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Title of Dissertation: How we talk about race: Interracial family communications on race, identity and the role of social context

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Abstract

The population of mixed-race children and interracial families in the United States continues to grow at a rapid rate and multiracial children represent one of the fastest growing youth groups in the country. The past several decades have shown an increase in social and psychological research aimed at understanding the experiences of multiracial Americans. Thus far, research tends to focus on either the experience and perspectives of multiracial individuals or the perspectives of the interracial couple (e.g. parents), each independent of one another. In the racial socialization literature, there remains a gap in understanding how interracial families discuss topics of race and identity together with their children. In addition, understanding how the broader social context in which these families live shapes those conversations has not been directly explored.

The current study utilized qualitative methods to explore and describe how interracial families, who identify as having one Black and one White parent, communicate with their multiracial 13-17-year-old children on topics of race and identity. Interviews explored how multiracial children and their parents perceive racial socialization and parenting practices relevant to racial identity and how social contextual factors (e.g., community racial climate, racial composition, attitudes toward interracial relationships) shape the way families discuss racial topics and navigate their social environments when it comes to issues of race and identity. Findings demonstrated that parental views on their own racial identity, specifically the salience, centrality, and meaningfulness of this identity, in addition to how they have come to interpret and navigate race-related issues in their own lives, shapes the way in which they approach race-related conversations with their children. Parental level of racial consciousness, particularly among the White mothers, also emerged as a relevant factor in shaping race communication

between parents and their children. Biracial children's understanding on the significance and meaning of their own racial identity related to the ways parents were engaging their child in topics related to race and identity, in addition to children's previous racialized experiences in their community and school environments.

Data from the current study was used to create an emergent model, entitled "interracial family communication on race," on the connections between parental and child meaning-making on racial identity, family communication on race, and the role of the larger social context. Individual-level interpretation of one's identity and racialized experiences shaped the way in which parents approached race talk with their child, which also related to the overall racial ideology espoused in the family. Triangulation in perspectives on racial socialization practices among parents and children showed that family members tended to hold greater convergence on the content of race-related messages but diverged more in deciding how and when such conversations should occur. Macro-level sociopolitical factors, such as community racial composition and climate, social movements, attitudes toward interracial families, and the political climate directly shaped the initiation, frequency, and value parents held in having conversations related to race and identity with their Biracial children. Overall, this research illuminates the experience of a sample of eight interracial Black/White families in America today, fifty years after the *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme court decision, a moment that shifted our country's understandings on what defines a marriage and a family.

How we talk about race: Interracial family communications on race, identity and the role of social context

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Dedication

This document is dedicated to the eight families who shared their voices and their experiences of being in an interracial family in America today. The experiences you shared, and your thoughts, feelings, and reflections on those experiences, provided me with great insight into how you understand your racial identity, the racial identity of your respective family members, and what that means for how you all view and discuss topics of race and identity together with one another. What became clear across my interviews with all of you was that these conversations related to race were not easy, but complex and ever-changing. Whether you had joyful and pleasant experiences to share or memories filled with hardship and anger, I greatly appreciated your willingness to open up and share those experiences and memories with me. Your agreement to participate in this project not only helped me to complete the final hurdle of my doctoral degree, but also helped contribute to the growth in the literature on interracial families in the United States. I believe it is critical that research continues to elicit the experiences of other types of interracial families across the country and around the world. Even more so, I believe it is critical that we continue this discussion about race, the implications of racial identity and the experiences related to race (e.g., racism) not only within our families, but also in society, via media, scholarship, and in our daily interactions with one another. I am proud to share your experiences with others and hope that in some small way, those who are reading this will have a greater understanding on what it is like to talk about race and identity within an interracial family in the American social context of today.

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Chapter I: Introduction

In the United States, although more or less visible in the media and public eye over the years, interracial unions have been a part of this country since its founding. Analysis of trends in interracial unions from the 1800s till today show that many social, historical and political forces have shaped, and continue to shape, sharp declines and rises in interracial unions over time. These forces have possibly been most influential in shaping the trends of interracial unions and marriages between Black/White groups, which is a group that has the most historically rooted taboos against interracial marriage and one that remains highly stigmatized to this day (Kelcholiver & Leslie, 2006; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008; Rockquemore & Henderson, 2015). Events such as slavery, Jim Crow laws, White supremacy movements, and anti-miscegenation laws have not only created deeply embedded beliefs in this country about how people should be separated and treated based on the color of their skin, but they have also created an ideology about who is appropriate to love and to marry. These ideologies are based on pervasive and systemic manifestations of oppression, racism, and discrimination that flow all the way from political legislation to personally held attitudes and beliefs.

Scholars today wonder if these ideologies and beliefs against interracial unions and marriage are breaking down. Is being part of an interracial family becoming more common or accepted in what some view as a "post-racial" America? Recent Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census data from 2010 showed a record high of 12% of newlyweds who married a person of a different race. However, research shows that Blacks and Whites continue to have the lowest interracial marriage percentages when compared to other racial groups (U.S. Census, 2010; Wang, 2015). The current study, exploring how interracial Black/White families communicate about race with examination into how families perceive social context shaping those

conversations, was designed to begin to explore this area of research from the perspective of interracial family members themselves. The literature review section will provide insight into the complex social, historical, and political context that shape these trends in interracial marriage and how interracial families navigate in American society today.

Not surprisingly, as trends in interracial marriage continue to rise, so does the multiracial population. The 2010 Census data showed that the number of people who identified as multiracial grew faster than those who identified with a single race, having grown by 32% to 9 million people between the years of 2000 to 2010 (US Census Bureau, 2010)[1]. In addition, between 2000-2010, not only did children who identified as multiracial increase by about 50% to 4.2 million making them the fastest growing youth group in the country, but the number of individuals who identified as Black and White Biracial more than doubled in size, increasing from 11.5% to 20.4% (U.S. Census Brief, 2012). There is no denying that the racial make-up of the United States is continuing to change and that the multiracial population in America has had a remarkable increase in the past ten years.

During the same time period between 2000-2010 when the U.S. Census reported this large increase, the United States experienced another remarkable change. Our country elected Barack Obama as the nation's first mixed-race/African American President. Standing on stage upon accepting the Democratic nomination for the Presidency in 2008, Obama was joined onstage by his African American wife and their two daughters, his White/European American great uncle, his Biracial Indonesian-White sister, and her Chinese-Canadian husband (Dacosta, 2009). Some scholars have noted that this vision of Obama and his family onstage "presented a remarkably harmonious, hopeful, and normalized version of interracial intimacy, the likes of

[1] Comparison rates of increase in population rates of single race groups: African American/Black: 12.3%; Caucasian/White: 5.7%; American Indian/Alaskan Native: 18.4%; Asian: 43.3%: Hispanic: 43.0% (http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf)

which we have never seen in so prominent and esteemed a position in American life" (Dacosta, 2009, p. 6). Thus, it has been argued, Obama's election and his eight years in the White House have, in part, contributed to a greater normalization of interracial families within our society. However, the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States in November 2016 created a dramatic shift, not only in political leadership, but also in conversations about race and racism happening across the country. This shift in the political context and climate of the U.S. will be further explored in the literature review below.

Considering the changing racial make-up of our country and the growing normalization of interracial families in our society, social and psychological research aimed at understanding the experiences of multiracial individuals and interracial couples has increased over the years as well. As this population continues to increase and the presence of interracial families becomes more common, it becomes critical to understand the experience of interracial families in American society. More specifically, it is important to gain a better understanding of how these families are conceptualizing, experiencing, and communicating about race with one another.

The current study focused specifically on understanding the experience of Black/White interracial families and their Biracial Black/White children for several reasons. First, the experience of interracial Black/White unions in the United States is unique from any other interracial union and is one that has been highly stigmatized in America, rooted as it is, in our society's racial hierarchy and the set of assumptions created from that hierarchy that continue to persist in regard to the assumption in superiority of Whites over Blacks (Kenney & Kenney, 2012). Secondly, and similar to the first point, Black/White interracial unions have some of the strongest historically rooted taboos against interracial marriage (Kelcholiver & Leslie, 2006; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008; Rockquemore & Henderson, 2015). Finally, there has recently

been a substantial growth in the Biracial Black/White population, which, as noted above, has more than doubled in size (U.S. Census Brief, 2012). Therefore, the experiences of Black/White Biracial individuals should be explored, and reflected in the literature, as this population continues to grow in the United States.

Below, I present a literature review, largely gathered from my previous thesis work on the same topic of multiraciality, updated, as appropriate, with new relevant research that has emerged since the completion of my thesis work.

Racial Identity in the United States

Race has long existed as a social construct and a method used to categorize individuals on a number of aspects including physical appearance, ancestry, nationality, and culture (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). The structure of race in the United States is hierarchal, primarily with Whites being positioned over Blacks (Root, 1996; Bonilla-Silva, 1997). This has consequently led to race being more than just categorical. Race and the implications of being born into one racial group or another have become deterministic of the way one will experience life and how one will be treated (Root, 1996; Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Since colonial times, people of color have experienced many different types of oppression, discrimination, and marginalization (Gibbs, 1999). Although race relations and the treatment of minorities in this country have improved tremendously, in large part as a result of the Civil Rights Movement, race continues to play a significant role, both positively and negatively, in the way people view themselves and in how they are viewed and treated by others.

Race is also used as a means of self-identification and belonging, meaning that individuals ascribe to membership in certain racial categories (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). Therefore, the development of a racial identity is an important part of a person's overall growth

and self-understanding. Racial identity development is defined as the understanding of one's self-concept in relation to membership within a racial group, understanding the meaning attached to being a member of that group, and developing pride in one's racial and cultural identity (Philip, Dawson, & Buford, 2011; Poston, 1990). Over the years, several models of racial identity development have been proposed for persons of color, including Biracial individuals (Root, 1999; Poston, 1990). These models of racial identity development have come to aid in the study and understanding of not only how individuals view and understand themselves, but also how they relate to others from the same racial groups, how they relate to those from other racial groups, and how that then relates to their place in society. It is key to also note that there is an iterative process operating within the understanding of racial identity development, meaning that the outside world's treatment of individuals will impact how they identify, and in turn, how those individuals identify will impact how the world will treat them.

In the extant literature, the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' are sometimes used interchangeably, and often with confusion or disagreement about how to use these terms (Markus, 2008). Some scholars have asserted that race and ethnicity terms are fundamentally different (Root, 1996). Some of these researchers contend that race refers to biological characteristics and represents factors such as a person's physical appearance (facial features, hair, skin color), while others assert that race is a social construction, denoting a sociopolitical hierarchy that exists in the United States and elsewhere (Helms, Jernigan, & Mascher, 2005; Goffman, 2009; Wilton, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2013; Omi & Winat, 2014). Throughout many decades of research in the field of psychology and sociology, ethnicity has been defined in a number of ways as well. Some researchers have defined ethnicity as a group that shows common descent and cultural background, while others have defined it as "a group of persons of widely

different cultural and societal backgrounds who can be identified as ‘similar’ on the basis of language, race, religion, mixed with broadly similar statuses” (Philip, Dawson, & Buford, 2011, p. 71). Some researchers believe that ethnicity is not biologically defined, and therefore, is not synonymous with race (Root, 1996), while others believe that race and ethnicity are similar terms that encompass a “set of ideas and practices that people create to distinguish groups and organize their communities” (Markus, 2008, p. 654).

Despite the debate that continues among researchers, this current study relies on the American Psychological Association’s most current stated guidelines for race and ethnicity, which define race as “the category to which others assign individuals on the basis of physical characteristics, such as skin color or hair type, and the generalizations and stereotypes made as a result” and ethnicity as “the acceptance of the group mores and practices of one’s culture of origin and the concomitant sense of belonging” (APA, 2002, p. 9). Based on this definition, the current study seeks to explore individuals’ own understanding of their race, and therefore, relies on each individual’s self-identification of her/his racial categorization. The following literature review focuses on the history of racial identity development; however, the roles of ethnicity and culture will not be ignored, as they are important components in the development of a racial identity and an overall understanding of oneself. In addition, while the terms Black and African American are often used interchangeably as well, the term Black will primarily be used because it is viewed as a broader term and also a term that is used more frequently by researchers in the below reviewed literature (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005; Waters, 1999).

In the United States, racial categorization has been a feature of both public and private life (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). Due to the fact that race has always been a highly salient way of categorizing people, racial identity has become a significant part of individual as well as

group identities (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). Racial identity can be defined as "the part of a person's self-concept that is related to her membership within a racial group" (Philip, Dawson & Buford, 2011, p. 71). Racial identity can be viewed as operating in two ways. There is the identification that individuals self-ascribe to and there is the public identification by which they are labeled by others. An individual may have a private identity that may or may not coincide with their public identity and how others identify them (Root, 1998). For example, a teenager whose parents are African American and Asian may identify herself as African American; however, because of a physical appearance that closely resembles her Asian heritage, others label her as Asian American. This example shows how a private identity may not coincide with the public identification and how others label the person. Race is one way that individuals identify and understand themselves, and also a way in which they understand how they fit into other groups, areas of their community, and society. For this current study, I focused on the way individuals self-identify, the perceptions of how they believe others identify them, and how their environment influences this. In this way, identity is viewed as being developed internally and also shaped by social and cultural forces (Philip, Dawson, & Buford, 2011).

Racial identity has been studied not only to address how race and labels have influenced American history and society, but also because of hypotheses and findings that racial identity can be tied to other social science outcomes. The topic of racial identity has been explored in relation to various psychology-related topics including psychological well-being (Seaton, Neblett, Upton, Hammond, & Sellers, 2011; Sanchez, Shih, & Garcia, 2009; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007, & Iwamoto & Liu, 2010) depressive symptoms (Neblett, Banks, Cooper & Smalls-Glover, 2013; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009; Caldwell, Zimmerman, Bernat, Sellers & Notaro, 2002), gender role identity

(Wester, Vogel, Wei, & McLain, 2006; Babbitt, 2013), self-esteem (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998; Oney, Cole, & Sellers, 2011; Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009), and body image (Hesse-Biber, Howling, Leavy, & Lovejoy, 2004; Hesse-Biber, Livingstone, Ramirez, Barko, & Johnson, 2010; Watson, Ancis, White, & Nazari, 2013) among many other topics. The development of one's racial identity has remained an important focus in the area of psychology due to its relation to these numerous indicators of mental health in racial minorities as well as its hypothesized importance to positive development among youth (Poston, 1990; Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Csizmadia, 2011). Nancy Boyd-Franklin (2003) discusses the importance of understanding racial identity development, particularly in the context of the therapeutic process with Black families. Her research found that racial identity and racial socialization, which is defined as having a sense of pride in one's cultural and racial identity, were important features to take into consideration during therapy and for understanding issues of treatment.

Many social scientists have also asserted that racial and ethnic identity and how one incorporates this identity, in addition to the way in which that identity aligns with how others see them, are essential to the development of a healthy self-concept and the psychological functioning of individuals (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). Other researchers have considered racial identity development important for reasons such as (1) it helps to shape individuals' attitudes about themselves, attitudes about people of other racial/ethnic minority groups, and attitudes about individuals from the majority and (2) it dispels the myth that all individuals from a particular minority group are the same and share the same attitudes and preferences (Poston, 1990). Racial identity salience, which is defined as the frequency with which one thinks about her or his group membership and the importance of one's identification with her or his self-

concept, has also been found to be an important component associated with a number of educational outcomes and experiences in academic settings (e.g., shaping intergroup relations and campus climate experiences) (Hurtado, Alvarado & Guillermo-Wann, 2015).

The concept of race as a social construction "implies that racial identity is an interaction between an internal psychological process and an external process of categorization and evaluation imposed by others" (Gibbs, 1999, p. 80). Figueroa (2012) stated that race as a social construction suggests two things: (1) race has no biological or scientific validity, but instead is "part of a group myth or of a distorted worldview shared by a particular group, or built into a particular social system" and (2) "races may be real groups but they are based on social processes rather than biological or natural forces or factors" (p. 23). In addition to race being socially constructed, researchers call attention to the fact that "membership in different racial groups is related to sometimes radically different life circumstances, experiences, and expectations" (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2102, p. 27; Root, 1999). This means that researchers still use racial categories as meaningful indicators of differences seen across social groups (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). Because the United States is such a highly racialized society, the understanding of one's racial identity is essential in the overall understanding of one's self and one's experience in the social world. This emphasizes how race has been viewed historically in this country and how that has, in turn, shaped how society views and understands race today.

Theories on the development of racial identity first emerged in the late 1930s and have continued to be put forward. These models of racial identity development, most of which focused on racial minority populations, include Stonequist's (1937) Model of "Marginality"; Cross' (1971;1991) Nigrescence Model; Morten and Atkinson's (1983) Minority Identity Development Model; Janet Helms' (1984) Interactional Model; Poston's (1990) Model of Biracial Identity

Development; the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity Development by Sellers, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous (1998); and Root's Ecological Model of Racial Identity Development (1999) to note a few. Some of these models will be discussed in more detail below. Each one of these models takes a different approach to viewing the development of a racial identity, some viewing it as a process dependent upon the beliefs of the individual, while others view it as influenced by the larger environment. This current study takes an ecological approach to viewing racial identity as it aids in understanding how individuals interact within the systems of the family, school, and society (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). The critical factor of this approach is the emphasis on how the person and environment influence one another and how this interaction operates in the development of a racial identity.

Ecological Model of Racial Identity Development

Bronfenbrenner (1974, 1977) first introduced the ecological systems approach to understanding human development. His theory referred to the interrelationship of organisms and their environments and the "processes and conditions that govern the lifelong course of human development in the actual environment in which human beings live" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 37). Researchers have subsequently applied this approach to the understanding of many areas within psychology, including racial identity development. In addition to the understanding that race and ethnicity are salient components of one's identity, research on the ecological model of racial identity development has asserted that race and ethnicity are intertwined with other salient parts of an individual's identity from which it cannot be separated, such as gender, class, generation, and sexual orientation. These in turn, cannot be separated from their relationship with the environment (Root, 1999). Root's (1998, 1999) research is perhaps the most

comprehensive in regard to this ecological model and how race and ethnicity are intertwined with both internal and external factors within an individual's life.

Root (1999) described the process of racial identification as spiral and circular. She outlined how political, social, and familial forces lead mixed-race individuals toward choosing a particular racial identity. The process of racial identification is also fluid and changes throughout the lifespan, suggesting that the development of identity does not show a stage-like progression that has a beginning and an end (Root, 1998). In an empirical study examining the racial identity development of Biracial siblings, Root (1998) suggests that identity development for Biracial persons can vary even among those who come from the same family. In this study, Root explored various processes affecting racial identity development and used an ecological model of racial identity development to guide her inquiries. There are many different ways mixed-race persons identified and these identities may be situational, simultaneous, or changeable throughout the lifespan.

From preliminary findings, Root (1998) saw many experiences emerge that affected the racial identity process such as hazing, family dysfunction, increased racial integration in the structure of society, and other salient identities (Root, 1998). Central to these experiences were factors such as the age at which the experiences occurred and if the experience was color-coded. Root (1998) defined color-coding as a process by which people and experiences are symbolically categorized with status by individuals as a way to make sense out of events and organize their experience, particularly in regard to issues of race. For example, if a child were to suffer negative emotional or even physical treatment by a parent, she or he may then refuse to date someone of the same racial make-up as that parent in order to provide themselves with a false sense of safety (Root, 1998). In this way, the individual consciously or unconsciously tries to distance her or

himself from that culture or ethnic group as a way of attempting to expel what went wrong. Consequently, family dysfunction (i.e. parents who abandon or abuse their children) may be color-coded, and this may result in different courses in identity development for siblings, as each sibling may experience and interpret this dysfunction in differing ways. These findings showed that the identity process was variable among Biracial siblings and that these variations were affected by certain experiences, which did not occur only at certain stages and were not necessarily shared by all individuals. Maria Root and her research is also discussed further below as she has conducted a significant amount of research specifically within the area of Biracial identity development.

Terminology in the Multiracial Literature

Past literature examining multiracial individuals is complicated by the varying terminology used to classify those who fall into this population. Historically, 'mulatto' was a term used to describe someone who was varying fractions of African and European heritage. However, this term was originally used with negative connotations, some believing that it was derived from the Spanish '*mulato'* meaning mule, "an infertile hybrid between a donkey and a horse" (Root, 1996, p. x). A term more generally accepted and used today is 'multiracial,' which refers to people who are of two or more racial heritages. This has been the most inclusive term to refer to people of all racial mixes. This term also encompasses the term 'Biracial,' which specifically refers to an individual "whose parents are of two different socially designated racial groups" (Root, 1996, p. ix).

In addition, another use of the 'Biracial' term might refer to those who have parents of the same socially designated race, "when one or both of the parents are Biracial or there is racial mixing in the family history that is important to the individual" (Root, 1996, p. ix). However,

researchers tend to recognize the difference in the social and psychological experience between those individuals and someone who is "first-generation" Biracial (Root, 1996, p. x.). The key here is having 'recent' multiple racial heritages. The current dissertation explored attitudes toward race and identity among families who self-identify as a Black/White interracial couple with "first-generation Biracial children" meaning their children are identified as having one parent who is Black and one parent who is White. More detailed information on how research defines interracial families is described further below.

Theories of Biracial identity development

The "marginal identity". One of the earliest theories of Biracial identity development theorized by Robert Park in 1928 and later expanded upon by E.V. Stonequist in 1935 focused on the Biracial individual (or what was then referred to as "mixed-blood") as having a "marginal identity" (Stonequist, 1935). This was a deficit model in which Park (1928) labeled such an individual as the "marginal man." Stonequist (1935) further explored this concept and the nature of the "marginal man" and his life cycle. The idea behind the "marginal man" theory was that a Biracial individual is positioned outside of the two races to which they belong, being never fully accepted by either race, but instead being a stranger in both worlds (Stonequist, 1935). The status of this individual was not a uniform one, but one that was straddled between the two parents' races. In this view, it was assumed that being mixed-race was in itself a problem. Because this marginal identity was seen as a problem, research took a problem-focused approach to studying Biracial identity, focusing on deficits, pathology, and any negative experiences that were associated with being mixed-race (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008; Goffman, 2009; Khanna, & Johnson, 2010). This theory was also reflective of the definition of race during this pre-civil

rights time period and the idea that there was a boundary between Blacks and Whites, which served a positive purpose and was absolute.

Stonequist's (1935) model suggested that having a mixed-race heritage exacerbated problems that were associated with a normal identity development process by creating feelings of ambiguity in an individual's identity within their family and within the larger peer and social environments. The study of racial identity development for Biracial individuals began with a focus on concepts such as rejection, isolation, and stigma from both the majority and minority groups (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). The ideas proposed by Park and Stonequist on Biracial identity and the marginalization of people who were mixed-race appear as the dominant theories of this time period. Although Stonequist is credited with beginning the process of understanding Biracial identity development, his and other related ideas and theories should be questioned because they overlook the complex process of Biracial identity development, the possibility of positive outcomes among Biracial persons, and the variability among how mixed-race individuals identify.

The Biracial identity as a Black identity. Immediately after the Civil Rights movement, theorists treated mixed-race individuals (of mixed Black and White heritage) as solely Black (Davis, 1991; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). During this time, the identity development process for mixed-race people was assumed to be equivalent to that of a monoracial Black identity. This was due in part to the prevailing ideology of the "one-drop rule" of hypodescent that stated any person who had any partly Black heritage was seen as only Black (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Because mixed-race people with any Black heritage were assumed to be Black, it was therefore said that their racial identity development would follow the same stages as Black individuals (Daniel, 1992). During this time, the only models that might have been

applied to identity development for Biracial individuals with Black heritage include, for example, William Cross's exploration of the Black experience (1971) and his Nigrescence model (1991) in which he posited that Black individuals go through a stage process of identity exploration and search for understanding of what it means to be Black in America.

Limitations of past theories. Within these past models of racial identity development for mixed-race individuals, there are several limitations. First, most of these identity development models proposed viewing Biracial identity as possessing few positive or adaptive components (e.g., Stonequist, 1935). Past theorists and researchers assumed that having a mixed-race identity was inherently problematic and therefore, could only result in negative symptoms and a negative experience within society. The fact that there could be positive outcomes to having a mixed-race identity was not explored in detail.

Second, these models also assumed that individuals choose the culture or values of one racial group over another at different stages (Poston, 1990). Again, there was an ignorance of the possible integration of multiple cultures and values, and instead, an emphasis placed on choosing one identity over the other. Overall, these models lack a comprehensive view of what it really means to be Biracial and the varying ways one can develop a healthy racial identity. They often present as linear, static, and non-encompassing view of the variety of ways in which individuals with multiple races will identify.

Another flaw, particularly seen in Stonequist's model, was that it placed the identity problems solely upon the individual (Poston, 1990). In reality, this model ignored the influence of society and the idea that society sometimes pushes or forces Biracial individuals into choosing to belong to one racial/ethnic group over another. However, these models served as an important stepping-stone in the right direction for beginning to understand the experiences of Biracial

individuals. More recent Biracial identity development models expanded upon these earlier models of identity development and began to incorporate other factors, such as the environment in which one lives and how that can affect the racial identity of mixed-race individuals.

More Current Frameworks of Biracial Identity Development

Gibbs' research. Past research on Biracial identity directly influenced the work of Jewelle Taylor Gibbs. In 1987, Gibbs investigated Biracial identity among Biracial (Black and White) adolescents and college students in mental health settings in the San Francisco Bay area. From this research, Gibbs (1987) suggested that the challenge for mixed-race adolescents involved their conflicting feelings about dual racial and cultural heritages and the failure among some to integrate these two identities into one cohesive racial identity. She stressed that a major task for mixed-race individuals was to "integrate the dual racial identifications into a single identity that affirms the positive aspects of each heritage, acknowledges the reality of societal ambivalence, and rejects the self-limitations of racial stereotypes or behavior on the process of self-actualization" (Gibbs, 1987, p. 275). Another issue these adolescents dealt with was social marginality and figuring out what peer groups they fit into. Gibbs (1987) discusses the need for these adolescents to "redefine their social status and renegotiate their social relationships" (p. 269) in order for them to be accepted for who they are, have their identity validated by others and be supported in their social relationships. From Gibbs' research, we can start to see the beginning stages of evolution and change within multiracial identity development models as the integration of two racial identifications into a single identity is discussed. A limitation of this study was that participants were only selected from mental health settings, and this could potentially bias the particular issues this population described in regard to their identity development.

Poston's model. Beginning in the 1990s, researchers began to investigate the idea that Biracial individuals could have a unique identity development process and also, that each Biracial individual may vary from the next in how they navigate this developmental process (Poston, 1990). Psychologists and researchers began to disagree with past theories and with the assumption that the process of a Biracial identity development was similar to that of Black identity development. W.S. Carlos Poston (1990) proposed a new model of identity development for Biracial individuals, focusing on the unique experience of being Biracial. This model included the following five stages: (1) personal identity, (2) choice of group categorization, (3) enmeshment/denial, (4) acceptance, and (5) integration. These stages are assumed to take place during childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Poston suggested it may be useful to view these stages as changes in reference group orientation (RGO) attitudes, as modeled after the idea behind the stages in Cross's (1971) Nigresence model. RGOs are defined as ways in which persons orient themselves toward socially ascribed groups, which can thereby provide information on how they feel about themselves on a personal level (Cross, 1985).

During the first stage, *personal identity*, individuals are usually young and the idea of a racial identity is just beginning to become salient for them (Poston, 1990). Although an individual at this stage may start becoming aware of race and ethnicity, they have not yet integrated their identity as a racial/ethnic one. Therefore, individuals in this stage tend to identify themselves in terms of other factors such as self-esteem and feelings of self-worth (Poston, 1990). The next stage is *choice of group categorization*, in which Biracial individuals believe they are pushed into choosing an identity by society. Two possible choices are emphasized at this time: individuals can chose a multiracial existence and identify with both of their parents' racial heritage, not choosing one racial background over another, or they can chose to identify with

only one of their racial backgrounds as dominant over the other (Poston, 1990). The three main factors that affect this choice are status factors, social support, and personal factors. Status factors include the group status of the parent's ethnic background, neighborhood demographic factors, and the ethnicity and influence of peer groups (Poston, 1990). Social support factors include acceptance and participation from other cultural groups and parental and family acceptance (Poston, 1990). Lastly, personal factors are features such as physical appearance, ability to speak other languages besides English, cultural knowledge, age, political involvement, and individual personality factors (Poston, 1990). All of these factors influence the individual in choosing an identity with the majority or the minority group. For example, a mixed-race Black/White individual who has a physical appearance more similar to a Black phenotype (personal factor), lives in a neighborhood that has a primarily Black population (status factor), and experiences acceptance from Black family members (social support factor), may come to identify more with a Black identity.

