing, 2008; Pinderhughes, 1995). Yet many White mothers are not
attuned or aware of what their Biracial children experience out in the community (Csizmadia, Rollins & Kaneakua, 2014; Cushing 2008; Pinderhughes, 1995). Moreover, these White mothers were not attuned to ask about, unpack and/or personalize the essence of Whiteness for themselves, which is an outcome of growing up in a society where race is often viewed through the lens of whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; McIntosh, 2012; Robinson-Wood, 2015). This can lead White mothers to not racially socialize their Biracial children and consequently not prepare them for negative racial encounters (Pinderhughes, 1995; Robinson-Wood, 2015). Thus, racial literacy is a concern for many of these White mothers of Biracial children. Without racial literacy, White mothers are not able to develop parenting strategies that can help their Biracial children navigate a society where race and skin color are central to various aspects of life (Robinson-Wood, 2015). Scholars suggest Whites tend to have a limited understanding about the effects and consequences of race, racism and the social construct of Whiteness for themselves as well as non-White races (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Robinson-Wood, 2015). O’Donoghue (2004) reported White mothers (all were engaged in long-term marriages with their Black husbands and raising Biracial children) struggled to identify with a specific race or culture. White tends to be the standard, the norm in the U.S, and is often not recognized as a culture (Rockquemore & Arend, 2002). Consequently, if White mothers raising Biracial children struggle with racially identifying themselves, it will be difficult for them to acknowledge the race of their children.

**Cultural Collision**

When White women partner with Black men (and conceive Biracial children), White and Black cultures collide. In this study, this collision resulted in the following: 1) racism from some family members (White), 2) racism in the community, 3) racism towards their Biracial child, 4) the racial make-up of the environment of the interracial family, 5) the adoption of Black culture, and 6) uncertainty about hair care of their Biracial children. Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, and Harris (1993) described the importance of the family and friendships of parents as well as established connections
with extended relatives, religious affiliations, and schools. Similar to the qualitative dissertation study conducted by Marbury (2006), some mothers in this study (except Charlotte and Mary) received little support from their families of origin when they chose to partner with a Black man. Similar to the research by Banks (1996) who interviewed 16 single White mothers of Biracial children, most mothers (except Charlotte and Mary) were treated differently, rejected and/or cutoff from their White families for period of time. Similar to the Scott (2014) study, two of the participants’ families (Sam and Alicia) changed their views and attitudes once their Biracial child was born.

Rollins and Hunter (2013) also asserted that White mothers of Biracial children are more likely to provide silent racial socialization, like mothers in this study. Despite most mothers not openly discussing race at home (except Charlotte), most (except Nana) engaged in Black cultural customs, promoting racial pride messages and non-verbal racial socialization (Brown, 2003; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; McKinney, 2015; Pinderhughes, 1995; Stevenson, 1996). Furthermore, most mothers (except Nana) cultivated friendships with Blacks and/or were connected with their Black in-laws (Kilson & Ladd, 2009).

**Parenting a Biracial Child**

White mothers reported both positive and challenging experiences raising their Biracial children. Ideally, parents raising a Biracial child should use parenting strategies that facilitate positive racial socialization (Pinderhughes, 1995; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Most White mothers (except Alicia) described relationships with their Biracial children as close. Despite reporting being close, half of the mothers (Sam, Mary, Bonnie and Alicia) did not have open discussions about race at home, believing their child would initiate any conversations about race or racial encounters. This finding was different from Stone’s (2009) qualitative dissertation study that reported White mothers tended to create an open family environment, and initiated conversations about race with their Biracial children. Rollins and Hunter (2013) reported some White mothers struggle to talk about race and tend to not engage in racial socialization with their Biracial children. Thus, results from Rollins and Hunter’s (2013) research are
similar to our findings. This may be because White mothers have White privilege in the U.S, resulting in differing lack of awareness about what their Biracial child might experience and racial socialization practices (Csizmadia, Rollins & Kaneakua, 2014; Cushing, 2008). Similar to previous studies (Kilson & Ladd, 2009; O'Donoghue, 2004), mothers, Mary and Bonnie reported relying on their Black husbands to racially socialize their children.

**Comparison of Findings for Biracial Adult Children and White Mother Interviews**

Few researchers have examined how parents racially socialize their Black-White Biracial children, both prospective (in childhood/adolescence) and retrospective (adult recollections of childhood) views of their White mothers’ parental racial socialization practices. To date, reactive socialization has not been examined in prior research with Biracial adult children. This dissertation study was designed to fill these gaps, in particular dyadic research to understand how White mothers helped Biracial children (or did not help them) navigate racial encounters during childhood, a pivotal time for racial identity development (Poston, 1990).

A main finding from this study was reactive socialization reported by Biracial adult children. Unlike the study by Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, and Harris (1993) where most Biracial participants did not recall a time when they first became aware of their race, most Biracial adult participants (all except Lynn and Ann) recalled their first racial experiences out in the community (reactive socialization) and how they handled it (Marbury, 2006; Stevenson, 1995). Yet most of these adult children did not tell their White mothers about the racial encounters, even after they occurred. For example, Michael recalled sharing his first racial encounter with his teacher and not with his mother. Brayden told his brothers about racial encounters; four adult children did not tell anyone about their racial encounters and instead internalized them.

A second main finding was the closeness reported by most adult Biracial children and their White mothers, despite not having open conversations about race. Seven out of eight adult children (except for Geronimo) reported not sharing their first salient racial encounters with their White
mothers. Yet most adult children and mothers (all except Ann & Alicia) reported feeling close to each other and having a good relationship. Only Geronimo (adult Biracial child) and Charlotte (White mother) reported having open conversations about race at home.

Half of the White mothers (Sam, Mary, Bonnie and Alicia) did not openly talk to their Biracial children about race unless their children initiated conversations. Biracial adult children confirmed this during their individual interviews. Additionally, four out of eight mothers (Sam, Mom, Charlotte and Nana) did not talk to their Biracial children about race, however, some incongruence did emerge. Sam described openly talking to her son, Michael about race. Yet later she reported not talking about race with Michael unless he had questions. Michael and most adult children (except Geronimo) confirmed their White mothers did not initiate conversations about race, in contrast to what some of their mothers (Mom and Nana) reported.

