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As our society becomes increasingly multiracial, it is imperative that parents, teachers, counselors, and researchers consider the complex processes associated with crossing racial boundaries and occupying a biracial social location. Few investigations have explored racial socialization within biracial families, and none have empirically examined the relationship between racial socialization and the multidimensional components of racial identity.

Using a cultural ecological framework, this study explored the racial socialization messages used by mothers of biracial adolescents and evaluated the relative impact of these messages on the racial identity of biracial adolescents. Data for this study were taken from a public-use subsample of the longitudinal Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS; Eccles, 1997). For this investigation, participants were 104 biracial adolescents and their mothers.

Mothers of biracial adolescents engaged in a full range of racial socialization messages, including cultural, minority, mainstream, egalitarian, and no racial socialization messages. Racial socialization varied by maternal race, such that Black mothers were most likely to use mainstream socialization messages while White and other minority mothers were more likely to provide no direct racial socialization. In general, Black mothers provided more socialization than their White and other minority counterparts.

Mothers of biracial adolescents reported using a combination of racial socialization messages, which can be conceptually reduced into three racial socialization strategies, namely, proactive, protective, and no racial socialization strategies. Proactive socialization was associated with racial identity salience, such that biracial adolescents who received proactive racial socialization reported less racial salience. In addition, maternal race was associated with racial salience, private regard, and exploration, such that biracial adolescents with a White mother reported lower racial salience, private regard, and racial exploration.

RACIALLY SOCIALIZING BIRACIAL YOUTH: A CULTURAL ECOLOGICAL  
STUDY OF MATERNAL INFLUENCES ON RACIAL IDENTITY

by

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To Ronnie, Arie, and Rocco  
Thank you for your patience and unconditional love

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Biracial children have blurred the color lines and challenged our beliefs about race and racial categories. The racial identity of biracial youth is often presumed to be ambiguous (Root, 1996), fostered in a racially segregated society where race is used to define and categorize. Within this sociopolitical context, biracial youth are faced with the task of deciding whether and how to integrate different racial identities and distinct cultural heritages. Research on this population is limited, but has grown in volume and rigor over the last decade.

Investigations of biracial people illustrate the permeability of group membership and the fluidity of race and identity. Yet scholars and contemporary society continue to struggle with how to absorb biracial people's duality into society's conceptualization of race. Race is considered static and is used to delineate group membership (Gossett, 1997). However, race is "neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions" (Lopez, 1994, p. 7). Race does not define "who" we are, but rather "how" we are. Race, along with its respective social position, influences how we approach our relationships with others, how we process and interpret the world, and how we respond to experiences. Investigations of biracial people

explore the boundaries, intersections, and fluidity of race and facilitate a social deconstruction of race.

Researchers as well as lay persons in the general public often presume that the greatest struggle for biracial people is with racial identity development; biracial people are believed to experience negative psychological affects because of their marginal status and to be confused with respect to group membership. However, research on normative samples of biracial people suggests that biracial people do not feel overwhelmingly marginalized or rejected by others, are resolving their “other” status, and benefit from their mixed heritage by having increased contact and experiences with multiple cultures (Root, 1990; Stephan, 1992). In fact, they look similar to other minority groups with respect to peer relations, depression, substance use, delinquency, and school achievement (Cooney & Radina, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 1991) and in some cases fare better, reporting less ethnocentrism, higher academic achievement, and more positive levels of self-concept (Chang, 1974; Stephan & Stephan, 1991). Given the United States’ racially divisive context, an important question remains, “With respect to racial identity, how are biracial youth resolving their biracial status?”

Much attention has been given to the identity development process of biracial people. Early theoretical work proposed that biracial identity developed similarly to other group identity process models, beginning with a lack of racial awareness and culminating in an acceptance of a multiracial identity (Jacobs, 1992; Kich, 1992; Poston, 1992). Challenging this singular identity resolution, other scholars purport that biracial people have options (Stephan & Stephan, 1989); they transcend traditional racial categories and

have the right to identify themselves however they wish (Root, 1992) but acknowledge the social constraints that limit such choices (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). As autobiographical narratives illustrate, self-labeling is a personal choice, biracial people exercise their right to define their own experience (Funderburg, 1994; Jones, 1994; Williams, 1999), and self-labels are fluid and often multiple.

The identity development process of biracial people is complex, evolves over time, and shifts contextually. The resolution of multiple racial heritages cannot be understood without considering sociohistorical factors, political context, and family and community influences (Root, 1992). These influences weave a complex web that is unique to each individual and results in a myriad of identity resolutions. Biracial people identify as monoracial minorities, as monoracial Whites, or as biracial (which includes numerous labels such as mixed and multiracial), while some reject racial classifications and refer to themselves as human (Rollins, 2002). Further, choosing a particular self-label is distinctly different from one's internalized racial identity. An internalized racial identity reflects feelings of belonging and ownership in a group and the acquisition of group values and norms. A self-label is how an individual describes his or her racial heritage, and this description may or may not reflect an internalized racial identity. Gatson (2003) wrote that "by the time I was 9 or so, there had been a typical [response] established" (p. 21) to the inevitable question, "What are you?" She racially labeled herself "a light-skinned Black person, a biracial African American, mixed, and multiracial" (p. 21). But Gatson recognized she was more than a label: "Over time, I have gleaned more information about the components of both individual lives—my own and

others’—social conditions that have culminated in my current sense of identity” (p. 21). Self-labels and racial identities are complementary but are not always interchangeable.

Contrary to what is suggested by identity development theories, biracial people’s identity “is not something that individuals ‘achieve’ and then maintain unaltered for the remainder of their life” (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005, p. 5). It is evolutionary, continually being negotiated and adjusted (Rollins, 2002). Biracial people negotiate varying ethnic contexts with a unique capacity to shift their identity, aligning themselves with group norms and values. This cognitive flexibility reflects biracial people’s “ability to hold, merge, and respect multiple perspectives simultaneously” (Root, 1996, p. xxi).

Research has clearly established that biracial people’s identity development process is unique and inherently multifaceted. However, few investigations have explored the content of racial identity among biracial people. Phinney and Alipuria (1996) conducted a comparative analysis of racial identity using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), a measure developed to assess the content and salience of ethnic identity. However, they did not discuss any within-group variability in their biracial sample. Little is known about the self-labels biracial youth choose, how salient biracial youths’ racial identity is, whether they actively explore their racial heritage, and how positively they regard their group membership. Further, even less is known about how these components of racial identity are influenced by environmental factors, such as families.

It has been clearly documented that ethnic minority families employ racial socialization strategies (Phinney & Chavira, 1995), and these strategies are correlated

with identity development (Marshall, 1995). Often referred to as the first “R,” implicit and explicit lessons about race are often taught before reading, writing, and arithmetic (Lewis, 2003; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Like other minorities, biracial people face racism, discrimination, and prejudice. Discriminatory experiences are difficult to negotiate at any age, but as adolescents, youth are often ill-equipped to handle the complexity of such issues and may be overwhelmed by the emotions elicited by such experiences. It is imperative that parents of minority children prepare them for the inevitable racial barriers and discrimination that await them.

Broadly defined, racial socialization is race-related communication (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). This communication includes implicit and explicit messages about racial groups, race relations, and racial discrimination and is enacted verbally, by modeling, and through exposure to culture, beliefs, and values (Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Racial socialization facilitates knowledge and exploration of racial group history and traditions (Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, & Ocampo, 1993), impacts the developmental process of identity development (Stevenson, 1995), and influences specific components of racial identity including racial pride, affiliation, and acquisition of group norms and values (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004).

Few investigations have documented whether, how, and to what extent parents of biracial youth are imparting racial socialization strategies. Qualitative investigations suggest that it is through interactions with others, especially parents, that biracial youth gain insight regarding their racial heritage and their respective position within society

(Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Rollins, 2002). However, the relationship between racial socialization and the components of racial identity has not been investigated.

### Study Aims

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the racial socialization messages conveyed by parents of biracial adolescents and to evaluate the relative impact of these messages on biracial adolescents' racial identity. This investigation utilized a cultural ecological framework (Garcia Coll et al., 1996), which is grounded by an understanding that one's social position and experiences with racism and discrimination will impact developmental outcomes. The specific research aims were (a) to identify the racial socialization messages imparted by parents of biracial adolescents and (b) to examine the association between racial socialization and racial identity. The following research questions guided this investigation:

1. What racial socialization messages do parents of biracial adolescents use to protect their children and to prepare them for experiences with racial discrimination?
2. Do racial socialization messages vary by parental race?
3. Are racial socialization messages related to the racial identity (self-label, salience, private regard, exploration) of biracial adolescents?

### Overview

The current chapter introduced the problem under investigation, describing the current research on racial identity among biracial people, identifying the gaps in the literature, suggesting the importance of racial socialization in explaining variations in

racial identity among biracial youth, and concluding with an introduction to the theoretical framework and research aims. In Chapter II, the racial socialization and racial identity literatures are reviewed within a cultural ecological framework. Racial socialization is then discussed within the context of biracial families, and the impact of racial socialization on racial identity is described. The chapter concludes with the specific aims and hypotheses for the proposed investigation. Chapter III describes the methods and data analytic strategies used to examine the associations between parents' racial socialization messages and biracial adolescents' racial identity. Chapter IV presents the qualitative and quantitative analyses and the findings of the study. Chapter V, the concluding chapter, discusses the findings within a cultural ecological framework, identifies limitations of the investigation, and recommends future directions for investigation of biracial families.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the growth of the biracial population in the United States, the majority of racial identity research focuses on monoracial people. Much of the research has focused on describing the racial identity development process, yet we know little about the components of racial identity, especially among biracial people. Even more scarce in the literature are investigations examining the influence of racial socialization on the various dimensions of racial identity, and absent from the literature are empirical investigations that focus on the association between racial socialization and racial identity among biracial youth.

Because of the transgressive and fluid nature of biracial people's racial identity, investigations that explore the content and antecedents of their racial identity help us better understand social constructions of race, racial identity, and racial hierarchies. Thus, this chapter presents a conceptual framework that explicates cultural ecological influences on the developmental outcomes of biracial adolescents and highlights the core constructs (i.e., racial socialization and racial identity) used in this study. Then, the racial socialization and racial identity literatures are reviewed with specific reference to biracial youth and their families. The chapter concludes by summarizing the aims and hypotheses for this study.

## A Cultural Ecological Approach

The cultural ecological approach used to frame this investigation is an outgrowth of several ecological and cultural ecological theories and frameworks. The ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) emphasizes the interaction between the individual and the environment in which he or she develops. Bronfenbrenner suggested that development cannot be understood without accounting for the interaction between the individual and the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems across historical time.

Applying this ecological model, Burton, Obeidallah, and Allison (1996) acknowledged the potential developmental risks and opportunities in each of these contexts as they are impacted by social position. This is especially relevant for minorities, who often experience risk factors (e.g., racism and discrimination, segregation, lack of access to quality education) that could negatively impact normal, healthy development (Tatum, 1997; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Similar to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model, Ogbu (1985) argued that child development cannot be understood without considering the cultural and historical contexts in which children develop. This cultural ecological theory was developed in direct contrast to theories that pointed to cultural deficiencies and genetic inferiority when explaining the outcomes of minority youth (Cooper & Denner, 1998). Taken together, these theories suggest that child outcomes can be explained by examining the relationship between the individual, his or her cultural experience, and the environment.

In an attempt to provide a model for the study of developmental outcomes for minority children, Garcia Coll et al. (1996) proposed an integrative model that elaborates

these ecological approaches and specifically accounts for the experience of being a minority. The authors suggest that the experiences of minority children cannot be understood separate from an understanding and acknowledgement of their social position and the racism and discrimination that impact their environment, resources, and, ultimately, developmental outcomes. This integrative model developed by Garcia Coll and colleagues focuses on the influential contexts within which minority children develop.