In the *enmeshment/denial* phase, individuals may experience feelings of confusion and possibly guilt if they have chosen to accept one racial identity as dominant over another (Poston, 1990). This period of time may be characterized by feelings such as self-hatred and disloyalty and individuals may also experience a lack of acceptance from one or possibly both racial groups (Poston, 1990). For example, if a child who is mixed Black/White chooses to only identify with a Black identity, she or he may feel shame to have their friends come over and see that they also have a White parent. Because of this situation, the child may then feel extreme anger about feeling this way. Having both parental and community support during this time can help the individual to deal with these feelings of guilt and anger (Poston, 1990).

The last two stages of this process, *appreciation and integration*, involve a much more positive outlook on the developmental process. In the *appreciation* stage, individuals may begin to have an appreciation for their multiple identities and strive to learn more about both of their cultural backgrounds (Poston, 1990). Although individuals may still only identify with one racial identity, they try to educate themselves about their chosen racial heritage and take part in more cultural activities (Poston, 1990). In the last stage, *integration*, individuals will recognize all of their racial identities and have a sense of wholeness (Poston, 1990). They begin to seek out information about both racial heritages and cultures and strive to learn more about both groups. At this final stage, the individual has developed a whole, secure, and integrated identity (Poston, 1990).

Poston's model helps to underscore the idea that the Biracial identity process is complex and has many factors at play, both at the individual and environmental level, that influence racial identity development among Biracial individuals. Social factors such as peer groups, neighborhood demographics, and familial influences are integral to this identity development process (Poston, 1990). Poston (1990) emphasizes the importance of the individual integrating and valuing multiple cultures and racial groups within a context of personal and social factors that are important in this process.

One limitation to Poston's model is that he organized Biracial identity as a stage process, whereby each individual goes through the same five stages in a linear process. This may not be the most accurate way to describe a racial identity development process, particularly for individuals who may find that the way they identify changes over time and varies within contexts. Instead, as other researchers have suggested, individuals may navigate the racial identity process in a more circular and fluid manner, sometimes going back and forth between

‘stages’ and having multiple outcomes to identification (Root, 1999). In addition, Poston’s model, while it explores Biracial identity development in great detail, lacks the use of empirical research to support this model, as it does not actually survey the experiences of Biracial individuals to develop this model.

Root: The multiracial experience. Maria Root has done a great deal of research in the field of multiracial identity development and investigating how multiracial individuals experience life. Although her work in relation to racial identity and the ecological model was discussed earlier, this section provides specific focus on research she has conducted on Biracial persons. In addition to providing accounts of how Biracial persons self-identify, her research also helped to raise many broader questions about race and how it is constructed and conceptualized in the United States. Through empirical studies, Root explored how this new construction of multiraciality changes the meaning of race relations in this country and how multiracial people affect our current understanding of the social system (Root, 1996). More specifically, in a study examining the ‘other’ status of Biracial persons and the sense of ambiguity that may come with being mixed-race, she investigated how contextual factors, such as social environment, family, geographical location, and other factors, influence the development of a Biracial identity.

In a model of Biracial identity, Root (1990) focused on what she called the “resolutions” of identity in reference to the socio-cultural, political, and familial context within which the individual resides. In this model, Root (1990) attempted to categorize the identity options a Biracial individual may choose. These resolutions were defined as “the lack of need for compartmentalizing the parts of their ethnic heritage” and all resolutions are “driven by the assumption that individuals recognize both sides of their heritage” (Root, 1990, p. 198). In addition, Root (1990) discussed the flexibility of these resolutions and how an individual may

choose one or more of these resolutions at varying times. It is essential to keep in mind that there are different parts of the country that are more accepting of mixed-race persons and interracial relationships than others, and that type of social environment will certainly affect how comfortable or supported one may feel in identifying in one way or another.

The four resolutions identified by Root (1990) were (1) acceptance of the identity society assigns, (2) identification with a single racial group, (3) identification with both racial groups, and (4) identification as a new racial group (Root, 1990). In *acceptance of the identity society assigns*, Biracial individuals lack the freedom to identify with the race they chose and instead are assigned an identity based on how they are viewed by others. Consequently, the individual will identify himself or herself in this way. This strategy is viewed as positive, meaning an individual will have a positive sense of self-identity if they feel they belong to the racial group to which they are assigned.

In being active and choosing to identify with a certain racial group regardless of how society views the individual, a Biracial person demonstrates the *identification with a single racial group* resolution. Root proposes that this strategy is positive only if the individuals do not deny the other part of their heritage, and also, if they don't thereby feel marginalized by identifying with only one reference group. However, in a situation where individuals identify in a way that is incongruous with how they are perceived by others, this may present a difficulty. In this circumstance, the individual would need to be aware of this incongruity, accept it, and possess coping strategies to deal with questions and suspicions from that reference group.

Identification with both racial groups resolution suggests the Biracial individual will identify with both racial groups and may make statements such as, "I'm Black and White," or "I'm mixed" (Root, 1990). It is suggested that this may be the "most idealistic resolution of

Biracial status" and also dependent upon what part of the country one lives (Root, 1990, p. 200). In certain parts of the country, mixed marriages and Biracial children exist in larger numbers and are viewed more positively by the community than in other areas. In these areas, individuals may feel more comfortable identifying with both racial groups and more accepted when declaring a mixed-race identity.

Lastly, in *identification as a new racial group,* individuals may feel as if they don't fit into any particular racial group, and thereby identify as a 'new race.' In this way, individuals may move between different racial groups, but find that they are not a part of any of the groups. Again, this strategy can only be positive if the individual does not feel marginalized and identifies with a 'new racial reference group' (Root, 1990). Some who have this resolution may feel a strong kinship to others who are Biracial and identify with the experience of not feeling a sense of belonging to any racial group. However, future research could look into addressing how this resolution would potentially change if the individual also had a reference group of those who felt similarly about this new identification. The option to not identify in any racial way was not discussed in this study as all resolutions were driven by the assumption that the individual recognizes both sides of her or his racial heritage (Root, 1990).

In summary, it should be noted that these resolutions are not mutually exclusive, but fluid, and that an individual may move among these strategies (Root, 1990). In addition, one can move back and forth through these resolutions as they may change throughout one's lifetime, and there is no one resolution that is more psychologically healthy to obtain. Time, geography, social environment, and family are all factors that play a part in this process and influence how Biracial persons decide their identification. Biracial identity, in this way, is an evolving process, continually changing and unique to each individual.

Rockquemore and Brunsma. In 2008, sociologists Kerry Ann Rockquemore and David L. Brunsma conducted a large-scale study of Biracial Black/White young women and men and investigated their process of racial identity development. Their sample included 230 college students from Midwestern, Southern, and Eastern regions of the United States. They sampled students from varying neighborhoods, including urban, suburban, and rural locations in order to include participants from varied experiences and backgrounds. The researchers' primary interest was investigating how mixed-raced people understand their racial identity and what this looks like in post-Civil Rights America. The most striking finding of this study was the varying ways Biracial participants self-identified, which will be discussed in detail below. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2008) took a grounded approach to interpreting the data and let the participants identify themselves and describe how they developed their racial identity. After analyzing their data, the following typology of racial identification emerged: (1) the singular identity, (2) the border identity, (3) the protean identity, and finally (4) the transcendent identity (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). The researchers urged others not to view these identities as mutually exclusive, but as ideal types.

Rockquemore & Brunsma (2008) defined the *singular identity* as either having an exclusively Black or an exclusively White identity. In their study, 13% of the participants identified as having an exclusively Black identity, while only 2.8% identified as having an exclusively White identity. For mixed-raced people who are Black and White, adopting an exclusively Black identity was the norm in the past and historically forced upon mixed-raced individuals. The rule of hypodescent is a concept that underlies the history of this racial identification, as it was a past approach to identity development. However, there were other factors at play in the development of this exclusive singular identity. Physical appearance was

one factor that played an influential role in a participant identifying with a singular, Black identity. The researchers addressed two aspects of physical appearance, (1) self-perceived skin color, and (2) socially mediated appearance (describing how others categorized them based on appearance). The closer one's appearance was to what is typically taken to be seen as Black, the more likely that person would identify themselves as Black, as opposed to Biracial or White. There were also other socialization and contextual variables that influenced this identity option choice such as: (1) social network composition, (2) family discussion about being multiracial, (3) experiencing negative treatment from Whites, and (4) geographic region (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). These elements and more were explored in the current study.

In examining geographic region, the researchers noted that no one from the Eastern sample identified with a singular Black identity, while it was slightly more common to choose this identity in the Southern regions, rather than the Midwest (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). The researchers hypothesized this may be due to the on-going impact of the one-drop rule in Southern regions. In terms of social composition, those who came from a primarily "black pre-adult context," meaning that they grew up in social networks that were heavily populated with Black people, were more likely to identify with the solely Black identity (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). These individuals have more frequent contact and interaction with Black persons so they, in turn, come to understand their racial identity as Black (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Notably, it is not only the composition of the contexts that matter, but also how one is experienced and treated within these contexts. For example, individuals may experience negative treatment by Blacks and/or Whites, or the lack of any real interaction (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). This treatment by others was described by the terms 'push' and 'pull' factors, which are at work when composing a racial identity.

Push factors are those that come from the negative treatment from White persons, while the pull factors come from the lack of such negative experiences, not necessarily positive experiences, with Black people (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Consequently, if a Biracial individual who physically appeared as Black had experiences of negative treatment by White persons, and acceptance and interaction from a community that was primarily Black, these mixed-race individuals were more likely to develop a singularly, Black identity. In addition, parental socialization was another factor that played a part in this process and varied among families. Those who did not talk openly about being mixed-race within the family and who did not experience negative treatment by Black people were the ones who were most likely to develop the singular, Black identity (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). By contrast, if a mixed-race individual had positive experiences with White people and experienced negative treatment by Black people, this type of experience may push that individual towards developing a singular, White identity.

The mixed-race individuals who identified with an exclusively White identity were the least frequently identified, as this identification was seen within only 2.8% of the sample population. Again, physical appearance and having more physical characteristics that were identified as being closer to White was an important factor in those developing a singular, White identity. Within the research on multiracial persons, there exists little mention of the exclusive White identity option (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Overall, it is important to note that among those who choose to exclusively identify with one racial identity, claiming that racial identity did not deny the existence of their parent of the other race, but rather the other racial identity was not salient in their racial understanding of themselves (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008).

The *border identity* was defined as those individuals who self-identified as falling between two racial categories and additionally, involves the creation of a new category of identification (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Within this identity option, the individual encompasses both racial categorizations of Black and White and were said to have "racially blended identities" (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008, p.44). The authors further explain that those who identify as the border identity do not consider themselves either Black or White, but instead "incorporate both blackness and whiteness into a separate hybrid category of self-reference" (Rockquemore & Brunsma, p. 43). Respondents in this group identified with "Biracial" as their racial classification. This identity was the most common among sample participants at about 58% (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008).

An important component of this identity was not just how participants self-identified, but also how they were seen by others. Participants in this racial categorization emerged as having either a 'validated' or 'unvalidated' border identity, which was defined as the participants' perceptions of whether their racial identity was accepted by others (validated) or not (unvalidated) (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Among the 58% of individuals who self-identified with the border identity, about 34% described themselves as having an identity that was unvalidated (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). These individuals saw themselves as "Biracial," but believed that those around them did not view their race as such. For example, on the identity questions on the administered survey, one respondent stated "I consider myself Biracial, but I experience the world as a Black person" (Rockquemore & Brunsma, p. 45). Again, physical appearance was one important factor that influenced whether or not an individual's Biracial identity was validated or unvalidated in this sample. Some respondents, whose appearance was closer to Whites than Blacks, found that their Biracial identity was validated,

while those whose appearance was closer to Blacks found that their Biracial identity was not validated (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Peers of these participants also influenced the validation of their racial identity; for example, some respondents found they had an identity that was more validated by their peers. Two reasons proposed why some had racial identities that were unvalidated by peers were that (1) others may not have "Biracial" as a racial classification in their mind and only designate others into mutually exclusive categories of "Black" or "White" and (2) the Biracial individual's appearance may be composed of physical characteristics that would lead others to classify them with one race or the other. Those individuals, who did not have as much contact with White peer groups and instead had more contact and interaction with Black peer groups were more likely to have an unvalidated border identity (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Researchers further explored the difficulties that arose in Biracial individuals justifying their personal identity choice, situations in which they are forced to make a choice, the lack of role models, conflicting messages, and handling rejection from both racial groups (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008).

Physical appearance was not the only factor that influenced the development of a border identity and whether or not this identity was validated. The family structure, social networks, and environment in which one lived also played a large part in how participants identified. The socioeconomic status (SES) of one's family was one of the most central components within the family structure that was important to racial identity formation. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2008) found that a family's SES and the availability of economic resources would determine the "parameters of social activity," in that it would determine components such as the neighborhood they live in and the schools their children attend (p. 59). This will, in turn, affect what types of

people these individuals will interact with and the norms, values, and attitudes they will experience.

Individuals described by Rockquemore & Brunsma (2008) as having a *protean identity* were those who expressed their racial identity as moving back and forth, depending upon the context. The researchers described this identity as a more fluid concept of race and one that Biracial individuals felt applied to how they perceived themselves throughout differing environments and settings (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). In this way, an individual will at times identify as White, at other times as Black, and at other times as Biracial. What identity one chooses to identify with depends upon how that individual feels about the setting and context they are in at the time. For example, while being interviewed, one of the participants described the shift in identifying with a White to a Black identity by describing the change between Black and White cultural contexts, such as moving between speaking standard English or Black vernacular English when interacting with a group of Whites or a group of Blacks.

This identity differs from the others discussed thus far in that those with this identity do not possess a single, unified identity, but change from one to another dependent upon the context (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). What is also unique about this identity is the ability for the individual to feel that they are accepted as the member of different in-groups and having a continuous awareness of different cultural norms and monitoring how one is perceived by others (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). The researchers predicted that individuals with this identity would report feeling the closest to both Blacks and Whites due to their identity strategy being dependent upon acceptance from both racial groups. This prediction was supported by their data, as respondents from this category felt simultaneously closest to both Blacks and Whites more than any of the other identity groups. For these individuals within the protean identity option, it

was both the contact and acceptance from both racial groups that enabled them to shift their identity within varying contexts. In this way, being rejected from one racial group or another was not something these individuals described as contributing to this self-identification.

The setting and region an individual lives in also impacts the decision to adopt this identity. This identity option was much more prevalent in those participants from the Eastern region versus the Midwestern or Southern regions and was not as prevalent in areas with less diverse groups of people. One participant in the study elaborated that he described his identity shifting from one racial identity to another because it gave him the ability to "function as an insider in differing social groups" (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2009, p. 47). Respondents in this group also felt that there were different ways of being around groups of Black individuals and groups of White individuals, each group requiring different social behaviors. However, it was not just about adjusting behaviors, but also involved adjusting one's identity within these contexts. For these individuals, when they are in a group of Blacks, they understand themselves as Black and feel that this self-understanding is validated, and when they are in a group of Whites, they understand their identity as White and feel accepted as such. In a heterogeneous group, these individuals feel their Biracial identity accepted as well. This was also based on the participant's self-perception that they were accepted by these groups when they were with them.

Consequently, this identity was seen as one that could help Biracial individuals tailor how they interact with people based on where they are and the other individuals in that setting. This process appeared similar to the concept of "code-switching," which is defined as "the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction" (Nilep, 2006, p. 1). Both concepts speak to the idea of altering one's behavior in certain ways in order to interact with others based on contexts of that setting and the people within that environment. With those

in the protean identity group, the shifting was more than a change in behavior, but a change in identity and self-understanding as well.

Unlike the other identities discussed thus far, individuals who adopt a *transcendent identity* believe that not only do they not fall into any of the other racial identities, but that they, in fact, have no racial identity at all (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). These individuals believe that their race plays no part in how they relate to the social world. Similar to the other identities discussed, physical appearance is the most salient factor that leads individuals to choose this racial identity (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). At first, the researchers assumed that those who would chose this identity were those who could "pass" as White, partly due to the belief that some who are White may adopt "colorblindness," an ideology that believes race does not matter because that person does not personally experience the negative impacts of racial discrimination on a daily basis and may overlook the privilege of being White (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). However, what the researchers found among the sample of individuals in their study was contradictory to this assumption. Researchers found that those who identified with this racial category fell across the entire spectrum of physical appearance and were not just those who appeared to others or identified themselves as more "White" in appearance. However, this identity was most prevalent among those whose appearance was White as only 4.5% denoted "appearing black" and choosing this identification (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Although these individuals were aware of the negative impacts of being a person of color and the reality of race in the U.S., regardless of how they appeared physically, they chose to remove themselves from this reality. The lack of this racial identity led them to neither seek nor desire validation of their self-understanding as, "an identity that does not exist cannot be validated" (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008, p. 97).

Overall, what Rockquemore & Brunsma (2008) ascertained from this study of Biracial Black/White college women and men in the United States is that these participants vary in the ways in which they classify their racial identity. From this research, Rockquemore & Brunsma (2008) assert that multiracial identity is methodologically and conceptually unique from both a Black identity and White ethnic identity as several factors that have previously predicted Black identity (i.e. age, religious participation) and White ethnic identity (i.e. surname, group popularity) failed to explain the identity choices of the study participants. Instead, factors such as physical appearance, family socioeconomic status, geographic location, and social network composition all played a part in the development of these individuals' complex understanding of their racial identity. It is also important to note the interactional nature of presenting an identity, having that identity being recognized by others, as well at it being validated or rejected by others (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008).

This research is an important contribution to the field of Biracial identity development, particularly among mixed-race Black/White individuals, because it brings together past and current knowledge on this topic and advances society's understanding of what it means to be Biracial in America. This study brings many questions to light for further debate, such as what does it mean to be Black in America today and how much of a role does the one-drop rule continue to play despite changes in the 2000 U.S. Census. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2008) not only detail the experiences of Biracial individuals, but they also question the future of this population, how they will find belonging within different racial groups, and what this will mean for the future of the racial hierarchy and race relations in this country. Moving beyond the experience of the multiracial individual, the next section reviews the literature on interracial

families and how the experience of mixed-race persons can be better understood within the context of the larger family system.

Interracial Families

Interracial couples are defined as partners, married or not, who are of two different racial backgrounds (Kenney & Kenney, 2012). As noted above, the term 'Biracial,' specifically refers to an individual "whose parents are of two different socially designated racial groups" (Root, 1996, p. ix). Consequently, *multiracial families* are defined as families comprised of interracial couples and their Biracial children (Kenney & Kenney, 2012). This definition encompasses single parents with biological children who are Biracial, as well as single parents with biological children as the result of a surrogate pregnancy or artificial insemination process (Kenney & Kenney, 2012). The terms "interracial" and multiracial" families are often used interchangeably in the extant literature and reflect the multiple dimensions of identity and background of members of this population. Therefore, this term is used interchangeably throughout this document. Prior to discussing current statistics on interracial families in the United States, I first provide a brief review on past and current conceptualizations of family.

Conceptualizations of family. Determining what constitutes or defines a family can be difficult and vary by factors such as geographic location, culture, and state and/or federal laws (Holtzman, 2008). Previous researchers have classified definitions of family into three types, including structural definitions, which define family by their formation, while the second and third types, task-orientation and transactional definitions, define family by function and interaction (Segrin & Flora, 2011). Structural definitions make it clear who is and who is not part of the family and define family units as those who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption and reside together. Task-orientation definitions describe family members by how they function and

the roles or tasks they perform, such as socialization, nurturance, development, and emotional and financial support (Segrin & Flora, 2011). By this definition, for example, an adult who is not related either biologically or legally to a child, but helps to care and support that child, may be considered part of that child's family. Finally, the transactional definition emphasizes the communication among individuals and the subjective feelings generated by those interactions. This definition extends the meaning of family beyond those who perform certain tasks by defining a family as a group of people that perform their tasks within a certain system of interaction (Segrin & Flora, 2011). The task-orientation and transactional definitions represent more fluid conceptualizations of family and allow members to be considered part of families who previously may not have been considered part of the family according to structural definitions.

The U.S. Census' definition of "family" has remained virtually unchanged since the 1930s and the most recent 2010 U.S. Census states, "a family consists of a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption" (Pemberton, 2015). As a result of this definition, cultural conceptions of family in the United States have been most traditionally associated with two parents and their biological and/or adoptive children (Holtzman, 2008). However, social changes over the years, such as increasingly higher rates of divorce and remarriage, cohabitation, medical interventions into procreative choice, and gay and lesbian parenting, have broadened cultural understandings of what it means to be a family. Current debates have also intensified over the last decade and have challenged the role of biology and marriage in conceptions of family. Therefore, current conceptualizations of family appear to be based on both traditional and socially expansive (e.g., non-biological, non-legal) relationships (Holtzman, 2008).

For the current study, I focused on a conceptualization of "family" that combines the traditional and socially expansive approach by examining families comprised of interracial Black/White couples who are cohabitating (not necessarily married) and have at least one biological, mixed-race child. The purpose of narrowing the focus on this conceptualization of family for this current study is to have an in-depth exploration of this one conceptualization of a multiracial family, noting that there are many other ways multiracial families are conceptualized, but would introduce too much variability into the small size of the current sample.

Interracial union statistics and trends over time. It is vital to first note that it is difficult to examine historical trends of interracial unions in the United States due to unreliable data and records that do not take into account interracial couples who are not legally married. Interracial marriage is only one of the many possible forms of interracial unions that can take place and, therefore, should only be considered a subset of all interracial unions (Gullickson, 2006). Fryer (2007) examined patterns of interracial marriage over time using data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series based on U.S. Census data from 1880-2000 and another researcher, Gullickson (2006) more specifically examined Black-White interracial marriage trends from 1850-2000. Overall, these analyses showed that while interracial marriages were uncommon, they were not necessarily rare prior to the end of the Reconstruction period. Many historical and political events shaped declines and rises in interracial marriage rates over time, particularly between Black and White groups, including emancipation, racial segregation and policing of the color line, migration of Black families out of the South, Jim Crow laws, and the Civil Rights movement (Gullickson, 2006; Fryer, 2007).

Analysis of trends showed that the majority of interracial unions were between Black men and White women; however, this gender disparity was primarily observed in non-Southern

regions likely due to the suppression of unions between Black men and White women in the South and the difference in race relations and racial composition within the South as well. In looking particularly at Black-White unions over time, from 1850-1950, marriages between White men and Black women remained under 0.1%, increased between the years 1980-2000, and peaked in the latter years at 0.2%, while unions between White women and Black men increased from 0.1% in 1970 to 0.45% in 2000. Currently, while almost 6% of Black men marriages are with Whites, approximately 2.9% of Black women marriages are with Whites, demonstrating that the prevalence of interracial marriages is less for Black women (Fryer, 2007; Henderson, 2015). Historically and when compared with other interracial marriage rates (e.g., Asian-White), rates of intermarriage with Whites have been lowest among Blacks (Qian & Lichter, 2011).

Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census data in 2013 showed a record high of 12% of newlyweds who married a person of a different race. Beyond newlyweds, 6.3% of all marriages were between spouses of different races in 2013, which is up from less than %1 in 1970 (Wang, 2015; pewresearch.org). Currently, similar trends are still being observed in regards to who is deciding to intermarry. Among the Black population, Black men are still much more likely than Black women to marry someone of a different race (25% of Black men versus %12 of Black women married outside of their race). Research also shows that Blacks and Whites have the lowest interracial marriage percentages when compared to other racial groups. Of the 3.6 million adults who got married in 2013, 58% of American Indians, 28% of Asians, 19% of Blacks and 7% of Whites have a spouse whose race was different from their own (Wang, 2015; U.S. Census, 2010).

Most theoretical explanations of shifts in interracial marriage rates discuss several factors including (1) expanding structural opportunities to intermarry, (2) changing marital preferences

(e.g., increasing racial tolerance) and (3) the breakdown of third party constraints (e.g., antimiscegenation laws and other barriers) (Qian & Lichter, 2011). For example, in examining the political context and interracial marriage rates before and after the abolishment of antimiscegenation laws in 1970, we see that Black-White interracial marriage rates went from 51,000 in 1960 to 395,000 in 2002 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). Changes in interracial marriage also signals declines in intergroup social distance, as well as growth in racial tolerance. For example, in 1987 only 48% of the American public agreed that it was okay for Whites and Blacks to date one another, but this agreement increased to 83% in 2009 (Qian & Lichter, 2011). In examining structural opportunities to interracial marriage, Qian & Lichter (2011) propose that patterns in interracial marriages have also been reshaped by the influx of immigration over the past decade. This contributes to increases in the pool of potential same-race partners and may reinforce patterns of racial endogamy. Marriages among various non-White groups remain relatively infrequent as most racial minorities who intermarry are married to White rather than people from other racial or ethnic minority groups (Qian & Lichter, 2011).

Research also indicates that there are large educational differences in interracial marriages (Fryer, 2007; Qian & Lichter, 2011). While there were previous claims that interracial marriages were most common among those with lower levels of education, this pattern has appeared to reverse as interracial marriages are now more concentrated among those with higher levels of education. In the 1960s and 1970s, Whites with a higher education level (e.g., college degree or more) showed a marked increase in intermarriage rates, while these rates decreased among less educated groups (e.g., high school degree or less) (Fryer, 2007; Qian & Lichter, 2011). In 2000, White men with higher education levels had intermarriage rates above 0.4%, while White women in these categories had intermarriage rates above 0.25% (Fryer, 2007). For

the Black population, between 1940 and 1960, those with lower educational levels were more likely to intermarry, but during the 1960s and 1970s, the intermarriage rates among this group shifted, with those who had higher education levels were more likely to intermarry. In 2000, Blacks with some college education were the most likely educational group to intermarry, with intermarriage rates for Black men at 2.5% and 1.1% for Black women (Fryer, 2007).

Previous theories have offered various explanations for "what class" of people decides to intermarry as well (Fu, 2008). Status exchange theory is one primary concept cited to help explain interracial marriage trends between educational and socioeconomic groups. First, exchange theory proposes that individuals make decisions in order to maximize their gains and minimize their losses, and this is seen throughout all types of social interactions, including romantic relationships and friendships (Xuanning & Heaton, 2000). This theory, when applied to marriage, states that marriage partners will strive to seek a balance in terms of their resources and attributes and what they each bring into the marriage. Therefore, those with unbalanced resources will most likely seek to maximize their rewards in an exchange with someone whose resources can correct the balance (Xuanning & Heaton, 2000).

When it comes to interracial marriage, status exchange theory implies that there is a hierarchy status among ethnic groups that needs to be matched by a compensatory system of intermarriage. Therefore, individuals from racial minority groups who are upwardly mobile (e.g., of higher education and socioeconomic status) are assumed to have an incentive to marry White partners because such a marriage would signal greater prestige (Xuanning & Heaton, 2000). According to another theory, the structural assimilation theory, education should increase willingness among all racial groups to cross racial lines by breaking down group barriers and promoting greater universalism (Gullickson, 2006).

Interracial relationship outcomes. Although we can see from current statistics that interracial marriage rates are increasing, and interracial relationships are becoming more common, U.S. society has historically not been supportive of these unions and, in particular, society has been more hostile toward interracial unions between Blacks and Whites in comparison to any other interracial unions. This hostility and unsupportiveness is rooted in our society's racial hierarchy and the set of assumptions created from that hierarchy that continue to persist in regard to the assumption in superiority of Whites over Blacks (Kenney & Kenney, 2012). Stigma against interracial unions and racial mixing was based on the idea that people of color were not suitable partners for Whites and the desire of Whites to keep their "superior race" pure (Yancy & Lewis, 2009). This ideology has been pervasive when it comes to understanding various social and psychological outcomes of being in an interracial relationship.