Similar to prior research (Rollins & Hunter, 2013), our findings suggest Biracial adult children tend to not be prepared by their White mothers to navigate racial encounters with peers, at school, and out in the community (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). As reported by adult children (all except Geronimo), open discussions about race did not take place and were not initiated by most White mothers. Many mothers (Sam, Mary, Bonnie and Alicia) decided to wait for their children to initiate conversations about race, which was described as a preferred parenting practice. Similar to the qualitative study conducted by O’Donoghue (2004), some White mothers in this study (Mary and Bonnie) relied on the Black fathers (their husbands) to handle any conversations about race at home.

Noteworthy Biracial children reported receiving messages from their White mothers that tended to deemphasize the importance of race when they were children (Rollins & Hunter, 2013), encouraging colorblindness (Marbury, 2006). Most mothers’ (except Charlotte) statements suggest colorblindness or not seeing skin color at all (Marbury, 2006; O’Donoghue, 2004). Mother participant, Nana said she did encourage her child to “experience Black culture”. Marbury (2006) describes this
type of parenting practice as “sheltering” a child from Black customs. Despite most White mothers not proactively racially socializing their children at home by initiating open discussions about race, most mothers reported embracing Black customs (McKinney, 2015). McKinney (2015) suggests Biracial children can benefit from their White mothers adopting Black traditions (e.g., learning about Black history, music, learning how to cook Black cuisine, learning about skin and hair care) and purchasing racially diverse person-centered toys. In this study, all mothers (except Nana) described adopting Black culture; all mothers (except Bonnie) bought racially diverse toys for their children.

These findings and prior research suggest White mothers have much to consider regarding how to racially socialize their Biracial children. Engaging in an interracial relationship with Black men introduces White women to a new cultural experience. In addition to this cultural collision, where White women decide to immerse themselves in Black culture, White women are also vulnerable to experiencing racism based on their decision to partner with Black men and/or have Biracial children. Six mothers (Sam, Lin, Mom, Bonnie, Nana and Alicia) had little to no support from their White families when they first partnered with Black men; some even reported cut-offs from parents after deciding to marry a Black man and having Biracial children (Marbury, 2006; Snyder, 2011).

Comparison of Family Interviews and Individual Interviews

In this study, experiences shared during the family interviews are organized into the following four dominant themes: 1) Responsibility and Recommendations for Socializing Biracials, 2) Closeness of Mother-Child Relationship, 3) Colorism and, 4) How the Interracial Family Functions. Within each of these four dominant themes, 9 sub-themes and 1 category emerged. The four dominant themes will be summarized and then considered with the two theories, one framework, and prior research.

Responsibility and Recommendations for Socializing Biracials

During the family interviews, all White mother-Biracial adult child dyads offered suggestions for racially socializing Biracial children. Half of adult children (Nicole, Lynn, Brayden, Dee) described the importance of White mothers preparing children for racism in the community by having open,
honest conversations about race. Brayden also noted if White mothers are feeling unprepared to racially socialize their Biracial children, they should look for resources or help so they can learn how to initiate conversations about race with their children. Six White mothers (Sam, Lin, Mom, Charlotte, Mary and Alicia) suggested how best to racially socialize Biracial children, although most did not utilize these recommendations themselves. Some recommendations included: 1) reminding their child about the family’s core values when encountering racism, 2) assuring their child of their innocence in the face of discriminatory acts, 3) encouraging their child to discuss any racial encounters, 4) having their child’s father involved during conversations about race, 5) openly talking about race, 6) maintaining connections with Black in-laws and the Black community, 7) promoting connections between their child and their Black and White relatives, 8) becoming familiar with Black culture, 8) focusing on what is best for their child, and 9) if the mother is divorced, separated, or no longer in a romantic relationship with the child’s father, maintaining an amicable relationship with the child’s father. As previously mentioned, racial literacy is important for these White mothers of Biracial children (Robinson-Wood, 2015) to develop. Recommending to other White mothers of Biracial children to discuss race with their children, despite many of them not engaging in these types of conversations with their own children emphasizes the importance of racial literacy. White mothers should be encouraged to question, unpack and racially identify themselves, their privilege, and recognize their Whiteness in the context of what it means while racially socializing their Biracial children.

Families tend to seek therapy when experiencing distress. Specifically, therapists need to be aware of possible issues that interracial families could encounter and what could impact Biracial children’s mental health (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008). Moss and Davis (2008) noted that therapists tend to not to focus on racial identity when Biracial individuals come to therapy. Mother participant, Mom said that single mothers might pursue therapy to help racially socialize their Biracial child. Geronimo believes a Biracial child who identifies with one race over the other could become
distressed and may need therapy. Few suggestions for reaching interracial families who are in distress were made by participants (Stone, 2009), with the exception of media campaigns and psycho-education. Similar to previous research recommending in-service training to help teachers navigate race relations in school and to support positive racial identity among Biracials, psycho-education (e.g., support groups for White mothers held by experienced White mothers of Biracial children) should also be made available to White mothers of Biracial children (Bryd & Garwick, 2006; Fusco & Rautis, 2012). Hud-Aleem and Countryman (2008) also recommend that parents of Biracials learn about the differences between racial identity development among Biracials versus monorace children to facilitate healthy racial identity.

**Closeness of Mother-Child Relationship**

Most White mother/Biracial adult child dyads (except Alicia and Ann) confirmed their close relationships. Kilson & Ladd (2009) explained in their book, that being aware of racial issues is learned through observation, empathy and when White mothers engage in open conversations about race with their Biracial children. Charlotte and Geronimo were the only dyad who reported openly talking about race. Mother, Mom said jokes were used to diffuse racial tension at home when her family talked about race. Half of the dyads (Mary & Lynn, Bonnie & Brayden, Nana & Dee and Alicia & Ann) did not recall discussing racial differences or privileges between them. Yet, during the family interviews differences regarding skin color, White privilege and physical attributes were openly discussed between White Mothers and their Adult Biracial children.