Grounded by social stratification theory (Laumann, 1970), this integrative model emphasizes the importance of examining the influence of racism and discrimination in the lives of minority children and their families. This model can be delineated into two interconnected components that influence developmental competencies in children: (a) racial ecology and (b) cultural adaptations and family and child influences.

### *Racial Ecology*

Racial ecology refers to the racial context in which individuals are embedded, and it includes (a) social position variables (e.g., race, social class, ethnicity, gender); (b) racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression; and (c) segregation (residential, economic, social, and psychological). Social position variables are used to hierarchically organize children of color in American society. Being relegated to a particular group does not directly influence developmental outcomes for children; it is only when children are relegated to a group that faces racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression that they experience deleterious consequences (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). However, Garcia Coll and colleagues purport that the effects of these pervasive social mechanisms do not directly

influence child development; instead, they affect child development through the creation of segregated environments. Segregation, whether residential, economic, social, or psychological, directly influences developmental competencies of minority children. The racial ecology of minority children represents the unique context in which they develop, a context that is not shared with majority children and explains some of the variance observed between White children and children of color.

In the U.S. context, race and race mixing have a long-standing history as salient stratifying attributes (Merton, 1941). Racism, discrimination, and prejudice continue to subjugate minority groups via personal and institutional relationships. Thus, developmental outcomes (e.g., racial identity) are affected by one's racial ecology (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Biracial adolescents occupy more than one racial category and in some cases suggest a new or altered racial category. The differential social location of each overlapping racial category may account for varying degrees of identification. For example, a Black/White heritage suggests a different social location than an Asian/White heritage or Black/American Indian heritage given the historical context of each racial group and the current relationship between the groups. Further, biracial adolescents' experiences of racism and discrimination from within their own racial group(s) and the social and psychological segregation unique to each experience may impact racial identity development.

Racism, discrimination, and segregation influence the environments (e.g., schools, neighborhoods, health care) within which minority children learn, grow, and develop. In addition to the indirect effect of racism and discrimination previously discussed, Garcia

Coll and colleagues suggest that children's environmental experiences are directly affected by racism and discrimination via social interactions. This is especially relevant during adolescence, when youths' social environments expand at the same time that their cognitive flexibility increases, thereby heightening their awareness of and increasing their experiences with racism and discrimination (Hamm, 1998). Further, these environments become progressively more segregated as adolescents' peer groups become increasingly racially homogenous (Shrum, Creek, & Hunter, 1987). It is within these environments that children are directly affected by the pervasive social mechanisms of racism and discrimination (Garcia Coll et al. 1996).

#### *Cultural Adaptations and Family and Child Influences*

To negotiate promoting and inhibiting environments, families of color create adaptive cultures that reflect their experience as minorities. This adaptive culture differs from the dominant culture and accounts for and reflects both historical and current social experiences. Experiences of racism and discrimination and the adaptive culture environment synergistically influence family and individual characteristics and ultimately minority children's experiences and development (Garcia Coll et al., 1996).

Indirectly, racism and discrimination influence biracial youths' experiences within their family. Parents' own racial group (Katz & Kofkin, 1997) and experiences with racism and discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001) influence the racial socialization messages they are likely to impart, and these messages influence children's racial identity (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Stevenson, 1995). For example, White parents are more likely to use reactive strategies (i.e., answer questions)

and teach equality, whereas minority parents are more likely to use proactive strategies (i.e., making children aware of racial differences and preparing them for bias; Katz & Kofkin, 1997). Further, parents' race-related job stress and experiences of institutional discrimination have been associated with the use of minority socialization strategies, such as promoting the mistrust of Whites (Hughes & Chen, 1997). The messages parents impart influence how children understand their group's social position and their membership within that group.

In addition, youths' personal characteristics influence the racial socialization messages they receive from their parents (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1997). Gender, age, and personal experiences are differentially associated with racial socialization. Research suggests that girls are more likely to receive no racial socialization messages or messages promoting racial pride, while boys are more likely to receive messages about racial barriers and egalitarianism (Bowman & Howard, 1985). Black and Latino parents of older children (ages 10 to 17) report more reactive strategies and minority socialization messages, such as promoting the mistrust of Whites (Hughes, 2003), adjusting for the youth's current developmental stage and need for protection. Early adolescence is a critical period when racial identity is developed and youths must negotiate increasingly large and complex social networks (Hamm, 1998). Further, youths' own experiences with racism and discrimination prompt parents to use more protective racial socialization messages (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999). Thus, youth are not passive recipients of racial socialization; rather, adolescents directly and indirectly influence their racial identity development.

In summary, minority children's developmental competencies are the result of the collective influence of the child's own characteristics, family processes, and their adaptive cultural heritage (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Each of these influences is impacted by the environments in which children and families are nested, and children's experiences within these environments are directly and indirectly influenced by their racial ecology (social position, racism and discrimination, segregation).

### Conceptualizing Racial Socialization

For this investigation, racial socialization is used to encompass what researchers have termed racial-ethnic socialization (Hughes et al., 2006). Typically, racial socialization was used to describe Black parents' efforts to protect and prepare their children for experiences of racism and discrimination (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Peters). Ethnic socialization was used to describe Latino and Asian parents' efforts to help their immigrant children retain cultural beliefs, traditions, and affiliation; promote their cultural identity; and resist assimilation into mainstream American culture (Knight et al., 1993; Quintana & Vera, 1999). However, as the field has grown and progressed, racial and ethnic socialization have, in many cases, merged into a combination of strategies parents use to inform their children about issues regarding race and ethnicity, and include lessons about group pride and the transmission of cultural traditions and values. Racial socialization is used here to encompass both racial and ethnic socialization. Given the historical context of racial stratification in the United States, the term *racial socialization* signifies the importance of race as a social construction in the lived experiences of people of color. In addition, this centrality of race is integral to the

“twoness” biracial people often experience as they cognitively reconcile their unique racial heritage.

Racial socialization is the transmission of messages from adults to children that fosters an understanding and awareness of race, racism, and cross-race relationships (Hughes et al., 2006). This socialization includes intentional and unintentional messages and is a byproduct of proactive and reactive parenting practices (Hughes & Chen, 1999; Stevenson, 1994). Racial socialization is a reflection of one’s own racial heritage, received racial socialization, racial identity, class, gender, experiences with racism and discrimination, beliefs, and values (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Ogbu, 1983; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thornton, 1997). Further, racial socialization is a bidirectional process, influenced by the youth’s racial heritage, gender, age, and experiences with racism and discrimination (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Thomas & Speight, 1999). Scholars have conceptualized racial socialization in varying ways and have identified different dimensions of racial socialization. For this investigation, five synergistic dimensions of racial socialization, including minority socialization, cultural socialization, mainstream socialization, egalitarian socialization, and no racial socialization (Figure 1) are used to represent the racial socialization processes in biracial families.

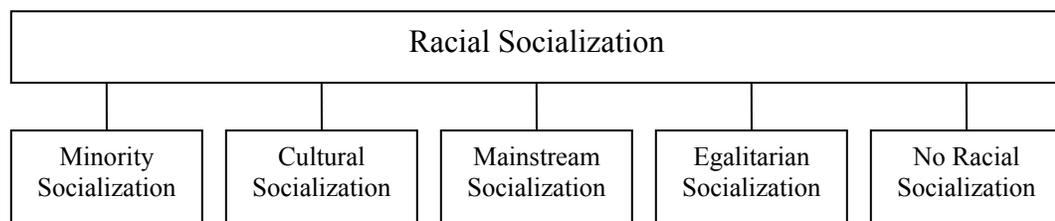


Figure 1. Dimensions of racial socialization.

## *Types of Racial Socialization*

### *Minority Socialization*

Minority socialization refers to the racial socialization strategies that parents use to prepare their minority children for and buffer and protect them from the racial and discriminatory practices of the dominant society. Ogbu (1982) suggests that parents socialize their children toward their future reality, which is dependent on their historical and contemporary economic, social, and political realities. Although minorities have successfully defeated formal legal barriers, informal remnants persist. People of color continue to experience implicit and explicit racism and discrimination. As a result, parents directly and indirectly socialize their children to deal with the social and economic realities of being a minority in America.

Both parents (Thornton, 1997) and adolescents (Phinney & Chavira, 1995) report experiences of discrimination. In preparation for the inevitable, and in an effort to counter the discriminatory experiences of their children, most African American parents talk to their children about race (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thornton, 1997). Parents use practical and developmentally appropriate strategies to advise children and adolescents about experiences with personal and institutional racism. The messages include awareness of racism (Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Stevenson, 1994; Thomas & Speight, 1999), direct teaching with regard to racial barriers and blocked opportunities (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Thornton et al., 1990), caution about interracial contact and the promotion of mistrust of White people (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Stevenson, 1995; Thomas & Speight, 1999;

Thornton et al., 1990), encouragement to stand up for one's rights (Thornton et al., 1990), and preparation for bias (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Stevenson, 1995).

### *Child Outcomes Related to Minority Socialization*

Several authors have posited relations between minority socialization and child outcomes, including more effective coping strategies (Phinney & Chavira, 1995), greater knowledge about one's group and greater understanding of racism and prejudice (Quintana & Vera, 1999), and advanced stages of racial identity development (Stevenson, 1995). Further, Bowman and Howard (1985) found that adolescents who received messages about racial barriers and who were cautioned about interracial contact had higher grades, and Miller (1999) suggested that minority socialization, along with racial identity, promoted resiliency among African American adolescents.

In contrast, a few investigations have found minority socialization, including promoting racial mistrust of Whites (Biafora et al., 1993), giving lessons about racial awareness, and providing Black pictures and toys in the home (Marshall, 1995), to be associated with deviant behavior and poor academic success. Parents must carefully negotiate how, when, and to what extent they enact minority socialization. Understanding racism and discrimination and being prepared for bias can help youth deal with inevitable experiences of racial conflict, but to avoid detrimental outcomes, parents have to carefully balance those messages with messages of pride and culturally enriching experiences (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Scholars suggest a fine line between preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust, both of which are often subsumed under minority socialization (Hughes et al., 2006). More research is needed to fully understand the

complexity that exists within this racial socialization strategy. Nonetheless, minority socialization is an important racial socialization strategy that has proven to be a protective factor for many minority youth.

### *Cultural Socialization*

Despite the importance of preparing minority children for experiences with racism and discrimination, Stevenson (1995) found that parents' socialization messages also included historical lessons that promote group pride and empowerment. *Cultural socialization* refers to the cultural conditioning (Boykin & Toms, 1985) that occurs within the family system. This conditioning includes transference within the family context of "modes, sequences and styles of behavior" (Boykin & Toms, 1985, p. 42) that reflect traditions and values directly related to cultural ethos. The transmission of cultural beliefs and values is embedded in interpersonal relationships and daily activities. Parents, siblings, extended kin, and the home environment model and represent cultural ethos to children. Thus, children are inundated with both articulated and unarticulated messages about who they are, how they should behave and interact, and how they are connected to their "people."

Whereas parents may not always consciously make the connection between ethos and their socialization practices, research suggests that parents do culturally socialize their children to be proud of their racial heritage (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Thornton et al., 1990). This type of socialization is empowering and supportive and includes direct teaching and messages of racial pride (Bowman and Howard, 1985; Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Thornton et al., 1990),

historical traditions (Thornton et al., 1990), and religious principles (Stevenson, 1995; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thornton et al., 1990). Cultural socialization is the most often cited racial socialization strategy employed by parents (Hughes & Johnson, 2001), and cross-ethnic findings suggest that it is a normative component of parental socialization for minority parents (Hughes, 2003).