In the past, researchers such as Gaines (1997), suggested that other researchers should regard interracial relationships as 'inherently dysfunctional.' One common assumption about interracial relationships made by both scholars and society is that this type of relationship will experience difficulties due to cultural/ethnic differences (Troy, Lewis-Smith & Laurenceau, 2006). However, researchers have found no evidence for this assumption. In fact, Troy, Lewis-Smith & Laurenceau (2006) conducted two studies in order to compare and examine the relationship quality among interracial and intraracial couples. In Study 1, the sample consisted of 118 dating couples, 86 who were classified as intraracial and 32 as interracial, and in Study 2 the sample consisted of 109 dating couples, 75 classified as intraracial and 34 classified as interracial. Both samples' participants were recruited from introductory psychology classes at a diverse Southeastern U.S. university as part of a larger study. In Study 1, contrary to their hypotheses that interracial couples would experience lower satisfaction and commitment and

higher conflict, results showed that interracial partners reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction when compared to intraracial partners, and there were no observed differences in levels of conflict. In Study 2, researchers examined whether there were differences between these groups in terms of relationship quality, conflict patterns, relationship efficacy (e.g., how confident one is that s/he can handle a relationship conflict), conflict coping styles, and attachment style. Results from this second study also demonstrated no differences in relationship quality between interracial and intraracial couples and both groups reported similar levels of relationship efficacy. In addition, despite hypotheses that those in interracial relationships would report more conflict and frequent use of coping strategies due to adverse environmental and societal pressures placed upon these relationships, results showed that these couples report using coping strategies with equal levels of frequency as partners in intraracial relationships. Overall, these results provide support and contradict the assumption that interracial relationships are 'dysfunctional' or 'deviant' compared to intraracial relationships (Troy, Lewis-Smith & Laurenceau, 2006).

Although attitudes toward interracial relationships are improving, stigmatization toward these unions still persists (Childs, 2005; Dalmage, 2000). There is emerging evidence that stigma can affect not only the individual, but stigma can also be experienced by a couple specifically when their relationship is devalued in society (e.g., interracial and same-sex relationships) (Rosenthal & Starks, 2015). Therefore, relationship stigma can be experienced by those in an interracial relationship both as an individual and as a couple and may have consequences for relationship outcomes. In a study examining relationship outcomes among individuals in same-sex and interracial couples, Rosenthal & Starks (2015) found that the source of relationship stigma matters and that stigma from friends had more adverse associations with relationship

outcomes than stigma from family and the public. Results also showed that egalitarian beliefs and dyadic coping were factors that buffered individuals from the adverse effects of relationship stigma.

It is also useful to examine not only how societal factors influence our understanding of interracial relationships, but also how interracial relationships shape our understanding of race relations and social boundaries between racial/ethnic groups in society. The growth of interracial marriages and multiracial individuals is often viewed as an indicator of improving race relations in the U.S. For example, some have argued that the election of Barack Obama as President was aided by his multiracial background and that the support for a mixed-race/African American individual as President of the United States was reflective of the changing racial climate in America (Yancy & Lewis, 2009). However, other scholars have noted that while there may be evidence of decreasing social boundaries between racial/ethnic groups, racism and discrimination is still prominent within the United States (Kroeger & Williams, 2011).

Some scholars suggest that the color line in America has shifted from a White-Black divide, to a Black-non-Black divide, a phenomenon known as *black exceptionalism*. This phenomenon notes that while other racial/ethnic minority groups in the U.S. assimilate into mainstream society and "blend in with the White majority," the Black population is the one racial group that continues to be segregated from all other racial groups (Kroeger & Williams, 2011, p. 401). Black exceptionalism can been seen in multiple ways in society including evidence that (1) Blacks experience more racism, discrimination, and racial segregation than other racial groups; (2) non-Black minority groups experience greater assimilation than Blacks; and (3) the phenomenon known as "social whitening" suggests that the idea of who is considered White has expanded to incorporate new immigrant groups such as Hispanic and Asian groups,

but this is not expanded to include Black Americans (Kroeger & Williams, 2011). The phenomenon of black exceptionalism can particularly be seen within the context of interracial relationships as evidence by trends that show despite improving attitudes toward interracial unions, non-Black individuals in the U.S. are less likely to date interracially with someone who is Black than they are with other individuals of other races.

Kroeger & Williams (2011) conducted a study to assess the consequences of black exceptionalism on the mental health of those involved in interracial relationships, specifically examining individual well-being in the context of interracial unions by exploring depressive symptoms and relationship satisfaction among non-Black individuals who violate social dating norms as defined by black exceptionalism. Results overall showed negative consequences of black exceptionalism within the context of interracial relationships. More specifically, Kroeger & Williams (2011) found that participants with Black partners reported significantly more depressive symptoms and less relationship satisfaction than those with non-Black partners, suggesting that the persistent stigma associated with being in a Black-non-Black relationship (e.g., disapproval from friends and family) may lead to negative mental health outcomes and poor relationship dynamics for non-Black individuals with Black partners. However, researchers note that there may be other factors related to these associations and that future research should obtain more direct measures of familial and social approval and/or disapproval of one's relationship, and further explore other important factors such as gender expectations between groups and/or differences in values or beliefs rooted in one's racial/ethnic identity (Kroeger & Williams, 2011). The current study addresses this call and utilizes qualitative methods to conduct a more in-depth approach into multiple perspectives on stigma, approval, discrimination toward interracial couples and families, as reported by those families themselves.

Racial socialization and parenting. Racial socialization is defined as:

> "an adaptive strategy parents use to prepare children to negotiate experiences associated with social position. These strategies shape family and child characteristics and give meaning to and provide a context for racial consciousness, identity development, and cross-race relationships. Parents use racial socialization strategies to foster an understanding and awareness of race, racism, and racial privilege as well as enculturation of ethnic heritage and culture." (Rollins & Hunter, 2013, p. 141).

There are various dimensions of racial socialization, including social position, ethnicity and culture, and political philosophies that "deemphasize the salience of race and emphasize individual development." (Rollins & Hunter, 2013, p. 141; Twine, 2004). Within interracial families, when parents of Biracial children discuss topics of race and ethnicity, they help their children to understand society's messages about race as well as provide communication that fosters awareness of race, minimizes ambiguity, increases familial interactions, and helps to buffer youth from stereotype effects. Previous qualitative studies on racial socialization in interracial families found that parents of Biracial children provide little racial socialization and when they do, they may deemphasize race and tend to respond to specific instances of racism and discrimination rather than taking a proactive approach to addressing these topics (Marbury, 2006; Samuels, 2009). The current literature review, and overall study, of racial socialization focuses on the communication and messages parents pass along to their children, however, it critical to understand that this is only one method in which parents engage in the process of racial socialization.

Racial socialization helps parents to impart knowledge of their own racial heritage, racial identity, class, gender, beliefs, and values onto their children as well as pass along messages

about the current state of race relations and ideological perspectives about race (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). This helps children to understand their social position and membership within racial groups. Within interracial families, each parent brings with them their own racial socialization experiences, racial identity, and an experience of a privileged or marginalized racial status. Researchers have found that White parents tend to emphasize messages of equality and answer specific questions when asked by their children, whereas African American parents are more likely to emphasize awareness of racial differences and prepare their children for bias they may experience (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Therefore, differences exist in whether parents are reactive or proactive in addressing issues of race and discrimination with their Biracial children. Parents of Biracial children are also in a unique position to pass along multiple cultures, values, and traditions; however, interracial couples must also negotiate and decide what cultural socialization messages they will pass along to their children. Cultural socialization refers to the way children learn about their culture and reflects traditions and values related to cultural pride and ethos, passing along cultural history and emphasizing group pride and empowerment (Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Wang, Brenner & Kim, 2015).

In discussing racial socialization messages within Black families, Barr & Neville (2014) reviewed the two primary types of socialization messages given to children from parents, including protective and proactive messages. Proactive messages focus on the positive aspects of one's racial/ethnic group, while protective messages warn of the realities of racism and discrimination and provide strategies for how to deal with encountering oppression and discrimination in one's daily life (Barr & Neville, 2014). Previous research has found that both types of messages are related to various mental health indicators. For example, Bynum, Burton & Best (2007), demonstrated that parental racial socialization messages reduced the impact of

racism on psychological stress and that emphasizing cultural pride was important in the psychological health of African American young adults. Relatedly, Davis & Stevenson (2006) found that racial socialization has an influence on the emotional coping strategies of Black youth, specifically that youth who receive cultural pride reinforcement and racism coping messages may show more positive emotional outcomes than those who receive messages to assimilate to the mainstream culture.

A recent study examined the impact of monoracial White parents' racial socialization practices on the process of Biracial identity development for their Black/White Biracial adult (ages 18-40 years old) children (Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017). Researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with ten White mothers and eleven of their adult Biracial children. Using phenomenological analysis, their results revealed two overarching themes of racial socialization practices interacting with and influencing Biracial identity development: creating a Biracial family identity and navigating what it means to be Biracial with the outside world (Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017). An important finding of this study was that, contrary to past assumptions about White, single mothers raising Biracial children, which said that White parents could not or do not properly racially socialize their children to their Black heritage because they do not share that experience (Samuels, 2009), the White, single mothers in the current study felt obligated to teach their children about both of their racial heritages and worked to instill a strong sense of Biracial identity in their children. In addition, the White mothers in the sample also discussed the necessity of teaching their Biracial children about racial discrimination. Findings also emphasized the importance of open communication from both the perspective of the parent and the child on the positive and negative aspects of having multiple racial heritages (Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017).

Some limitations of previous studies include that they often do not explore perspectives of all family members involved in the racial socialization process (children and both parents), such as Marbury (2006) who only interviewed White mothers or Samuels (2009), who exclusively interviewed parents who adopted mixed-race children, which limits our understanding of what the racial socialization process looks like in interracial families with biological children from the perspective of all family members. While Stone & Dolbin-MacNab (2017) did interview parents and their children, they did so retrospectively with now adult children, rather than conducting interviews with families while children were young and still living with their parents and, therefore, much closer to the experiences of racial socialization occurring within the family. The current study sought to extend previous research by examining the racial socialization process from the perspective of mothers and fathers as well as adolescent children within interracial families. Prior to delving into how families communicate on the topic of race, I will step back to review the important social, political, and historical context relevant to interracial families in the United States.

Intersectionality and family studies. While the primary focus of this current literature review is on the role of race, writ large, in understanding practices and dynamics within interracial families, it is important to note that issues of race are inextricably tied to other social identities, including gender, social class, nationality, and skin color, just to name a few. The importance of acknowledging and investigating the connections between these identities relates to the burgeoning research on intersectionality, which examines the ways in which various dimensions of identity and systems of oppression (e.g., sexism, racism, classism) interact to shape the experiences of individuals (Crenshaw, 1994). While research on the role of intersectionality in socialization practices and race-related communication among interracial

families is limited, previous literature has explored the intersections of race, gender, and class in shaping parenting practices and family dynamics across other types of families.

For example, Patricia Hill Collins (1998) explored the intersections of race, class, gender and nation in a review of the research on the impact of each of these factors on Black families during the 1980s and 90s. In exploring the intersections between race and social class, Collins (1998) highlighted that multiple factors associated with capitalist development, migration patterns, industry and job market changes in the United States, which had affected the educational and economic opportunities available to Black families. These patterns, in turn, had a direct effect on family organization in multiple ways, for example, in trends over time which showed that Black families shifted from being head by two parents, to a majority of Black families having women only households (Collins, 1998). Further, even in two parent homes, factors such as racial discrimination and exclusion have often thwarted Black men in their attempts to be the sole economic providers for their families (Hill & Sprague, 1999). According to Collins (1998), feminist research, which had once been criticized for being at odds with longstanding Black nationalist perceptions of Black families as essential building blocks of strong Black communities, also found meaningful intersections between race and gender in Black families. Research on the labor status of women showed that Black family structures were also shaped by the placement of Black men and women in a "race and gender-segmented" labor market (Collins, 1998, p. 31). In addition, state policies applied to Black men and women had also affected household and family configurations. For example, trends from the 1970s-80s showed both Black men and women experience chronic unemployment and underemployment, but Black men tended to encounter the criminal justice system, while Black women confronted "an increasingly punitive social welfare system" (Collins, 1998, p. 31).

In their study on the intersections of race, gender and class on parenting in Black families, Hill & Sprague (1999) found differences in parenting practices along race, gender, and class lines. For example, their results showed that compared to the parents of girls, parents of boys stressed obedience and respect more frequently as a value and were more likely to use removal of privileges as a discipline strategy. However, the emphasis on obedience for their sons versus daughters was a pattern noticed among White, but not Black families, demonstrating that gender socialization is not a "monolithic phenomenon" (Hill & Sprague, 1999, p. 496). There were also gender differences observed at specific intersections of race and class, for example, poor Whites were more likely to emphasize obedience with their sons; however, there were no statistically significant gender effects in the practices related to obedience by poor Black parents. Their overall results showed that while these gender by race findings appears salient in shaping discipline strategies and family priorities, it was a less salient feature in shaping parents' long-term goals. Hill & Sprague (1999) noted that this result may relate to the interpretation that gender may not be salient when parents think about their values, but "may be embedded in their daily practices where it will have concrete consequences for children" (p. 497).

Intersections of gender and class also shape the process of parental racial socialization. Research on the impact of child gender shows that boys of color are more likely to be viewed as threatening by others and thus, racial socialization messages from parents differ between their sons and daughters as parents anticipate what their children may experience in their neighborhoods and schools (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006). While research on gender differences in racial socialization practices have yielded mixed results, several studies of Black families have found that boys are more likely receiving messages regarding racial barriers, while girls tend to receive messages regarding racial pride (Bowman &

Howard, 1985; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002; Thomas & Speight, 1999). In terms of class differences, research has shown that higher income and more highly educated Black families perceive more prejudice and discrimination than their lower income, less educated counterparts and as such, middle-upper class socioeconomic families report having more racial socialization practices (e.g., preparing their children for bias) than those from lower class groups (Hughes et al., 2006). Research has also shown that parents from more affluent families were also more likely to have Afrocentric home environments (e.g., Afrocentric toys, books, magazines, music) (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002).

Parents' immigration status has also been shown to shape differences in racial socialization practices in families. Not surprisingly, processes such as immigration and acculturation influence perspectives on what it means to be a member of a particular ethnic or racial group and the types of cultural knowledge family members possess (Hughes et al., 2006). The previous literature on racial socialization practices among immigrants has demonstrated that recent immigrants are more likely to socialize their children in regards to their ethnic origin, native language, and traditions, and they are also more likely to discuss discrimination than their same-ethnicity counterparts who have been in the United States longer (Alba, 1990; Cheng & Kuo, 2000; Knight, Bernal, Garza, et al., 1993; Quintana, Casteñada-English, & Ybarra, 1999; Rumbaut, 1994; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004; Waters, 1990).

Decades of research have also highlighted the role of colorism, the "allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin" (Burke, 2008, p. 17), in shaping inequality and socioeconomic mobility across families, interracial relationships, and the racial socialization of children, among many other factors (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010). Research has shown that colorism impacts both socioeconomic

and psychological outcomes, for example, dark-skinned racial minorities are more likely to grow up in poverty, more likely to suffer from substance abuse, and less likely to marry (Hochschild & Weaver, 2007). The pervasive social effects of colorism imply that within families, racial socialization practices may vary according to the child's skin tone (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010).

In Margaret Hunter's 2013 book entitled, *Race, Gender and the Politics of Skin Tone*, she explored the role that colorism has on the experiences of Black and Mexican American women and men, not only within society, but also within their own families. This research highlighted the many complexities related to the impacts of colorism on the ways in which individuals perceive themselves and how they are viewed and treated by others. For example, individuals, and specifically women, who are light-skinned are viewed as "better," more beautiful and desirable by their family and friends, while individuals with darker skin are seen as less attractive and desirable (Hunter, 2013). Skin color stratification among the Mexican American and Black interviewees in Hunter's (2013) research discussed the levels of praise and approval they received in their own families as a result of their lighter skin or, conversely, teasing and rejection they experienced as a result of their darker skin. While the impacts of colorism can be seen across both women and men, research has shown that skin color bias seems to impact the experiences of women more due to the reality that women are so often evaluated by their physical attractiveness, and as such, they are afforded certain privileges or not based on their perceived beauty (Hunter, 2013).

The effects of colorism are not impervious to interracial families and, in fact, there are additional layers of complexity in such families. In examining the impacts of colorism in mixed-race families, Tharps (2016) remarks on the complexities of this topic within families and how

interracial family members may be ultra-conscious of the differences in skin color between parents and their children. In Sharon Chang's (2015) book, *Raising Mixed Race: Multicultural Asian Children in a Post-Racial World*, she describes the fear some monoracial parents have in raising biracial children due to their skin color differences and believing that they might not be able to connect with their children due to these obvious skin color differences and not "looking like" their children. Among the Asian and White parents Chang (2015) interviewed in her research, there were also worries that their children would not be perceived as "theirs" by society due to their skin color differences, which has indeed occurred among interracial families (Tharps. 2016). The current study explored the role of colorism in interracial families, as well as intersections between race and other social identities (e.g., gender, nationality) that emerged as influential in shaping the process of race-related communication between parents and their adolescent children.

Interracialism and the sociopolitical context

As mentioned thus far throughout this document, the lived experiences of mixed-race children and interracial families are best understood within the larger sociopolitical and historical context of the United States, which has a long history of significant social and political events that have shaped and continue to shape how interracial families function and navigate within various communities of this country. From the painful and abusive relationships between White slave owners and African slaves in the 17th to mid-19th century, to anti-miscegenation laws which remained in effect from the late 17th century to 1967, to where our country stands now, with the first mixed-race/African American person to ever hold the presidential office, we can see that the treatment of interracial relationships and acceptance of mixed-race persons has changed dramatically over the centuries in the United States. Beginning with more recent history, the

following review details several, key sociopolitical events over the last fifty years that are relevant to interracial unions and multiracial persons, including the *Loving v. Virginia* case of 1967, the Multiracial Movement, which resulted in changes in racial categories of the US Census in 2000, the election of our country's first mixed-race/African American President, Barack Hussein Obama, and recent, unprecedented election of Trump as 45th president of the United States, and resulting racial tensions that reemerged during this time.

Relevant historical and current events

Loving v. the Commonwealth of Virginia. On June 2, 1958, twenty-four-year-old Richard Loving drove to Washington, D.C. to wed eighteen-year-old Mildred Jeter, and the pair subsequently returned to their home state of Virginia to live as a married couple. The problem with this scenario, Richard was White, and Mildred was of African and Native American heritage. Five weeks after their return to Virginia, Richard and Mildred awoke one morning to find the county sheriff and two deputies in their home, where they arrested the newlyweds for unlawful cohabitation, adding that their marriage certificate was not recognized by the state of Virginia (Roberts, 2014/2015). The Lovings were indicted by a grand jury for trying to evade the ban on interracial marriage and the couple subsequently pleaded not guilty to the charge on January 6, 1959. To avoid imprisonment, they accepted banishment from the state of Virginia for a period of 25 years and moved to Washington, D.C. (Kenney & Kenney, 2012). No words better reflect the societal attitudes toward interracial marriage at that time than those spoken by the trial judge in the Circuit Court [388 U.S., 1, 3] of Caroline County Virginia (1958) during this case when he stated,

> Almighty God created the races, white, black, yellow, Malay, and red and placed them on separate continents, and but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no

> cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend the races to mix.

Richard and Mildred Loving lived in Washington, D.C. for five years without the support of family and friends before deciding to seek the help of the US Attorney General's Office and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), who subsequently aided the Lovings in bringing the case before the Supreme Court (Kenney & Kenney, 2012). It is important to note the political and litigation agenda at this time. By the time the ACLU had brought this case to the Supreme Court, state anti-miscegenation laws had long been challenged by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and considered as a potential target for the civil rights litigation campaign led by its Legal Defense and Education Fund (Roberts, 2014/2015).

At the time, state anti-miscegenation laws had long remained in effect since the late 17th century, not only to criminalize interracial marriage, but more importantly, to enforce racial segregation. Roberts (2014/2015) conducted a review of anti-miscegenation laws within the context of the segregationist regime at that time period and noted that these laws were a key element of the segregationist structure and essential to establishing the political order that separated individuals by race, subordinating Blacks to Whites, and policing the boundaries between them, with the ultimate goal to uphold White purity and establish White supremacy. In the *Loving v. Virginia* case, the legal statues under question were part of the Racial Integrity Act of 1924, which made it a crime for a White person to marry anyone other than another White person, defined as having "no trace of blood other than Caucasian." Violation of this law was punishable by one to five years imprisonment (Roberts, 2014/2015). Between 1661 and 1967, approximately 30 states had anti-miscegenation laws, the first of these was observed in Virginia.

One June 12, 1967, the US Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Earl Warren voted unanimously in favor of the Lovings and declared anti-miscegenation laws that remained in sixteen states at the time, including Virginia, as unconstitutional (Kenney & Kenney, 2012). The Court's decision in this case as well as in *Brown v. the Board of Education* in 1954 helped to begin breaking down the segregationist regime that aimed at keeping Blacks and Whites from having contact and developing relationships with one another, first in the public sphere of education, then in the private realm of marriage. Civil rights' advocates viewed this decision as a step forward in achieving racial justice. However, some scholars disagree with the notion that this decision as well as the increase in interracial marriages over the decades should be taken as a sign of racial progress and liberation from White supremacy. In fact, some scholars argue that because interracial marriage rates are still relatively low, with Black-White marriages being the least common, the persistent political, social and economic gaps between Blacks and Whites continues to pose barriers to any significant trend toward crossing racial lines to marry (Roberts, 2014/2015). Nonetheless, the *Loving v. Virginia* case was one political event, among many, that began to challenge the segregationist structure of America and forever changed legal statues relevant to interracial relationships.

The Multiracial Movement. Since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and the eradication of anti-miscegenation laws in 1967 discussed above, the legalization of interracial marriages and growing acceptance of interracial unions led to what has been termed a 'Biracial baby boom' (Root, 1999; Wallace, 2001) in the United States. Due to the increase in interracial relations and an increase in immigration rates during 1950 to the 1960s, the United States experienced an increase in interracial/interethnic unions, which grew from about 150,000 in 1960 to roughly 1.46 million in 2000 (Dalmage, 2004). Prior to the 2000 U.S. Census accounting of

mixed-race individuals, the growth of Biracial children was estimated based on the growing number of interracial marriages and birth certificates of those children (Gibbs, 1998). Before this time, even though the existence of a Biracial population was known, it was a population largely ignored by society, partly due to the oppression of racial and ethnic minority populations and society's continued silence on Biracialism. Even though the rulings on anti-miscegenation laws changed, it did not mean that attitudes toward racial mixing and mixed-race individuals changed (Root, 1990). It was not until the 1990s that the country saw an emergence of political and social organizations dedicated to the experiences of individuals from a wide array of mixed backgrounds (Wallace, 2001). This has been referred to as the Multiracial Movement (or sometimes the Mixed Heritage Movement) and was created to help ensure the freedom of those individuals who wish to self-identify with more than one racial category (Wallace, 2001).

This movement was comprised of various groups and organizations from local college support groups to larger, national organizations such as the Association of Multiethnic Americans (AMEA) and Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally), which is a national advocacy group that aimed to change the classification of race in the United States on all types of forms such as school, hospital, government, and other forms (Spencer, 1999). These organizations serve as a voice for the multiracial/multiethnic population in the United States and ensured that those who belonged within this population were able to correctly self-identify themselves on various forms. However, while some embraced this movement, others met this movement with criticism and fear. In particular, certain civil rights and minority groups perceived this movement as a danger because it threatened to "disrupt the logic of race in which such organizations have become increasingly invested over time" (Dalmage, 2004, p. 78).

Although racial classification was once used to discriminate and disenfranchise

minorities, following movements such as the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the 1960s and 1970s, the accounting of racial classification was employed as a means to monitor racial and ethnic data and to help ensure the compliance and delivery of services among minority populations (Dalmage, 2004). For example, after implementation of the Civil Rights Act, racial classification and the collection of racial data became important for firms and schools in order to track and show improvement on their racial composition and the number of minorities within their organizations (Dalmage, 2004). Although these movements helped to ensure equality and opportunities among some minority populations, they also created a question of how to classify those who belong to more than one racial group. Overall, the Multiracial Movement was met by some with skepticism, fear, and a general misunderstanding. However, for those individuals who identify as multiracial, the movement was viewed as a step forward in the right direction and a victory for those who wished to be recognized fully for the individual they are, not only select parts of their racial background.

President Barack Obama and the "New Politics of Race." In 2008, Barack Hussein Obama II became the first Biracial individual elected president of the United States. President Obama is simultaneously and more often regarded as our nation's first African American president and President Obama has remarked that he identifies as African American. However, in his autobiography, *Dreams from my Father,* Obama (2006) describes the diversity of his immediate and extended family and importantly notes that he is the son of a Black man from Kenya and a White woman from Kansas. President Obama is Biracial, but he does not refer to himself this way, and is rarely referred by others as mixed-race, or our 'first mixed-race President,' which may point, in part, to the persistence of the one-drop rule as well as Obama's understanding of his lived experiences as that of a Black man. In his book, Obama discusses the

fluidity in understanding his racial identity, stating, "As it was, I learned to slip back and forth between my black and white worlds, understanding that each possessed its own language and customs and structures of meaning, convinced that with a bit of translation on my part, the two worlds would eventually cohere" (Obama, 2006, p. 82). As noted above, many have pointed to the election of Obama as a sign of our country's progress in racial equality and evidence of a "post-racial" society. While certainly a historic moment, the fact that his election as president is evidence of a "post-racial" society remains to be seen. Undoubtedly, Obama's election as president has generated and continues to generate much public discussion on the contemporary meaning of race and what defines Blackness, as well as debates on multiracial identity and interracial families.

Before reviewing the research on Obama's influence on racial discourse in America, it is critical to first briefly review the "new politics of race" and how social constructions of Blackness have shaped the political climate when it comes to race. First emerging in 2007 and 2008, scholars began to discuss what has been termed the "new politics of race," which referred to racial discourse and a set of guidelines for how President Obama should "deal with the issue of race," should he be elected into office (Logan, 2014, p. 653). More generally, it was viewed as a set of standards or cultural norms for Black, upwardly mobile individuals. This concept was grounded in the ideology of colorblindness and the acknowledgment that America had largely overcome "the problem of race." According to this perspective, Logan (2014) writes, "race-specific remedies such as affirmative action are divisive and unfair, acts of anti-black racism are rare and likely over-reported, and the problems facing the black poor are due mostly to the profound cultural deficiencies found within the poor themselves" (p. 654). Therefore, if Black individuals wished to seek access to White spaces and institutions (e.g., the White House), they

should present themselves as mainstream, articulate, and acknowledge the racial progress our country has made, while also avoiding divisive racial issues (Logan, 2014). In order to be successful in his election as President, Obama would have to follow these guidelines of the new politics of race.

Logan (2014) argues that the new politics of race goes beyond colorblindness and that this racial discourse is *class-specific*, meaning that it divides the Black poor against the Black upwardly mobile, which differentiates between "good Blacks" like President Obama, and "more problematic others" (p. 654). In understanding the dynamics between race and class, specifically within the Black community, one needs to take a slight detour to review the concept of racialization. Racialization refers to process of attributing social meaning to different types of physical bodies on the basis of supposedly heritable racial essences. It is a relational process in which racial groups acquire characteristics and are understood only relative to each other (e.g., the meaning of Blackness only makes sense in reference to Whiteness) (Logan, 2014). Previous researchers have discussed the importance of understanding how class shapes processes of racialization within groups (Omi & Winant, 1994). The emergence of deep class stratification among African Americans is described by Winant (1994) as one of the most important racial developments of the post-civil rights era. Differences in social class in combination with factors such as residential segregation, mass incarceration, educational tracking, and the racialization of the public sector employment, mean that there are increasingly distinct modalities of Black racialization today (Logan, 2014). This context is important in understanding the influence Obama had in Black racialization discourse.

Based on an analysis of approximately 300 articles from online and print media between 2007-2014, Logan (2014) examined the conceptual frameworks used by political observers in

describing and analyzing Obama's way of handling issues of race, social class, and Blackness. Among many findings, Logan (2014) discussed racial transcendence as one of the core narratives found in the Obama campaign and that the "postracial" climate of the time required Obama to downplay the significance of race so as not to risk appearing as an "angry, Black leader." In addition, he had to be careful in framing racial issues in ways that would not alienate the White community. More often than not, Obama was seen to comply with the guidelines of the new race politics, carefully moderating his comments about racial injustice, speaking rarely about racism and distancing himself from other more outspoken advocates of racial injustice, including Jesse Jackson and his former pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright. He was viewed as striving to "transcend the racial divide," eloquently performing his Blackness in a way that was unthreatening and presented as a "newly authentic American identity" (Logan, 2014, p.664).