**Colorism**

Colorism describes how White mothers and adult Biracial described how their families handled prejudice and discrimination because of their skin color. Some mothers (Mom and Charlotte) felt Whites might not know what to do about race or know how to respond when witnessing racially driven acts (Cushing, 2008; O’Donoghue, 2004). Similar to findings from Moss & Davis (2008) other mothers (Sam, Lin and Alicia) said race is not an issue for them because they see no differences
between races. Similar to research conducted by Karis (2003), the comment “race does not matter” was used by White mothers of Biracial children as a defense against the stereotypes and tension experienced. Additionally, Mary asserted that she and her daughter, Lynn are equal; Lynn agreed with her mother’s view after some encouragement during the family interview.

**How the Interracial Family Functions**

How interracial families function describes family interactions, interactions with their extended family, as well as community members. Charlotte reported she was accepted by her White family. In contrast, Mother Nana and her son Dee, were not accepted by her White family but were not sure it was due to race. Moreover, mother Mom said her brother accepted her, but seem to not unconditionally accept her Biracial children. In addition to family, mothers, Lin and Mom reported their child’s Black friends accepted them. Furthermore, Dee shared how Black community members accepted him.

Similar to prior research, half of the dyads (Mom & KC, Charlotte & Geronimo, Mary & Lynn and Bonnie & Brayden) identified their family as interracial/Biracial (Moss & Davis, 2008). Half of the dyads (Sam & Michael, Lin & Nicole, Nana & Dee and Alicia & Ann) did not define their families as interracial/Biracial, instead they viewed their families as just a family and did not focus on race. Similarly, Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris (1993) reported monorace parents of Biracial children tend to not use racial labels to describe their families. Similar to prior research, mothers, Charlotte and Mary described their interracial families as “the best of both worlds” (Stone, 2009).

**Comparison of Findings for Family Interviews and Individual Interviews**

Six out of eight White mothers/Biracial adult children reported not openly discussing race or racial privileges at home. Prior studies have not examined the types of conversations that tend to occur between Biracial children and their White mothers about race. Instead, the focus has been on whether or not White mothers racially socialize their Biracial children (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Marbury, 2006; O’Donoghue, 2004; Stone, 2009). During the family interviews, White mothers and their adult Biracial children were asked to describe when and how their families talked about race.
KC (adult child) and her mother, Mom reported talking about race using jokes to diffuse the tension. In contrast, Geronimo (adult child) and his mother, Charlotte had open discussions about race that included: 1) the news and media coverage (e.g., “Black Lives Matter”, social injustice, police discrimination, justice system corruption), 2) debriefing about people who are different from during their travels abroad (e.g., multiculturalism), 3) racial encounters Geronimo experienced growing up (e.g., dating White women in adolescence and not being accepted by the fathers of the girls he was dating), 4) Charlotte (mom) sharing her appreciation for Black culture (e.g., Black authors and literature, desiring more inclusion of Black culture in school curriculum) and, 5) Charlotte (mom) developed more cultural awareness from Geronimo’s wife who is Black.

In addition to how they talked about race, families were asked if they ever talked about or identified racial privileges and differences between them. Half reported not openly talking about their racial differences and associated privileges. Ann (adult child) and her mother, Alicia discussed physical attributes they desired and attributed to each other’s race (e.g., Ann liked Alicia’s straight manageable hair and Alicia adored Ann’s voluptuous rear-end) when identifying racial differences between them. Neither, Dee (adult child) or his mother, Nana could recall a specific time when they talked about racial privileges between them. Yet during the family interview, Dee reported what he believed life might have been like for his mother before having an interracial relationship and conceiving Biracial children. Dee said his mother has White privilege and then noted that when she became part of an interracial relationship and had Biracial children she lost some of her White privileges. Nana had similar views to Dee, except she believed she did not lose privileges with the White community but did with her White family.

Similarly, Brayden talked about his mother, Bonnie’s White privileges and also reported never discussing their racial differences and privileges with each other; Bonnie agreed with her son. It is possible Bonnie felt a bit uneasy based on her quick responses during this part of the interview. Moreover, Mary (mother) prompted her daughter, Lynn to agree with her that they are “equal”, with
no racial differences or privileges between them. These two White mothers could have “blind spots” and inadvertently encouraged their Biracial children to not be aware of privileges associated with race. Consequently adult Biracial children were less prepared for racial encounters out in the community (Cushing, 2008; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993; O’Donoghue, 2004).

**Contributions to CFT Research**

Prior studies have examined parental racial socialization practices of Biracial children by White mothers, however, they have not focused on reactive socialization (Marbury, 2006; O’Donoghue, 2004; Stone, 2009). Reactive socialization is defined as one’s first exposure to a racial encounter and the lasting impression and internalized messages learned from these earlier experiences (Chavez & French, 2007; Marbury, 2011; Stevenson, 1995). This dissertation study filled a gap in CFT by examining the reactive socialization experiences of Biracial adult children. The influence of adult children’s first recalled racist encounters and how they talked about it or did not talk about it at home was examined. Most of the adult children participants who remembered their first racial instance did not openly talked to their White mothers about the encounter. Despite most describing having close relationships, only two families openly discussed at race at home. Biracial children in this study could have believed their mothers were not prepared for open conversations about race. Most mothers were not comfortable openly talking about race at home or engaging in active parental racial socialization to prepare their children for racial encounters out in the community. Despite the lack of racial socialization at home, most Biracial adults in this study seem quite resilient. They found role models and diverse friends, peers, and adult figures to help them develop their Biracial identities and most seemed to embrace being both Black and White.

**Clinical Implications**

Findings from this study have clinical implications for mental health professionals and family therapists who work with Biracial families. The themes that emerged highlight the importance of White mothers initiating and having open conversations about race at home. Although not explicitly
stated, despite describing their relationships as close most adult Biracial children knew not to talk to their White mothers about racial encounters out in the community. This could be due to a perceived lack of knowledge or discomfort talking to their White mothers about race.

An initial information/counseling session conducted with parents of Biracial children could help parents engage in proactive, creative (versus reactive) racial socialization practices to help buffer Biracial children from negative racial encounters out in the community. These sessions should include both parents since most White mothers relied on Black fathers to handle conversations about race and it often did not occur. Providers should inform couples about racial identity development, how to openly initiate and talk to Biracial children about being both Black and White, and how to facilitate positive self-esteem.