#### *Child Outcomes Related to Cultural Socialization*

Cultural socialization is positively associated with racial identity (Marshall, 1995; McHale et al., 2006; Stevenson, 1995), self-esteem (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002), and anger management (Stevenson, 1997) and is negatively associated with psychosocial problems (Caughy et al., 2002) and depressive symptoms (McHale et al., 2006). Cultural socialization has also been considered a reflection of the home environment. Caughy et al. (2002) used the Africentric Home Environment Inventory to measure the racial socialization context of the home environment. This measure was adapted from the HOME-Preschool Inventory by rewording items to make them culturally relevant to African American families. The items assessed toys, artwork, religious figurines, books, music, pictures of family, periodicals, and African fabric and clothing. In this socioeconomically diverse sample, the majority of families had possessions defined as Africentric in their home. Findings suggested that the children who were surrounded in their homes by items reflecting their heritage (physical cultural socialization) had a greater wealth of academic factual knowledge and more well-developed problem-solving skills than other African American children.

### *Mainstream Socialization*

Contrary to minority and cultural socialization, mainstream socialization decenters race. Individuality, as opposed to group membership and solidarity, is encouraged, and discussions of race, racism, and discrimination are avoided (Hughes et al., 2006). Mainstream socialization messages include self-development, positive character traits, and an endorsement of mainstream cultural institutions and values (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, Cameron, & Davis, 2002). Mainstream socialization messages are universal messages with no mention of race or inequalities and are used to prepare children to be successful within the dominant cultural context.

Parents socialize their children to be successful within mainstream society by emphasizing the importance of negotiating the dominant culture and downplaying racial group affiliation. Boykin and Toms (1985) discuss the multiple contexts within which Black socialization occurs and recognize mainstream American society as an important socializing context. Using Boykin and Toms's framework, Thornton et al. (1990) identified several racial socialization messages consistent with mainstream socialization including achievement and hard work, good citizenship, and moral virtues. Further, Stevenson et al. (2002) found that Cultural Endorsement of Mainstream (CEM), which highlights the importance of majority culture institutions and values for the advancement of Blacks and deemphasizes racism, discrimination, and African culture, was the racial socialization message most often reported by girls who had not personally experienced

racism or discrimination. Further, older adults report higher rates of mainstream socialization messages than younger adults (Sanders Thompson, 1994).

### *Egalitarian Socialization*

Similar to mainstream socialization, egalitarian socialization deemphasizes racism and discrimination. Egalitarian socialization focuses on promoting equality and acceptance of all people. Parents espousing egalitarian messages encourage their children to look beyond skin color, treat everyone equally, and celebrate all people. Egalitarian socialization subsumes what scholars have identified as the color-blind perspective (Orbe, 1999) and egalitarianism (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes et al., 2006).

A color-blind philosophy emphasizes the humanistic similarities among people, maintaining that teaching about race is illogical and perpetuates stereotypes and unscientific falsehoods (Orbe, 1999). Parents espousing a color-blind perspective consciously avoid the use of race in discussions and descriptions of people in an attempt to transcend the limiting notion of race. Few investigations have included color-blind messages; of those that have, findings suggest that the usage of color-blind messages is reported only by White parents (Hamm, 2001) and parents of biracial youth (Orbe, 1999). It has been argued that only from a place of privilege can an individual choose not to see race or to raise their children to be color-blind (Rosenblatt, Karis, & Powell, 1995).

Egalitarian socialization messages emphasize the equality of races and minimize or neglect the presence of racial inequalities and discrimination. In a national cross-sectional investigation of racial socialization and academic achievement among Black adolescent and young adults, Bowman and Howard (1985) found that 12% reported

receiving egalitarian messages. These messages included messages about interracial equality, multiethnic coexistence, and an acknowledgement of the expanded opportunities available for Blacks. Using the National Survey of Black Americans data set, Thornton et al. (1990) found that 6% of Black parents reported egalitarian messages as the most important racial socialization message they impart to their children.

Empirically, very little is known about mainstream or egalitarian socialization messages or the impact of these messages on child development. Some scholars suggest that youth who are only socialized within a mainstream and/or egalitarian worldview may be unprepared to handle the complexity inherent in race relations (Hughes & Chen, 1999).

#### *No Racial Socialization*

Silence may be an attempt to avoid the harsh reality of racism and discrimination in our society or a reflection of the difficult nature of such a subject; however, silence speaks volumes. The absence of messages may be just as powerful and important as overt messages (Hughes et al., 2006). However, investigations of racial socialization have primarily focused on the content, antecedents, and consequences of racial socialization messages, but do not report the percentage of parents who report they do not racially socialize their children (e.g., Marshall, 1995; Quintana & Vera, 1999).

In some cases, one can deduce the percentage of parents who are not reporting any racial socialization by evaluating the percentages of racial socialization reported. For example, Stevenson, Reed, and Bodison (1996) found that 49% of Black young adults reported that they had talked in their families about racism and discrimination; thus, it

can be inferred that about 51% of young adults in this sample had not done so. Likewise, Thornton et al. (1990) found that 63.6% of Black parents reported racially socializing their children; thus, we can assume that about 36.4% did not report using any racial socialization strategies.

#### *Outcomes Related to No Racial Socialization*

To date, two investigations have systematically examined no racial socialization as a racial socialization strategy. Using data from the National Survey of Black Americans, Bowman and Howard (1985) found that 38% of Black youths reported receiving no racial socialization. When compared to youth who received racial socialization, youth who had not received any racial socialization had lower self-efficacy scores and lower academic achievement. Using the same data set, Demo and Hughes (1990) found that when compared to adults who had not reported any parental racial socialization, those who received egalitarian messages and preparation for bias had stronger feelings of closeness to other Black people and a stronger commitment to Black separatism. No racial socialization is more than an omission; it is an approach to socialization, one that may be more prevalent among biracial families. More research is needed to explore the impact of this absence, or silence, of racial socialization.

In summary, racial socialization gives meaning to and provides a context for racial consciousness, identity development, and cross-race relationships. Racial socialization consists of verbal and nonverbal, conscious and unconscious, and direct and indirect race-related communication that includes cultural, minority, mainstream, egalitarian, and no racial socialization messages. This communication, which must be

understood within the larger sociohistorical context, is influenced by personal and environmental characteristics and is a synergistic process between the parent and child.

### *Racial Identity Development*

Racial identity has been broadly defined as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). Researchers have conceptualized many components of racial identity including, but not limited to, affiliation and belonging, exploration, salience, private regard, and racial ideologies (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Sellers et al., 1998). Further, Helms (1990) suggests it is important to delineate between a person’s self-label, or racial categorization, and his or her racial identity. Given the transgressive nature of biracial people’s racial ideologies, this delineation is an important consideration when investigating the racial labels and racial identity of a biracial sample.

W. E. B. DuBois was one of the early scholars who discussed racial identity development. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), he wrote, “One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (pp. 45-46). This “double consciousness” describes the internal struggle that people may experience when trying to explore their racial identity, simultaneously trying to be true to themselves and find their place in a world that is less than hospitable. DuBois specifically spoke of the struggle for Blacks, but his thesis can be extended to

biracial people, whose “consciousness” is further complicated by their multiple racial heritages.

Group identity models were developed to describe the process of racial identity development among non-White people. These models vary in the number and content of stages or statuses, but all begin with a lack of racial awareness and appreciation and end in an acceptance of and appreciation for all people (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1983; Cross, 1971; Helms, 1989; Parham, 1989). With the exception of Helms (1989), these models are static stage models that describe the process of identity development across the life span. Helms (1989), expanding on Cross’s model of nigrescence, developed the people of color racial identity model. Acknowledging the critiques of stage models, she coined the term “status” to denote the mutually interactive dynamic process of identity development and to explain behavior rather than assign persons to static categories of development. In addition, Helms argued that individuals exhibit schemas that reflect more than one stage and purported that all people, regardless of socioracial group membership, experience a racial development process that can simultaneously include behaviors from more than one stage. However, the content of each status is different for minority and majority groups due to the inequity of power in society. As such, these models are inappropriate for discussing biracial identity development because biracial individuals’ multiple heritages could include both minority and majority lineage.

Scholars have developed models specifically designed to address the issues of identity development for multiracial people. Many of these models borrow from the previously discussed models; however, they have been reframed to explain the unique

experiences of multiracial people. All of these models are stage models, in which children begin with a lack of racial awareness and understanding and, with the exception of the model proposed by Root (1992), develop an integrated multiracial identity (Jacobs, 1992; Kich, 1992; Poston, 1992). Root recognized that all people do not follow the same developmental trajectory and all identity resolutions do not end in a multiracial appreciation. She indicated four ways in which multiethnic people come to terms with their racial heritage: (a) by passively accepting their multiracial heritage, (b) by actively identifying with a single racial group, (c) by identifying with both (or all) racial groups, or (d) by identifying oneself as a member of a new racial group. In contrast to earlier models that assumed one path to a healthy development of self, Root recognized the existence of equifinality in choosing one's identity.

#### *Components of Racial Identity*

Racial identity is multifaceted and dynamic, and it changes over time (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Phinney, 2003; Romero & Roberts, 2003; Sellers et al., 1998). As previously discussed, numerous investigations have described the process of racial identity development and theorized which identity resolution is most socially and psychologically advantageous. An overwhelming majority of studies evaluating the components of racial identity have used either the MEIM (Phinney, 1992) or the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1998) to investigate the racial identity of monoracial samples. Conceptualizations of racial identity have included varying components. For this investigation, racial identity is conceptualized to include self-label, salience, private regard, and exploration (Figure 2).

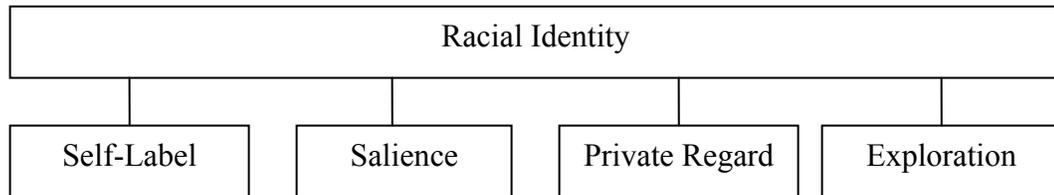


Figure 2. Components of racial identity.

*Self-label.* Theorists (Root, 1992), scholars (Haug, 1998; Williams, 1999), and popular culture writers (Funderburg, 1994) all agree that it is the right of individuals to identify themselves as they choose. Racial identity is “centered in the person, not in societal constructions” (Williams, 1999, p. 34). A biracial person has the right to own his or her own truth and “name her or his own experience” (Williams, 1999, p. 34). In an anthropological investigation of mixed identity in Belize, Haug (1998) concluded that “children need to be given the opportunity to construct their own ideas about their own identity and the freedom to voice them” (p. 63).

*Salience.* Sellers et al. (1997) developed the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), which describes four dimensions of racial identity in African Americans: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology. Sellers et al. (1998) maintain that these dimensions are “independent, but interrelated” portions of one’s identity (p. 287). Inherent in the MMRI framework are the beliefs that individual group members differ in their racial identities at any given time and, as previously discussed, that identity is dynamic. Racial salience, taken from identity theory (Stryker, 1987), describes the extent

to which a person's racial classification is a germane part of one's self-concept at a particular time. Sellers et al. (1998) described salience "as a mediating process between the more stable characteristics of identity and the way individuals perceive and behave in specific situations" (p. 280). Salience represents the importance and pride attributed to membership in a racial group and influences daily functioning.