Beyond Obama's influence on the politics of race and the racial discourse of Blackness, his election as president has also reinvigorated debates and questions about multiracialism that began in the multiracial movement of the 1990s discussed above. Such questions for debate included, "Is Obama Black? Is he Black enough? Is he too Black? Why doesn't he identify as mixed-race? Should he identify as mixed-race?," (DaCosta, 2009). Researchers have argued that Obama's campaign for presidency forced the citizens of our country to confront the issue of multiracialism and interracial intimacy in a personal way, by examining one's personal feelings about Obama's mixed-race ancestry and his Blackness. Over time, cultural understandings of interracial intimacy moved from fear and loathing, to the utopian belief that intimate interracial relationships could ultimately help to resolve racial conflict, and that mixed-race children, previously viewed as "abominations," would instead have "the best of both worlds" and serve as proof of our country's racial progress. In his writings and speeches, however, Obama offered a

counterpoint to this utopic vision, often describing his complicated feelings of interracial kinship (e.g., his White grandmother, who helped raised him and whom he loves, but who also has confessed her fear of Black men and utters racial stereotypes) and that discrimination and prejudice can sometimes coexist in the context of love and family (DaCosta, 2009).

Overall, it is clear that President Obama's entrance into the political and public domain revitalized the national conversation about interracial relationships, mixed-race identity, and nuances in understanding what it means to be Black. DaCosta (2009) argues that Obama's candidacy likely has "done more to normalize interracial families than all of the community groups, magazines, and challenges to census classification of multiracials than the last decade combined" (p. 7). However, on a more micro level, it is unclear how interracial families themselves feel about the past eight years of the Obama presidency in terms of racial discourse and what this means for how they discuss issues of race and identity within their families, and if Obama's racial discourse and presence as a public figure have shifted or changed those conversations in any way. The current study aims to address the current social and political climate relevant to race and how this has shaped family conversations and individual thinking about race.

Race and racism in the era of Donald Trump

During the course of this dissertation, the divisive campaign and eventual election of Donald Trump in November 2016 as the 45th president of the United States seemingly caught the nation and the world by surprise. Many Americans, and indeed other individuals across the world, did not believe that a controversial businessman-turned reality TV star, who ran on a campaign of division fueled by racist, sexist, and xenophobic rhetoric, would win the Republican nomination, much less secure the presidency. Trump's electoral win sparked national

conversation on the state of the American identity, questioning who we are as a country and reigniting debate on the racial climate of the United States (Goethals, 2017). While Donald Trump's election and early presidency have created discourse on multiple political, social and moral fronts, the deeply imbedded issue of race and racism in this country was once again brought to the foreground, creating a distinct shift from the 'post-racial' society many believed we lived in under the presidency of our nation's first Black/Biracial president.

Donald Trump's first year in office was marked by an increase in White supremacist groups as well as an increase in public activities by new and old groups, which many believed was a direct result of the words and actions of Trump himself, who has spoken about and tweeted out hate materials against various minority groups and failed to strongly condemn such 'alt-right' and supremacist hate groups. This was most notable following the White supremacist march in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 11, 2017, where one anti-racism activist was killed, and Trump responded that there was 'hate on both sides,' equivocating the actions of White supremacists and anti-racist protestors (Begley, 2018). Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke remarked that the rally was a "turning point" and vowed that White supremacist groups would "fulfill the promises of Donald Trump," and "take back our country" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018). Trump's refusal to strongly denounce such groups and their actions further supports the perceived legitimacy of such groups.

The Southern Poverty Law Center report entitled, *Year in Hate and Extremism*, identified 954 hate groups in 2017, which represents a 4% increase in hate groups from 2016. Not surprisingly, there has also been a rise in Black nationalist hate groups- groups which have always existed as a reaction to racism, which expanded from 193 to 233 chapters in 2017. The report notes that the rise was driven, in part by, by backlash from the Nation of Islam and fringe

black nationalist groups that view Trump as the leader of the rising White supremacist movement (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018). There have also been rises in neo-Nazi groups (from 99 to 121) and anti-Muslim groups (101 to 114) in 2017; however, the report notes that the overall rise in hate groups likely underestimates the real level of hate in America, as many who identify with the alt-right or other hate groups may not formally be affiliated with one group or another (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018).

Trump's election and the rise of various racially-based hate groups across the country have forced many to once again confront the realities of racism, which are not only alive in the words and actions of individuals but are deeply entrenched in laws and policies that continue to disenfranchise, discriminate against, and dehumanize people of color. These racist ideologies now have the backing of an individual holding the highest office in our country, a man who continues to demonize and scapegoat minorities and immigrants, and someone who also has appointed key administration advisors with ties to these 'alt-right' groups (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018). Scholars argue that Trump's message to 'make America great again,' was a not-too subtle call to "return to an America where the material well-being and privileged position of White citizens would be protected and made something that could be again taken comfortably for granted" (Bobo, p. 100, 2017). Others in the media and political world contend that Trump's presidency thus far has served to negate Obama's legacy with his attempts and actions to dismantle many Obama-era policies, such as the Affordable Care Act (Manchester, 2017). The current study's exploration of the context in which multiracial families live thus also included family member's perspectives on the current political climate and how they believed the shift in political leadership, and the seemingly related shift in race relations, impacted conversations they were having with one another related to race.

Societal attitudes toward interracialism

In sociological research, interracial unions are often utilized as a measure of levels of integration or assimilation for minority ethnic groups into the larger, dominant culture (Field, Kimuna & Straus, 2013). While researchers can examine interracial unions as a way to estimate the level of acceptance of racial minority groups by majority groups, another approach to take can include directly exploring attitudes toward interracial unions themselves over time. In a report by Gallup and Newport (1991), researchers assessed views toward approval and disapproval of marriage between Blacks and Whites over a series of years (1968, 1972, 1978, 1983, and1991). The results demonstrated that in 1991, for the first time, more Americans approved interracial marriage than those who disapproved and that approval for interracial marriage between Black and Whites was higher for Blacks than it was for Whites. In another smaller scale study conducted by Paset and Taylor (1991), researchers administered surveys to 50 Black and 50 White women between 18 to 23 years of age, asking them to rate their responses on a Likert scale (1 being most negative, 10 being most positive) on their attitudes toward (a) a man of their race marrying a woman of another race and (b) a woman of their race marrying a man of another race. Results showed that White women overall gave a more favorable rating than Black women on attitudes toward both men and women marrying a partner of a different race. Although the sample characteristics limited the generalizability of these findings, Paset and Taylor (1991) suggest findings show that White women were consistently more favorable of men and women marrying a partner of another race than Black women.

More than a decade later, Herman and Campbell (2012), using the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), examined Whites' attitudes toward dating, cohabitating, marrying, and having a child with African and Asian Americans. The CCES collected data from

individuals who matched a random sample of the adult American population drawn from the 2004 American Community Survey (ACS), conducted by the US Bureau of the Census (Herman & Campbell, 2012). Overall, these study results demonstrated that while many of the participants sampled supported and were open to interracial interactions or being in an interracial relationship, few actually married a partner of another race or engaged in interracial dating. More specifically, results showed that attitudes toward interracial relationships become slightly less positive as the relationship becomes more serious (moving from dating, to cohabiting, to marrying, respectively). There were also observed gender differences in willingness to engage in interracial intimate relationships, with women being more likely to draw a distinction between what they will personally do and what they condone for others, thus showing a divide between public attitudes (attitudes applied toward others) and personal attitudes (attitudes applied to one's own behavior) (Herman & Campbell, 2012). However, researchers importantly noted that these trends in fewer numbers of individuals who choose to interracial marry when compared to higher numbers of individuals who are tolerant or willing to engage in interracial relationships may be due to other factors, including perceived lack of opportunity, potential unconscious resistance to interracial dating, or that tolerance for interracial dating may coexist or be trumped by a preference for homogenous relationships (Herman & Campbell, 2012). This is an important area for future research to explore further.

Field, Kimuna, and Straus (2013), noted that limitations of some of the previous studies, including assessment of attitudes based on one or two survey items and lack of any standardized or rigorous use of a measurement scale of participant's attitudes toward interracial relationships, making comparisons between studies over time very difficult. Therefore, using a sample of 1173 college students at four American and one Canadian university (including Historically Black

Colleges/Universities, HBCUs, and Predominately White Institutions, PWIs), Field, Kimuna, and Straus (2013) compared attitudes toward African American/White and Asian American/White interracial relationships, utilizing the Cross-Group Relationship Scale (CGRS). The CGRS was developed to measure approval of interracial relationships in general and also toward specific types of relationships, including African American/White and Asian/White. Results demonstrated that approval of interracial marriage and dating is lower for African American/White than for Asian American/White unions. Approval of interracial relationships was also lower among African American women than African American men, and overall lowest among Whites. However, Southern HBCU students were the least approving of interracial relationships, suggesting that this may represent an attempt by HBCU students to preserve African American history, culture and relationships.

Overall, while conducting research on interracial families, it is critical to understand the larger social and historical context of this population and how attitudes toward interracial unions, and views toward being part of an interracial relationship, have shifted over time. In this way, exploring the personal and family attitudes toward racial topics among interracial families and the way they communicate about such topics can be framed and better understood within the context of societal attitudes and treatment of interracial unions and families over time.

Communicating about Race

As noted above, families are one of the primary influences in their children's racial socialization. One way to examine how families engage their children in racial socialization is to explore family communication and how family members talk with one another on topics of race, identity, discrimination, and so on. Family communication is an important context wherein children construct and manage their personal and racial identities (Socha & Diggs, 1999). Family

communication is also an important source for family members to learn about ethnic/racial groups outside of their own. Communication can happen either directly, whereby family members ask one another questions and discuss various topics, or indirectly, whereby children observe their parents interacting with others and take note of those interactions (e.g., behavioral observations of their parent interacting with a Black store clerk) (Socha & Diggs, 1999). Because families are so diverse, there are diverse ways that families communicate and interact with one another.

Prior to reviewing theories of interracial family communication, it is useful to provide some basic definitions to understand what is meant by the phrase, 'family communication.' First, although there are many definitions of communication, one way theorists define communication is as a, "transactional process in which individuals create, share, and regulate meaning" (Segrin & Flora, 2011). Human beings communicate with one another in both verbal and nonverbal ways, as well as through symbols that represent units of meaning. Researchers in the field of communication emphasize communication's reliance on *intersubjectivity*, which refers to shared meaning, or a state where a person understands and is understood by the other. Families are said to experience a great deal of intersubjectivity due to shared history and common experiences (Segrin & Flora, 2011). Previous research has also noted that communication is comprised of both content messages, which refer to what is said, and relationship messages, which refer to how it is said and the impact that has on a relationship (Watzlawick, Bavelas & Jackson, 1967). *Metacommunication* refers to communication about communication and is an important skill for families, particularly when there are breakdowns or misunderstandings in communication between family members. Within each family, communication is a process that is complex, ongoing, and continuous; each family with their own unique history, present, and future (Segrin

& Flora, 2011). Researchers suggest that instead of "attempting to understand the family from a specific instance of communication or from one family member, the family should be understood as a whole" (Segrin & Flora, 2011, p. 15). Historically, family researchers examined family communication in dyadic relationships (e.g., parent-child, couples), but scholars are encouraging future researchers to examine whole family interactions in addition to the dyadic relationships. The current study will address this call by examining family communication in individual, dyadic and family interviews.

As will be seen below, the findings from the current study brought to the forefront the work on the role of racial ideology in shaping communication on race. Racial ideology is defined as "collections of beliefs and understandings about race and the role of race in social interaction" (Doane, 2017, p. 976), which are used to explain and justify or challenge the racial status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Among the many ways in which individuals and societies conceptualize race and racism, there are two predominant racial ideology theories in the literature on race: color-blindness and color-consciousness. These ideologies set two distinct paths for how individuals interpret information related to race (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). The theory of color-blindness maintains that "race no longer matters as an obstacle to social and economic success in America" (Doane, 2017, p. 975). In Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's book entitled, *Racism without Racists*, he argues that color-blindness is the "new racism" which emerged as America's new racial structure in the 1960s, in which there was "an increasingly covert nature of racial discourse and racial practices; the avoidance of racial terminology in racial conflicts by whites; and the elaboration of a racial agenda over political matters that eschews direct racial references" (Bonilla-Silva, 2003/2017, p.23). While color-blindness can take on many forms and purposes, it is generally understood as the perspective that racial and ethnic group membership are irrelevant

to the ways in which individuals are treated (Ullucci & Battey, 2011). Color-consciousness is often viewed as a counter to the color-blind ideology as this perspective asserts that race matters and racism exists (Ullucci & Battey, 2011). This ideology acknowledges and challenges the persistence of White supremacy, institutional racism, and racial inequality (Doane, 2017). The way in which the racial ideology within the family shaped how family members talked about race emerged as an important focus of analysis in approaches to race talk.

Interracial family communication

It is important to examine the ways in which parents communicate about issues of race within their families, especially with their Biracial children. Interracial marriages, in the past, were discouraged due to the questions of acceptance and belonging of the resultant children, particularly concerns that those children would be alienated and rejected from both Black and White communities. Scholars wondered how this type of family would function within a society with a history of racial segregation and White supremacy. Aside from the impact of society, scholars also wondered how the interracial family would relate to one another, particularly as racial beings. One way to explore this question is through examining family communication. Obre (1999) reviewed four different orientations interracial Black/White families take in their approach to communicating about race, including (1) embracing the Black experience (e.g., Jones, 1996), (2) assuming a commonsense approach (e.g., Harris, 1997), (3) advocating a colorblind society (e.g., Shirley, 1994), and (4) affirming the multiethnic experience (e.g., Wardle, 1991, 1996). These four approaches are described in more detail below.

Embracing the Black experience. History and implications of the one-drop rule show that children of interracial Black/White families have traditionally been more readily accepted and identified with African American communities more so than European American ones

(Obre, 1999). Following this tradition, many parents of Biracial children raise them with emphasis on what it means to be Black, with little or no attention paid to their White ancestry. Three main reasons cited for this rationalization include (1) parents believe it is important to prepare their children to live in a society that will define them as Black regardless of their appearance and so identifying their children as Black is seen as the only option (Rosenblatt, Karis & Powell, 1995); (2) identifying as Black allows Biracial children to benefit from the strength of the African American community, which provides children with a "large, identifiable, culturally-defined group with which to affiliate" (Rosenblatt et al., 1995, p. 208); and (3) interracial families' view of the Black experience as positive and affirming and, therefore, families' desire to expose their children to African American history and accomplishments within this community, past and present. Overall, from this approach, families hold the perspective that identifying their Biracial children as Black comes with a positive set of values, a wider support network within the African American community, and a strong sense of identity rooted in racial pride. However, these families also take into account how society will view their children and believe in that regard, they have no choice but to raise their children as Black, as that is how they believe society will view and treat them.

Assuming a commonsense approach. In the commonsense approach, families view the one-drop rule as antiquated and approach racial topics and issues depending upon what "makes the most sense" in a particular situation. This approach takes into consideration the presence or absence of both parents as well as the racial composition of the larger environment in which the family resides (e.g., for a Biracial child being raised by his/her White mother in a predominately White neighborhood, it makes sense for the child to assume a White identity). In addition, this approach considers the physical appearance of the child and within this approach, it makes more

sense for a child who "looks more Black" to identify as such, and a child who looks White to take on that identity so that the child's self-identification does not clash with or confuse how their peers or strangers would identify them. Others who advocate from this stance take a more fluid approach toward racial identity and make changes in how one racially identifies their child dependent upon the situation. For example, when some benefit or advantage may be gained by identifying with one group rather than the other, interracial families may change in how they present the identity of their Biracial children in order to navigate those circumstances (Obre, 1999).

Advocating a colorblind society. In this third approach to communicating about race, families advocate for a colorblind society meaning that individuals are seen and treated as human beings regardless of any cultural differences (Obre, 1999). Those who hold this ideology believe that race does not matter because that person does not personally experience the negative impacts of racial discrimination on a daily basis and may overlook the privilege of being White (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Some interracial families support the idea that "love has no color," and promote being a "transracial family," which is a family that emphasizes transcending the limiting notion of race in their communication within and beyond the family. Most often, it is the White/European-American parent who promotes this perspective (Rosenblatt et al., 1995). Previous research has shown that people of color have a more difficult time embracing this ideology as the "choice" to ignore race is not a realistic option in a society where race greatly shapes how one will experience the world.

Affirming the multiethnic experience. The final and fourth approach to communication about race focuses on affirming the uniqueness of each culture represented within the interracial family. Advocates of this approach believe that a key component is having a commitment to

Black history, social consciousness, and cultural affirmation, but not at the expense of denying the existence of the other part of an individual's cultural heritage (Orbe, 1999). For parents who take this approach to racial communication, another important component is allowing their children to choose how they wish to identify. Part of affirming the multiethnic experience means that parents and families must also be prepared to develop communication strategies to confront instances in which others refute their child's assertions as Biracial/multiethnic. Communication also involves lessons about prejudice, discrimination and racism. Central to this approach is also the refusal to engage in dualistic thinking that families must either choose to be Black or be White, challenging traditional thinking about racial classifications.

All of these perspectives are informed by various factors including gender, age, spirituality, socioeconomic status of the parents, family structure and situational contexts (e.g., geographical region, neighborhood, local community). Therefore, examining family communication approaches to race among interracial families will vary dependent on all of these factors, including time. It is critical to also note that the above research was synthesized prior to 2000 (between 1991-1997) and prior to many national events, including the changing of the US census racial categories, the election of the country's first Black/Biracial president, the Black Lives Matter movement, and many other local and national events that have shaped the racial climate in the U.S over the past fifteen years. These events may have also informed how interracial families discuss topics of race and multiraciality with their children. Therefore, now is an opportune time to examine how interracial families are currently approaching conversations about race and how they perceive national and local events influencing their approaches to topics, particularly on racial identity, racial attitudes, racial pride, and discrimination.

Racial and Intergroup Attitudes

In the extant literature, there is mixed evidence that parents and families play a crucial and/or dominant role in the shaping of young children's racial attitudes (Castelli, Zogmaister & Tomelleri, 2009; Nelson, 2015). Most researchers make the assumption that if parents influence the racial attitudes of their children, there should then be a high level of consistency between the racial attitudes of the parent and their children. While some researchers have shown there is a positive correlation between parent and child racial attitudes, particularly for children older than 10 years of age, in a review of previous studies (Castelli, Zogmaister, & Tomelleri, 2009), primarily with White and Black families and with children 7-10 years of age, researchers have either found no correlation between child and parent racial attitudes (Aboud & Doyle, 1996), a negative correlation between parent-child attitudes (e.g., high levels of prejudice among children whose parents had low levels of prejudice) (Branch & Newcombe, 1980, 1986), or researchers found that attitudes between parent and child are only positively correlated when that child has a strong identification with their parents (Sinclair, Dunn & Lowery, 2005). In their study, Castelli, Zogmaister, & Tomelleri (2009) found that preschool children's racial attitudes are not correlated with the explicit attitudes of their parents (deliberate and controlled responses) but are with the implicit attitudes (nonverbal and controlled behavior), particularly of their mother. Castelli et al. (2009) thereby argued that this research provides evidence that preschool children's racial attitudes might be shaped within the family environment. However, there is a great deal of complexity to examining this link and many factors to consider, including age of the child, racial background of the family, social environment, quality of the relationship between the parent and child, and many others such as peer influences. It is useful to further explore the evidence on the

role of parents in the formation of intergroup attitudes in children more generally, racial attitudes being one component of intergroup attitudes.

In a recent meta-analysis, Degner and Dalege (2013) reviewed research on intergroup attitudes over the past sixty years, particularly examining the evidence on parental socialization in intergroup attitudes by assessing (1) the average effect size of parent-child similarity in intergroup prejudice, (2) potential mediators of this relationship, and (3) to what extent parent-child similarity can be interpreted as indicating parent-child socialization. First, in examining previous social-developmental theories of prejudice formation, Degner and Dalege (2013) discuss several theories that have emerged over the past few decades and attempted to explain the formation of intergroup attitudes, including the social cognitive developmental theory, the social identity development theory, the developmental intergroup theory, and the societal-social-cognitive-motivational theory.

The social cognitive developmental theory (SCDT; Abound 1988, 2008) states that prejudice at various stages of childhood is based on parallel developmental changes in children's dominant mode of information processing (from affective to perceptual to cognitive) and their dominant focus of attention (from self to groups to individuals). Another theory proposed by Nesdale (1999), the social identity development theory (SIDT), states that intergroup biases in early childhood are driven by in-group preferences, which are based on self-categorization, in-group identification, and biased social comparisons. From this perspective, neither input from parents nor other socialization agents are expected to play a role in the formation of in-group preferences (Degner & Dalege, 2013). On the other hand, developmental intergroup theory (DIT; Bigler & Liben, 2006, 2007) assumes that adults might influence children's attitudes in several ways including, (1) direct use of group labels or by indirectly using intergroup differentiations

(e.g., segregating individuals belonging to different groups) and (2) through what parents say and how they behave toward out-group members (Castelli et al, 2009). However, the DIT views parental attitudes as one of the many influences on the formation of intergroup attitudes in children (Degner & Dalege, 2013). Finally, societal-social-cognitive-motivational theory (SSCMT; Barrett, 2007) focuses on the various environmental factors where children may acquire information about intergroup relationship and attitudes, including parents, but also teachers, peers, media, and so on. From this perspective, parents play an important role, not only because of their own attitudes and behaviors that may influence the child, but also indirectly through their choices of selecting aspects of the child's environment (e.g., selecting the neighborhood the child lives in, the school s/he attends, media access) (Degner & Dalege, 2013).

In summary, many theories have emerged over the years to hypothesize the formation of intergroup attitudes in children, with mixed perspectives on the direct and/or indirect role of parents in the formation of those attitudes. Degner and Dalege (2013) conducted a meta-analysis to summarize this information and the extent to which parents and children are similar in intergroup attitudes. Overall, their analysis of 131 studies with over 45,000 parent-child dyads revealed a significant, positive relationship between parent-child intergroup attitudes, with small to moderate effect sizes, demonstrating that parent-child intergroup attitudes are indeed related throughout childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. However, they also point to numerous methodological issues and aspects of assessment situations, which may underestimate these effects. For example, they found higher effect sizes in studies which, (1) used conceptually highly overlapping child and parent measures, (2) when the assessment situation was private, and (3) with samples of older children and/or children from higher status majority groups. Results are also complicated by a number of potential mediating variables, including macrolevel factors

(e.g., shared cultural norms, socioeconomic situation, media influences) as well as meso- and microlevel factors (e.g., educational attainment, neighborhood diversity) (Degner & Dalege, 2013).

While attempting to answer this question on the role of parents and families in the formation of intergroup and racial attitudes is quite complex, the extant literature does provide evidence that while parents do play an important role, there are many other influential factors to take into consideration as well, including the larger social and cultural environment (Degner & Dalege, 2013). It is, however, unclear what the transmission of racial and intergroup attitudes looks like among families where one parent belongs to a high-status, majority group and another belongs to a low-status, minority group, making the defining of an in-group and out-group more complex, as is the case with interracial families. Therefore, the current study is an important first step in exploring how parents and children in interracial families approach race-related topics and the similarities and dissimilarities in parent-child racial attitudes and/or perspectives.

Coping with Racial Discrimination

An important discussion in racial minority families in the United States is how to respond to and cope with racial discrimination. Scholars agree that experiencing prejudice, racism, and discrimination is a normative experience for racial/ethnic minority individuals and families in the United States and examining how families (both parents and children) respond to and cope with this discrimination is important, as research has consistently shown negative health outcomes related to discrimination (Romero, Gonzalez & Smith, 2015). More specifically, research has shown negative physiological and physical health outcomes of racial discrimination, including elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate and risk for cardiovascular diseases, cellular aging, and dysregulation of the hypothalamic pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis (Hope, Hoggard, & Thomas,

2015). In addition, previous research has also shown a relationship between racial discrimination and greater symptom levels of mental health outcomes such as depression, suicide, violence, stress disorders, and maladaptive coping strategies such as substance use among African Americans (Brown et al., 2000; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Carter, 2007; Polanco-Roman & Miranda, 2013).

Researchers also discuss various sociopolitical consequences of discrimination, particularly for African Americans. For example, previous research has found that while racial discrimination is indeed harmful to African Americans in a number of ways, encounters with discrimination may also serve as a transformative experience that motivates individuals to get involved in efforts that benefit the larger, racial group (White-Johnson, 2012). Previous researchers have found that individuals who perceive racial discrimination as more stressful were more likely to belong to a political-social justice organization, suggesting that individuals may engage in prosocial involvement as a way to cope with the negative experiences of discrimination (Mattis, Beckham, Saunders, Williams, McAllister, Myers, Knight, Rencher & Dixon, 2004).

Due to the various outcomes of perceived racial discrimination, it is critical to examine how youth and families together cope with racism and the strategies they use to respond to perceived discrimination. Although researchers have examined this topic among various racial/ethnic groups, the following brief review examines how interracial families cope with discrimination. In a qualitative study with 12 Black-White interracial couples, Killian (2003) explored couples' strategic responses to experiencing racism and discrimination, particularly focusing on their responses to negative public reactions, such as stares, disapproving expressions, and harassment. Results demonstrated six primary strategies interracial couples used

to cope with negative attention in public situations, including (1) “fighting fire with fire” or responding in kind with a negative reaction in order to challenge others’ behaviors; (2) “making a special effort” or presenting oneself in a positive manner in order to purposely form a good impression; (3) dissociating from one another, in which couples attempt to not draw attention that one is with the other (as one interviewee described as “not trying to look as provocative”); (4) restricting itinerary, whereby couples discussed limiting their visits to settings in which they feel comfortable and secure; (5) not discussing negative public reactions; and finally, (6) deprioritizing racial differences, in which couples attempted to cope with negative public attention by defining themselves as unremarkable and “just like any other couple,” and choosing to focus on the similarities between themselves and their partner.

Killian (2003) concluded that interracial couples’ strategies to cope with negative public attention varied greatly from open defiance to preemptive avoidance, while other couples saw no need to engage in strategies due to their perception of being an “ordinary” couple. Importantly, Killian (2003) pointed out that in exploring couples’ responses to public attention, it was critical to acknowledge that these strategies took place within the conditions of space, culture, and history, meaning that couples’ responses to public attention carry consequences, such as violent backlash. Therefore, equally important in examining couples’ responses to discrimination is also their perception of the racial climate within their local and regional communities. Considering this study was conducted more than a decade ago, it was important to assess how interracial couples, in today’s society, perceive racial climate and how this informs their perspectives on discrimination and coping responses. In addition, this study only addressed one form of discrimination, namely, negative public attention. The current study addresses these limitations

by examining other forms of discrimination as well as the larger, ecological context (e.g., schools, neighborhood, local community) from both child and parent perspectives.

Specific Research Aims

Although the extant literature has explored the experience and perspectives of multiracial individuals and the perspectives of the interracial couple (e.g. parents), when it comes to issues of race and identity, those perspectives are often investigated independent of one another. There remains a gap in understanding how interracial/interethnic families discuss topics of race and identity with their children and how parents perceive their role in the racial socialization and identity development of their multiracial children. Furthermore, there remains a paucity of research on the broader social context in which these families live and on how family communication about race is informed by various factors, such as perspectives on racial climate and social approval of interracial relationships and mixed-race children. With this in mind, this study has five primary research aims designed to expand our understanding of interracial family, parent, and child perspectives relevant to race and identity and a more in-depth understanding of the larger, social contexts in which these families are embedded.

Aim one: To explore parent perspectives on race and identity and communication approaches in discussing topics related to race and identity with their children. In order to provide an in-depth understanding of how parents in interracial families understand race and identity, I explored how both parents (1) understand their own racial identity and what meaning that gives to their lived experience, (2) understand one another based on their respective racial identities and their overall sentiment and experience in being part of an interracial relationship, (3) decide to racially identify their children and their rationalization for that decision, (4) discuss racial topics, such as prejudice, discrimination, and racial pride with their children, and (5)

choose to handle any discrepancies in perspectives and parenting strategies relevant to racial socialization with one another. The first aim was accomplished via dyadic interviews with both parents present.

Aim two: Explore self-identification, racial identity expression and formation among the sample of Biracial children within each family. In order to triangulate and understand multiple perspectives, I explored each child's (1) experiences with race in both their family and social life, (2) understanding and expression of their racial identity, (3) perspectives on factors that influence any changes or shifts in understanding their racial identity, and (4) perspectives in how their parents have shaped their understanding of race and identity. This second aim was accomplished via individual interviews with each child.

Aim three: Explore family-level approaches to discussing race, identity, and communication on race-related topics. A third aim of this study was to explore how children and parents together discuss issues of race, identity, and other race-related topics (e.g., discrimination) with one another. This was achieved via a family interview with both children and parents present and exploration of several topics, including (1) review of the family's racial and cultural heritage, (2) the role of extended family members, (3) parental racial socialization practices (e.g., race-related messages passed from parents to children), (4) perspectives on stigma, approval, and discrimination that the child and/or parents may experience as members of an interracial family, and (5) importance of racial identity expression within the family. Particular attention was given to areas where children and parents converge and diverge in perspectives.