Parents should also have the option of contacting other parents raising Biracial children to provide additional support. Providers should also talk about privileges associated with race so White mothers are more comfortable talking about it with their children in developmentally appropriate ways. This type of psycho-education program can offer support to parents who are preparing their Biracial children for racial encounters out in the community. Additionally, parents can learn about healthier and developmentally appropriate ways to prepare (creative socialization) their Biracial children for anticipated discriminatory acts and racism from society.

Based on the findings and prior research, training programs should prepare culturally sensitive therapists who can work with Biracial families (Laszloffy, 2005; McDowell, 2015; Stone, 2009). Encouraging trainees to examine their own biases regarding interracial relationships and in particular privilege among White therapists, and informing trainees about possible issues interracial families may face are some recommendations training programs should consider to best help these families. Additionally, McDowell (2015) recommended using family cartography with families while providing therapy. The use of a topological map when developing the family cartography can highlight power, privacy, personal space, social interactions, safety, mobility, oppression, resistance and resilience of
the family (McDowell, 2015). Family cartography is not only be beneficial in family therapy but also for training interns. Trainees who develop their own family cartography can raise social awareness, encourage insight into relationship dynamics (e.g. personal and professional), and increase understanding of self and others (McDowell, 2015). Asking trainees to learn about parental racial socialization practices that are associated with well-being among Biracial children and youth is another recommendation based on the findings and prior research (Stone, 2009). Regarding reaching these families, most participants described media campaigns, however, partnering with communities who serve Biracial families, training more Biracial providers (who can also serve as role models), and providing psycho-education to White mothers to help them facilitate positive racial identity are some recommendations based on the findings.

Finally, parents should not be the only individuals targeted in prevention, any staff or adults who interact with children (e.g., school teachers, camp counselors) should also be aware of how best to promote well-being among Biracial children and adolescents. Developing a cultural awareness training program for providers and staff who interact with children is another clinical recommendation based on the findings.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were some limitations of this qualitative study. First, the researcher interviewed four child-mother dyads in-person, one child in-person and his/her mother on the telephone and the remaining three child-mother dyads on the telephone. This prevented direct observation of non-verbal expressions and skin color complexions of three adult children participants interviewed on the telephone.

In these cases, the researcher relied on the tone of participants’ voices and conversational pauses. Yet a strength associated with interviewing participants over the telephone was the ability to reach eligible participants in geographical locations all over the U.S., including Northeast, South and Midwest. The only geographical location not included in this study was the West Coast.
Another limitation includes the probes provided by the researcher. There were times during the interviews when the researcher could have probed more deeply. For example, when a White mother reported she did not have open discussion about race with her Biracial child, the researcher could have asked follow up questions, for example: 1) “Why?”, and/or 2) “How do you make sense of not talking about race with your child considering you shared that you two can talk about everything and are very close to each other?”

Fathers and siblings were not included in this study in order to focus specifically on the influence of White mothers on Biracial racial identity development. During the interviews, many mentioned the important role of family members (e.g., siblings, maternal and paternal grandparents). Interviewing more family members could have led to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This was a retrospective study of adult Biracial children and their White mothers. Retrospectively remember experiences from childhood could be in accurate because of problems recalling specific events and memory recall.

Qualitative studies cannot be generalized; the primary aim is to understand the experiences of participants versus generalizing experiences to participants from the same group. Although the sample size of 8 families led to saturation in this phenomenological study, it does not represent all Black-White interracial families in the U.S. Additionally, families volunteered for this study which represents a select sample of families possibly interested in the topic versus all possible Biracial families who are eligible but who did not decide to volunteer. Finally as a Biracial myself, my own biases and views could have been a limitation. In order to bracket my own assumptions, I memoed, triangulated the data with two additional coders (R. Waite and M. Davey), asked participants to confirm codes that emerged (member checking), and rigorously coded the data using MAXQDA software.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research with White mothers raising Biracial children should begin with first asking White mothers how they racially identify themselves. If White mothers do not see race and/or have
difficulty racially identifying themselves, this may lead to a better understanding of why some White mothers struggle to racially socialize (creative socialization) their Biracial children at home and to have open conversations about race.

Another recommendation for future research is to develop and evaluate prevention programs to encourage White mothers to talk openly about race and engage in creative racial socialization practices with their Biracial children. Despite White mothers not having the experience of being called a racially derogatory term, they can still offer compassion and support when their Biracial children encounter racism out in the community. Thus, White mothers can help, support and guide their Biracial children regardless of not sharing the same experiences.

Prior studies also suggest that when a White mother’s family of origin was supportive of the interracial relationship (and conception of Biracial children), race conversations were more openly discussed. Thus, future research should examine the life patterns, family relational dynamics and generations of interracial dating within the family are recommended.

Black mothers raising Biracial children with White fathers should be interviewed to explore the role of racial socialization of their Biracial childrens’ racial identity. Black parents tend to racially socialize their children and prepare them for racial encounters. Thus, future research should examine how Black mothers facilitate creative socialization by having open conversations about race with their Biracial children. Then, an examination of whether Biracials are more likely to discuss their first racial encounter (reactive socialization) with their Black mothers versus White mothers can be examined.

Finally, a longitudinal prospective study with White mothers and their young Biracial children could help the field develop a better understanding of parental racial socialization, as well as Biracial identity development and stages over time. Many cross sectional studies with Biracial individuals and their parents have been conducted (Biracial children, adolescents, and adults), however, to date no longitudinal studies have been conducted in real time with Biracial children and their White mothers over the life cycle. Including parents who are married, single, or divorced can also lead to a better
understanding of optimal parental racial socialization practices for diverse families regarding both race and family structure.

**Final Self of the Researcher Reflections**

During this study, as an adult Biracial woman myself I learned about new experiences from other adult Biracial individuals and their White mothers. Throughout the study, I memoed and carefully bracketed my own experiences as a Biracial who was raised by a White mother and a Black father. I also talked about my feelings and experiences interviewing the families with my dissertation chair (M. Davey), dissertation committee member (R. Waite), colleagues, parents and extended relatives and peers. I also shared feelings with my own mother, unlike my childhood this facilitated an open conversation about race. My mother and I are closer now and more openly discuss race. As a phenomenological researcher, I also asked participants to confirm codes to ensure I captured their experiences.