*Private regard.* Private regard is a measure of how positively one feels about his or her racial group and his or her membership in it. It is "analogous to racial self-esteem" (Sellers et al., 1998) and has been an integral dimension and focus of investigations of racial identity development (e.g., Clark & Clark, 1939). Private regard has been positively associated with lower levels of self-reported alcohol use among adolescents (Caldwell, Sellers, & Bernat, 2004) and higher levels of personal self-esteem (Caldwell, Zimmerman, Bernat, Sellers, & Notaro, 2002). Phinney and Ong (2007) referred to this dimension as "evaluation and ingroup attitudes," suggesting it is more than an internalization of society's appraisal; rather, one must evaluate his or her own racial group before committing to it or developing a sense of affiliation and pride.

*Exploration.* Exploration is a key component of racial identity. It refers to the process of "seeking information and experiences relevant to one's ethnicity [racial group]" (Phinney & Ong, 2007). It includes all opportunities taken to explore racial group customs, traditions, beliefs, and values. Exploration is often thought of as a stage encountered in adolescence (Erikson, 1968); in this investigation it is a dimension of racial identity reflecting frequent exploration of and experiences with one's racial group(s) and cultural traditions.

Separately, these dimensions do not adequately represent the complexity of racial identity, yet taken together they illustrate a multifaceted sense of self understood through one's own racial lens. By investigating the self-ascribed racial labels used by biracial youth, the salience of their racial heritage, the importance they attribute to their racial group(s) and their membership in them, and their exploration process, we can gather important information about the content and influential nature of racial socialization.

Racial identity is the most often investigated outcome of racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006). Much of the racial socialization literature focuses on the content and delivery methods parents use to pass on cultural traditions and preparation for bias. Few investigations have considered the associations between racial socialization and other outcomes. Racial socialization has been associated with facilitation of racial knowledge and acquisition of group norms, increased pride, salience, and affiliation (Knight et al., 1993; Umana-Taylor & Fine, 2004) and with racial identity development (Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, 1995).

Racial identity is an outgrowth of racial socialization, which reflects how well individuals have been socialized to feel connected to their group (whatever "group" they choose to identify with) and how competent they feel within that group and with that decision. The family, as well as other social contexts (e.g., school, neighborhood), provides opportunities for biracial adolescents to try on different self-labels, to explore their racial heritages, to develop a sense of community, and to evaluate the relevance of their racial heritage with regard to their self-concept.

*Racial Socialization in Biracial Families: Influences on Racial Identity*

Historically, the racial socialization literature has focused on the experiences of African American families. Empirical investigations evaluating the racial socialization experiences of other racial/ethnic groups are limited, and fewer investigations have evaluated racial socialization within a biracial context. Whereas families raising biracial children and adolescents are confronted with some of the same challenges as other minority families, they also have unique challenges inherent in their children's integration of two distinct heritages.

Several authors found that open communication in biracial families fosters racial awareness, reduces inconsistent messages, minimizes ambiguity, increases familial interaction, and decreases the effects of conflictual messages (Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Jacobs, 1992; Pinderhughes, 1995; Rosenblatt et al., 1995). Rosenblatt et al. (1995) conducted an ethnographic study of Black/White interracial couples ( $n = 42$ ) and their children. Parents felt a great responsibility to shield their children from racial injustice and discrimination. In order to rear biracial children without negative psychological effects, parents believed they had to socialize their children to have positive, well-adjusted identities. According to the authors, parents talked to their children about their racial identities and instructed their children about how to respond in certain situations. Parents also thought it was important to expose their children to appropriate books, films, television programs, and adult role models. These additional socializing agents provide increased opportunities for parents to openly communicate with their children about

important racial issues they may confront. Communication impacted children's abilities to negotiate the unique circumstance of being biracial.

Orbe (1999), summarizing the scant literature available on biracial families, outlined four approaches to racial socialization that biracial families use. First, some parents embrace the Black (or minority) experience, adopting the beliefs and values of one group without recognition of the other (majority) group. Believing they have no other option, these families affirm society's minority appraisal of their children and trust that group affiliation and affirmation will help their children traverse inevitable racism and discrimination. Second, rejecting historical conceptualizations of race, some parents address issues of identity and belonging differently, depending on the current situation, phenotype, and context. For example, a child in a single-parent home, living in a homogenous racial environment and being socialized within that one group, may adopt its traditions, beliefs, and values and singularly identify with that group. Further, the child's physical racial appearance may dictate parental socialization, either by constraining socialization or providing parents with opportunities to "use" their biracial child's ambiguous appearance in situations in which some benefit is gained by choosing one group over another. Third, parents espousing a color-blind approach believe that love is blind and racial differences are unimportant. This humanistic worldview is based on the assertion that racial categories are unscientific and socially used to denigrate and separate. Parents who espouse a color-blind approach do not deny the historical consequences of race; however, these parents do not want to perpetuate its significance by referring to their child racially, maintaining that their child is human. Fourth, some

parents endorse a “best of both worlds” approach, “affirming the uniqueness of each of the cultures that they represent” (Orbe, 1999, p. 175). This multiracial approach is committed to social consciousness and teaches about both cultures equally. Further, parents who espouse a multiracial approach support children’s individual choices with respect to their racial identity and communicate openly about the prejudice and discrimination people of color face.

Parents draw on their own experiences and group values to prepare children for experiences with racism and discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Parents of biracial youth have to make a decision about whether to draw from their own intergenerational models of socialization, attempt to socialize their children within the context of the child’s other racial heritage, or integrate both heritages in their socialization strategies. This decision is even more difficult given the historic relationship between racial groups and varying social positions.

White parents were more likely to racially socialize their children by answering questions and teaching equality, whereas African American parents were more likely to emphasize awareness of racial differences and preparation for bias (Katz & Kofkin, 1997). In a qualitative investigation of Black and White parents’ socialization beliefs and practices, Hamm (2001) found that in contrast to Black parents who supported and encouraged positive relationships with White peers, White parents were more likely to endorse cross-ethnic contact and exposure, but did not actively support or encourage cross-ethnic relationships. White parents were also more likely to defer socialization efforts to the school, acknowledging their highly segregated lifestyle, living

arrangements, and social experiences. For White parents, cross-ethnic relationships are bound contextually and are not integrated into daily life. As a result, their children have little cross-ethnic contact (Hamm, 2001). White parents' lack of racial socialization messages, unsupportive stance with regard to cross-ethnic relationships, and deference of socialization could be attributed to the privileged position of White Americans. Minority parents cannot afford to defer socialization efforts to others, nor can they avoid cross-ethnic contact. Minority youth, even in predominately minority environments, cannot escape institutional racism and discrimination.

Racial differences in racial socialization messages reflect the differential experiences of each group and suggest that White parents may not inherently possess the knowledge and experience needed to enact minority socialization strategies. White parents lack the intergenerational modeling that minority parents use as a valuable resource in their child-rearing beliefs and values. Further, White parents are more likely to react to their child's experiences and queries as opposed to proactively equipping them with the tools needed to traverse racist and discriminatory institutions.

In summary, the beliefs and values of parents with respect to their biracial child's racial status within society will influence how racial socialization messages are enacted within child rearing, including exposure to history, traditions, food, and language; direct teaching and reactive discussions about racism and discrimination; provision of a culturally appropriate home environment; and contact with extended kin and social networks. Ultimately, these racial socialization messages influence how biracial children understand their racial status and how they choose to resolve their "twoness."

## Hypotheses

Empirical research has explored racial socialization, racial identity, and the associations between racial socialization and racial identity with monoracial populations. However, little is known about racial socialization in biracial families or the associations between racial socialization and racial identity for biracial youth. The purpose of this investigation was to explore the racial socialization messages conveyed by parents of biracial adolescents and to evaluate the associations between racial socialization messages and biracial youths' racial identity. The specific research questions and hypotheses addressed were as follows:

1. What racial socialization messages do mothers of biracial adolescents use with their children?
2. Does the content of racial socialization messages vary by maternal race?

*Hypothesis 1:* Racial socialization messages will vary by mothers' race, such that minority mothers will be more likely to report using minority socialization messages than White mothers, and White mothers will be more likely to report using egalitarian socialization and no racial socialization messages. No differences are expected in the use of cultural and mainstream socialization messages.

3. Are racial socialization messages from mothers related to the racial identity (self-label, salience, private regard, exploration) of biracial adolescents?

*Hypothesis 2:* The content of racial socialization messages will influence the likelihood of biracial adolescents' selecting a monoracial or biracial self-label.

*Hypothesis 3:* The content of racial socialization messages will be associated with biracial adolescents' racial identity (salience, private regard, exploration), such that cultural and minority socialization messages will be associated with higher racial salience, higher private regard, and more exploration, and mainstream, egalitarian, and no racial socialization messages will be associated with lower racial salience, lower private regard, and less exploration.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### Data Source

Data for this study are from a public-use subsample of the longitudinal Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS; Eccles, 1997). The purpose of MADICS was to describe and understand the influences of social context on the psychological determinants of behavioral choices and developmental trajectories during adolescence. Data were collected from multiple informants in an economically and ethnically diverse sample of adolescents and their families.

Five waves of data have been collected from the adolescents, their parents (both mothers and fathers), and one older sibling via in-home and telephone interviews and self-administered questionnaires. Data collection began in 1991 as the adolescents entered middle school (7th grade), and the most recent wave was conducted three years after high school graduation. The current investigation utilizes data from the primary caregiver, typically mothers, and the adolescent at two time points, Wave I (1991) and Wave III (1993). These waves were chosen to evaluate the impact of early socialization on identity during a critical period when identity development is salient.

The sample at Wave I included 1,482 families who had a seventh grader attending a public seventh- and eighth-grade junior high school. The adolescent sample was approximately evenly split with 51% males and 49% females. The adult sample, which

included mostly mothers and teachers, was disproportionately female. The adult sample was 67% Black and 33% White.

### Sample

The sample for this study consists of 104 biracial adolescents who were, on average, 14.1 ( $SD = 0.45$ ) years of age at Wave III. Among them, 51.9% are female and 48.1% are male. For this investigation, biracial refers to a person whose biological parents are from two different racial groups. Three approaches were used to identify a biracial sample. First, biological mothers and fathers who were both involved in the investigation were identified. Of those identified, adolescents were selected if mothers and fathers identified themselves as being members of different racial groups. In an attempt to limit this investigation to first-generation biracial adolescents, parents who identified themselves as biracial were excluded from this sample. Second, adolescents were selected if the mother identified the adolescent as biracial. Third, adolescents were selected if the adolescent identified him- or herself as biracial. Because of the fluidity of racial identity and the multiple identity choices biracial people may select, adolescents were included if they were identified by at least one of the approaches at either time point.

Twelve biracial categories were identified, including Black/White (25%,  $n = 26$ ), Black/American Indian (19.2%,  $n = 20$ ), Latino/White (8.7%,  $n = 9$ ), Biracial (8.7%,  $n = 9$ ), American Indian/White (6.7%,  $n = 7$ ), Asian/White (6.7%,  $n = 7$ ), Black/other (4.8%,  $n = 5$ ), Black/Asian (2.9%,  $n = 3$ ), Black/Latino (2.9%,  $n = 3$ ), Asian/American Indian (1%,  $n = 1$ ), Asian/Latino (1%,  $n = 1$ ), and other (1%,  $n = 1$ ).

Primary caregivers were predominately female (87.5%,  $n = 91$ ) and will be referred to as mothers throughout. Mothers ranged in age from 30.5 to 55.1 years ( $M = 40.6$ ,  $SD = 5.8$ ). Mothers racially identified themselves as Black (44.7%,  $n = 46$ ), White (40.8%,  $n = 42$ ), Asian (7.8%,  $n = 8$ ), Latino (3.9%,  $n = 4$ ), American Indian (1%,  $n = 1$ ), Human (1%,  $n = 1$ ), and other (1%,  $n = 1$ ). Mothers' race was coded as Black, other minority (including Asian, Latino, American Indian, Human, and other), and White.