Aim four: Explore individual perspectives on social contextual factors, specifically racial climate, community racial composition, and perspectives on attitudes toward interracial

relationships and mixed-race persons that influence individual- and family-level understandings of race and identity. An important component of this study is to understand how the social context shaped the individual and family-level thinking on these topics of race and identity. Therefore, another aim of this study was to explore child and parent perspectives on social contextual factors, including community racial composition, racial climate within various nested communities and at multiple levels of micro-, meso- and macrosystems (e.g., local, school, and national), perceived attitudes toward interracial families and mixed-race children both locally and nationally, and any other important contextual factors described throughout the interviews that family members perceive as informing their individual- and/or family-level understandings and experiences of race (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1977, 1994).

Aim five: Suggest a model of the relations between child and parent perspectives on race and identity, family communication on race and identity, and the larger social context. Finally, the fifth aim of this research was to build upon the above aims in order to construct a model, which proposes the relationship between racial identity, child and parental perspectives and practices relevant to racial identity development and racial socialization, family communication on racial topics, and how these relations are operating within the larger social context.

Chapter II: Methods

Due to the exploratory and descriptive nature of the above stated research aims, this study utilized a qualitative research design. Glesne (1999) describes qualitative research as being "generally supported by the *interpretivist* (or *constructivist*) paradigm, which portrays the world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (p. 5). This dissertation was designed to include concepts, such as race and identity, which are also socially constructed,

complex, and constantly changing and evolving. Therefore, using a qualitative methodology works best in order to understand the participants' detailed experiences in reference to the research questions. Because qualitative research is exploratory and descriptive by nature, it also allows for the voice of the participants to be the focus of the research, which I believe is paramount in addressing the complex constructs that are at the forefront of this study.

Participants

The sample consisted of eight families who identified as having one Black/African American parent and one White/European American parent and at least one biological child between the ages of 13-17. This is the developmental period defined as adolescence and there are several reasons for focusing on families who have children within this stage of development. First of all, during early to late adolescence, children have an increased social-cognitive maturity and the ability to understand how their own racial-ethnic identity impacts their social experiences. Since a large part of this current research study focuses on the child's understanding of their racial identity, it is appropriate to focus on children within this stage of development as they possess the abstract thinking skills required to consider identity issues, the capacity to merge their personal identity with their reference group, and perspective-taking skills which help them to develop a more sophisticated understanding of their racial/ethnic identity in relation to others, apart from what it means to their parents (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). In addition, as children make their way from early to middle adolescence, they begin to increase their resistance to peer pressure and demonstrate increased independence in decision-making, which may lead them to their own explorations of their identity rather than relying on agreement with parental or peer influences (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). In considering the larger family structure, it is probable that the parents of children of a younger age (e.g., early to middle childhood) may not

yet have had conversations about race, ethnicity, or identity with them and it may be inappropriate to use a research study to introduce such sensitive topics to young children (Kasuga-Jenks, 2012).

The decision to select families who have biological children with both parents present is based on extant research, which suggests that family structure is very influential in a Biracial child's understanding of their racial and ethnic values, and families where Biracial children were raised by only one parent or by an adoptive parent may have different cultural and racial socialization experiences than those children raised in families with both biological parents present (King & DaCosta, 1996; Johnson, 1992). For example, children living in single parent families may be excluded from access to the cultural experiences embodied in the family of the parent not residing with the child (Johnson, 1992). In addition, socialization experiences may differ in families where both parents do not live in the home with the child. With that in mind, selection of families included those where the immediate family is intact, meaning both parents live with the child. For the current sample, it was not a requirement that the parents are married, but that they are cohabitating with their child.

Families were recruited within various community settings in the Maryland-DC-Virginia area. With the permission of various establishments, the researcher posted recruitment fliers in local churches, libraries, schools, grocery stores and other similar locations. Fliers contained basic information about the study and contact information of the researcher. Additionally, the researcher engaged in snowball sampling, which is a technique helpful in reaching marginalized populations. It was originally thought that a total of eight families, with three interviews each, for a total of 24 interviews, would allow the researcher to reach a point of saturation and redundancy, defined as the point in which additional data no longer adds to the analysis and

adding more participants no longer contributes new evidence (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In the end, however, it is unclear if 'theoretical saturation' was reached. Thus, while this limitation of the current sample will be discussed further below, since the goal of the current study related to exploration and description, rather than theory building, the data collected from these eight families and 24 interviews was deemed sufficient to achieve those stated goals.

Research Design

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both parents and one child in each family. A total of three interviews per family (one dyad interview for the parents only; one child interview; and one family interview with parents and child present) were completed for a total of 24 interviews. This study employed a family systems approach, meaning multiple members of the same family participated in the interviews. Previous researchers have suggested that interviewing multiple family members is key in conducting qualitative research with families as family members experience different realities. Therefore, obtaining the perspectives of multiple family members is necessary for understanding the broader family dynamics (Reczek, 2014). Conducting multifamily interviews also aids the researcher in understanding how experiences of family life are similar or divergent as a key way to understand family processes.

There are several strengths to obtaining a combination of individual, dyadic, and family group interviews for the current study. In obtaining individual interviews with the child, the researcher was able to receive an independent account of that child's perspective within the family system and understand how they view the role of their parents in shaping their understandings of race and identity. In addition, individual interviews helped to facilitate the disclosure of personal narratives without the influence or coercion of other family members (Reczek, 2014). In conducting dyadic interviews with the parents, the researcher began to

observe family dynamics, understand how each parent co-creates a mutual understanding of daily life, and also understand the ways parents negotiate and construct the meaning of race, culture and identity within the family (Reczek, 2014). Individual and dyadic interviews were conducted first, followed by the family group interview, which was scheduled subsequent to those interviews. The researcher allowed the parents and child together to decide who would go first for the individual/child and dyad/parent interviews. The majority of parents wanted their child to take part in the interview first, although there were a couple families that the parents offered to participate first. Conducting the family group interview as the last step in data collection was beneficial in that information collected from the previous interviews was used to facilitate discussion in the family interview. In addition, the family group interview helped to capture the dynamics and nuances in communication between each family member, particularly between the parents and child that cannot be observed in the individual or dyadic interviews.

There was a total of three interview guides for the current study: child, parent, and family. All interview guides covered three major topic areas including, (1) personal understandings of race and racial identity, (2) racial socialization messages within the family, and (3) perspectives on social contextual factors relevant to race related experiences, such as racial climate and attitudes toward interracial unions and families. In order to organize content within each interview guide, the researcher created a conceptual interview guide that served as a way to organize the research aims and link them to interview questions. The conceptual interview guide as well as the child, parent, and family interview guides can all be found in the Appendix.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over the course of two days with each family. Day one of data collection included initial rapport building with the family and administration of the dyadic interview with the parents and the individual interview with the child. The researcher scheduled the second day of interviewing, which included the family as a whole, at least two days after the first interview so that there was time to review the information learned in the individual and dyadic interviews that informed questions asked during the final, family group interview. Each interview lasted between approximately 1-2 hours. Families were provided the option to be interviewed at their home or in a private room within a public location (e.g. meeting room of a library or recreational center). Each family received a total of $60 cash as compensation for partaking in the study. The child received $20 cash for their individual interview. The parents together received $20 cash for the parent interview. And finally, the family was given $20 cash for the family interview. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and checked for accuracy by the researcher. In addition to the audio recordings, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal of notes, reflections, thoughts, and behavioral observations from each family's interviews.

Once data was collected, any identifying information (i.e. names of people, places) were redacted in each transcription. Further, any identifying information was not included anywhere in the interviews or notes, as each participant was assigned pseudonym in order to protect each participant's privacy. After the interviews were transcribed, the audio files were deleted. The researcher, faculty advisor, and qualified research assistants had access to the data and codes; however, the researcher was the only one who had access to the actual audio files and any participant information. In addition, if the dissertation committee requested, they were also

provided with the transcriptions. All data is stored in a password protected folder on the researcher's password protected computer (laptop). All consent forms were kept in a locked filing cabinet drawer in the researcher's lab on campus. If at any time during or after the study a participant decides to withdraw, all of their information, including audio files and interview transcriptions, will be deleted.

Data Analysis

As the research aims were to explore theoretical constructs of racial identity development, racial socialization, and family communication on race, initial analysis was guided based on those constructs. However, since another research aim was to suggest an emergent model that described the relations between racial identity, child and parental perspectives and practices relevant to racial identity development and racial socialization, interracial family communication, and how these relations are operating within the larger social context, the researcher utilized a thematic analysis approach in analyzing the data as well. In this approach, I took a more generic approach to analysis that followed more of a thematic analysis and the steps put forth by Glesne (2010). Overall, the data analysis process consisted of five phases, as outlined by Crabtree and Miller (1999), which included (1) describing, (2) organizing, (3) connecting, (4) corroborating/legitimating, and (5) representing the account. This process was iterative in that I moved through the data in cycles, continually revisiting the research questions and modifying them based on the content. Data analysis started concurrent with data collection.

The first phase, *describing*, involved a reflective process of questioning what is happening in the data, how has interpretation been influenced, and where should interpretation go next (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). During this phase, I examined the research questions and assessed if the data collection methods are consistent with answering these questions. In this first

phase, I transcribed the recorded interviews and documented my initial thoughts and observations about the data and put this information together into one document. In addition, behavioral observations from each individual, couple, and family interview were collected and added to each transcription document. I created summaries of each family following each day of interviewing, which included a summary of the demographics and dynamics of the family, as well as my initial thoughts in reflections about this family in relation to the research questions of interest. My reflections, thoughts, and observations of each interview were maintained in a reflexive journal, described in the reflexivity section below. Overall, this first step involved continually asking what the main questions and foci of the study are and assessing if additional data needs to be obtained.

In the second phase, *organizing*, I applied an appropriate style to organize the data, which included initial coding. The initial coding phase involves naming each line of data, followed by a selective and focused phase that uses the most frequent or significant codes to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2003). In examining each line of data, I identified the actions or events that are occurring in the text or as represented by it. Initial codes helped to separate the data into categories and uncover processes (Charmaz, 2003). I utilized *Atlas.ti Qualitative Data Analysis and Research Software* in order to organize and code the data. After developing initial codes, data analysis moved into the third phase.

In the third phase, *connecting*, I aimed to discover themes and patterns and make links between categories and potentially develop models and generate theory (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This process began by moving from initial to more focused coding. Focused coding involved using the most frequent and/or significant codes in order to sift through the large amounts of data and make decisions as to which initial codes make the most analytical sense and

most accurately categorize the data. Codes were determined to be significant if they related to the research questions under study, as well as if they appeared frequently in the data. This helped in developing tentative categories that were then grouped into higher order categories (Charmaz, 2008).

In the fourth phase, *corroborating/legitimating*, I reviewed the text and aimed to uncover multiple truths. The goal of this phase is to evaluate the research thus far and search for any "alternative explanations, disconfirming evidence, negative cases, and member checking" (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 136). During this stage, memo writing was crucial in order to build clear links between the data and categories. Charmaz (2008) discusses the importance of memos in helping the researcher to "lend form to fleeting ideas, take codes and categories apart, make comparisons explicit, mine descriptions, stories, and incidents for their analytic import, raise and discuss conjectures, and identify gaps and unanswered questions in the data" (p. 472). Overall, this becomes the means by which the researcher can actively engage in one's data, codes, and categories. I engaged in memo writing throughout the analysis process, developing more focused and analytic memos as I progress through the stages of analysis. During this phase, I also utilized several charts and matrices to organize the data and assess for patterns between and across the families in relation to the various questions under investigation. For example, I utilized *cross-case* matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994), to explore and test relationships between two, then among several variables (e.g., salience of racial identity, frequency of race talk, social contextual factors). I also utilized a role-ordered matrix, in which I sorted the data in rows and columns and reflect the views, beliefs, and perspectives across each family member, organized by their role in the family (e.g., mother, father, child), in order to examine themes across family member roles and between families as well (Miles & Huberman,1994). The *legitimating* part of this phase

involved having the interpretations viewed by others, such as the research team, for believability and utility. I presented my interpretations to my advisor and a peer reviewer in an effort to legitimate my findings and reduce any potential biases I may have placed on interpretation. I selected an individual for peer reviewing who has experience in qualitative research and has participated as a peer reviewer in the past for other research studies. This peer reviewer was asked to review the interpretations I was making based on the data and assess if my interpretations were believable. They were specifically asked to challenge any interpretations which did not make sense to them or did not fit the data of the study. They were asked to do this several times throughout this phase of the research process. In addition, the peer reviewer also reviewed my interpretations to assess if my interpretations were biased in any way. As also noted above with regards to data collection, this analysis process took place in an iterative fashion both during and after data collection.

During the final phase, *representing the account*, I represented what was learned throughout the research process and presented it to others. In this study, this took the form of a dissertation document as well as an executive summary designed to share findings with participants in a language that will hopefully be of interest and meaningful to them. The aim of this phase is to find a way to honestly represent the research, the interpretations, and limitations of the findings and to "honor the multiple voices in the texts"(Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 137). Overall, it was important to make the analysis process clear and explain why certain analysis decisions were made along the way.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, traditional components of validity and reliability such as internal validity, external validity, and the threats that fall within those concepts are often inappropriate

and so these terms are often replaced with a more appropriate concept, 'trustworthiness.' Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss four terms, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as four components of trustworthiness, which replace the traditional terms of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, respectively.

Credibility refers to the researcher showing that she or he adequately represented multiple constructions which are arrived at via the inquiry and are "credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Various techniques and activities can be utilized in order to enhance the credibility of the researcher's data and interpretations, such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, member checking, and triangulation. In using prolonged engagement, the researcher aims to invest enough time in the project in order to build trust and learn the "culture" of the population or context she or he is investigating. In addition, prolonged engagement aids the researcher in becoming more oriented to the setting and being able to test for misinformation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another activity, persistent observation, encourages the researcher to focus on the most relevant characteristics of the issue at hand in an effort to obtain more depth of the research and exploration of particularly salient factors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process of triangulation involves the collection or utilization of different methods, sources, investigators, or theories in an effort to enhance the believability of the data. Member checking is another technique used and involves a process whereby "data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Other credibility techniques include peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and referential adequacy.

In order to assess for credibility in this study, I utilized methods such as peer debriefing negative case analysis, and triangulation. In using peer debriefing, I located a colleague who

helped to provide further exploration into aspects of the research that may not have been discovered otherwise. This process aided in keeping me honest and aware of any biases I may have had towards analyzing the data. I chose someone for peer debriefing who has experience in qualitative research and understanding of the methodology involved in this type of research. In using negative case analysis, I examined the data, searched for and described any information that was disconfirming or not supportive of previous patterns and themes that emerged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, in using triangulation, I conducted interviews with multiple family members (parents and children) within each family in order to assess the credibility of the experiences shared by each family member. Family members were asked to reflect on the accuracy of experiences shared by one another during the interviews and to offer additional insight, information, or perspectives if needed.

Transferability refers to the process of providing an in-depth description of the time and context in which the data were collected so that those interested in making a transfer of this information to another setting or context can determine if that will be possible. While those in the field of naturalistic research agree that the researcher should provide sufficient description of the context and the data, some disagreement has existed over what constitutes "sufficient" description of this background information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Some researchers have recommended that additional information should be considered in order to convey the boundaries of the study such as (1) the number of organizations taking part in the study, (2) any restrictions on the type of people who contributed data, (3) the number of participants involved in fieldwork, (4) data collection methods employed, (5) the number and length of data sessions, (6) and the time period over which data was collected (Shenton, 2004).

In order to aid in transferability of the data, I provided detailed descriptions of the setting, population, individual participants (without breaking anonymity), and context within which data collection and analysis occurs. Although there are no specifically named techniques for carrying out transferability, I attempted to provide the widest possible range of information for these descriptions by including information on the six components discussed above by Shenton (2004) in order to aid in the possibility of this information being "transferred" into other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In regard to dependability, instead of assessing for consistency and predictability, the researcher "seeks means for taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 299). During this process, I utilized the same peer reviewer mentioned above to examine and authenticate the data obtained. As mentioned above, a peer reviewer is someone who is an outsider to the research process who can examine the data and interpretations separately from the researcher. In this respect, dependability is different from reliability because instead of trying to achieve consistent results across multiple administrations of a test or procedure, dependability strives to confirm the accuracy of the data obtained and attest that findings and interpretations are supported by the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Once again, I utilized a peer reviewer with experience in qualitative researcher to assist in assessing the authenticity of the data collected.

The last component, confirmability, refers to judging the objectivity of the data and determining if it is supportable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This goal can typically be achieved with a task referred to as a confirmability audit. This task is comprised of five stages including (1) preentry, (2) determination of auditability, (3) formal agreement, (4) determination of trustworthiness, and (5) closure (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ultimate goal of this process is to

provide the researcher with information that will help her/him to improve the information being evaluated, whether that is the data collected or the methodological process.

Reflexivity and the Researcher's Standpoint

In qualitative research, it is of utmost importance for the researcher to remain reflexive and aware of her or his role in the research process. Crabtree and Miller (1999) describe reflexivity as "self-reflection, self-criticism, and is based on the premise that the engaged field researcher is an active part of the setting, relationships, and interpretations" (p. 14). As Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest, I maintained a reflexive journal to keep track of my thoughts about my self and my methods on an as needed basis. In this journal, I recorded decisions that I made and what reasons I had for making those decisions. Ultimately, the goal of this reflexive journal was to maintain awareness of how I was thinking about the research process, my values and interests during the course of the project, any impact I may have had on the process, data, findings, assumptions, etc. and the rationale behind any decisions made. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I started my reflexive journal soon after proposing my dissertation and before starting data collection and found it to be a critical resource in keeping track of not only my values and interests and how they affect the process and data, but also queries I posed to myself about why I was asking a certain question or making a particular assumption and to force myself to provide a rationale for these. In an effort to be reflexive and assess my role as researcher in this project, below I briefly discuss my background and interest in racial identity, interracial families and social context, and how these interests shape how I selected my research questions, choose the population, and analyzed the data.

From a young age, I have had a strong interest in racial identity and how labels, racial categories, and experiences of race shape the lives of human beings and influence how we see

the world and navigate within that world. It is no coincidence that I choose to explore the lived experience of multiracial persons and interracial families, as I myself am Biracial and part of an interracial family. My mother is White and my father is Black. Although I did not grow up with my biological father, I did grow up with my stepfather, who is also Black, and his three children who are all Biracial Black/White as well. In addition, I grew up with my twin sister and a half brother, who is White. The majority of extended family members I have had contact with over the years were mostly on my mother's side of the family and, therefore, all White.

Growing up, I do not recall seeing many families like ours in the community where we lived. I do, however, remember strange looks I would receive when walking somewhere with my mother or when she would show up to school event. I remember that my sister and I did not look like any of our extended family members, which felt particularly strange when we would go to family events. These were circumstances and moments that I did not truly take in and ponder until I was older and had the chance to reflect on my upbringing within an interracial family in a predominately White community. Now that I've entered the field of community psychology, I've become fascinated with understanding our lived experience as racial beings and how social, historical, and political events shape these experiences. Prior to this current research study, I conducted a project with Biracial women in an attempt to understand the link between Biracial identity development and the components of psychological sense of community when a person's racial heritage is innately tied to multiple racial groups, and potentially multiple racial communities. I wanted to understand how identity development is informed by entering various communities over time and how factors such as racial climate and racial composition play a part. While completing the interviews, I asked participants to speak to the role of their family in their identity development and understanding of race. Overall, there were varying perspectives on

ideologies espoused by parents of different races and varying levels of agreement on whether or not this ideology helped to contribute to their identity development and overall understanding of themselves as racial beings. I wondered, if I had the chance to speak with their parents, would they have something different to say? I also wondered, would the family converge around these topics or would there be divergence in perspectives? How would this entire process be informed by the larger sociopolitical and historical context of interracial unions and multiraciality in the United States?

In reflecting on why I was so interested in the family process surrounding racial identity development and socialization, I realized this also relates to many curiosities I had in examining my own family history. As I grew older and started to have conversations with my mother about my experience as a Biracial woman in an interracial family, in what seemed like a monoracial world, she would tell me of the struggles she faced in raising Biracial children. I realized that the existence of my sister and myself created major upheavals in my mother's life and within her family. It was upon learning more about this experience for my mother that I became interested in learning what other interracial families and Biracial children may experience.

One of the most revealing circumstances I learned about my family history in having these conversations with my mother is that my grandmother is Irish, and my grandfather is Italian, and decades ago when they were going to get married, this "intermarriage" was also disapproved, as it was apparently "taboo" at that time for Italians and Irish to get married. Over the years, that stigma faded, but the stigmatization against Whites marrying people of color, and particularly Black people, remained. I felt it was ironic that social stigmas against whom should marry whom still existed decades later but had shifted from one ethnic group to another. It was almost as if I was watching history repeating itself within my own family, with no one aware of

this cycle occurring. As a future clinical/community psychologist, I've decided that I want to further investigate and explore the conversations about race and identity among other interracial families in the United States and attempt to understand how families perceive social context influencing these conversations.

While I believe that my understanding of my personal experience as a Biracial woman and interracial family member may aid the research process, I am aware that there is the potential for bias and my personal experiences getting in the way of the experiences of understanding my participants. However, I believe that I am very cognizant of this potential for bias and continually assessed how my personal viewpoints shaped multiple parts of this research process. I corrected for this bias by always consulting with peers, colleagues, my advisor and seeking continual feedback throughout all stages of the research process. Throughout this project, I continually strived to be reflexive and take time to assess my own background and interests in order to further enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of this dissertation.

Chapter III: Results

A Note on Interview Quotations

Throughout the remainder of this document, participant quotations illustrate the various findings of this research. Pseudonyms are used in place of participant's real names in order to protect participant confidentiality. Family roles are also noted in participant quotations (e.g., mother, father, child). In addition, names of people or places that may identify participants have been removed. Quotations have also been edited to enhance the readability of the participants' words and meaning. Ellipses are utilized in areas where words are removed, either due to irrelevant words or conversational utterances such as 'um.' However, care was taken to edit quotations in a way that does not change the meaning of the participants' words. Finally, words

in brackets were added to quotations in instances where further context is needed to fully understand the meaning of the participants' words. Italics are utilized in instances where participants placed emphasis on certain words.

Overview of Participant Demographics and Family Descriptions

Table 1 in the Appendix presents a brief overview of the demographics of each individual and the families who participated in this study. This information is important as it provides necessary context to participants words as they appear in the results section below. All information was self-reported via a brief demographic questionnaire administered prior to conducting the interviews with each family. In addition, participants also completed a brief skin tone questionnaire, and those results are displayed in Table 2. It is striking, and nonintentional, that among participating families, all of the mothers racially identified as White and the fathers as Black/African American. This trend mirrors the larger statistical pattern in the United States, discussed in the above literature review; the prevalence of interracial marriages between Black women and White men is much less than with Black men and White women (Fryer, 2007). Interestingly, almost half (N = 3) of the mothers in the sample were immigrants to the United States versus only one of the fathers. Mothers ranged in age from 41-51 years old and fathers ranged from 40-54 years old. Children were between 13 and17 years old, half (N=4) identified as female, and all child participants currently identified as Biracial/Mixed. Families lived in the areas between north-central Maryland and northern Virginia, although most families in the sample lived in north-central Maryland. Over half of the parents in the sample had completed a graduate degree (N = 10), while a smaller portion's highest level of education was an undergraduate degree or some college (N = 5). In the section below, a more detailed description of each family in the sample is provided.

Family Composition and Racial/Cultural Heritage

In addition to recording demographic information for each family, it was also important to explore their racial and cultural heritage, specifically as it relates to how each parent incorporates an understanding of their own racial and cultural heritage into the family as a whole. Thus, summaries of each parent's description of their racial and cultural heritage are also included below.

The Simons Family. The Simons immediate family is comprised of the father, John, who identifies as Black; the mother Sylvia, who identifies as European[*]/White; and their 16-year-old son, Carlo, who identifies as Mixed, Black/White. Sylvia is originally from Europe and immigrated to the United States in the late 1990s upon meeting her husband, John. John is originally from the urban Midwest but has lived in north-central Maryland for over two decades. The family has lived in their current residence for the entirety of Carlo's life. Sylvia works as a designer and John is employed as an executive of a corporation, and also works as an artist. Sylvia speaks both the language of her country of origin[*] and English, and at times during the interview, would speak certain phrases in her first language or ask for the English translation of specific words. John also speaks some of her first language. Sylvia and John's son, Carlo, is their only child. At the time of the interview, he was in the 11th grade. He speaks English and his mother's first language as well. The family describes themselves as very close, and the father remarked that they parent like, 'helicopter parents,' which for them meant that they take a very active role in exposing their son to different experiences in life. The family described that they travel around the world almost every year, including back to the mother's home region, and that it is important for them and their son to gain exposure to different cultures across the world. The

[*] The specific country and ethnicity of this participant was redacted to protect their anonymity
[*] The specific language and ethnicity of the participant was redacted in order to protect anonymity

parents described that they are not religious, but that they provide Carlo the choice to pursue and explore various religions and faith practices.

Sylvia describes her family growing up as "non-traditional, non-stereotypical [ethnicity*] family." She elaborates that, for her family, this meant that they did not go to church and that her mother was 'not a great cook,' but eating together and talking with one another during meal times was important for their family. The father, John, describes that he did not grow up speaking around the dinner table like his wife's family, meaning that he and his family would mostly sit in silence while eating or talk about nonconsequential topics, unlike Sylvia who described her family as having very long, in-depth conversations at dinner time. However, John described that he has now embraced this tradition as an important part of their family life with their son. He added that his natal family has followed the traditional 'American' celebration of holidays, which was important for being together with their friends and family and he continues these traditions with his current family.

The Keane Family. The Keane immediate family is comprised of the mother, Isabel, who identifies as White/Hispanic, the father Derek who identifies as Black, and their 13-year-old daughter Amber who identifies as Mixed. Isabel is originally from Latin America, immigrated to the United States in 2001 and married her husband shortly thereafter. Derek is from New York, but his family is originally from the Caribbean and he described that he was the first in his extended family born in the United States. The family has lived in their current residence in North-central Maryland for the past 9 years. Isabel works as a homeschool teacher, Derek is a business professional, and together they own and operate a small business. Isabel speaks both Spanish and English fluently, and Derek reports that he speaks English, Spanish, French, Patois,

* The specific country and ethnicity of this participant was redacted to protect their anonymity

and Binary. Their daughter, Amber, is their oldest child, and they have three younger sons. At the time of the interview, Amber was in 8th grade. The parents described that valuing their family and spending time with one another is their highest priority. Isabel described that as a family they, "try our best and keep everything positive and stay solution driven." The family identifies as very religious Catholics and throughout the interview they referenced the importance of God and teachings from the Bible that influence their parenting and approach to conversations with their children.

Derek and Isabel describe themselves as a 'second-generation' family. For them, this meant that their children were born in the United States and they celebrate 'American' traditions, but also infuse their Caribbean and Latin American cultures into the American culture, mostly through food. Both parents described that food helped them to bond and combine their cultures. The parents also described that being Catholic and practicing those values is important in their family and that they often prioritize those values when encountering challenging life situations.

The Morgan Family. The Morgan family is comprised of Sabina, who identifies as White, Justin who identifies as Black, and their 15-year-old son Caleb, who identifies as Black and Middle Eastern*. Sabina is originally from a Middle Eastern* country and immigrated to the United States with her family when she was about 7 years old. Justin is originally from Ohio and he and his family have lived in Northeast Maryland in their current residence for about 2 years. Sabina works in healthcare and Justin is a stay at home father. Sabina speaks English and the language of her country of origin and her husband and son both speak English. Caleb at the time of the interview was in 9th grade and is the middle child, with an older and younger sister. Each family member described their relationship as close and the parents remarked that education and

* The specific country and ethnicity of this participant was redacted to protect their anonymity

striving to do well in school is a very important value to their family and how they raise their children.

Sabina discussed that she and her family practice some of the religious and cultural traditions that she grew up with as a practicing Muslim, such as holidays and family rituals (e.g., Eid). She described that her family was much stricter than her husband's family growing up, and that they try to find a balance between those approaches in raising their children. Aside from some of the mother's religious traditions, the family identifies with other generic 'American' traditions (e.g., Thanksgiving, celebrating birthdays). Justin noted that his parents and family were 'not close enough' to really practice any racial/cultural traditions with one another when he was growing up.