Many White mothers described negative experiences with their own relatives (even family cut-offs) after deciding to partner with a Black man. This outcome saddened me each time a mother shared this experience. I cannot envision that at such a happy time (e.g., falling in love and conceiving a child), a family would withdraw their support. I am not White or a mother so it is hard for me to fully understand such a traumatic experience. As a Biracial and a child of a White mother, I did know my mother’s side of the family. I would have struggled with my own racial identity development and likely my mental health (e.g., decreased self-esteem, feeling unworthy, depression), and could have resented Whites if my mother’s family disowned her or refused to develop a relationship with me. Although this was not my experience, my heart ached for each family who shared there was tension or a cut-off in their families of origin (whether it was for a brief period of time or still occurring). Moreover, I rejoiced hearing the conflict some families experienced with relatives did not have a negative effect on the racial identity development of the Biracial children.
The Biracial adult children who volunteered for this study seemed strong and resilient; I have a lot of respect for them. Hearing about their first racial encounters and discriminatory encounters made me remember my own experiences. When hearing about a racial encounter in the bathroom, it brought tears to my eyes because that is also where I had my first racist encounter. Unlike Biracial adult children in this study, I did talk to my mother about the racial encounter, perhaps because every day she asked how my day went at school. Like most mothers in my study, my mother did not initiate talks about race, however, my mother did embrace Black culture, adopting many of the customs (e.g., food, music), even learning how to care for my hair and skin. Similar to most mothers in my study, my mother encouraged me to be a good person and instilled the importance of exhibiting love, respect and politeness to others.

I commend all of the mothers for the unconditional love shown to their Biracial children. I imagine partnering with a Black man and raising a Biracial child within a society that privileges whiteness was not easy. These mothers were not presented with a handbook describing how to be in an interracial relationship or how to raise a healthy Biracial child. Some of these mothers encountered prejudice from their own families and/or members of society. Given the mother’s lack of awareness about their own white privilege and color blind attitudes, it is understandable that most mothers were not prepared to racially socialize their Biracial children in a nation that was founded on racism.

Conclusions

This study describes the experiences of 8 Biracial families with adult children who identified as Biracial families. Across the eight families, there were stories of resiliency, love, and connection that can help to inform other interracial families, the field of family therapy, and training programs. The main findings of this qualitative study included: 1) Despite reporting a close relationship to their Biracial children, White mothers did not initiate open discussions about race at home; and, 2) Biracial adult children’s recollections of reactive socialization (first racial encounter in the community) and not
sharing these experiences with their White mothers (instead sharing them with teachers, siblings, or processing it by themselves).

Most White mothers and Biracial adult children reported being close to each other, yet seemed uncomfortable talking about race at home. Biracial adult children who volunteered for this study may not have believed their White mothers were comfortable or prepared to discuss racial encounters. Despite the absence of open race discussions with their White mothers, these Biracial adult children seemed resilient, looked for role models in the media, at school, found racially diverse peer groups, and coped with negative racial encounters without direct parental racial socialization from their White mothers.

Most White mothers reported embracing the Black culture, for example, many provided racially diverse toys at home but were not prepared or comfortable initiating open conversations about race with their Biracial children. Many believed their child’s Black fathers would racially prepare their children for encounters out in the community. Most White mothers in this study described beliefs supporting colorism that can lead to the avoidance or lack of acknowledgement of race. This can lead White mothers to not racially socialize their Biracial children and not prepare them for negative racial encounters. White tends to be the norm in the U.S, and is often not recognized as a culture. Consequently, if White mothers raising Biracial children struggle with racially identifying themselves, it will be difficult for them to acknowledge the race of their children.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  RECRUITMENT FLYER
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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLIER

Are you a Biracial Adult (ages 18 to 45) who has a White Mother and a Black Father?

Does your Mother Want to Be Interviewed Too?

Drexel University

Recruiting Volunteers for a Research Study

*Biracial Adult Children Raised by White Mothers: The Development of Racial Identity and Role of Racial Socialization*

If you answered yes to the two questions listed above, then you are eligible to participate in a research study so we can learn more about your views as a Biracial and your White mothers’ views parenting you.

Participation in this study involves one in-depth 90 minute interview (30 minutes individually and 30 minutes together) and a follow-up email or telephone call. All information you and your mother share will be kept confidential.

You and your mother will receive a $25 gift card to Macy’s department store or Best Buy store

For more information please contact:
Nicole McKinney, PhD Candidate or Dr. Maureen Davey at nm566@drexel.edu or #267-359-5524

Department of Couple and Family Therapy at Drexel University
This research is approved by the Institutional review board.

This research is being conducted by a researcher who is a faculty member at Drexel University and her doctoral student. This study is being conducted for a doctoral dissertation.
APPENDIX B

Letter of Recruitment

Dear ________,

I would like to ask for your help with a dissertation study of considerable significance for Biracial families. We know very little about the experiences of Biracial adults and their White mothers because so little research has been done asking about your perspectives. We hope that this study will help to better prepare providers who are working with Biracial families.

I would like to invite you and your mother to consider participating in a one-time 90 minute interview (30 minutes with you, 30 minutes with your mother, and 30 minutes with both you and your mother) and one follow-up phone call or email.

You are eligible to participate in the study if you:

1. Are age 18 to 45
2. You are Biracial and have a White mother and a Black father
3. Your mother also agrees to be interviewed

I can interview you and your mother at a convenient location, date, and time, one the telephone or online, whatever is more convenient. Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Upon completion of the one-time 90 minute interview, you and your mother will receive a $25 gift certificate to Macy’s or Best Buy Department Stores.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Please feel free to contact me at: nm566@drexel.edu or my dissertation chair, Dr. Maureen Davey (mpd29@drexel.edu; phone number: #267-359-5524).
Sincerely,

Nicole McKinney, MA  
Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Couple and Family Therapy Department  
Drexel University
APPENDIX C

Drexel University

Consent to Take Part

In a Research Study

1. **TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY**: BIRACIAL ADULT CHILDREN RAISED BY WHITE MOTHERS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF RACIAL IDENTITY AND ROLE OF RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

2. **RESEARCHERS**: DR. MAUREEN DAVEY AND NICOLE S. MCKINNEY, MA

3. **WHY YOU ARE BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

WE INVITE YOU TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY BECAUSE YOU ARE A BIRACIAL ADULT (AGES 18 TO 45) WHO WAS RAISED BY A WHITE MOTHER AND A BLACK FATHER. YOU AND YOUR MOTHER ARE BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT THE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF BIRACIAL ADULTS AND WHITE MOTHERS’ PARENTAL RACIAL SOCIALIZATION ROLE. WE ARE CONDUCTING THIS STUDY TO UNDERSTAND YOUR EXPERIENCES REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME AND PARENTING PRACTICES AT HOME.