Household income ranged from less than \$5,000 to greater than \$100,000, with a median income between \$55,000 and \$59,999. Income was coded as 0 for less than \$50,000 and 1 for greater than or equal to \$50,000. In terms of marital status, mothers identified themselves as married (63.5%,  $n = 66$ ), divorced (14.4%,  $n = 15$ ), never married (10.6%,  $n = 11$ ), separated (9.6%,  $n = 10$ ), or widowed (1.9%,  $n = 2$ ). Marital status was coded as 0 for married and 1 for not married (i.e., divorced, never married, separated, or widowed).

For this investigation, the attrition rate between Wave I and Wave III was 20.2% ( $n = 21$ ). To assess whether respondents who dropped out of the study differed from those who remained in the study at Wave III, chi-square analyses were conducted to compare the groups on demographic variables (maternal race, child gender, income, and marital status) and the independent variable (racial socialization). There was a significant difference between those who left the study and those who remained at Wave III in terms of marital status,  $\chi^2(1, N = 104) = 5.62, p = .02$ , and reported usage of minority socialization messages,  $\chi^2(1, N = 104) = 5.10, p = .02$ .

In this investigation, 85.7% ( $n = 18$ ) of mothers who left the study were married and 14.3% ( $n = 3$ ) were not married. Of those who remained in the study at Wave III, 57.8% ( $n = 48$ ) were married and 42.2% ( $n = 35$ ) were not married. Further, of the mothers who left the study, 52.4% ( $n = 11$ ) did not report using minority socialization messages and 47.6% ( $n = 10$ ) reported using minority socialization messages. Of those who remained in the study at Wave III, 77.1% ( $n = 64$ ) did not report using minority socialization messages and 22.9% ( $n = 19$ ) reported using minority socialization messages.

## Measures

### *Racial Socialization Messages*

Racial socialization, which was measured at Wave I, was assessed by measuring reported incidences of cultural, minority, mainstream, egalitarian, and no racial socialization messages. In a face to face interview mothers were asked the following open-ended questions:

1. “What kinds of things are you doing for (child) to protect (him/her) from being discriminated against because (he/she) is (race)?”
2. “Are you trying to teach (him/her) any special things to help (him/her) deal with discrimination?”
3. “What are you teaching (him/her)?”

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The MADICS research team conducted qualitative analysis and coding of the open-ended responses which resulted in summarized qualitative text.

For this investigation, the summarized qualitative text was coded as cultural, minority, mainstream, egalitarian, or no racial socialization messages, as suggested by the racial socialization literature. Racial socialization messages were coded in terms of presence or absence of each socialization message, with presence (yes) coded as 1 and absence (no) coded as 0. Two raters, coding all responses, achieved 86% interrater agreement. Points of disagreement were resolved by discussion so that 100% consensus was reached.

#### *Cultural Socialization*

Maternal responses coded as cultural socialization included statements indicating that mothers were focused on developing a sense of pride, fostering group affiliation, and passing on cultural traditions and values (see Appendix A for a complete list of messages). Responses suggest that mothers educate their children about current events and the history, heritage, and legacy of their people and encourage youth to take part in cultural activities. Youth receive messages about the legacy of their cultural heritage and are encouraged to trust in a higher power as a strategy for dealing with racism and discrimination.

#### *Minority Socialization*

Maternal responses coded as minority socialization included statements indicating that mothers were preparing youth for experiences with racism and discrimination (see Appendix B for a complete list of messages). Responses suggest that mothers teach youth to expect racism and discrimination, to fight against it, and how to respond to it, and that mothers serve as role models for how to fight against historical racial atrocities, civil

rights violations, and present-day inequities. Youth are encouraged to be strong and stand up for their rights but are also warned that they must work harder, be competitive, and outperform others to combat the racism and discrimination they will face. Adolescents are cautioned that race is not an excuse, they cannot be hostile, they must exercise self-control, and, above all else, they must be prepared—prepared for an opportunity to shine and also prepared for inevitable inequities.

#### *Mainstream Socialization*

Maternal responses coded as mainstream socialization included statements indicating that mothers socialized youth to be successful in mainstream America by encouraging them to do their best, be smart, and be respectful (see Appendix C for a complete list of messages). These responses represent universal messages used to develop the necessary skills to be successful. Mainstream socialization messages are intended to develop self-esteem, develop positive character traits, and encourage a strong work ethic. Mothers teach children how to communicate with people, how to be a leader, and the importance of getting a good education. Mothers report being invested and involved in their children's lives and desire to teach them the life lessons necessary for success. These messages do not include any explicit reference to race, racism, or discrimination.

#### *Egalitarian Socialization*

Maternal responses coded as egalitarian socialization included statements indicating that mothers encouraged a color-blind perspective and promoted the equality of races (see Appendix D for a complete list of messages). These responses suggest that mothers teach their children about other cultural groups and encourage interactions with a

diverse group of people. Equality and acceptance are valued, and children are taught to respect all people, not to be prejudiced, and not to assume others are prejudiced.

#### *No Racial Socialization*

The absence of a response is considered no socialization. Mothers who did not respond to the racial socialization questions are coded as no socialization. Also, those who responded that they do nothing are also coded no socialization. However, mothers who indicated no racial socialization messages but also provided responses to the questions were not coded in this category.

#### *Development of Racial Socialization Strategies*

Coding for individual socialization messages (as listed above) revealed that 58.7% ( $n = 37$ ) of mothers reported using more than one type of racial socialization message. There were eight multiple socialization messages reported by mothers (Table 1).

Consistent with qualitative analysis procedures (Patton, 1990), cross-classifications of the racial socialization messages were analyzed to evaluate how the racial socialization data could be organized according to the multiple racial socialization messages used and “to look for patterns that were not immediately obvious” (p. 411). Content analysis of the racial socialization messages revealed three strategies of racial socialization: proactive, protective, and no racial socialization (Table 2). Six themes of racial socialization messages are subsumed in the proactive socialization strategy. Six themes of racial socialization messages are subsumed in the protective socialization strategy. Responses that indicated mothers did nothing related to racial

Table 1

*Multiple Socialization Messages*

No.	Socialization message	Socialization message	Socialization message	<i>n</i>	%
1	Minority	Mainstream		13	35.1
2	Mainstream	Egalitarian		6	16.2
3	Cultural	Mainstream		4	10.8
4	Cultural	Minority	Mainstream	4	10.8
5	Minority	Mainstream	Egalitarian	3	2.9
6	Cultural	Mainstream	Egalitarian	3	2.9
7	Minority	Egalitarian		3	2.9
8	Cultural	Minority		1	2.7

socialization and no mention of any racial socialization are subsumed in the no racial socialization strategy.

*Confirmation of Coding Scheme for Racial Socialization Strategies*

Two methods were used to evaluate the validity of the coding scheme and the strategies identified. Multiple raters assigned individual messages and combinations of messages to each defined strategy (proactive, protective, and no racial socialization) to evaluate the validity of the strategies identified and the coding schema. Interrater agreement was 90%. In addition, predictive validity was assessed to explore whether or not the racial socialization strategies developed from the qualitative responses were similar to a quantitative measure of racial socialization that was collected at Wave III

Table 2

*Racial Socialization Strategies*

Strategy	Messages	Description
Proactive socialization (32.7%, <i>n</i> = 34)	Mainstream socialization (14) Egalitarian socialization (7) Mainstream & egalitarian (6) Cultural & mainstream (4) Cultural & mainstream & egalitarian (3) Cultural socialization (0)	Mothers focus on strengthening the child's sense of self, believing in one's ability, and passing on cultural traditions and values. Mothers emphasize equality and a color-blind worldview with no preparation for bias.
Protective socialization (27.9%, <i>n</i> = 29)	Minority & mainstream (13) Minority socialization (5) Cultural & minority & mainstream (4) Minority & egalitarian (3) Minority & mainstream & egalitarian (3) Cultural & minority (1)	Mothers prepare their children for experiences with racism and discrimination, but this preparation for bias is tempered by encouraging the child to be the best they can be and strengthening the child's sense of self as a part of a racial group. They are encouraged to stand up for their rights, but also to exercise self-control, be respectful, and not forget where they came from. Mothers emphasize the importance of equality for all people, but prepare their children for discriminatory experiences.
No racial socialization (39.4%, <i>n</i> = 41)		Mothers either stated they didn't racially socialize their children or did not respond to either racial socialization question.

from minority mothers ( $n = 47$ ). Four items (see Appendix F) measuring racial socialization were computed into a mean score ( $\alpha = .61$ ). Responses were scaled from 1 to 6, with higher scores indicating more frequent racial socialization. The quantitative measure of racial socialization accounted for 94% of the variance in racial socialization strategies ( $\eta^2 = .94$ ,  $n = 47$ ). Minority mothers whose qualitative responses were coded as proactive or protective socialization ( $M = .17$ ,  $SD = .73$ ,  $n = 28$ ) were compared to mothers whose qualitative response or lack of response was coded as no racial socialization ( $M = -.24$ ,  $SD = .57$ ,  $n = 19$ ). Analysis of variance results indicated a significant difference between groups,  $F(1, 45) = 4.24$ ,  $p = .045$ . Mothers whose strategies were coded as no racial socialization reported significantly lower scores on the quantitative measure of racial socialization than did mothers whose strategies were coded as proactive or protective.

#### *Racial Identity*

Racial identity items were developed by the staff of MADICS (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Racial identity, which was measured at Wave III in a self-administered questionnaire, includes four dimensions: exploration, private regard, racial salience, and self-label (Appendix E). Exploratory factor analysis (Table 3) revealed three factors consistent with the racial identity literature (exploration, private regard, and salience). Salience, private regard, and exploration items are differentially scaled; thus scores were standardized and mean scores were created. Accordingly, three subscales were maintained and self-label was measured as a simple dichotomous variable.

### *Self-Label*

Self-label is determined by the adolescent's response to an open-ended question about their race, "What is your race/ethnicity?" In bivariate and multivariate analyses, self-label was coded biracial equals 0 and minority equals 1. Adolescents' who self-identified as White were dropped out of the analyses because chi-square analyses evaluating self-label by racial socialization revealed cell sizes less than 5.

### *Salience*

Salience is measured with a mean score created from five items (cronbach's alpha = .77). Racial salience is the extent to which race is an important part of one's self-concept. Adolescents were asked, for example, "How important is your racial background to the daily life of your family?" Responses are scaled from 1 to 6, with higher scores reflecting greater salience.

### *Private Regard*

Private regard is measured with a mean score created from four items (cronbach's alpha = .65). This variable assesses how positive the adolescent feels about their racial group. Examples include "People of my race/ethnicity have a culturally rich heritage" and "I have meaningful traditions because of my race/ethnicity." Responses are scaled from 1 to 5, with higher scores reflecting more positive regard for their racial group.

### *Exploration*

Exploration is measured with a mean score created from three items (cronbach's alpha = .71) included in the adolescent face-to-face interview and self-administered questionnaire. These items measure the adolescents' exploration of and experiences with

Table 3

*Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings for Racial Identity Measure Items*

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Close community	-.07	.37	.41
Rich heritage	-.01	-.03	.74
Meaningful traditions	.23	.19	.80
Supportive of each other	.14	.28	.46
Importance of race	.69	.27	.09
Important to know background	.74	.45	-.08
Proud of race	.56	.01	-.37
Talk in family about race	.77	.08	.19
Talk in family about discrimination	.70	.01	.32
Study traditions and history	.32	.68	.16
Participate in community activities	.04	.90	.02
Celebrate special Days	.27	.56	.29

Note: Eigenvalues for each factor were  $> 1.0$ . Factor 1 accounted for 32% of the variance, Factor 2 accounted for 14% of the variance, and Factor 3 accounted for 10% of the variance.

his or her racial group(s) and cultural traditions. For example, adolescents were asked, “How often do you participate in community activities with people of your racial background?” Responses are scaled from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating a greater sense of exploration.