The Agnew Family. The Agnew family includes the father Jacob, who identifies as Black, the mother Maribelle, who identifies as White, and their 15-year-old son Alexander, who identifies as Mixed. Maribelle was born and raised in two Southern states, and later moved to Washington, D.C., while her husband, Jacob, was born and raised in D.C. Their son Alexander has lived in D.C. most of his life. Jacob works in IT and Maribelle is employed in marketing. Alexander is the oldest of two younger siblings (brother and sister). At the time of the interview, he was in the 10th grade. All family members described being close with one another and that spending time with one another and other family members is important.

The mother described herself as culturally Cajun and both parents discussed practicing Catholicism as another important aspect of their values. Specifically, Maribelle notes that the Cajun food and music and the value of family were important in her upbringing. Jacob reported having a religious upbringing, and that having meals together with his family, particularly after

church, was important. The parents discussed that they try to 'blend' their values together and that they go to family reunions and visits to help keep their family traditions alive.

The Kent Family. The Kent family includes the mother Natalie, who identifies as White, the father Chase who identifies as Black, and their 13-year-old daughter, Avery, who identifies as Biracial. While Chase was born in the South and Natalie was born in the far mid-west, as a military family, they have lived in many different places throughout the United States and even briefly internationally in Asia. Chase's mother and father are from two different West Indian islands and his identity as the first American in his family is important to how he sees himself. The family currently resides in Northern Virginia and has lived in that current location for about 4 years. Natalie is employed as a receptionist and Chase as an active duty analyst. Avery is the youngest child and has one older brother. At the time of the interview, she was in the 8th grade. Similar to other families, the Kent family describes themselves as very 'tight knit' and close with one another, especially due to the fact that they move so frequently. The parents described that being kind, proud, and having a strong work ethic are important family values.

Natalie described her heritage as Scandinavian and British Isles and she remarked on the values and traditions passed down in those cultures, which were mostly related to the types of food her family would make. She also noted that she has traveled to the countries of her family's origin and has found those trips very meaningful, in that it helped her to feel connected to those cultures. Chase described that his parents' West Indies heritage, and particularly the music and food, were important parts of his upbringing, which he shares with his children (e.g., having them listen to Calypso music, his mother making traditional dishes).

The Hayes Family. The Hayes family is comprised of the father, Dominic, who identifies as Black, the mother Julie who identifies as White, and their 13-year-old son, Noah,

who identifies as Mixed. Dominic is originally from a mid-eastern state in the Appalachian region, Julie is from a neighboring state, and the family has resided in Central Maryland for the past 15 years. Dominic is employed as an attorney and Julie as a mental health professional. Their son Noah is the oldest sibling, with one younger brother. At the time of this interview, he was in 8th grade. The Hayes family also described themselves as very close with one another and described that they greatly value honesty, humor, kindness, and open communication.

Julie described herself as having a Christian upbringing and that her family celebrated American traditions and holidays. She noted that her family does not identify with or really acknowledge their European Anglo-Saxon roots. Julie commented that her family is 'stereotypically American.' Her family is from the Midwest (she describes as 'Midwestern farmers) and she noted that values such as hard work, religion and education were important to her family. Dominic described his upbringing as that of a Southern, Black, Baptist family and values such as food, church, and connection to the community were important.

The Douglass Family. The Douglass family includes the mother, Brielle, who identifies as White, the father Emmett, who identifies as Black, and their 17-year-old daughter, Andrea, who identifies as Black and White. Brielle is originally from a small town in the Midwest and her husband, Emmett, has lived in North-central Maryland his entire life. Their daughter Andrea has also lived in North-central Maryland for her entire life. Brielle is employed as an office coordinator and Emmett is a retired law enforcement officer who currently works in investigations. Andrea is the youngest sibling, having one older brother. At the time of the interview, she was in 12th grade. The father describes their family as a 'good unit' who all work well together. The mother adds that they 'hover' over their children somewhat (having seen some of the harsh realities her husband is exposed to in law enforcement) and that they want

their children to know that their family is always there for them, no matter what. They described values such as being a leader and having integrity as important in how they raise their children.

When asked to describe their racial and cultural heritage, both parents remarked that they 'don't have anything different' and that they just celebrate the traditional 'American' holidays and traditions.

The Peterson Family. The Peterson family includes the father, Samuel, who identifies as Caribbean*, the mother, Caroline, who identifies as White, and their 14-year-old daughter, Clara, who identifies as Biracial. Samuel, immigrated from Caribbean country X* in the1980s and grew up in a small Caribbean community in the southern United States. Samuel's parents had left their country of origin, Caribbean country Y, to return to the country of their parent's origin (country X), so Samuel reported feeling ties to both the country of his birth and, even though he had never visited it, that of his parents, in which a large part of his family still resides. Samuel speaks the languages of both of these Caribbean countries in addition to English. Caroline is originally from a northeast state and has resided in North-central Maryland with her husband and two children for the past 25 years. Their daughter, Clara, has spent her entire life in North-central Maryland and is the oldest sibling with one younger brother. At the time of the interview, she was in 9th grade. Samuel and Caroline are both teachers. The family described having a large extended family on both sides whom they are close with and try to spend as much time with as they can. The parents described values such as being compassionate, reflective, and their political identity as Democratic and the values that stem from that (e.g., "wanting to help others less fortunate," as Caroline noted) as important to their family.

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* The specific country and ethnicity of this participant was redacted to protect their anonymity. Caribbean country X and Y are utilized to denote the difference in the Caribbean country in which Samuel grew up (X) and where his parents immigrated from (Y).

Samuel discussed celebrating Catholic traditions (e.g., Christmas), while also celebrating his Caribbean culture, but had noticed himself becoming "Americanized" over the years, which he described as taking on some of the more 'American' traditions (e.g., celebrating birthdays). Caroline described herself as having an "Anglo-Saxon" upbringing and added, similar to the other families, that she celebrated the traditional American holidays and traditions growing up.

Family Member Identities and Experiences

How we see race. How do families make sense of race? How does understanding race shape the meaning family members give to their own racial self-identifications? And furthermore, how do these understandings of race shape talk about race within families, between mothers and fathers, parents and their children? These and other questions were at the core of the first aim of this dissertation, which was to explore how parents in interracial families understand race and racial identity, and how this relates to their view on the racial identity of their Biracial children. Assessing parental and child conceptualizations of race and racial identity and their similarities and differences was important context to gain prior to exploration of family member racial identities and communication related to race. Among other things, this conversation provided insight into how each family member understood the meaning of race within their individual lives, and in relation to one another.

Across the families in the current study, parents held similar definitions and understandings of race, encompassing one or more of the following: nationality (what part of the world you come from), ethnicity and culture (where your parents come from and the traditions and values that flow through the family), and/or physical appearance (most often referred to by skin color). For example, after Caroline Peterson responded that race was determined by skin color and where people come from, her husband, Samuel added:

> I guess if you dig deeper, if you want to peel back the layers of race, it's the identity of the combination of where your parents come from too. That could be ethnicity, I guess, you can add that in there. So normally people ask your race, it's not just the color of your skin, but they're really trying to—at least in this society—trying to figure out what makes you, you. Where do you come from, where do your parents come from?

Some parents discussed the concept of race as a social construct; that the idea of race is given meaning only within society, has no foundations in biology, and is used to group and categorize people. Other parents believed that there was a genetic component to racial differences. Sylvia Simons described her perspective on race as tied to a combination of genetics and geography:

> I think that race is linked more to genetics, like you know say you are dark-skinned person… so your particular color, your particular attributes. Where you're coming geographically, then you are set in a particular race, you know. It seems to me there's more linked physical and geographical maybe.

However, Julie and Dominic Hayes, both saw race as a changeable social construct:

> Julie: I see it as a social construct and, you know, not a biological element.
>
> Dominic: Yeah I agree, it's more of a social construct and seemed like there was a time in human history when we didn't have the racial definitions that we have now.

In addition, a few families added other identifications that they felt should be included in the conceptualization of race, such as religion and social class. John Simons saw race as a much more fluid concept and described it as a choice of how one wished to identify:

> Race, I would say is pretty much what people would identify themselves with. And it could be based on religion, it can be based on ethnicity, based on where you're coming from, so it could be any of those things.

For many parents, race also included both perspectives of race as an identity you give yourself, and race as a classification society assigns to you. Sabina Morgan's understanding of race was also tied to her identity as a Muslim woman, which was conveyed in her response to the question of 'what is race':

> Well for us it's based on…for *me*, more on my ethnicity than anything else, it's always been assigned to race. You can't tell by looking at the color of my skin that I'm anything, but I am, by ethnicity- Middle Eastern- so I see more of that side than, of course, how Justin would define it, as race. For me, the prejudices of it have been more from where I come from and my religion.

Her husband, Justin, shared his divergent perspective which, as she predicted, had a greater focus on skin color:

> I would say fully based off of Black, White, color of your skin, just to simplify it. Anything else I mean I guess I would say the same thing anyway, like we all get based on and judged on the color of our skin, that's the way I see it.

Parent definitions of race conveyed how, for some, understandings of race were tied to their experiences and treatment by others based on the visible, or invisible, aspects of their identity. Their definitions also varied by the agency with which they believed they had control to claim their own identity versus being classified by society. Parent views on race had varying levels of alignment between each other and also with their child's understanding and definition of race. The table below helps illustrate the alignment across families:

Table 3

Parent-Child Alignment on Definitions of Race

FAMILY	**DEFINITION OF RACE**: PARENT-CHILD ALIGNMENT			
	Father perspective	**Mother perspective**	**Child perspective**	**Alignment**
1. SIMONS	How people identify themselves, such as religion, ethnicity, etc.	Genetics; categorized by skin color/physical appearance; where you come from geographically	Son: Physical appearance, skin tone	Son-mother aligned; parents not aligned
2. KEANE	"Communication used to identify people"; a way to group people that is convenient	Ethnic background; cultural traditions; where you're from; expectations society has for you	Daughter: Where you're from, culture, traditions	Daughter-mother aligned; parents not aligned
3. MORGAN	Skin color	Ethnicity- tied to where prejudices come from; nationality and religion	Son: Ethnicity, skin color	Son-aligned with mother & father; parents not aligned
4. AGNEW	Cultural identity- how you were raised, "reflects the visual parts of your race"	Self-identity- defined by culture/society, deals with skin color	Son: Color of your skin that you identify	Son-mother-father aligned
5. KENT	Where you're from-nationality	Physical representation of someone's cultural heritage	Daughter: Where you come from in the world	Daughter-father aligned; parents not aligned
6. HAYES	Social construct- has survived throughout history	Social construct- not biological	Son: Initially said 'I don't know'; when pressed- stated, “skin color and where you're from”	Mother-father aligned; child not aligned with parents
7. DOUGLASS	Class of people	Color of your skin; partially by religion and beliefs	Daughter: Color, how you see yourself	Daughter-mother aligned; parents not aligned
8. PETERSON	Skin color, place of origin, ethnicity, where your parents are from	Origin of where people come from, determined by skin color	Daughter: Where your ancestors are from, skin color and accent	Daughter-father-mother aligned

As seen in the table above, children’s definitions of race varied in whether it aligned with the father’s, mother’s, or both parents’ definitions of race. Half of the children (N = 4) aligned more with one parent’s definition of race, and of these, three out of four aligned with their mother’s understanding of race. In two of the families, the child, father, and mother all shared similar understandings of race and in one family, the child aligned with both parents, but the

parents did not align with each other. And in the Hayes family, the child's understanding of race defined as skin color and nationality did not align with his parents' shared definition of race as a social construct. Interestingly, in more than half of the families (N =5), the parents did not align with one another.

Differences in parental and child definitions of race were seen across many families and were a starting point in understanding the connections between how race is conceptualized and how that impacts communication related to race. These differences did not appear to relate to how parents viewed their children's racial identity (e.g., as Biracial or otherwise), nor did it directly relate to the ways in which families talked about race, patterns in race talk or perspectives on race. One finding that did emerge, however, showed that families where the child aligned with both their mother and father in their understanding of race were also families where the child expressed their Biracial identity as having more meaning and importance in their lived experience. This was a trend observed in the Morgan, Agnew, and Peterson families. For example, in the Peterson family, where child and parent perspectives all aligned on the definition of race as based on physical appearance, their daughter, Clara described the meaning being Biracial held for her:

> I think [being Biracial] influences [my life] positively cause I get to see like both sides and I'm tan too [laughs]. And I get to see what it's like on my dad's side of the family, my mom's and like, so like I don't get one side of the story, I get two different perspectives.

The Morgan family was a unique case because the son, Caleb, aligned with how both his father and mother defined race as related to skin color and ethnicity even as his parents did not align with one another. I will talk more later about how Caleb's bridging of his parent's divergent

views seemed to operate, but despite Caleb's alignment with his parents on how to define race, there was also some divergence in how Caleb and his parents understood his racial self-identification as Biracial. During the child interview, Caleb described that he identifies as Mixed or Black/Middle Eastern. When asked what it meant to identify as Black/Middle Eastern, Caleb replied, "…it's just weird I guess. Nobody really sees me as being [Middle Eastern], they see me as just being Black." Caleb attributed this to his physical features, which he noted as having "a lot of Black features" in terms of his hair and skin color. He also expressed frustration that others could not "see" the other part of his racial identification. When asked during the parent interview how their son racially identifies, his parents responded:

> Sabina: I think my son identifies more as Black [Justin: Black (says at the same time as the mother)], um [pause] although he prefers White girls, he identifies himself with the music and the style and the hair and everything on that side.
>
> Justin: But he does say Mixed, he does classify himself as Mixed, but he would generally…he hangs with more Black people and things like that so I guess you would say…
>
> Mother: Well [and] in this county where we live also, he felt more accepted by that crowd.

It was interesting to hear that when considering how their son identifies, Sabina and Justin considered other elements, such as who he dates, how he dresses, styles his hair, and who he spends his time with. While the parents did not mention such factors when they described how they define race, they believed that such elements impacted their son's identification. Although Sabina and Justin viewed their son 'leaning' towards a Black identity, Caleb asserted that he identified with both racial groups. Interestingly, Caleb's parents also viewed him as identifying

more as Black rather than Mixed, which is how Caleb described feeling when he talked about his racial identity during the child interview. The divergence in parental definitions on race, which Caleb bridged, highlighted a trend in the family in which Sabina and Justin had greater divergence in their ideas about a multitude of race-related issues, and Caleb often found a way to 'split the difference,' and integrate both perspectives into his own understanding. This idea as well as the ways in which Sabina and Justin's responses highlight the contextual factors at play (e.g., belonging within the community), which also shaped the process of racial self-identification in their son, will be explored in greater detail across all of the families in the sections below.

In contrast to children like Clara Peterson and Caleb Morgan who expressed their Biracial identity as having great meaning in their lives, Avery Kent, whose family had less alignment in their understandings of race, presented a much more limited understanding of her identity as Biracial. When asked what it meant for her to identify as Biracial, Avery answered, "Uh, just that I have parents with two different races." When asked if she thought being Biracial had any influence on her life, she responded, "I don't think it's had an influence before, and I can't really see it having an influence in the future." Amber Keane, whose family also had less alignment on their understandings of race, presented a similar response, stating, "I don't know…honestly to identify myself as Mixed when I don't know if it means much."

Although having alignment on definitions of race is not the only factor related to how children make meaning of their Biracial identity (other factors will be discussed below), it may be the case that parents who more frequently discuss racial topics with their children create the opportunity to develop a shared understanding of race among one another, which in turn, may aid in their child developing greater meaning of their identity as a Biracial beyond

acknowledgment that their parents are from two different racial backgrounds. This finding aligns with previous research on racial socialization that shows open communication and talk about race fosters racial awareness among children (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). It also expands this research to elucidate the connection between having a shared understanding of race within the family and the child's meaning making of their identity as Biracial.

Of note, it was clear across both child and parent responses to the question of 'what is race' that the term 'race' often encompassed and overlapped with other terms, such as nationality, ethnicity, and culture. Across all child, parent and family interviews, it was often difficult to isolate the discussion around race without also interweaving discussion of those other aspects of identity and categorization. This is reflective of the literature on race, in which the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' are often used interchangeably, and that it is often impossible to separate culture from our understandings of race (Markus, 2008).

As highlighted above, examining definitions of race merely scratched the surface in terms of truly understanding the way in which families incorporated their conceptualization of race into conversations with one another. As the results below will demonstrate, as the conversation on the utility, function, and importance of race grew deeper, the connections between how parents were understanding, and subsequently, communicating about race with their children became much clearer. In addition to exploring this alignment in how children and parents defined race, another research aim was to explore how parent perspectives on their own racial identity may shape their child's perspectives on their racial identity, and subsequently, how parents talked with their children on what it means to be Biracial.

How we see ourselves. In the current study, both parents and their children were asked to describe their racial self-identification and discuss what meaning that provides to them within the

context of living in the United States. As could be expected, results demonstrated varying levels of meaning being Black, White, or Biracial provided the fathers, mothers, and children, respectively. The role of social context was intimately tied to these variations and was explored in detail. In order to make sense of these experiences within the individuals themselves, and also between parents and their children, the following section is organized in a dyadic fashion, exploring the relationship between racial identity and meaning-making of race-related experiences first between fathers and their children, then between mothers and their children. The parent and child's view of their identities and experiences is also included within these two sections. This section will then be followed by a more in-depth exploration of the child's meaning making of their identity as Biracial, the interracial experience of the family as a whole, and how the multiple perspectives between family members intertwined to shape race talk within families.

Black fathers and their Biracial children. When asked how they identify, all the fathers in the sample reported identifying as Black and/or African American. Samuel Peterson, the only first-generation immigrant father, spoke of his self-identification as Caribbean[2], based on his culture and upbringing, while society tended to label him as Black because of his dark skin color. In relation to Samuel's experience, this meant that how he viewed his racial and ethnic identity was obscured by the larger societal definition of Black, which often ignores the heterogeneity within the Black racial category (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005). Therefore, he viewed his identity as distinct from other Black Americans, as he believed there were important differences associated with his experiences as an immigrant from the Caribbean. This was noted in both Samuel and Derek's (2nd generation immigrant) experience, both men with recent

[2] The specific ethnicity of the participant was redacted in order to protect anonymity

immigration histories from the Caribbean. Samuel described this experience and the difference in how he viewed his identity and how others viewed him:

> You know as dark as I am, I grew up where [Caribbean immigrant community members] in Miami in the '80s were being discriminated against…they were certainly conflict in the African American community in the '80s in Miami because we were taking jobs from Black Americans, and so I grew up in a [small Caribbean immigrant community] where I never identified as Black American, but I was [Caribbean], but I was born in [Caribbean country X]…but my family were [from Caribbean country Y] and [my country of origin] was certainly a stopping point along the road to this country, but my [Caribbean] was strong so I guess I've always identified more as being [Caribbean] than Black American…I have to identify, when I fill out a form, as Black American or African American, but if I could, would certainly be [Caribbean], and that would be the end of that. And [Caribbean] is not a denomination of Black or White or lighter or darker, you're just [Caribbean], but it's Black in this country now. That title has changed, has evolved.

Derek Keane also spoke to his understanding of his Black identity shifting over time, dependent on context, and how others chose to label him. He also highlighted how this labeling was tied to stereotypes and assumptions of how Black people are "supposed to" act or behave:

> I grew up in New York and lived in D.C. I lived in a lot of urban environments and they make up nicknames cause maybe I don't talk a certain way or I dress a certain way…and then I'm international based cause I was born here but my family is from [the Caribbean], the islands, so you know it's also different that way with the culture too versus we- New York- are different with the culture versus like D.C. and Maryland…so now I'm able to

> choose, I choose Black, but when I was in college they give me the nickname 'White boy' because I talked English…proper English.

Some fathers described how sometimes parts of their Black identity felt 'forced' on them by society and that it was difficult, as such, to not identify as Black. When asked if his Black identity was important to how he sees himself, Emmett Douglass replied, "that's a double—two ended question. Yes, it's important, but no it doesn't define. People are people. So yes, I'm reminded every day what color I am 'cause it doesn't wash off." Dominic Hayes expressed a similar sentiment in his response stating:

> I mean [identifying as Black] is important to me in that there's, you know, there's a social piece to it that I—you're forced to accept and deal with, so in that sense it's something that I can…it's very difficult for me to look at other things without the lens—other than through the lens of race.

Jacob Agnew also identified as Black, but did not view this as his most important identity:

> I mean, I definitely identify with my race of being Black, but it isn't, or at least not now, the first thing. I mean, the things that happen in my life are, you know, that's not going to be—that's never the first thing that pops into my head, and maybe that's just because the type of things I've gotten into …I'm going to go to something else to identify with, you know, I'm a man or I'm what I do for a living something like that.

Although all of the fathers in the sample identified as Black, they varied in what meaning being Black gave to their lived experience, and how they believed their child(ren) should navigate issues related to race in society. In particular, fathers varied in how they interpreted the personal experiences they've faced as Black men. This then related to variation in how fathers were communicating about race with their children. There was an association observed between how

meaningful, or central, the father believed his identity as a Black man was to his lived experience, and how he communicated messages to his child(ren) about race.

The connection between the meaningfulness, or centrality, of one's racial identity and how race-related messages were communicated to their children was seen most strikingly in one father who saw his race as having little meaning to his lived experience. Derek Keane believed that being Black held no personal importance in his life and he also believed that society was "distracted by race," on which he and his wife chose not to focus. Derek remarked on this awareness placing them 'in a bubble' whereby they could choose to ignore the influence of race:

> We realize outside our bubble people are gonna conveniently play cards like it's a game and they have that luxury because survival is so easy you know, a lot of things go on that makes their life easier…[but] we see through the hype [of race].

In this statement and other remarks made during the parent interview, Derek seemed to be expressing his belief that people in society tended to bring up issues of race when it was convenient for them to do so and he felt that people could easily get caught up in the 'hype' of race, meaning that race was often viewed as a larger issue than he really believed it truly was in society. Therefore, Derek's messages to his daughter regarding race were very limited. There was only one occasion that the Keane family could remember in which they discussed a racial topic with their daughter, which was when someone at school called her the n-word. When asked what he told his daughter in response to this incident, Derek replied:

> Well we just didn't deal with the race part, we said it was bullying and obviously the kid wanted her attention or he wanted some attention if it's not hers, you know, we dealt with the issues so she understands-- cause I mean when we discuss stuff it's like the whole pie

> and we zoom out and that part—slice-- might be a line if it's even in there, you know, for us to discuss.

This idea that race was a small 'slice of the whole pie,' also speaks to the colorblind ideology embraced in this family's overall approach to race-related conversations, which directly related to having almost no conversations about race with their children. The family's ideology and how it shaped the conversations within the family will be discussed in greater detail in the section on race talk and racial ideologies.

For the other seven fathers in the sample, there appeared to be a split between fathers who viewed their racial identity as central to their lived experience, and fathers who recognized being Black had an influence in their lived experience but did not believe it was the most important identity in their life. Despite this split, all seven fathers appeared to communicate similar content in messages to their children on (1) understanding what it means to be Black in America (historically and presently), (2) awareness of issues affecting the Black community, (3) how to monitor and control one's behavior as a person of color, (4) being prepared for discrimination and strategies to address it, (5) understanding differences that may emerge in their child's personal versus public racial identification, and (6) embracing one's identity as Biracial. The most common of these messages discussed by Black fathers with their children were understanding the meaning of being Black, how that relates to how their children will be treated, and how their children should monitor and control their behavior to navigate situations as a person of color.

While the content of these messages was similar across the families, *how* these messages were conveyed varied among the fathers, which appeared to relate to how they were making sense of their past racialized experiences as Black men, which informed their understanding of

the racial contexts their children will enter/are entering. To gain a deeper understanding of the fathers' past racialized experiences as Black men, they were all asked to describe positive and negative experiences they've had related to race in their lives. Analysis of their experiences and how they were interpreting what they've experienced as Black men showed that it was through these experiences that fathers were learning how they should manage and react to the realities of race, particularly to instances of discrimination, racism and oppression. These experiences were then informing how they were constructing their view on the reality their children would enter, and subsequently, shaped their approach to race-related conversations with their children.

For example, John Simons wanted his 16-year-old son to have awareness of discrimination and prejudice, but he was wary of going too 'deep' into those messages for fear that constant attention to those issues could lead to greater suffering on the part of his son. When examining how John had interpreted his own experiences as a Black man and how race has functioned in his life, he noted:

> I mean race…it's something like I don't even think about every day and I mean cause, the more you think about it, it seems more like something that can stop you from achieving something that you want to achieve or it becomes a barrier, you know, if we worried about race every day… it's like something you have to think about, [but] it's more than--I would…you know, give thought to.

John had come to believe that as a Black man, he would not have had as much success and achieve what he wants if he focused or "worried" too much about race. This appeared related to how he wanted to approach race talk with his son. During the family interview, when asked what is important to talk about when it comes to race and identity, John looked at his son as he shared his thoughts on what he wanted him to know. In his statement, he references experiences of

discrimination his son has already faced (e.g., being discriminated as a customer at Chipotle). He stated:

> We definitely have to be mindful of…just because of the environments that we live in the United States … so many types of prejudice that occur on a daily basis whether it's being discriminated in some way as a customer in Chipotle or not being considered for some kind of job based on whatever your race or your color and stuff or just always having to prove that you have the same skills and abilities that your counterparts have. And it's a challenge, you just have to be mindful of it. I mean I wouldn't necessarily go on it too much because if you worry about all those things you'll constantly give yourself a lot of grief and headaches and stuff because it's so common [chuckles] but at the same time it's that you develop a like a sixth sense against these kinds of things that you automatically know that's just not right or you being looked at a different kind of way and you have…unconscious mechanisms that deal with it. It's not something you have to think about, "Ok this guy he doesn't like Black people so I gotta come up with another strategy." You know, you already know-- you already have it built in the way you know you maybe talk or your mannerism anything like that.

In his approach, John references the strategy he has developed over time in order to navigate his world as a Black man. When asked if he could recall ways he was treated negatively due to his race, John describes how he has made sense of such experiences:

> Well yea, that's happened a lot over the years, but I think that just related to people, their own prejudices and stuff and not necessarily anything that I could have done to change their opinions about stuff…I mean I'm 54 so, you know, through the '70s and stuff like that there were a lot examples of racism or blunt just calling you the n-word or things like

> that or chasing you from one side of your neighborhood to another. Those things were not uncommon back then. And then I remember experiences where I was in the military too that had people that come from all over the country and stuff and you have people that weren't comfortable with Black people or people from anywhere like the North, or things like that and so there was a lot of inroads that you had to make with people to get…to win some of their prejudices and things like that.

Based on how John has learned to manage experiences of racism, it appears his approach to race-related conversations with his son follow his perspective on what he believes helped him to survive these experiences of hate and oppression. John's learned strategy to deal with such experiences was to contain his reaction and not let those experiences consume him. In order to do that, it appears he tries to take some power away from those experiences and the conversation related to race in general, as when John states, "don't give it [race] more legs than it needs."

Dominic Hayes expressed a similar sentiment when having conversations with his sons about Black athletes and how they are portrayed in the media. He was also wary of going 'too heavy' in these types of conversations. He described:

> Another way that [race] comes up a lot, especially with my older son, Noah, and certainly with [younger son] is that they both are big sports fans as am I and …there are a lot of serious race pieces when it comes to athletics in America—professional sports, how Black men who play sports are portrayed, how they've been treated, portrayed, and I always come and give them that historical context when it comes to athletics…we talked about Colin Kaepernick, we've talked about just how the media portrays certain White athletes versus certain Black athletes, you know, there's times where a White athlete who's played hurt is said, 'well he's really tough he plays hurt,' Black athlete plays hurt

> and it's, 'oh he's hurt.' … I kind of given them that message, but I try not to keep it too heavy … going back—my mother did a lot of heavy context of a lot of things and as a kid I just didn't want to hear it anymore, so I'm trying not to do that with them.

Different from John, Dominic references his experiences related to race within conversations with his mother and based on how he felt in relation to the 'heavy context' his mother provided in conversations about race, he decided he wanted to take a different approach with his sons. Chase Kent also discussed his concern in discussing race with his daughter 'too early,' and that for him, he worried that he would 'put preconceived notions into her head':

> We haven't made an issue of [race], to just say, 'remember, you're half-Black and half-White, alright remember that.' It's—I guess for me, at her young, tender age, if it becomes an issue, you know, at 13, then I think it's appropriate to have a conversation about it, kind of help her understand why people may either look at her differently, treat her differently. I guess I never thought of it as something to discuss and—cause it feels like I'd be putting my preconceived notions into her head about how people are going to treat her, you know, and that may or may not ever happen, or she may- again being young- take the information wrong and treat somebody else differently, so I guess for me it's—see how she develops, be here to guide her on that path, and answer questions and have discussions if we need to, but the issue of race, again, for us it's just not a big deal, so don't wanna make it a big deal and turn it into a thing if it doesn't have to be.