4. **WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

5. **WHO CAN YOU TALK TO ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team at # (267)359-5525 or email at mpd29@drexel.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. You may talk to them at (215) 255-7857 or email HRPP@drexel.edu for any of the following:
Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
You cannot reach the research team.
You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
You want to get information or provide input about this research.

6. WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

You and your mother are being asked to participate in a 90-minute interview (either face to face, online or on the telephone) to understand the retrospective experiences that Biracial adults had as children/youth and parenting practices among White mothers who raised Biracial children. The goal of this study is to better understand your experiences so providers can better meet the needs of Biracial families.

7. HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST?

We expect that you and your mother will be in this research study for one 90-minute interview and then a follow up telephone call or email.

8. HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE STUDIED?

We expect about 10 adult Biracial children and their mothers (20 individuals) will be in this research study.

9. WHAT HAPPENS IF I SAY YES, I WANT TO BE IN THIS RESEARCH?

If you and your mother decide to volunteer for this study, it involves first completing a demographic questionnaire before the one-time 90 minute interview begins. After you and your mother complete the demographic forms, you each will be asked to choose an alias name (not your birth name given) to ensure confidentiality and then the 90-minute semi-structured interview will begin. You can be interviewed either in-person at a convenient time and location, online, or over the telephone, whatever is most convenient.

You and your mother will first be interviewed separately (30 minutes each) and then interviewed together (30 minutes) to better understand Biracial identity development and the role of parental racial socialization among White mothers raising Biracial children. The interview will be audio-recorded with two audio devices (in the event one malfunctions) in order to accurately capture the interview.
You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason. Additionally, you may withdraw from participating in the study at any time as well.

At the end of the interview, you and your mother will be asked if a follow up telephone call or email can be scheduled. Interviews, emails, and telephone calls will be transcribed verbatim, but your name will not be associated with your responses; instead your chosen alias will be used on all information.

10. WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

If you take part in this research, it is very important that you follow the researcher’s instructions and tell the researcher right away if you have any distress because of participating in this research study.

11. WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT WANT TO BE IN THIS RESEARCH?

You may decide not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you.

12. WHAT HAPPENS IF I SAY YES, BUT I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

If you agree to take part in the research now, you can stop at any time and it will not be held against you.

13. IS THERE ANY WAY BEING IN THIS STUDY COULD BE BAD FOR ME?

The main risk of participating in this study is the loss of confidentiality. However, we will do our best to keep your information private both during the support group sessions and by keeping your paperwork confidential by using your chosen alias.

If you decide to participate in this research study, there are minimal risks. The research is not expected to cause any physical harm, but it may cause minimal emotional distress.

While it is unlikely, this minimal risk could present itself as feelings of discomfort associated with your particular memories recalled of experiences that could arise with regards to your racial identity development. Therefore, you may experience some psychological distress during and/or the interviewing process. Should this occur, the researchers will be available to discuss your questions and/or concerns. Should you need further assistance, the researchers will recommend a therapist who will be available to you on a sliding scale at a cost to you.
14. DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR ANYTHING WHILE I AM ON THIS STUDY?

There is no cost to you for participating in this study. All costs related to the research study are the responsibility of the researchers. If you agree to take part in this research study, to show gratitude for your time and participation, the researcher will give you a $25.00 gift card to either Macy’s department store or Best Buy upon completion of required paperwork and the 120-minute semi-structured individual interview.

15. WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME ANYWAY?

WE CANNOT PROMISE ANY BENEFITS TO YOU OR OTHERS FROM YOUR TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH. HOWEVER, POSSIBLE BENEFITS INCLUDE AN INCREASED LEVEL AWARENESS ABOUT YOUR ATTITUDES, THOUGHTS, FEELINGS ABOUT RACIAL IDENTITY AND PARENTING PRACTICES.

16. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION WE COLLECT?

Efforts will be made to limit your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization. By signing this form, you authorize the following persons and organizations to receive your PHI for purposes related to this research: Dr. Maureen Davey and Nicole S. McKinney who are part of the research team. These individuals will need this information to conduct the research, to assure the quality of the data, and/or to analyze the data.

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and all other identifying information confidential.

There is no set time for destroying the information that will be collected for this study. Your permission to use and share the information and data from this study will continue until the research study ends and will not expire. Researchers continue to analyze data for many years and it is not possible to know when they will be completely done.

We will do our best to keep your personal information private and confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. For instance, if we find out that you intend to hurt yourself or someone else or that you have been abused, we must report this.

18. WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

This research study is being done by Drexel University
Signature Block for Capable Adult
Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE

______________________________
Signature of subject

______________________________
Date

______________________________
Printed name of subject

______________________________
Signature of person obtaining consent

______________________________
Date

______________________________
Printed name of person obtaining consent

Form Date

[Add the following block if a witness will observe the consent process. E.g., short form of consent documentation or illiterate subjects.]

My signature below documents that the information in the consent document and any other written information was accurately explained to, and apparently understood by, the subject, and that consent was freely given by the subject.