## Analytic Strategy

### *Research Question 1*

The first research question was as follows: What racial socialization messages do mothers of biracial adolescents use with their children?

To address this question, open-ended responses were analyzed thematically. Descriptive analyses were used to explore the racial socialization used by mothers of biracial adolescents. Messages were first analyzed individually and then combinations of messages were explored to develop socialization strategies.

### *Research Question 2*

The second research question was as follows: Does the content of racial socialization messages vary by maternal race?

It was hypothesized that racial socialization messages would vary by mothers' race such that minority mothers would be more likely to report using minority socialization messages and White mothers would be more likely to report using egalitarian socialization and no racial socialization messages. No difference was expected in the use of cultural and mainstream socialization messages. The relationship between mothers' race and racial socialization was explored with chi-square analyses.

### *Research Question 3*

The final research question was this: Are racial socialization messages from mothers related to the racial identity (self-label, salience, exploration, private regard) of biracial adolescents?

It was hypothesized that the content of racial socialization messages would be associated with the self-label selected and that racial socialization messages would be associated with aspects of biracial adolescents' racial identity (salience, exploration, private regard), such that cultural and minority socialization messages will be associated with higher racial salience, higher private regard, and more exploration, and mainstream, egalitarian, and no racial socialization messages will be associated with lower racial salience, lower private regard, and less exploration.

A series of regression analyses was used to examine the relationship between racial socialization and racial identity. Logistic regression analyses with a dichotomous dependent variable were used to investigate the effect of the mothers' use of racial socialization on the self-label of biracial adolescents. Using self-label (0 = biracial, 1 = minority) as the dependent variable, maternal race and racial socialization were simultaneously entered as predictors.

Three separate regression equations were used to investigate the associations between racial socialization practices and measures of racial identity, including salience, private regard, and exploration. Using racial identity (salience, private regard, exploration) as the dependent variable, maternal race and racial socialization were simultaneously entered as predictors.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The present investigation examined the use of racial socialization by mothers of biracial adolescents and evaluated the associations between racial socialization and racial identity. This chapter describes the racial socialization messages and racial socialization strategies used by mothers of biracial adolescents and presents findings from regression analyses evaluating the associations between racial socialization strategies and measures of racial identity among a sample of biracial adolescents.

#### Descriptive Analysis

The majority of mothers of biracial youth reported using racial socialization messages. Among mothers who engaged in racial socialization, 41.3% ( $n = 26$ ) of mothers used a single socialization message, whereas 58.7% ( $n = 37$ ) reported imparting multiple socialization messages.

#### *Racial Socialization Messages*

Maternal racial groups differed in their use of racial socialization messages (Table 4). Mainstream socialization was the most coded message among Black mothers (58.7%,  $n = 27$ ), while the absence of any socialization message was the most often coded racial socialization message among White mothers (47.6%,  $n = 19$ ) and other minority mothers (56.3%,  $n = 9$ ). Cultural socialization was the least reported message among the five racial socialization messages. Only 13% of Black mothers ( $n = 6$ ) and 11.9% of White

Table 4

*Frequency of Racial Socialization Messages by Maternal Race*

Black	White	Other minorities
Message (Frequency)	Message (Frequency)	Message (Frequency)
Mainstream Soc (27)	No Racial Soc (20)	No Racial Soc (9)
Minority Soc (15)	Mainstream Soc (16)	Mainstream Soc (5)
No Racial Soc (14)	Minority Soc (10)	Minority Soc (4)
Egalitarian Soc (12)	Egalitarian Soc (7)	Egalitarian Soc (3)
Cultural Soc (6)	Cultural Soc (5)	Cultural Soc (0)

mothers ( $n = 5$ ) were coded as using cultural socialization messages. None of the other minority mothers were coded as using cultural socialization messages

Chi-square analyses revealed significant differences between maternal racial groups with regard to racial socialization message. There were significant differences between Black and White mothers who were coded as mainstream and no racial socialization (Table 5). The results show that 58.7% of Black mothers were coded as using mainstream socialization messages, compared to 38.1% of White mothers,  $\chi^2(1, n = 88) = 3.73, p = .05$ . In addition, 47.6% of White mothers, compared to 30.4% of Black mothers were coded as no racial socialization,  $\chi^2(1, n = 88) = 2.74, p = .10$ .

Similarly, there were significant differences between Black and other minority mothers who were coded as mainstream socialization and no racial socialization (Table 6). The results show that 58.7% of Black mothers were coded as using mainstream

Table 5

*Racial Socialization Messages of Black and White Mothers*

	Cultural socialization	Minority socialization	Mainstream socialization	Egalitarian socialization	No Racial socialization
Black	13% (n=6)	32.6% (n=15)	58.7% (n=27)	26.1% (n=12)	30.4% (n=14)
White	11.9% (n=5)	23.8% (n=10)	38.1% (n=16)	16.7% (n=7)	47.6% (n=20)
$\chi^2$ (df=1)	.03	.84	3.73**	1.15	2.74*

\*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

socialization messages, compared to 31.3% of other minority mothers,  $\chi^2(1, n = 62) = 3.58, p = .06$ . In addition, 56.3% of other minority mothers, compared to 30.4% of Black mothers were coded as no racial socialization,  $\chi^2(1, n = 62) = 3.39, p = .07$ . There were no significant difference between White and other minority mothers on any racial socialization messages.

### Racial Socialization Strategies

#### *Proactive Socialization Strategy*

Mothers who use the proactive socialization strategy focus on strengthening the child's sense of self, believing in one's ability, and passing on cultural traditions and values. Mothers emphasize equality and encourage a color-blind worldview with no preparation for or direct teaching about racism and discrimination. In this study, 32.7% ( $n = 34$ ) of mothers used proactive socialization messages.

Table 6

*Racial Socialization Messages of Black and Other Minority Mothers*

	Cultural socialization	Minority socialization	Mainstream socialization	Egalitarian socialization	No Racial socialization
Black	13% (n=6)	32.6% (n=15)	58.7% (n=27)	26.1% (n=12)	30.4% (n=14)
Other Minorities	0% (n=0)	25% (n=4)	31.3% (n=5)	18.8% (n=3)	56.3% (n=9)
$\chi^2$ (df=1)	2.31	.32	3.58*	.35	3.39*

\* $p < .10$ .

*Protective Socialization Strategy*

Mothers who use the protective socialization strategy focus on preparing their children for experiences with racism and discrimination, but this preparation for discrimination is tempered by encouraging their children to be the best they can and strengthening their children's sense of self as a member of a racial group. Mothers encourage their children to stand up for their rights but also to exercise self-control, be respectful, and not forget where they came from. Mothers emphasize the importance of equality for all people but explicitly prepare their children for discriminatory experiences. In this study, 27.9% ( $n = 29$ ) of mothers used protective socialization messages.

*No Racial Socialization Strategy*

Mothers that indicated they did nothing related to racial socialization or omitted a response to racial socialization questions were categorized as no racial socialization. In

this study, 39.4% ( $n = 41$ ) of mothers did not use any racial socialization messages to prepare their youth for discriminatory experiences.

*Racial Socialization Strategies and Maternal Race*

Maternal racial groups differed in their use of racial socialization strategies (Table 7). Proactive socialization was the most coded strategy among Black mothers (39.1%,  $n = 18$ ), while the absence of any socialization was the most often coded racial socialization strategy among White mothers (45.2%,  $n = 19$ ) and other minority mothers (56.3%,  $n = 9$ ).

Table 7

*Frequency of Racial Socialization Strategies by Maternal Race*

Black	White	Other minorities
Strategy (n)	Strategy (n)	Strategy (n)
Proactive Strategy (18)	No Racial Soc Strategy (19)	No Racial Soc Strategy (9)
Protective Strategy (15)	Proactive Strategy (13)	Protective Strategy (4)
No Racial Soc Strategy (13)	Protective Strategy (10)	Proactive Strategy (3)

There were racial differences in the use of racial socialization strategies (Table 8). There were significant differences between Black and White mothers and Black and other minority mothers who were coded as no racial socialization strategy. The results show that 28.3% of Black mothers were coded as using no racial socialization messages, compared to 45.2% of White mothers,  $\chi^2(1, n = 88) = 2.74, p = .10$ , and 56.3% of other

minority mothers,  $\chi^2(1, n = 62) = 4.06, p = .04$ . There were no significant differences between White mothers and other minority mothers on any racial socialization strategies.

Table 8

*Racial Socialization Strategies by Maternal Race*

Variable	Black	White	Other Minorities
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Proactive socialization	39.1 (18)	31.0 (13)	18.8 (3)
Protective socialization	32.6 (15)	23.8 (10)	25.0 (4)
No racial socialization	28.3 (13)	45.2 (19)*	56.3 (9)**

\*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

## Multivariate Analyses

### *Correlations*

Table 9 presents a correlation matrix of demographic variables (adolescent gender, maternal race, marital status, household income), racial socialization strategies (proactive socialization, protective socialization, no racial socialization), and measures of racial identity (self-label, salience, exploration, private regard). Maternal race was associated with racial socialization and measures of racial identity. The results show that maternal race explained a modest amount of variance in the use of no racial socialization strategy  $r(104) = -.20, p = .04$ , racial salience  $r(79) = .37, p = .001$ , and private regard  $r(79) = .22, p = .05$ . In addition, marital status explained a modest amount of variance in

Table 9

*Pearson Correlations Between Demographic, Racial Socialization, and Racial Identity Variables (N = 104)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Adolescent gender	–										
2. Maternal race	.08	–									
3. Marital status	.05	.17	–								
4. Income	-.09	-.11	-.51**	–							
5. Proactive socialization	.01	.12	.07	-.03	–						
6. Protective socialization	.08	.09	-.21*	.06	-.43**	–					
7. No racial socialization	-.09	-.20*	.12	-.03	-.56**	-.50**	–				
8. Self-label	-.18	-.05	-.09	.12	-.20	.18	.03	–			
9. Salience	.11	.37**	.00	.11	-.17	.11	.07	.10	–		
10. Private regard	.11	.22*	.06	-.07	-.02	.11	-.08	-.14	.22	–	
11. Exploration	.05	.22	-.04	-.08	.03	.00	-.03	-.13	.48**	.40**	–

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .001$ .

the use of no racial socialization strategy  $r(104) = -.21, p = .04$ . There were no significant associations between the remainder of the demographic variables, racial socialization strategies, and measures of racial identity. Multivariate analyses were conducted to examine the associations between maternal race and racial socialization strategies and racial identity.

### *Racial Identity of Biracial Youth*

#### *Racial Self-Label*

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the relation between maternal race and racial socialization strategies on the likelihood that adolescents would choose a minority self-label. Logistic regression analyses indicated that maternal race and racial socialization strategies were not related to the likelihood of a biracial adolescent's choosing a minority self-label versus a biracial self-label (Table 10).

#### *Salience, Private Regard, and Exploration*

In separate ordinary least squares regression analyses, salience, private regard, and exploration were regressed on maternal race and racial socialization strategies (Table 11). Racial socialization strategies were not significantly related to salience, private regard, or exploration, with the exception of proactive socialization strategy, which was significantly related to salience. Maternal race was significantly related to salience, private regard, and exploration.