Here, Chase's goal in being more cautious to discuss topics related to race was to avoid the possibility of putting 'preconceived notions' in his daughter's mind, which could potentially lead to his daughter then treating someone differently based on their race. This was similar to the Keane family, who also feared that by talking about race, they may unintentionally bias their

children, which then may lead to their children treating others differently based on the race of those individuals. Age also emerged as a factor in Chase's response, as he believed his daughter was too young for him to engage in such conversations unless race "becomes an issue."

Samuel Peterson felt that he did not want his children to view the world as he has, based on his experiences as Black man and his awareness of being 'watched' because of his color:

> I don't want them to live in my head. Like the stuff that I had to live with, I don't want them to live with. I don't want them living thinking that—that experience, I wouldn't want that for a White kid—no one should live with thinking that people are going to watch me because of my color, that I am the different one here and people clearly want me to know that, so no.

There is great nuance to the approach of race talk between fathers and their children whereby the fathers want to share particular messages about the world and what their children may experience as people of color, but with some degree of caution in order to protect them. When thinking about the literature on color-awareness versus colorblind ideologies, which was discussed in the literature review in regard to the relation between race ideology (how one views race and racism) and how one communicates about race, I think this nuanced approach can be best described with a new term, I'm calling 'color-cautiousness,' or 'moderate' racial consciousness. As seen in these family's narratives, color-cautiousness is an ideology that seems to fall somewhere in between these two other ideological approaches to conceptualizing and discussing race. In the 'color-cautiousness' ideology and approach, fathers wanted to discuss issues related to race, but with some degree of care. These fathers are also less likely to acknowledge and incorporate discussion on the systemic and structural nature of race and racism. Some fathers wanted to protect their children from the harsh reality they themselves were (and continue to be) exposed to

as Black men. As a result, they tailored the messages to their children in a way that did not fully dive into the complexities of that experience but gave them enough information so that their children would feel prepared for what they may encounter as people of color.

Justin Morgan had a different approach to talking about race with his children, in that he did not specifically detail his desire to refrain from going too deeply into the conversation. Justin Morgan was one father in the sample who described little to no caution when talking about race and related issues with his son. This appeared to relate to how Justin has interpreted and made sense of his experiences as a Black man. As noted above, to gain a deeper understanding of the fathers' experiences as Black men, they were all asked to described positive and negative experiences they've had related to race in their lives. While all fathers in the sample described many negative experiences due to being Black, from job discrimination to overt racism (e.g., being called the n-word), many fathers also described what they believed they've experienced positively due to their race, such as learning about African culture, developing racial pride, and using their experiences as Black men to help challenge racial injustice and break down stereotypes. Justin was one of the only fathers who noted that he could not recall any positive experiences he has had related to his race. In fact, his wife described how he grew up in very wealthy neighborhoods, where his family was often the only Black family among other very wealthy and affluent White families. As a result, Justin describes constant discrimination he experienced throughout his life, perhaps compounded by issues of class and the perception of his family, being the only Black family in a very wealthy community, not belonging within their community. While referencing recent instances of discrimination, Justin explained throughout the parent interview how he has developed a mindset to immediately judge others as racist, and to point it out to others around him, as he states, "it's kind of wrong the way I look at it, that I

kind of think everyone's racist, Black, White, doesn't matter…but this is why I do it. This is- you know- cause this is what I've seen."

During the parent interview, Justin describes that the more he has been exposed to such negative treatment as a Black man, the more he has become accustomed to it and, as a result, is able to contain his reaction to instances of racism. For example, he discusses that he used to get into physical fights as a result of racist experiences, but as it has happened to him more over his life, he has come to expect it and no longer reacts with that intensity, as it's what he has just come to expect. This then translated into how he talked with his son about race. He remarks on his rationale for how he talks about race with his son:

> I mean we talked, I talked to him and I'm more…I've seen it, like I've seen a lot of racism, so I'm more vocal, like she [referring to his wife] hates the way how vocal I am about it and I point it out all the time and so I point it out to him [referring to their son] all the time like, um so, I guess he can see it, just so if it does happen, then he's used to it. Like she said, he said the third time [that kid called him the n-word] he was maybe gonna punch the kid, probably if I didn't talk to him, it probably would've been the first time he would've punched him or something like that, but just to talk to him, that's pretty much what I would do.

Justin wanted his son to be prepared for what he has experienced, so that he could contain his reaction to those experiences over time. He believed that the more in-depth conversations he had with his son, the better he was preparing him to contain his reactions to such experiences in his life. He described his approach to discussing race with his son and specific messages he communicates to him:

> How to act when he's out. How people look at him, he'll be out here and I have like nice Boise speaker and its really loud, he plays his rap music and I'm like, you know, 'play your music, don't play it at a loud level. They already think, like we talked about, how we are anyway, ghetto and stuff like that.' So I'll say that to him, if he goes out and he wears his hood and stuff like that, just little things to make him, like I do acknowledge how people look at you and—well they'll be around his friends and they'll all be around me, basketball, football-wise, I have to go pick them up and stuff like that. They'll be all loud and crazy and you know, I'll try to tell them you can't really…look where we are and you know, they don't understand that, 'what do you mean?' Look, 'if the certain place where we are, nobody's really acting like that, so you can't act like that.' Or he wants to drive soon, and I'll tell him certain things about that cause we get pulled over.

Noticing the differences in how fathers shared messages with their children also highlighted the role of social context, particularly in relation to community racial composition and climate. The Morgan family lived in a predominately White neighborhood where their status as an interracial family and people of color was particularly salient, and not in a positive manner. Their neighborhood racial climate was described as particularly negative and there were multiple instances of the family being profiled, stereotyped, and discriminated against. Sabina Morgan, supporting her husband's narrative, succinctly highlighted how her son is treated in their community:

> …We moved here when he was in the eighth grade, it was actually the first time he was called the n-word in school because this community, [name of community], itself it's pretty racially divided, there's a lot of racism, it's always been that way cause they're not used to color being here.

The Morgan family's description of their community's racial composition and climate was different than the Hayes, Simons, and Peterson families, who described residing in more racially diverse neighborhoods or neighborhoods that were predominately White, but more accepting of diversity and were openly accepting of their status as an interracial family. Therefore, messages between parents and their children were also being tailored according to the context, particularly related to the racial composition and racial climate of where the family currently resides. How parents were talking about race in light of the neighborhood racial composition and climate, in addition to discussing the influence of other contextual factors, will be explored in further sections below.

Skin color. Many fathers noted the discrepancy between how they viewed their children (e.g., as Biracial) and how others may view them (e.g., as Black). In this way, children were receiving dual messages to embrace a Biracial identity but understand what it means to be Black and that they may experience the world as such. Justin Morgan highlighted this thinking when he remarked, "… Sabina says you know, about his race how he's Mixed and all of that, but I say that people see him as Black, like the color of his skin, he's more my complexion, he's closer to me." Results from the 'Brief Skin Tone Questionnaire' showed that on average, the Biracial children in this sample did indeed have self-reported skin tone ratings that more closely matched the skin tone of their fathers than their mothers. Some Biracial children reported the same skin tone as their fathers and others rated their skin tone as a shade or two lighter. Fathers' perspectives on their child's skin color emerged as another factor in how they were viewing their child and preparing them for the treatment they may receive.

Research shows that colorism, the process of discrimination that privileges light-skinned people over dark-skinned individuals, operates across racial groups, and that those who are

darker-skinned will face greater intensity and frequency when it comes to discrimination, regardless of racial/ethnic group (Hunter, 2007). While the connection between colorism and discrimination has been studied extensively, especially within the African American community, the role of colorism in how parents discuss race with their Biracial children, has been less explored.

Analysis revealed two aspects related to fathers and their approaches to having race-related conversations with their children on the basis of skin color: (1) awareness of their child's skin tone as similar to that of a Black person and (2) understanding that, due to their skin color, their children may be viewed as Black. For example, Chase Kent discussed wanting his daughter to be aware of how others will look at her as a Black woman:

> With Avery she's fairly quiet, you know, and I keep telling her-- and again this is me going to her as [saying], 'you're at a disadvantage, people are going to look at you different because you're female, because you're Black, right. And again, if you want to be able to enjoy the things that you should be able to with that kind of a brain in your skull, you're going to have to speak up, carry yourself, you know, with some sort of confidence because, I mean, you have to—you need to be aware of who you are and how you're looked at.' So it's a lot of me, I think, talking to them like that as I see them growing up.

He subsequently discussed how he would talk to his children about the historical context of "passing" and how they may have been treated in the past based on their skin color:

> When we go to Mt. Vernon and Monticello, you go to the homes of our forefathers, or the nation's forefathers and you hear, you see…what their involvement was with slavery and how the slaves were treated and where they lived compared to where Washington and

> Jefferson lived and have a conversation with the kids so they understand, you know, this is part—it is part of our history, both sides, you know, so we need to understand both sides, but you also have to understand that—if your skin was light enough as an African American, that you could pass right, I think I was talking to you and [our son] about passing and that—they're lighter, but not quite light enough, but just how difficult stuff like that would be.

Dominic Hayes also discussed the implications of passing with his sons and described a time when his younger son asked why he could not identify as White due to his lighter skin tone. Dominic explained how he responded to his son about that topic:

> Dominic:…in my conversations with him, I had—I talk with him about the concept of lighter skin, you know, Biracial Black people or just lighter skinned Black people trying to pass as White and the ramifications of that on a lot of levels, so I have had that conversation with them.
>
> Interviewer: What kind of ramifications have you kind of conveyed to them or I guess consequences could be of that?
>
> Dominic: Well I mean that…in particular Black people will react poorly, the Black community will react poorly, if you try to do that, you may not be successful around White people, and it also gives the impression that there is an aspect of your personality that you're trying to deny.

Dominic's son Noah also described how he is perceived by others as a light-skin Black person, and the difference he notices in how he identifies himself and how others identify him:

> Some people … they think I'm light-skinned, so basically it's Mixed but just, it gives it more like different opportunities, you know what I mean, where there's like Biracial

> which is White and Black, and then there's light-skinned, which is more opportunities—I don't have a problem with light-skinned, like just get more opportunities…so some people say that I'm light-skinned, I don't have a problem with that, but I mostly go by Biracial.

Overall, fathers tended to discuss the challenges that result from being Black and did not as often address how the children may face unique challenges in being Biracial. However, there was one father, John Simons, who did specifically detail how he speaks to his son on the potential issues he may face from being Biracial:

> There's a certain amount of bias, prejudice that may be towards you because of your race because of the mixtures of the races and you could be not liked from the Black side, you could not be liked from the White side, not liked from the middle side [laughs]. So either are adversities that you have to overcome and deal with them.

John's son, Carlo, then echoed this sentiment during the child interview when he was asked what it means to him to identify as mixed in America:

> I think that it presents like a few like challenges and then also like privileges … well for me I'd say that it's more challenges than privileges because I don't necessarily attribute my-- say that I'm White, so there's always this idea of White privilege and then being White sometimes comes with certain things that make it easier. But being mixed race, you not only face the racial discrimination, but also sometimes are less racially discriminated against because you're lighter than other Black people yeah.

Gender differences. There was also a gender difference observed in messages fathers communicated to their daughters versus their sons. Specifically, the father's appeared to communicate more protective messages with their sons, such as 'be careful' and encouraging

them to always monitor their behavior, specifically while driving and in interacting with police officers. The current racial climate surrounding issues of police brutality against Black men and boys and social movements, including Black Lives Matter, was discussed frequently across families in relation to messages the parents, specifically the Black fathers, were sharing with their sons. Samuel Peterson speaks to this connection between what he talks about when it comes to race, specifically with his son, and how the death of Trayvon Martin created a greater intentionality to have these conversations:

> Trayvon Martin woke me up with—cause that kid looks like my son and my son lives in a predominately White neighborhood, I mean the whole conversation of my daughter and my son now about—I need to remind them of, 'no, you're not playing guns and robbers in our neighborhood, you're not running around cars, running behind…you're not doing that stuff in this neighborhood.' So, it's like I have—is that the fabric, is that the conversation that people are having in their households? About my son, you need to be careful that they don't think--- like really? That's the world we live in today. Like when my son drives, dude I gotta have a conversation about 'hands on the wheel, don't talk back, I want you to come home.' Honestly, that's the conversation that I'm faced to have with my son and daughter, like, 'don't talk back, I want you to come home.'

Although he discusses having the conversation with both of his children, Samuel emphasizes his particular need to have the conversation more with his son, which may relate to the frequency of events involving police brutality against Black boys versus Black girls being conveyed in the media. Again, the racial composition of the family's community played a part as Samuel stated that their predominately White neighborhood being a particularly important environment for his children to monitor their behavior as one of few children of color. Emmet Douglass discussed a

similar conversation he had with his son, and how he prioritized discussing this with him versus his daughter who is also in her late teens:

> I gave [my son] the same speech [my father gave me] as far as I had when he started driving, he was pulled over, he was racially profiled by an officer so I kind of had the same conversation with him, not to have more than two people in the car, make sure you know what your passengers have on them, make sure no one's riding—call it 'riding dirty', make sure no one has anything illegal, so you're responsible for every passenger in your car. So, I've had that conversation with him and people gonna judge you just by the way you look and not by character or the content of the person you are. So just having that conversation. I haven't really had that conversation with my daughter, and I probably should, because she's kind of experienced some of the things that he has had to experience.

In analysis of the messages shared between fathers and their daughters, the content within those conversations was similar to the content fathers had in conversations with their sons (e.g., awareness of differences in how others may perceive their racial identity and stereotypes they may face based on their race).

Overall, findings showed that the fathers' meaning making of their racial identity, skin color, values, personal experiences as Black men, and how they were making sense of such experiences shaped the messages fathers shared with their children on topics of race and racial identity. These factors shaped the strategies fathers have developed over time to navigate racial issues, and this impacted how they discussed issues of race with their Biracial children. These messages appeared to vary in frequency, intensity and depth of exploration based on how

meaningful and important the father weighted his own racial identity and how he made sense of his experiences as a Black man.

White mothers and their Biracial children. It was also important to explore how the mothers in the current study viewed their racial identity and understand how meaning making of their racial identity and experiences related to race shaped how they viewed and talked about race with their children. All of the mothers in the study identified as White; however, the immigrant women in the sample (*N*=3) felt that while they were assigned a White identity, they did not necessarily connect with or understand themselves as such. This may point to the differing societal conceptualizations of race across nations and how that is integrated into an individual's understanding of their own racial identity. For example, Sylvia Simons, who immigrated from Italy, spoke to feeling more Latina than White or 'Caucasian,' due her linguistic connection to that ethnic group:

> …coming from a country where, at the time, I didn't identify myself as White or Caucasian, so when I came here was weird…because I had to fill out a lot of paper[s] and was just like…Caucasian especially was totally like…to me Caucus is a mountain, a chain of mountains and it's in Europe and its more towards Russia, so I have no connection to that so I prefer to identify…I feel myself more like a Latino because I guess as [redacted] …, you know, Latin is our common language of origin, so I would prefer to that, but they told me that when I say Latino, they say well you don't speak Spanish, therefore you're not…or you were not born in South America, or Central America, or Spain, therefore you're not Latino, like okay.

Isabel and Sabina, the other two immigrant mothers in the sample, discussed a similar theme of having to complete forms where they marked their racial identity as 'White,' but did not

necessarily see themselves as White, despite their lighter skin tone. Of note, results from the Brief Skin Tone Questionnaire showed that all mothers self-rated their skin tone as two or three out of ten on the scale (one equals the lightest skin tone on the scale). However, two out of the three immigrant mothers, Sylvia and Isabel, rated their skin tones as three, which was one degree darker than all of the other mother's in the sample. When asked to rate how much discrimination they believed they have personally faced because of their skin color, Sylvia selected 'none at all' and Isabel and Sabina selected 'a little.' Their responses were similar to the other non-immigrant mothers in the sample who also selected either 'none at all' or 'a little,' which demonstrates that these mothers generally believed they have faced little to no discrimination based on their skin color.

Isabel observed that she could mark her identity as White and Hispanic on forms, or just mark as White, and that there were differences in job interviews and subsequent questioning she received as a result. She described feeling frustrated when this happened, as she felt she received harsher questioning about her job qualifications when she identified as Hispanic. From these experiences she concluded:

> I left [my race] [marked] as White after that [experiences of applying for jobs in the school system] because I don't wanna be dealing with the stereotype and like [pause] assuming that they have to drill me to a wall every time they meet me -- just to bypass all of that because I know what I am capable, I know my skills, I know my preparation. So if I go in there and you're gonna interview me, you're gonna see my skills, you're not gonna see my color.

When pressed on what this means for how she views her identity, she remarked, "I don't see color. Because see in [Latin America] we don't have that, and I've lived most of my life there."

Sabina discussed her understanding of race and how filling out racial demographics on forms made her begin to question this understanding:

> I usually identify myself as White, I mean [people from my country] are Aryan, so for us its always been White…there's not…Middle Eastern is not a race so for me it's always been that way and for my sister too, but that's really where it—the questions [about racial identity] began to arise I think, selecting that box on the form.

Since three out of the eight mothers in the current study were immigrants, differences in conceptualization of a White identity were explored between the immigrant and non-immigrant mothers. As described above, the immigrant mothers across the families did not necessarily connect with their identity as White in a way that was meaningful in how they viewed themselves. Research on racial identity among immigrant populations shows that upon immigrating to the U.S, immigrants assimilate into a racial hierarchy, and through this process, establish a racial identification. However, racial categories are complex and open to negotiation, complicating the saliency of race or "Whiteness" among immigrants to the U.S. (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2004).

In the current study, claiming and embracing a White identity among the immigrant mothers appeared complicated by language and accent barriers, experiences of discrimination, and religious affiliation. Sylvia described above her connection with being Latino more than White due to shared linguistic origins, but that she was told she could not identify in this way due to her country of origin. Therefore, her identity as [European – redacted] was most salient to her experience and acknowledgment of a 'White identity' appeared to only align with how others classified her. While Isabel identified as White and Hispanic, she described her process of developing a racial identity only upon immigrating to the U.S. and marrying her husband, as it

was not a means of classification in her home country. In addition, her experiences of job discrimination compelled her to shift her identity to solely White when filling out forms so that she felt she would not receive as much prejudice. Finally, while Sabina identified as White, her other identities as [Middle Eastern] and Muslim were more salient to her experience and she saw race being more defined by nationality and religion based on her own experiences.

There was also a pattern seen among these mothers of becoming conscious of race upon entering the U.S., which for two of the mothers (Isabel and Sylvia), was described by them as the same time they married their partner. Racial consciousness is defined as the awareness of one's own racial identity as well as the knowledge of social systems that create and perpetuate power differentials between groups (e.g., awareness of racism) (Aldana, Rowley, Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2012). In addition, the concept of White racial consciousness refers to the ways in which White people think about people they do not consider to be White. This theory proposes that there are various types of attitudes held by White people in relation to people of color, which then characterize their racial attitudes (Leach, Behrens & LaFleur, 2002). Among the immigrant mothers in the current sample, these women described having little to no exposure to the idea of race, and therefore limited racial consciousness, prior to immigrating to the U.S. and/or when they married their partner. For example, when asked about having positive or negative experiences related to race, Sabina replied:

> For me it's never been about race until you and I got married. I never really encountered race issues, it was just about me being [Middle Eastern] and Muslim and all those stereotypes that come with that. It was after you [referring to her husband] came into my life where the issue was constantly in our face from both ends.

Isabel made a similar statement when asked how she learned about race. She stated, "The first time I learned about race was when I married him, and I move in here [to the U.S.] to live with him." Sylvia recalled her lack of learning about race growing up in her home country and how the demarcation of classes of people by skin color was not something she was exposed to at that time:

> At that time- '51- so when I was small, we didn't have the diversity that we have now in [my country of origin], so speaking about races in [my country of origin] was not really an issue—an issue as it was not needed in a way because we all were kind of [from this ethnic group], darker or lighter skin, but [from this country].

How each mother's racial consciousness and understanding of her own racial identity as White related to how she was talking with her children about race was further explored among both immigrant and non-immigrant mothers in the sample. Findings showed that two out of the three immigrant mothers, Isabel Keane and Sabina Morgan, chose to emphasize other aspects of their child's cultural identity, such as religion, when having conversations that involved race, and chose to curtail the messages related to race. Similar to her husband, Isabel Keane shared the approach to not respond at all to the element of race in conversations with her children, and instead emphasize their Catholic values, including forgiveness and compassion. When describing the influence of her faith on conversations related to race, she discussed:

> …the fact that our faith has taught us to be compassionate for other people…so even when other people come across and try to be racist or something we try to- like you said- clarify and try to teach them be compassionate and show them love.

As described above in the section on fathers, this avoidance of discussing race impacted their daughter, Amber, who also expressed some apprehension around noticing race as she did not

want to potentially "offend" others by acknowledging their race. Although the Morgan family, overall, were more engaged in having conversations related to race than the Keane family, Sabina described that when it came to her involvement in these conversations, she did not want to further discuss the role of race beyond the level of awareness:

> I try to eliminate the issue [of race] as soon as possible. I don't try to add more flame to the already existing fire. I just say things like, "Caleb, it is what it is, you can't make people change their mind if they don't want to or…" I don't go in [Justin's] direction of, "well that's just how they are, you know, they look at you and they know you're the n-word!" [imitating father's voice] or whatever. I'm on the polar end of dealing with the racial [issues]…

This idea that race was a 'fire' and simply engaging in a conversation related to racial issues could 'fuel the fire' conveyed the contentious nature of this topic in the Morgan family. The dynamic between the mother and father in the Morgan family and how it shaped their conversations with their child will be further explored in more detail in the family section below; however, for their son Caleb, it was clear that he held messages from both parents in his understanding of how to navigate racial issues. This was similar to the way in which Caleb straddled both parent's definitions of race into one integrated understanding of race, as described earlier above. When asked what his mother versus his father talks with him about when it comes to race, he replied:

> Caleb: Sometimes [my mom] will say something like 'don't judge people,' cause she doesn't like to judge people, so she told me not to do that.
>
> Interviewer: Okay, like based on race?
>
> Caleb: Yeah and like gender and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Don't judge people. And what kind of things will your dad say about race?

Caleb: Like… a lot of times it's like 'watch my back' and stuff cause of where we live now, he doesn't want me to get hurt or something I guess. So, he tells me to watch out.

Contrary to Isabel and Sabina, Sylvia Simons described that since learning about race upon immigrating to the U.S., she has become very passionate and engaged in understanding the realities related to race in this country and how this impacts people of color. For example, when describing what it has been like for her being a European/White immigrant woman in the U.S., she explained:

> I learned more, I'm more how do you say, conscious of the problems that are here because, I think America is--a beautiful country…I'm very grateful because I met so many different people that I never would've met in [Europe], I know that for a fact…I'm glad to be [from my home country], to be here, but maybe I'm here to just be a human and be able to experience being here… to learn a lot from the good and the bad, about race…I mean [race] exists like…is a state of mind and is a physical…mind, spirit…race it goes across different realities and so I do experience all of them and try to understand them. I don't have a history here…but I kind of have some experience as mother and spouse of a Black man, and mother of a Biracial kid and so I've been exposed to some realities that I know other people haven't and I'm very glad for that.

Interestingly, Sylvia described wanting to discuss race-related issues more frequently and in greater depth than her husband, John, who wanted to "tame" and cautiously approach conversations related to race. Reflecting on what kinds of conversations she has with her son,

Sylvia shares what this has felt like for her as a White mother of a Biracial child, especially in talking with other parents who do not have Black or Biracial children:

> I have to say as a mother, I have interesting conversations with mothers, non-Black, non-Biracial kids, and it's interesting especially when they are teenagers now I too have some discussion with [our son]. I know some of my non-Black American friends didn't have to have and so you make them think because like "wow yeah I don't have to say this to my son you know" and yeah that's pretty hurtful when you have to say to your son like "don't wear a hood," "I know you like those particular shoes but maybe now's not the case to" or some stuff like "if you take the bus, make sure that you are respectful" or stuff like that you don't have to say to, your kids... because people won't look at a group of White kids the same ways look at a group of Black kids or interracial kids.

At the same time, Sylvia was also sharing messages with her son that being Biracial is a strength and that he should feel comfortable and confident in himself as a racial being. This was reflected in a response from her son, Carlo, when asked what his family talks about when it comes to race:

> My mom is a lot like- she is very passionate about making sure that I am comfortable when I leave the house, I'm comfortable being my own person and stuff like that so she is saying that obviously there's people who-- you can't control what people are going to think, but you just make sure that you know who you are and you know what to say when, if somebody like verbally attacks you and to just to know who you are so whatever they say to you isn't really that important because they don't know who you are. She's always been passionate about working with—like working against like racial division like imbalances. Like she volunteers at a drug rehab center and she's very connected in

> the community and trying to help people improve their lives and stuff-- mainly the Black community.

Sylvia's strong connection and involvement in the Black community, as described by her son and also Sylvia herself during the parent interview, appeared to fuel her awareness and passion to discuss the importance of racial issues with her son and wanting him to understand the balance between being prepared for prejudice, but also feeling comfortable in who he is as a Biracial person. This conveys Sylvia's higher level of racial consciousness, moving beyond awareness of race and injustice, to action oriented toward helping to improve the conditions for those oppressed by social conditions such as racism. This appeared to relate to Sylvia engaging in more frequent conversations with her son on embracing his Biracial identity and advice on how he should navigate the current racial climate as such.

The statements of becoming conscious of race differed in how the U.S. born mothers described their own racial consciousness. Several of the U.S. born mothers remarked on learning about race and experiences of racism via experiences throughout their life (e.g., witnessing differences in how White children and Black children were treated in their schools and/or neighborhoods when they were growing up). Therefore, some U.S. born mothers described developing some level of racial consciousness prior to marrying their partner. However, this appeared to vary based on the racial composition of where the mothers were raised (discussed further below). The U.S. born mothers in the sample also claimed their identity as White with greater certainty than the immigrant mothers, but with varying levels of salience of that identity. Notably, none of the mothers in the current sample claimed their Whiteness as a particularly important identity and some mothers, such as Brielle Douglass, directly responded to the question of whether their racial identity as White was important by replying 'no.' Brielle

described growing up in an all-White community and remarked that she did not meet a person of color until she was an adult and moved away from her childhood home. When asked more on what it means for her to identify as White, her response highlighted her lower level of racial consciousness, which she described as increasing over time, in part due to having Biracial children and the current sociopolitical climate:

> I think I didn't ever really realize [my White identity]. It wasn't ever different to me, so like everybody's just kind of the same, but seeing now and all the things that are happening in politics and with my kids getting older, I think I'm more guarded on making sure everybody's safe and [feel] kind of shameful about some of the things that have happened like some of, you know, the police officers and the things they're doing to others, to think like how could anybody do that, and so—it makes you kind of enlightened on the things that are happening.

In her response on what it means to identify as White, Julie Hayes, who described being raised by parents who were social justice advocates, noted that identifying as White did not capture how she views herself. She related this to how she has felt as a White mother in an interracial family:

> I mean, I'm clearly White and I've always identified that way out in the world, but I feel like it doesn't capture—it doesn't actually reflect how I feel. Like as [Dominic's] talking about sort of that the social piece that you identify with-- my Whiteness does not match the social piece that I identify with…there will be times where I'm talking about my family and later they find out that it's a Biracial family and they're surprised and I'm like, the color that they are doesn't make any of what I've discussed about my family any

> different and so that's always just like, what are you—what does that mean that sort of their view is me different now.

When asked how she felt being White in America, Maribelle Agnew replied:

> For me, it's not so much about me, it's more about when things happen to the kids or my fear for the kids, so I think more about that now then I would've before and since I have the kids that get me more riled up about race then anything.