______________________________
Signature of witness to consent process

______________________________
Date

______________________________
Printed name of person witnessing consent process
APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE AND SKIN COLOR - BIRACIAL ADULT

Participant’s Initials ________________

Date ____________________________

1. Age __________

2. Gender (Please circle one): Male Female

3. City, State, AND Country of Birth:_____________________

3. How do you racially identify (Please circle one):

   Biracial

   Black

   White

   Other (Please specify):

   __________________________________________________________________

5. Highest level of education attained (Please circle one):

   Middle School or less

   Some High School

   High School Degree

   Some Technical School

   Technical School Degree

   Some College

   Associate’s Degree

   Bachelor’s Degree

   Some Graduate or professional school
Master’s Degree

Doctoral Degree

6. Employment Status (Please circle one):
   
   Full-time
   
   Part-time
   
   Unemployed
   
   Disabled
   
   Student

   If employed, please provide your occupation

______________________________

7. What region of the United States for you live in now? (Please circle one)

   East Coast
   
   South
   
   Midwest
   
   West Coast

8. What region of the United States did you spend the majority of your childhood?

   (Please circle one)

   East Coast
   
   South
   
   Midwest
   
   West Coast

   Outside of the United States (Please specify):
9. Please describe the racial make-up of the neighborhood you spent the majority of your childhood growing up in.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

10. Please describe the racial make-up of the schools (elementary, middle and high school) you attended while growing up.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

11. Please identify your three longest standing friendships and identify their first name, duration of friendship in years and their racial identification.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
12. Were you part of any communities in college or in your community?
   Yes or NO
   If yes, what were they? ________________________________________________

13. Who were your role models while growing up in the community, media, sports, etc.?
    ____________________________________________________________________

14. What type of household were you raised in? (Please circle one)
    Single parent household
    Two parent household
    Multiple parent household (ex. parent(s) and grandparent(s) or other relatives)

15. How many siblings do you have?______________
    If have siblings, please provide their race(s)
    ____________________________________________________________________
    What are the ages, gender of your siblings?_____________________________

17. What is current your relationship status? (Please circle one)
    Single
Date            Coupled            Married            Separated            Divorced            Widowed

18. If you are dating, coupled, married, separated, divorced or widowed, please identify the racial identification(s) of you (previous/current) partner/spouse.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

__________

19. If you are a mother please provide below the child(ren)’s first name(s), age, gender and identify if they are biological, step or adopted.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

20. How do you racially identify your children? _____________________________
NIS SKIN COLOR SCALE

The New Immigrant Survey measured respondent skin color using a scale designed by Douglas S. Massey (one of the Principal Investigators) and Jennifer A. Martin (NIS Project Manager), based on an idea originally developed by Massey, Charles, Lundy, and Fischer (2003) in their work on the National Longitudinal Study of Freshmen.

The scale is an 11-point scale, ranging from zero to 10, with zero representing albinism, or the total absence of color, and 10 representing the darkest possible skin. The ten shades of skin color corresponding to the points 1 to 10 on the Massey and Martin Skin Color Scale are depicted in a chart, with each point represented by a hand, of identical form, but differing in color. The Scale was constructed with assistance from a graphic designer. The M&M Scale is for use by interviewers, who essentially memorize the scale, so that the respondent never sees the chart.

A facsimile of the NIS Skin Color Scale appears in Figure 1.

The Martin and Massey NIS Skin Color Scale was first printed in an appendix to the Field Interviewer Manual during the baseline round of the New Immigrant Survey. The Manual included the following instruction:

As you know, human beings display a wide variety of physical attributes. One of these is skin color. Unfortunately discrimination on the basis of skin color continues to be a reality in American life. Substantial evidence suggests that lighter skinned people fare better in a variety of social and economic settings than those with darker skins. In order to detect such discrimination, it is important that the NIS include a measure of skin color. We therefore ask interviewers to use the Scale of Skin Color as a guide to rate the skin color of each respondent on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is the lightest possible skin color (such as that of an albino) and 10 is the darkest possible skin color. Please rate the skin color of ALL respondents upon completion of the interview, be they of European, Asian, Latin American, or African origin. It is very important that we obtain this information for everyone, not just those of obvious African ancestry.

It is important that you become familiar with the scale so that you do not access it during the interview. Respondents should never see the scale.

Users of the NIS Skin Color Scale are requested to kindly notify the NIS Project staff by emailing the Project Manager, Jennifer A. Martin (nis@opr.princeton.edu).

Suggested citation:
Scale of Skin Color Darkness
APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE- MOTHER

Participant’s Initials ________________
Date ____________________________

1. Age ____________

2. Gender (Please circle one):  Male  Female

3. City, State, AND Country of Birth:_____________________

3. How do you racially identify (Please circle one):

   Biracial
   Black
   White
   Other (Please specify):

   ________________________________________________

5. Highest level of education attained (Please circle one):

   Middle School or less
   Some High School
   High School Degree
   Some Technical School
   Technical School Degree
   Some College
   Associate’s Degree
   Bachelor’s Degree
   Some Graduate or professional school
Master’s Degree
Doctoral Degree

6. Employment Status (Please circle one):
   Full-time
   Part-time
   Unemployed
   Disabled
   Student
   If employed, please provide your occupation

   _______________________________

7. What region of the United States do you live in now? (Please circle one)
   East Coast
   South
   Midwest
   West Coast

8. What region of the United States did you spend the majority of your childhood?
   (Please circle one)
   East Coast
   South
   Midwest
West Coast

Outside of the United States (Please specify):

________________________________________

9. What type of household were you raised in? (Please circle one)

- Single parent household
- Two parent household
- Multiple parent household
  (ex. parent(s) and grandparent(s) or other relatives)
- Other (e.g – orphanage) _______________________________________

10. How did you manage your child’s hair?

________________________________________

11. Did you have conversations about race with your children?

   Yes or No

12. What types of support did you receive from family or the community while raising your children?

   ______________________________________

13. Please describe the racial make-up of the neighborhood you spent the majority of your childhood growing up in.

   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
14. Please describe the racial make-up of the schools (elementary, middle and high school) you attended while growing up.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

15. Please describe the type of area you raise your children.

Urban
Suburban
Rural

16. Please describe the racial make-up of the neighborhood your childhood spent the majority of their childhood growing up in.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
17. Please describe the racial make-up of the schools (elementary, middle and high school) your child(ren) attended while growing up.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

18. Please identify your three longest standing friendships and identify their first name, duration of friendship in years and their racial identification.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

19. What type of household were your child(ren) raised in? (Please circle one)

   Single parent household

   Two parent household

   Multiple parent household

   (ex. parent(s) and grandparent(s) or other relatives)

20. What is current your relationship status? (Please circle one)

   Single
21. If you are dating, coupled, married, separated, divorced or widowed, please identify the racial identification(s) of you (previous/current) partner/spouse.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________

22. Please provide below your child(ren)’s first name(s), age, gender and identify if they are biological, step or adopted.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX F

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE- BIRACIAL ADULT

Introduction

I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences as a Biracial adult living in the U.S. If during the interview there are any questions you do not want to answer, please let me know and you do not have to answer them. You can also stop the interview at any time, if you do not want to continue.