Maternal race and racial socialization strategies accounted for 24% of the variance in racial identity salience. Having a White mother ( $\beta = -.48, p = .000$ ) and having a mother who was coded as using a proactive strategy ( $\beta = -.22, p = .05$ ) were

associated with lower levels of racial identity salience,  $F(4, 74) = 5.85, p = .000$ . That is, biracial youth with a White mother or whose mother was coded as using a proactive racial socialization strategy were less likely to acknowledge their racial background as a germane part of their everyday life.

Maternal race and racial socialization strategies accounted for 14% of the variance in private regard. Having a White mother ( $\beta = -.32, p = .008$ ) was associated with lower levels of private regard,  $F(4, 74) = 2.88, p = .03$ . That is, biracial youth with a White mother were less likely to have positive feelings about their racial group and their membership within that racial group.

Maternal race and racial socialization strategies accounted for 10% of the variance in racial identity exploration. Having a White mother ( $\beta = -.30, p = .01$ ) was associated with lower levels of racial identity exploration,  $F(4, 77) = 2.00, p = .10$ . That is, biracial youth with a White mother were less likely to seek information and experiences relevant to their racial background.

Table 10

*Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Self-Label*

	Logit	SE	Odds
Maternal race			
Other minority	.18	.55	1.19
White	.17	.79	1.18
Racial socialization strategy			
Proactive strategy	-.68	.62	.51
Protective strategy	.59	.63	1.81
Constant	-.32	.50	.73
-2 log likelihood	87.94		
$\chi^2$	3.73		
df	4		
<i>N</i> = 67			

*Note.* Dependent variable is 1 if self-label is minority and 0 if self-label is biracial. Black is the reference category for maternal race. No racial socialization is the reference category for racial socialization.

Table 11

*Summary of Simultaneous Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Salience, Private Regard, and Exploration*

Variable	Salience			Private regard			Exploration		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Maternal race									
Other minority	-.20	.24	-.09	.16	.25	.08	.10	.28	.04
White	-.70	.16	-.48***	-.44	.16	-.32***	-.47	.19	-.30***
Racial Socialization Strategy									
Proactive strategy	-.34	.17	-.22**	.00	.18	.00	.02	.20	.01
Protective strategy	.03	.20	.01	.23	.20	.14	-.03	.23	.02
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.24			.14			.10	
<i>F</i>		5.85***			2.88**			2.00*	

Note: Black is the reference category for maternal race. No racial socialization strategy is the reference category for racial socialization strategy.

\* $p \leq .10$ . \*\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .01$ .

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

In the 2000 census, 6.8 million Americans identified as more than one race, and 2.9 million of the individuals were under age 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). These statistics were reported almost a decade ago, and demographers have predicted that our society will only become increasingly more diverse (Nakazawa, 2003). Biracial people challenge the legitimacy of racial boundaries, shattering the myth of racial categorization. They face racism and discrimination as they negotiate a racially segregated society and work to resolve their unique dual racial heritage. Their unique duality sometimes positions them as members of, yet separate from, the very racial group with which they identify. This unique existence requires that parents of biracial youth “engage in a process of racial socialization that will prepare their children to understand and effectively negotiate the complexities of race relations” (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005, p. 59).

Previous research has demonstrated the importance of racial socialization among minority youth (Hughes et al., 2006). Yet little is known about how racial socialization is enacted within biracial families and what effect racial socialization has on the racial identity of biracial adolescents. The current study contributes to existing research on racial socialization and racial identity by exploring these processes within biracial families. The specific research aims were to (a) identify the racial socialization messages

imparted by parents of biracial adolescents and (b) examine the association between racial socialization and racial identity.

A cultural ecological framework was used to describe racial socialization and its influence on racial identity. This framework recognizes the centrality of racial ecology and cultural adaptations of families in the development of minority youth, acknowledging the direct and indirect influence of racism and discrimination. Thus, racial identity is influenced by the individual characteristics of the child and parents, the adaptive culture created by families, and the racial context within which families and individuals are positioned (including social location, racism and discrimination, segregation, and environment). For this investigation, racial socialization was evaluated as one influential factor in the development of racial identity among biracial adolescents. Racial socialization occurs within the family as influenced by the adaptive cultures of the parents' racial heritage, individual characteristics of the adolescent, environmental context, segregation, and racism and discrimination, all of which are influenced by social location.

Initially this investigation was conceptualized to compare minority and White mothers of biracial youth. However, exploratory analyses revealed differences between Black mothers of biracial youth and other minority mothers of biracial youth. In fact, other minority mothers of biracial youth looked more similar to White mothers of biracial youth than Black mothers of biracial youth.

## Racial Socialization in Biracial Families

In this study, the majority of mothers of biracial adolescents reported some form of racial socialization. Mothers of biracial adolescents reported imparting the full range of racial socialization messages suggested in the literature: cultural, minority, mainstream, egalitarian, and no racial socialization messages.

Mainstream socialization was the most often reported racial socialization message. Mothers of biracial adolescents used mainstream socialization messages to emphasize individual success and positive character. Mothers of biracial adolescents racially socialized their adolescents to be positive, be a leader, and get a good education. In addition, mothers used mainstream socialization messages to promote a positive self-concept, confidence in self and abilities, self-acceptance, and self-respect in their adolescents. Further, mothers openly communicated with their adolescents and encouraged them to communicate effectively with others, be a good listener, work hard, and use their abilities to accomplish their goals.

Although mainstream socialization did not explicitly address race, it was positioned against the backdrop of racial discrimination, suggesting that these messages were more than simply promoting positive development. Mothers used mainstream messages to protect their youth from the deleterious effects of racism and discrimination. Within the context of racial socialization, the meaning and intent of “be the best you can” communicates the necessity of being better than others and always trying harder. It conveys the sentiment that you have to strive to be the best you can in an effort to combat the inevitable effects of being a minority.

While mainstream messages were the most frequently reported racial socialization messages, no racial socialization was a close second. The lack of any socialization is more than an omission; it reflects an approach to racial socialization by mothers of biracial youth. Conversations about race can be difficult and uncomfortable for both mothers and adolescents. However, even in the 21st century, interracial families are subject to controversy and discrimination. A mother's choice to not communicate about race, racial experiences, and discrimination will influence how biracial adolescents interpret their racial heritage. Potential reasons for the lack of racial socialization by mothers of biracial adolescents include that (a) mothers espouse a color blind perspective (Orbe, 1999), (b) mothers are uncomfortable with issues of race and discrimination, (c) mothers do not see a need for racial socialization, or (d) mothers are unprepared to provide racial socialization. Regardless of why, maternal silence with respect to racial socialization may position mothers in a reactive racial socialization stance (Brown, Tanner-Smith, Lesane-Brown, & Ezell, 2007). That is, mothers may react to situations as they arise as opposed to taking a more proactive stance, which may include discussions about group pride and inequalities, providing biracial adolescents the tools necessary to negotiate a racially polarized society and experiences of racism and discrimination.

In this study, mothers of biracial adolescents did provide minority and egalitarian socialization messages, albeit less frequently than mainstream and no racial socialization messages. Biracial mothers desire to shield and protect their biracial children from injustice (Rosenblatt et al., 1995). To do this, mothers of biracial adolescents educated their adolescents about racism and discrimination, provided instruction about how to

handle discriminatory experiences, were role models working to combat prejudicial practices, ensured that the adolescents were aware of their rights, and taught the adolescents they must work harder and outperform others to get ahead.

In contrast, some mothers focused on promoting equality and avoided direct teaching about racism and discrimination in their racial socialization messages. Mothers who used egalitarian socialization messages encouraged interactions with persons of other races, educated their adolescents about multiple cultures, stressed the importance of universal respect for all people, and emphasized that all people are equal and thus one should not be prejudiced or assume everyone else is prejudiced.

Unlike other investigations, in this study cultural socialization was the least likely message to be reported by mothers of biracial adolescents, and it was never reported alone; it was always used in conjunction with other messages. Using cultural socialization messages, mothers of biracial adolescents educated their youth about history, traditions, and current events, and encouraged them to attend cultural activities. They taught the adolescents to be proud of their racial heritage and encouraged them to have a positive view of their race. The limited account of cultural socialization messages among this sample may be a function of how the question, which referred to how mothers were preparing their children for experiences of racism and discrimination, was asked. Some mothers may not see cultural socialization practices as relevant for preparing their children for experiences with racism and discrimination.

As hypothesized, racial socialization messages varied by maternal race; however, the direction of the hypotheses was not fully supported. As hypothesized, White mothers

were more likely to report using no racial socialization and there were no differences in the reported use of cultural socialization. Contrary to the hypotheses, Black mothers were more likely than White mothers and other minority mothers to report using mainstream socialization messages and there were no differences in the reported use of minority socialization or egalitarian socialization messages.

Overall, Black mothers reported more racial socialization messages than White mothers or other minority mothers. Specifically, Black mothers reported greater use of cultural, minority, mainstream, and egalitarian socialization messages. There are several plausible reasons for this finding. First, Black mothers are more likely to have received racial socialization and thus are more likely to convey intergenerational lessons of pride and preparation for bias. Second, Black mothers have more direct knowledge of and experience with racism and discrimination. This predisposition may manifest in heightened awareness of the need for racial socialization and/or increased knowledge of what racial socialization is. Third, Black mothers embody a minority experience, which gives them greater insight into and connection with their minority adolescents' racial socialization needs. Black mothers' personal experiences may prompt the initiation of minority socialization messages. Fourth, their minority status may help them approach this topic with greater confidence and competence than White mothers. Fifth, Black mothers' social networks may reinforce their socialization practices, enhance their adolescents' knowledge and awareness of racial group traditions and values, and transmit racial pride.

These differences suggest that mothers may not inherently possess the knowledge and resources needed to provide racial socialization for their biracial youth. Biracial adolescents exist along the margins of segregated groups and lack a clearly defined biracial community that could provide meaning and support to guide racial socialization practices. Further, biracial people are raised by parents who do not share their racial experience; consequently, adolescents may not directly identify with either monoracial parent (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Thus, race-specific parent education may help parents negotiate this complex socialization process.

Mainstream socialization and no racial socialization messages were overwhelmingly reported by Black, White, and other minority mothers of biracial youth, but these groups differed in reported frequencies of these messages. Among Black mothers, mainstream socialization was the most used socialization message, while among White and other minority mothers no racial socialization was most often reported. Although all mothers racially socialize their children, findings suggest that minority parents may use more direct and deliberate socialization methods, while White mothers' socialization is more likely to be indirect and unintentional. Mothers socialize their children toward their future reality (Ogbu, 1982). White mothers may be socializing their youth to be White (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005), which could prove challenging given that the biracial adolescent inhabits a different social location than the White mother.

While some mothers reported using single racial socialization messages, most used a combination of messages. Previous research suggests that combining racial

socialization messages about managing racism and discrimination with education, awareness, and racial pride better equips youth to negotiate their minority status (Stevenson et al., 2002). The majority of mothers of biracial adolescents used either proactive or protective racial socialization strategies. Mothers focused on developing their adolescents' sense of self, passing on cultural traditions and values, and preparing the adolescent for inevitable experiences of racism and discrimination. However, a significant proportion of mothers reported that they do not specifically do anything to protect their child from being discriminated against because of their race. As previously discussed, choosing not to racially socialize is a socialization strategy and may have implications for adolescent development. Even when mothers are silent with regard to racial socialization, they may transmit messages about the importance of race, racial interactions, and racism and discrimination (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). In the absence of direct socialization regarding discrimination, adolescents may be left to develop their own conceptualization of race and their own interpretation of racial inequities. It is imperative that mothers explicitly communicate about these issues to prepare biracial adolescents to negotiate the boundaries and limitations of their unique social location (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005).