I would like you to pick a pseudonym to replace your name, so that when your interview is transcribed your name will not be associated with your interview and demographic survey.

Do you have any questions?

- How do you currently racially identify?
  - What does identifying as ______ mean for you?

- Please describe your first experience when you were made aware of having a Black father and White mother?
  - How old were you at the time?
  - What did you feel about having a White mother and Black father?
  - At what age did you have your first racial encounter? What happened and how did you feel about it?
  - What role did your mother have in discussing your first racial encounter with you? What was your mother’s reaction, and suggestions to you?

- What are your personal thoughts about race?
  - How do you experience being both Black and White races?
  - Have ever felt accepted by one racial group over the other? Please describe what happened?
Do you embrace being two races or reject (dislike) being Biracial? Please describe your feelings?

Have you ever experienced one race getting treated better or worse than another? Please elaborate (explain) your answer and give some examples.

What are the benefits (good things) and downsides (unpleasant things) about being Biracial?

Where do you believe these thoughts and opinions come from? How has growing up with a White mother shaped your racial identity?

Please discuss the ways in which your mother has assisted in your understanding of race, and your racial identity.

Please share the nature of the relationship/dynamic between you and your mother.

What are the races of your closest friends?

Any ideas as to why your circle of friends reflects ______ race(s)?

What race groups do you feel most accepted by and why?

Who were your role models growing up (in the community, media, TV, sports, etc.)?

Please describe how your race influences your experiences at work, in school or college?

What feelings resonate (sit) with you behind your perception and understanding of race in this environment?

Were you part of any communities in college or in your community and if yes, what were they? (e.g, Black sorority/fraternity system, etc.)

What should I look forward to learning going forward? Is there anything I did not ask that you’d like to tell me about?
APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW GUIDE - WHITE MOTHER (CURRENTLY MARRIED TO AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHER)

Introduction

I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences as a White mother who has raised a Biracial child in the U.S. If during the interview there are any questions you do not want to answer, please let me know and you do not have to answer them. You can also stop the interview at any time, if you do not want to continue. I would like you to pick a pseudonym to replace your name, so that when your interview is transcribed your name will not be associated with your interview and demographic survey.

Do you have any questions?

➢ Please describe what it has been like raising Biracial children with your husband.

   o How do you describe your child’s racial identity?
   o What positive experiences and challenges have you had?
   o How did you and your husband raise your children regarding racial identity?

➢ What types of support did you receive from family or the community?

➢ What were the responses of your family and friends when you became pregnant and gave birth to your Biracial children?

   o Please describe in what ways were they supportive or not supportive.
   o Do you spend time and socialize your children with your family and with your husband’s family? If yes, how do you spend time?

➢ Did you have conversations about race with your children?
What were some of the topics that you explored during these conversations?

Did discussions about race change as your children grew older from child to adolescence ages? How so? Please discuss why.

Please describe the first time your child came to you about a racial encounter they experienced out in the community (e.g., with peers, teachers, neighbors).

What was your response (thoughts and feelings), guidance given?

Please describe the nature of the relationship/dynamic between you and your child/children.

What aspects of the Black culture did you adopt, if any? (history, music, food)

What types of toys did you buy for your child?

When purchasing dolls what were the races of the babydolls?

How’d you manage your child’s hair?

How did you parent your Biracial child(ren) with your husband?

What parenting strategies did you use with your Biracial children regarding racial identity development?

What recommendations do you have for providers to help White mothers raise Biracial children?
APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW GUIDE – WHITE MOTHER (SINGLE PARENT)

Introduction

I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences as a White mother who has raised a Biracial child in the U.S. If during the interview there are any questions you do not want to answer, please let me know and you do not have to answer them. You can also stop the interview at any time, if you do not want to continue. I would like you to pick a pseudonym to replace your name, so that when your interview is transcribed your name will not be associated with your interview and demographic survey.

Do you have any questions?

➢ Please describe what it has been like raising Biracial children.

  o How do you describe your child’s racial identity?
  o What positive experiences and what challenges have you had?
  o How did you raise your children regarding racial identity?

➢ What types of support did you receive from family or the community?

➢ What were the responses of your family and friends when you became pregnant and gave birth to your Biracial children?

  o Please describe in what ways were they supportive or not supportive.

➢ Did you have conversations about race with your children?

  o What were some of the topics that you explored during these conversations?

  o Did discussions about race change as your children grew older from child to adolescence ages? How so? Please discuss why.
Please describe the first time your child came to you about a racial encounter they experienced out in the community (e.g., with peers, teachers, neighbors).

- What was your response (thoughts and feelings), guidance given?

Please describe the nature of the relationship/dynamic between you and your child/children.

What aspects of the Black culture did you adopt, if any? (history, music, food)

What types of toys did you buy for your child?

- When purchasing dolls what were the races of the babydolls?

How’d you manage your child’s hair?

What parenting strategies did you use with your Biracial children about their racial identity development?

Do you have any recommendations for how providers can better support single White mothers who are raising Biracial children?
APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE – FAMILY INTERVIEW WITH WHITE MOTHER AND BIRACIAL ADULT CHILD

1. What does it mean to your family to be Biracial?

2. How did your family talk about race?

3. How did your family talk about race at home when you were growing up when a racial encounter occurred out in the community? (probe for examples)

4. What experiences do you think influenced how and when your family talked about race together? (probe for examples);

5. How has your family’s racial identity affected your interactions with extended family, friends, and the community?

6. Please describe the nature of the relationship between the two of you. What is the relationship dynamic between you two?
   a. What are the racial privileges/differences between the two of you?
   b. What conversations have you two had about these privileges/differences?

7. Is there anything else you would like to share that I have not asked about in the interview?

8. Couple and family therapists try to help families in a culturally sensitive way. Are there tips or suggestions you would like to provide to help Biracial families like yours, in particular when there is a racial encounter and a Biracial child comes home to process the experience with their White mothers?

9. What are some issues that other Biracial families may experience and will need help with in therapy?
10. What is the best way we can reach this population of families?