When mothers of biracial adolescents provide proactive and/or protective socialization, they increase opportunities for communication about their adolescents' racial heritage, transmit family beliefs and values, and prepare biracial adolescents to respond to questions about their racial heritage. In addition, mothers who provide proactive and/or protective socialization may help biracial adolescents explore their

duality, negotiate their transcendent racial space, and acknowledge their unique social location (Nakazawa, 2003).

Protective socialization is used the least by mothers of biracial adolescents. However, this protective strategy, which explicitly prepares youth for discriminatory experiences while emphasizing the importance of equality, is used more frequently by Black mothers as opposed to White or other minority mothers. White mothers may not report racial socialization if they perceive it to be an undesirable or socially unacceptable parenting strategy (Hughes, 2003).

#### Predicting Racial Identity

As hypothesized, proactive socialization was associated with racial identity salience. Biracial youth who received proactive socialization, compared to those who received no racial socialization, were less likely to acknowledge their racial background as an important part of their daily life. This finding supports the argument that no racial socialization is a socialization strategy and has implications for racial identity development. When parents are silent with regard to racial heritage and the consequences of group membership race may become more important and central to the daily life of biracial youth. Conversely, when parents communicate about race, heritage, and group membership biracial youth may experience dissonance with regard to their duality which could lead to less stable and more fluid conceptualization of one's racial group membership and racial identity.

Contrary to the hypotheses, protective socialization did not predict self-label, private regard, or exploration. This is a surprising finding given the theoretical and

empirical support for these processes. However, much of this work is grounded in the monoracial experiences of minority youth and families. Very little research focuses specifically on racial socialization within biracial families or the content of racial identity for biracial adolescents. A biracial experience may be fundamentally different from the experiences of other previously studied groups; hence, previous theorizing and findings cannot adequately describe this unique racial heritage. Further, racial socialization is difficult to measure given the many unintentional and unconscious ways that parents communicate messages about race (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Mothers in this investigation may not have fully reported their racial socialization strategies. Furthermore, because racial socialization strategies represent an interwoven combination of messages, they may not be distinct enough to delineate differences in racial identity.

Maternal race was a significant predictor of racial salience, private regard, and exploration among biracial adolescents. Biracial adolescents with a White primary caregiver reported lower racial salience, lower private regard, and lower racial exploration. This is an interesting finding given that only one racial socialization strategy, was a significant predictor of racial identity. Thus an important question is, through what other mechanism does parental race influence adolescent identity? As previously discussed, it is the racial ecology and cultural adaptations of families in which adolescents are nested that influence their racial identity. The parents' race is reflective of this entire racial context that socializes the adolescent. Further, in this investigation the mothers only reported on the racial socialization they themselves were using, which is only half the socialization biracial youth receive. Because of the dual heritage of biracial

adolescents, it is imperative that both biological parents' racial socialization be evaluated to fully understand the socialization processes within biracial families.

In summary, mothers of biracial adolescents are racially socializing their children. Racial socialization varied by maternal race, such that Black mothers were most likely to use mainstream socialization messages while White and other minority mothers were more likely to not provide any direct racial socialization. Further, Black mothers generally provided more socialization than their White and other minority counterparts. Proactive racial socialization was associated with racial identity salience and maternal race was associated with racial salience, private regard, and exploration.

This study is the first investigation specifically exploring racial socialization among biracial families; as such, it provides a significant contribution to the literature. The conceptualization of racial socialization strategies is exploratory and represents an important theoretical contribution. Further, no other investigations have empirically examined the relationship between racial socialization and racial identity among the biracial population. Little is known about how these processes are related and what role maternal race plays in the development of racial identity among biracial adolescents.

#### Study Limitations and Suggestion for Future Research

The findings from this study highlight racial socialization processes among mothers of biracial adolescents, identify important differences between Black, White, and other minority mothers in their usage of racial socialization strategies, and illuminate the influence of maternal race on the racial identity of biracial adolescents. In addition, this investigation has important implications for race-specific parent education. Yet, despite

the importance of this exploratory investigation and the new insight it provides, this investigation is not without limitations, and much work remains to be done.

First, this investigation used secondary data that were not designed to investigate racial socialization and racial identity among biracial families. Further, this study was detached from the data collection process and initial data reduction, which are important steps in qualitative research analysis. Thus, this investigation used summarized qualitative data to identify racial socialization messages among mothers of biracial adolescents. Due to the lack of access to original transcripts, the analysis and interpretation were limited.

Second, the racial socialization questions specifically referred to racism and discrimination; thus, they elicited responses that reflect socialization specifically related to combating racism and discrimination and may not reflect the full range of messages mothers use to communicate about race, group membership, and race relations. In addition, the specific reference to racism and discrimination may have evoked uneasiness with the subject and limited responses. This uneasiness may also account for the large number of omissions and limited cultural socialization responses. More research is needed to evaluate racial socialization without a specific reference to racism and discrimination. Removing this specific reference to racism and discrimination may reveal a broader range of socialization messages used by parents of biracial youth.

In addition, adolescents are not merely recipients of racial socialization; they are active participants in a bidirectional process (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Future research should include the adolescents' perception and/or receipt of racial socialization as an

important factor in an evaluation of racial socialization. Further, racial socialization is imparted by both parents and the extended family (Fatimilehin, 1999; Sanders Thompson, 1994). Future investigations of racial socialization should examine the impact of these additional socializing agents. These influences are especially relevant given the multiple heritages of biracial adolescents. This additional socialization may be complementary or contradictory to what the primary caregiver provides and may account for differences in racial identity development. Furthermore, the role of neighborhoods and school context should be considered important socializing agents and should be included in future investigations.

Findings from this investigation support a modest link from the racial socialization provided by mothers to racial identity. Thus, a suggestion for future research is to undertake a theoretical consideration of what other mechanism(s) parental race operates through to influence the racial identity of biracial youth.

Third, the nature of the racial socialization questions did not allow for an evaluation of the extent to which mothers used these messages. It is unclear if mothers actually used these messages or just thought they were important. Further, it is unclear if mothers used these messages once or if they weave racial socialization messages into their daily communication.

More qualitative work is needed to further understand the extent to which racial socialization strategies are used in biracial families. Ethnographic observations would provide more information about the nuances of racial socialization, including the inadvertent, unspoken socialization that often goes unmeasured. This work could be used

to develop a qualitative measure of racial socialization for empirical investigation of biracial youth and families. Further exploration of biracial family processes and biracial adolescent development could potentially be used to create race-specific parenting education curricula for parents with biracial children, both biological and transracially adopted.

Fourth, the racial identity measures may not be sensitive enough to detect the variations within the racial socialization strategies. This may partly be due to how closely related racial socialization and racial identity are (Stevenson, 1995) and because of how biracial people are racially positioned. Biracial people's racial identity is fluid and shifts contextually (Rollins, 2002; Root, 1996). When biracial people respond to racial identity questions, researchers cannot be sure to which reference group they are referring. Likewise, biracial people may find it difficult to respond to racial identity questions depending on their self-identification, particularly if they self-identify as biracial. It may be difficult to disentangle a biracial self-identification and unequivocally respond to questions that refer to one's "racial group." Questions asking about traditions, beliefs, and customs could be problematic since a biracial identity would not have these collective referents. More exploratory research is needed to interrogate the best practice for measuring racial identity among biracial youth.

Fifth, many investigations of biracial people limit their sample to individuals of the same mixed-race heritage (e.g., Black/White only), arguing that biracial experiences differ as a result of varying racial mixes (Fatimilehin, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002). While these investigations identify unique experiences within a specific biracial

population, investigations of multiple racial mixes can identify universal phenomena related to being biracial. Regardless of what the specific racial mix is, there may be something uniquely different and influential about having a multiple heritage as opposed to a singular heritage. Thus, the inclusion of diverse biracial adolescents is considered both a strength and a limitation of this investigation.

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## Appendix A

### Cultural Socialization

- Encourage religion, belief in God
- Educate about current events, encourage child to be informed, to get involved with cultural activities
- Teach child to be proud of race/heritage
- Encourage positive view of own race
- Educate about racial heritage, history, background

## Appendix B

### Minority Socialization

- Educate/awareness about racism and discrimination, teach child to be aware of racism and discrimination, explain why discrimination occurs
- Encourage child to be a strong person (race mentioned)
- Teach child ways to combat race discrimination, teach child to handle situations of racism, teach child to deal
- Teach child his/her rights
- Teach child to stand up for his/her rights, stand up for what he/she believes in
- Work harder than others, outperform others, be competitive, be the best at what you do
- Parent is involved in community activities intended to combat discrimination/racism
- Parent's work is intended to combat discrimination
- Don't let race become an excuse
- Encourage child to ignore discrimination and racism, don't let it get to her/him, don't get hostile, don't get upset, self-control
- Be prepared

## Appendix C

### Mainstream Socialization

- Encourage child
- Self-respect, self-acceptance, positive self-view, promoting self-esteem, self-confidence, self-awareness, take pride in self
- Social skills
- Work hard, satisfaction from activities, work hard for satisfaction
- You can accomplish anything you set your mind to, you can accomplish your goals, encourage to fulfill potential
- Be good at what you do, be the best you can, pursue goals, use abilities
- Good communicator; listen to others, articulate, be understood by many kinds of people, respond—don't just react
- Education/communication
- Encourage/help child get a good education
- Talk to child, child talk to parent
- Teach child to think for self, use mind, be own person, be responsible for your actions
- Be considerate, caring, kind, a good person, honest
- Tell child to be himself/herself
- Be a leader, set an example
- Staying involved in child's life
- Encourage child to be positive, have a positive attitude
- Good behavior, appropriate behavior
- Treat others as you'd like to be treated

## Appendix D

### Egalitarian Socialization

- Encourage interactions, getting to know people of other races
- Awareness of other ethnicities, teaching child about different races/cultures
- Respect for others/others' worth
- Teach child that there are no significant differences between people of different races, encourage "color blindness"
- Teach child that everyone's different (but not unequal)
- Not be prejudiced, all people are created equal, including child
- Not everyone is prejudiced

## Appendix E

### Racial Identity Items and Descriptive Statistics

#### *Racial Identity Self-label Item*

- For the past several pages, you have answered questions about your race. What is your race/ethnicity?

Table E1

*Descriptive Statistics for Racial Salience, Private Regard, and Exploration Items*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Salience</b>			
How important is your racial background to the daily life of your family?	79	2.58	1.19
How important is it for you to know about your racial background?	79	3.08	1.01
How proud are you of your racial background?	79	3.76	.51
How often do you talk in the family about your racial background?	79	2.44	1.33
How often do you talk in the family about discrimination you may face because of your race?	79	2.08	1.35
<b>Private Regard</b>			
I have a close community of friends because of my race/ethnicity.	79	2.01	1.13
People of my race/ethnicity have a culturally rich heritage.	79	2.84	1.34
I have meaningful traditions because of my race/ethnicity.	78	2.54	1.26
People of my race/ethnicity are very supportive of each other.	79	2.96	1.21
<b>Exploration</b>			
How often do you study the traditions or history of people with your racial background?	79	2.34	1.09
How often do you participate in community activities with people of your racial background?	79	2.38	1.18
How often do you celebrate any special days connected to your racial background?	78	2.32	1.23

## Appendix F

### Quantitative Racial Socialization Items

- How important is it for (child) to know about (his/her) racial background?
- How often do you talk in the family about your racial background?
- How often do you celebrate any special days connected to your racial background?
- How often do you talk to (child) about how much discrimination (he/she) may face because of (his/her) race?