While there were differences across the immigrant and U.S. born mothers on their level of racial consciousness, there was a trend across both groups of mothers describing increases in their awareness and understanding of race issues upon entering into an interracial relationship and raising Biracial children who were now coming into adolescence. This finding aligns with previous research that shows White mothers become more aware of their own identity as a White person and develop more awareness of racial injustice upon entering an interracial relationship and parenting Biracial children (O'Donoghue, 2004). For example, Natalie Kent described an increased level of awareness she had in relation to her White privilege that she believed other White mothers may not have:

> I think for me it's just that…the whole White privilege thing, things are easier for me than they are for Chase and the kids, you know, in certain situations and it's just something that I think I'm more mindful of then maybe other White people are, but I still don't think I'm as mindful of it as I should be. I think I still take it for granted, even though I don't intend to, it's just I don't know any different.

Natalie later discussed what meaning her White identity provided her and the mixture of feelings she held in relation to that identity:

> …identifying as someone who is White in America, its…its kind of mixed feelings, you know, and on the one hand it's-- I mean it makes it easy, it's like okay well I've got the easier path ahead of me, but it also it makes me feel almost embarrassed or guilty that I'm not…why should it be better for me than it is for any other random person here…I mean it shouldn't be that way and it makes me feel like I don't deserve anything to be easier for me than anybody else does. I just feel kinda weird about it I guess, but then I also... like okay you have this easy path so you need to use that easy path to make a change, although I don't know how I would do that, but it's kind of-- the emotions that come up when I think about how to I identify, what does that mean to me.

Analysis of race-related messages across both immigrant and non-immigrant White mothers showed that the majority of mothers in the sample tended to agree with and share the same content in messages about race that were generated by their husbands. However, as noted above among the fathers, there were variations in how mothers were interpreting their White identity, their experiences as White immigrant or non-immigrant women. Furthermore, there was another layer of difference in how these women were making-meaning of their roles as White mothers of Biracial children and wives of Black men. This appeared to relate to how they decided to approach conversations about race with their children. For example, Sylvia Simons, as mentioned above, conveyed a higher level of racial consciousness, and as such, described her interest and desire in having frequent conversations with her son about race, feeling comfortable going in-depth into such conversations, even if this diverged from the approach her husband, John, wanted to take of 'taming' the conversation. This appeared to relate not only to Sylvia's increased awareness of racial injustices upon immigrating to the U.S., but also her desire to become involved in addressing those issues in her community. Therefore, at home, Sylvia

believed it was necessary for her to participate in these conversations related to race with her Biracial son. Her approach appeared less informed by the meaningfulness of her White self-identification and more informed by her understanding of what it means to be a White wife of a Black man and mother of a Biracial child.

Sabina Morgan and Isabel Keane held opposite approaches from Sylvia, wanting to curtail conversations related to race as quickly as possible, and refrain from 'fueling the fire.' Although all three women have similar experiences of becoming conscious of race when immigrating to the U.S./marrying their husband and also not identifying strongly with a White self-identification, there were differences in how their racial consciousness developed and how they were interpreting and understanding their roles as White mothers of Biracial children. While Sylvia viewed her participation in race conversations with her son as critical, Sabina and Isabel did not believe it was important for them to participate in such conversations with their children. Analysis revealed that both women preferred to focus on other factors of their child's identity as more central to their child's experiences (e.g., religion), which was more central in their own understanding of their experiences than their own racial identity. This was evident in Isabel's description on the impact of her Catholic values in her life, and how that outweighed the importance of race. In addition, Sabina's discussion of her Muslim identity as more impactful to her experiences, particularly in relation to experiences of discrimination and prejudice, than a White racial identity, appeared to relate to her decision to deemphasize the importance of talking about race with her child.

Other mothers in the sample also held varying levels of racial consciousness and centrality of their White identity. As noted above, there were no mothers who saw their White identity as central to their experience; however, there were several mothers, Natalie Kent, Julie

Hayes, and Caroline Peterson, who specifically discussed ideas such as White privilege and how that impacted their feelings of responsibility toward understanding and discussing issues of race in their lives. Analysis showed that these mothers were more likely to bring general awareness of racial injustices, social issues, and historical context into their conversations with their children. For example, Natalie Kent noted that in her conversations with her children about race:

> I think with [my husband] the conversations are more, I think, child specific to how their lives are impacted. I try to do more of the discussions about like the Black Lives Matter movement and the things on the news and, you know, make sure that they're just aware of these issues that are coming up cause they don't—[my son] follows the news a little more, but [our daughter] Avery doesn't really pay any attention to anything, so just to create an awareness and kind of get their thoughts and 'what do you think about that' and-- they don't usually offer up a whole lot, its usually kind of like, 'well I think that's good or not good,' depending on what it is, but that's kind of my-- I guess the angle that I use more, kind of the big picture and narrow it down more as you start with the here and go big.

Caroline Peterson described the desire for her daughter to understand how to navigate racial issues, which aligned with her husband's approach to discuss the historical context for race-related issues. During one part of the interview with the Peterson family, Caroline refers to an instance at school where Clara's friends were creating with nicknames for one another and joked that Clara's nickname should be 'Blackie.' While Clara thought this nickname was funny and Caroline didn't believe there were any intentions to offend on the part of Clara's friends, she believed they could be doing more to discuss how Clara could respond to such situations. She

discussed this in her response to the question on the importance of race during the family interview stating:

> I think it's important with the whole 'Blackie' thing and just like…just getting her to, you know, as she gets older and faces different things that she hasn't really been exposed to—just so that she has kind of tools and knowledge and understands it's just people are scared and ignorant and just like don't get it and so I think it's just important to have her be successful for her to have a good understanding of race in a historical context and to see just the varieties of people's thoughts and feelings about it.

The other two mothers in the sample, Brielle Douglass and Maribelle Agnew, described less reflection they have had on what it means to be White and that when they do reflect on issues of race, there is little to no reflection on their identities as White women and how that impacts their awareness of race issues. Instead, these women described focusing more on their children and what they may encounter as Biracial beings. These women can be described as having lower levels of racial consciousness than the other mothers in the sample. Analysis showed that these mothers were less likely to initiate conversations with their children with content based on their own experiences or understandings of race and were more likely to echo the messages already shared by the fathers. This was exhibited in mothers being more likely to describe what 'they,' meaning both parents, discussed with their children about race, versus messages they shared specifically with their children. For example, when asked why it would be important to talk about race in their family, Brielle Douglass answered:

> I mean, I think we've always told them like, 'I'm White, your father's Black, you're Biracial, you're not one color.' But I think as they're getting older, they're realizing that even though they are Biracial, people see them as one color.

When asked what they talk about in conversations about race with their son, Maribelle Agnew primarily described what the father discusses:

> I feel like you [referring to the father] have probably talked to him about like education in that way, I mean right now our conversations center around the internet and what's acceptable and not acceptable, catching him in things that aren't acceptable, I don't know how often we talk about race, but I think you have talked with him about, 'people are going to be judging you,' I mean I think I've heard you say that, 'you're going to have to work harder.'

Of note, this does not mean that there were not also other mothers who shared messages they communicated together with their partner. In fact, there were many families were parents described that they rarely had separate conversations with their children and were more often having conversations together with their partner. However, it may be the case that White mothers with lower levels of racial consciousness, who have reflected less on their own racial identity and experiences they've had related to their race, may tend to follow the approach and conversations of their partner when it comes to issues of race rather than develop their own approach and content within such conversations.

Overall, analysis of messages between the Black fathers, White mothers, and their Biracial children highlighted that the majority of parents aligned in the content of the race-related conversations they had with their children. Factors such as the parent's understanding of their racial identity, interpretation of race-related experiences, immigration status, salience of their racial identity versus other cultural identities, and level of racial consciousness influenced their approach to those conversations (e.g., how frequently they engaged in race-related conversations, how in-depth those conversations were). These factors, in turn, were impacting how their

children view and understand their identity as Biracial, specifically in relation to how children understood the meaning of their Biracial identity and how they are understanding approaches to navigate race-related issues in their lives. This will be further explored in the following section.

Child identity formation and expression. In the current study, exploration of the child's identity formation and expression was achieved by asking children (1) how they currently identified their race, (2) if there were any times where they made a shift in how they identified racially, and (3) what factors led to that shift. In addition, they were asked to describe what their mothers and fathers talked with them about in relation to racial identity and how that shaped their own understanding of their identity. Furthermore, children were asked to describe their experiences related to race within their family, school, local community, and peer groups and how they perceived themselves navigating the world based on their racial identity.

All eight of the children in the sample reported that they currently identify as Biracial or Mixed, and only one child, Carlo (age 16), described having a distinct shift in his racial identity over his life thus far, which will be described further below. For some children, the assertion of identifying as Biracial or Mixed came from their refusal to 'pick sides,' as well as support from their parents who encouraged them to identify with both parts of their racial background. Noah Hayes (age 13) talked about his Biracial identity and described how he would check 'other' when filling out school forms that did not allow him to check multiple racial identifications. In describing what this process was like, he expressed his refusal to 'pick' one race over the other when it comes to how he identifies himself:

> You do one [survey] every year and it's like a survey for what you did this year in school…and at the beginning it's like your age, gender, and your race and it had like, you know, Black, White, Spanish, Asian and all of that, but they didn't have Biracial so I just

> put 'other,' cause I couldn't pick between like White and Black, like my mom and my dad, I can't pick.

Amber Keane (age 13) discussed the importance for her to identify with both sides of her cultural heritage, stating:

> I usually say Mixed. I wouldn't want to say something else cause my parents are both from two different cultures, of course. My mom is basically Spanish or Latino, I guess, and then my dad he's from America, and then his parents are from [the Caribbean[3]] so it's kind of like a lot of cultures in one.

When asked if anyone in his family has told him how he should identify, Caleb Morgan (age 15) remarked that his mother, "most of the times [she] told me I should say Black and [Middle Eastern]." He discussed that although he previously used the term, 'Mixed,' he now more specifically identifies as Black and Middle Eastern to acknowledge the specific ethnicities of his mixed-race background. Carlo Simons expressed a similar sentiment when describing how his racial self-identification aligns with how his parents view his racial identity:

> I think my parents are more like open to just letting me decide whatever I wanna be so they never really forced me into a mentality where I'm either White or Black, but they always told me if it comes to like you saying what you are, then you just say that you're Mixed because that's what you are.

Carlo (age 16) was one out of the eight children who spoke to shifting his understanding of his identity between Black and Biracial over his life. He reflected on his belief that this shift was due to the changing racial composition from White to Black of his school community and friend group and wanting to fit in more with his Black friends. He explained the shift in his identification as Biracial to Black in this way:

> …in high school all the kids who went to my school were like my old friends from middle school, but they were the White friends and then I stuck with them at the start of high school, but then I met a lot of new friends that were Black and now that's mostly who I hang out with. So I felt it like kind of was a detachment, like I still hang out with my White friends, but it was more of like- I've fit in and I wanted to fit in with the [pause] Black like cultural group in the school rather than the White ones.

Upon further discussion, Carlo also reflected on the culture of the majority Black community he lives in and how this impacted his identity shift:

> I also think [my neighborhood] is a city that is majority Black so there's like… a cultural movement towards Black culture so…Black culture is like embedded in [the] city so like you move towards that. I [also] like [the] music [and] the way people dress like fashion…Black culture has rooted itself in clothing and music and those are two big things…that make [this city] …so that's like what made me shift over.

Although Carlo has lived in the same community his entire life, he describes the racial composition of his schools shifting over time (e.g., becoming more racially diverse and having a larger Black population) and how this provided him access to a different group of friends. In addition, as a 16-year-old, Carlo now has greater access and connection to his friend group and the community outside his family than he may have had when he was younger. Although Carlo was not the oldest child in the study, it may be the case that Biracial children experience a shift in their racial identity as they get older and develop relationships with different friend groups of various racial compositions and gain greater exposure to the cultural elements (e.g., music, fashion) within their respective communities. Carlo also described what being Mixed meant and provided to him in terms of his racial identification:

> I just say like [being Mixed] just allows you to [pause] be culturally [pause] how you say like uh [pause] like you can…not shift…[pause]
>
> Interviewer: Be culturally fluid…?
>
> Carlo: Yeah, culturally fluid, you can decide what you want to be and then you're not forced into anything because you might look a certain way and then you can choose what you want.

In this statement, Carlo appeared to be speaking to his belief that he does not feel forced by others to identify in one particular way based on his physical appearance. He also feels freedom in being able to shift his identity according to the context he is in and the connection he feels to others and to aspects of Black culture. Although other children in the sample did not describe such shifts in their racial identity as Carlo, it was interesting to see that there were no children in this study who identified with a singular racial identity. This may be due to several reasons, such as the geographic location of the sample and previous research that shows mixed-race people in the Eastern region of the country rarely identify with a singular identity and identifying with a singular identity appears more prevalent in Southern regions of the country, perhaps due to the prevalence of the one-drop rule in those regions (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). In addition, as described above, parents were often encouraging their children to embrace their Biracial identity and acknowledge both sides of the racial and cultural heritage. This appeared to relate directly to their child's understanding of their Biracial identity. Finally, as mentioned above, it may be the case that future shifts in racial identification may occur for these children as they get older.

Although all of the children in the study currently identified as Biracial/Mixed, and all of the children described support from their parents to embrace that identity, there were differences

observed in how meaningful or important children believed this identity was to how they saw themselves and how they experienced the world. For example, there were two children, Amber Keane and Avery Kent, who expressed that their Biracial identity held little to no meaning or influence in how they navigated and experienced the world. Amber noted that her lack of particularly positive or negative experiences related to being Biracial was evidence that perhaps her Biracial identity does not shape much of how she views herself or navigates the world. When asked what it means for her to identify as Biracial in America, she replied:

> I don't know honestly to identify myself as Mixed when I don't know if it means much considering the people that I met before I don't necessarily see anyone one-hundred percent complains about me that way or praises me or something.

When asked the same question, Avery replied, "[It means] just that I have parents with two different races, so…I don't think it's had an influence [in my life] before, and I can't really see it having an influence in the future."

Age may have been a factor here, as both girls are 13 years old and on the lower end of the age spectrum in the current sample. Therefore, it may be the case that as they get older, their awareness and understanding of how their racial identity impacts their experiences may increase. However, there were other 13 and 14-year old children in the sample who expressed a higher level of meaning and influence attributed to their racial identity (such as Noah Hayes, age 13, and Clara Peterson, age 14), which points to other factors operating besides age. Indeed, one pattern noted among these two girls was the frequency of conversation their parents had around topics of race and identity with them. As described above, Amber's parents deemphasized the role of race in conversations with her, choosing instead to highlight values such as compassion and forgiveness. As such, they had almost no conversations related to race with their daughter,

and when the potential for race to be discussed in a conversation arose, they approached such conversations with great caution. During Amber's interview, when she was asked about experiences related to race and how she felt about such experiences (e.g., positive or negative experiences related to race or her experience of race-related events in her community), she would often respond, "it never crossed my mind," or "I've never been too curious to ask." However, she did describe that she felt everyone should be treated the same regardless of race, and that she saw no differences between people of different races. This was highlighted in her response to how she saw groups of different races being treated:

> The news kind of brings it up a lot like how our new president keeps talking about races like that…so it's kind of, I honestly don't like when I hear about it cause they're not really too different to me honestly. I mean if they're people of different backgrounds then that's that. They're not really too different cause I know a few good friends who I really appreciate, and they care about me and they happen to be that race.

It was clear that Amber's perspective on viewing all people the same regardless of race was influenced by messages from her parents, who held a similar view that people should not be viewed or judged based on their race. As described above, this reflects the family's colorblind ideology and belief that race should be deemphasized and that their children should not focus on color. In addition, Amber had the experience of having friends of different racial backgrounds, whom she perceived as all treating her well, which appeared to confirm her perspective that color doesn't impact her experiences in relation to how others view or treat her or how she views and treats them.

Avery's parents held a different ideology than Amber's family. Her parents believed race influenced their lives and will influence how others perceive them as people of color. However,

they also expressed a higher level of caution in having in-depth conversations about race with their children. As noted in the father's section above, Chase Kent expressed that he "did not want to put preconceived ideas" in his daughter's mind when it comes to discussing race-related experiences and what she may encounter as a Biracial woman. Chase also remarked that race is currently not a "big deal" where the family lives, compared to other places the family has lived where their racial identities were more salient, meaning that they and their children are not often confronted with issues or conflict related to race where they currently live. Therefore, he and his wife believed that they did not want to initiate those types of conversations related to race if there was no pressing need to do so.

As such, during the child interview, Avery described the messages her parents shared with her about race as mostly revolving around racial bias and prejudice such as, "some people don't see different races equally." When asked to give an example of a conversation she had with her parents, Avery replied, "we talked about how it's important to do our best in the community with things and stuff because not everyone will see me in the same way as they see other people." Avery expressed a slightly higher level of meaning of being a person of color than Amber, such as her general understanding that she will have to "do her best" and perhaps work harder because she may face bias and discrimination. However, this meaning appeared limited to her general understanding of being a person of color and did not appear to extend to her understanding and interpretation of other race-related experiences in her life. It may also be the case that based on the racial composition and climate of their current environment, as noted by her parents, Avery rarely encounters issues related to race, such as discrimination.

Among the children in the sample, there was also a pattern noted between those who interpreted their Biracial identity as having the potential for more positive or negative

experiences, and what that meant for how they would navigate the world. This also related to the types of experiences the child had already encountered in their lives thus far due to their race, as well as messages their parents were sharing with them. For example, when asked what it meant for him to identify as Black and Middle Eastern/Muslim in America, Caleb Morgan (age 15) responded:

> I think it's scary cause of a lot of people are against Black people and a lot of people are against Muslim people. And a lot of people search for that here, in this county, so I mean, it's really nerve-racking, but other than that, it's fine.

When asked if he felt scared on a frequent basis, he replied:

> Nah, 'cause nobody really comes to me in the school, I have too many friends that are always with me and so if anybody does anything stupid, it's just dumb for them.

Caleb ultimately stated that the general fear that he felt being Black/Middle Eastern-Muslim did not affect how he navigated his world on a daily basis; however, part of his rationale was that he had friends at school who he believed would protect him and, therefore, provided him with a sense of safety should someone decide to confront him. In that sense, Caleb considered his friend group important in thinking through how he would navigate issues that may emerge related to racism/discrimination at school. Caleb also described earlier experiences he had in middle school when other students called him racist names ("monkey") and said offensive things, such as telling him to "pick a banana off the floor and eat it." During those incidents, Caleb stated that he did not know how to respond, so he would just keep walking and ignore the remarks. Caleb would tell his parents about these experiences, which ultimately lead to more conversations around how he should monitor and control his behavior as a person of color (e.g., not reacting with aggression or getting into a fight due to such remarks). However, because his mother's

approach to such conversations was to eliminate the discussion as soon as possible, the family described that the father, Justin, was most often processing and discussing these issues with Caleb.

Another child in the current study, Andrea Douglass (age 17), also referenced worries that she has related to her Biracial identity. When asked what it meant for her to identify as Biracial in America, Andrea responded:

> It kind of makes me more aware of what I do and my surroundings cause I'm always going to have to be on the lookout in case…it's kind of bad to say, but yeah.
>
> Interviewer: What kind of things do you mean you have to be on the lookout for?
>
> Andrea: Um, just like to watch my surroundings cause not everyone is as—I'd say…I don't know how to explain, cause not everyone's like—so if they don't agree with me being Biracial or something, they might say something. So I just might have to watch out for what I say and stuff.
>
> Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?
>
> Andrea: I don't like it, but I've come to accept it.

Similar to Caleb, Andrea expressed her belief that others may not be accepting of her due to her race and as such, she believed she would need to have greater awareness of who she was around and monitor what she says. Also similar to Caleb, Andrea was able to recall experiences she had previously where she felt she was treated differently because of her race. She described that this was primarily feeling like she "stood out" and that she received looks from others, which made her feel uncomfortable and that she didn't belong. When asked about negative experiences related to race, she answered:

> I get a lot of looks sometimes so like, when I do hang out with my White friends and there's activities I do that are more 'White' I guess and so the looks are like, 'oh, there's a Black person here,' kind of so that's kind of negative cause then it's like, 'oh yeah, I get it, I'm Black.'

During the family interview, she also remarked that she often feels uncomfortable when she is in a group of one racial composition. Tying together the themes noted among Carlo, Caleb, and Andrea, these were three children in the current sample who described negative experiences related to race that they had personally experienced. They were also the same children in the sample who spoke to the challenges of being Biracial when asked to discuss what being Biracial means for them currently living in the United States, which makes sense given their personal experiences of bias and discrimination. These three children were also on the higher end of the age spectrum (15, 16 and 17 years old), which supports the argument that as children get older they may encounter more experiences related to their race and/or gain a greater awareness and understanding of what it means to be Biracial or a person of color. The Simons, Morgan, and Douglass families also described living in predominately White communities, which may also relate to the higher likelihood of these children encountering experiences where they feel 'different' or that they don't belong based on the racial composition of their communities.

Children in the sample also spoke to the positive aspects of being Biracial, which was not discussed as frequently among the children as the challenges of being Biracial. However, a few children described that being Biracial was positive in their lives, such as Alexander Agnew (age 16), who stated:

> I think [being Biracial] like [pause] it can definitely help you see multiple perspectives. Like I've noticed people who are just Black, they see things a certain way and White people see things a certain way, I see kind of like in the middle.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that's something that influences your life positively, negatively, or in both ways?
>
> Alexander: I think it influences my life positively cause it allows me to connect with a wider range of people in different ways.

Clara Peterson (age 14) made a similar remark stating that being Biracial provided her the opportunity to "see both sides," and that she had exposure to two different perspectives having contact with both her mother and father's side of the family.

Analysis of messages communicated between parents and children across all families showed that in discussing how to navigate the world as Biracial beings, parents were more likely to discuss the potential challenges and barriers and have conversations focused on how to prepare for and navigate such circumstances, rather than conversations focused on the positive aspects of being Biracial. While several families (Simons, Morgan, and Douglass) did describe that they wanted their children to "embrace" their Biracial identity (e.g., identify with and integrate both aspects of their racial heritage), there was not as much conversation on the positive aspects or *strengths* of being Biracial or the assets related to their racial identity (e.g., racial pride). This highlights the question of 'racial regard' and how children were evaluating their race, and the role parents played in the development of their child's racial pride. In Sellers et al. (1998) Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity, he defines racial regard as "a person's affective and evaluative judgment of her or his race in terms of positive-negative valence" (p. 26). In the current study, it appeared that two children evaluated their Biracial identity as positive

(one of those two also spoke to the challenges of being Biracial), four children highlighted the negative aspects, or challenges, of being Biracial, and two believed it had neither a positive nor negative impact on their experiences.

In assessing the messages parents communicated to their child(ren) about their racial identity and what role this played in the development of their child's racial regard, findings were mixed. In some families, there appeared to be a connection between messages parents were communicating to their child on the positive-negative aspects of being Biracial, and their child's understanding of their racial identity, while in other families the connection was not as clear and there appeared to be other factors at play. Therefore, it appeared that parental messages to their child, in addition to the child's own exposure to and interpretation of race-related experiences in their life thus far, impacted their meaning on being Biracial and how they navigated the world as such. For example, in the Simons family, Carlo's father and mother spoke directly to the positives of being Biracial, such as Sylvia Simons who remarked that Biracial people like her son are "the key to both worlds." During the family interview, she stated:

> I think there is more of an advantage than a problem in a many different ways because you can sum up, you know, such diverse, different groups in yourself, which is a trend that is becoming more common now…that's what we should aim to because we become a whole-- more stronger, but of course you will have people that you know might have a problem, but it's their problem. It doesn't have to be your problem I think. They can try to make a problem for you, but it won't-- it doesn't have to be, it's there unfortunately, they are closed minded, they are behind, so, that's what I see by the strength being Biracial is actually that more of the future of every race.

His father, John, also spoke to the "negative" aspects of being Biracial, such as the discrimination and bias Carlo would face, as noted in the father's section above. Carlo appeared to merge these messages into an interpretation of his Biracial identity and having both challenges and privileges. Clara Peterson and Alexander Agnew were two children who spoke to the positive aspects of being Biracial; however, themes from their parents' race-related conversations with them focused on preparing for bias and monitoring their behavior in various contexts, and not much on the positive aspects of being Biracial. Therefore, it may be the case that children are finding other ways to understand and make sense of their racial identity aside from what their parents are communicating with them. For example, when the Peterson family was asked to remark on how they view current attitudes toward interracial families, Clara responded:

> What I've seen from my point of view since I'm on social media, I see things on Instagram and they're praising [interracial families] because they're like, 'oh my gosh, these babies are beautiful!' And like how they have like the perfect light skin and their babies are so cute and like you see pictures like, wow this family is like perfect. At the same time, they're not perfect, but like I feel like they're viewed—the most part, from what I've seen—they're viewed pretty highly.

Via social media, Clara was exposed to the praise and positivity showered upon Biracial children, particularly for their lighter skin tone. It appeared that Clara had internalized this praise and held an overall understanding of her Biracial identity as positive, particularly in relation to her skin tone, as quoted in the document earlier above when Clara stated, "I think [being Biracial] influences [my life] positively cause I get to see like both sides and I'm tan too." Carlo

also noted the role of skin tone in providing a more positive experience for him as a Biracial person:

> I don't necessarily attribute my-- say that I'm White, so there's always this idea of White privilege and then being White sometimes comes with certain things that make it easier. But being mixed race, you not only face the racial discrimination, but also sometimes are less racially discriminated against because you're lighter than other Black people.

Recognition of their lighter skin tone and how it impacted others' views of them appeared to relate to Carlo and Clara's acknowledgment on the positives of being Biracial. In the current study, children also completed the Brief Skin Tone Questionnaire. Results showed that all eight children rated their skin tone between a 4 and 5 on the scale. While there was not much variation in how the children in the sample rated their skin tone, understanding the role skin tone plays in their treatment as Biracial persons related to how some children were understanding the positive aspects of their racial identity, as reflected in how Clara and Carlo highlighted the role of skin tone in their statements above.

Overall, children's racial identity formation and expression were impacted by factors such as age, skin tone, race-related experiences (both positive and negative) and their interpretation of such experiences in their lives thus far. In addition, how parents were approaching conversations about race and identity with their children appeared to relate to the child's level of understanding and meaning of their Biracial identity. However, it is important to note that a single factor did not emerge as most relevant to the process of racial identity formation and expression among the children in the current sample. Instead, a complex interplay between multiple individual-level and family-level factors were at play in shaping this process among Biracial children, in addition to exposure to macro-level factors (e.g., social media).

Another aim of the current study was to explore how parents and children understand one another based on their experience being part of an interracial family and how that related to the way families approached race-related conversations together. Therefore, in the next section, the dynamics in the parents' relationship as an interracial couple and the overall family relationship dynamic related to understandings on the role of race and identity within the family is explored.

Interracialism in Parent and Family Relationships

Interracial parent relationships. Across the parent interviews, the mothers and fathers discussed their overall experiences being in an interracial relationship with their partner and described their differences in race impacting their relationship with one another and, also, how they were perceived and treated within their respective communities as an interracial couple. It is important to note that all parents reported being together between 15 and 23 years; therefore, many parents spoke to shifts they have seen in the way interracial couples (including themselves) are perceived and treated over the span of many years. Some remarked on the positive changes, such as interracial couples being more accepted and viewed as 'normal' in today's society versus that of the past. For example, Sylvia and John Simons discussed the positive aspects they have observed in being in an interracial relationship and how this has changed over time:

> John: I think that being an interracial couple …we certainly have I would say an opportunity to be an ambassador between the cultures, [Sylvia: yea] we kind of give people the opportunity to see how two people can be together…
>
> Sylvia: It can be done!
>
> John: You can do it and I think cause a lot of things come with the barriers, you know, are your parents gonna like it, are your parents gonna like it, my friends…what side are they gonna chose and things like that, but you know, you can't worry about that, you just

> have to do what you wanna do…I think that you know, it's certainly-- we got married 20 years ago, so it was a lot different than it is today, people don't think of it as much. They thought more of it when we got married and probably 10 years before that and then, you know, '*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*,' …
>
> Sylvia: I think sometimes people they [gasps], 'oh, your husband is Black,' like 'oh, your wife is White!'
>
> John: Nobody said it, but they might have different looks.

Several other parents also discussed receiving surprised looks and shock from others, often stemming from the assumption that their partner would be the same race they were. Brielle Douglass described this experience in discussing a work function she attended with her husband:

> I can tell you one thing, sometimes being married to an African American, there's this stigma about how the person actually is, so if—when I am with people that I've never met, people—you're not going to say, 'oh she's married to a Black man,' and when he's with like friends and people that didn't know him—people are shocked! …like when he started his new job, his coworkers didn't know who I was, so when I came up behind him to their little function, they were like…their eyes were like bulging out of their head, and it was kind of funny cause it was like, 'oh you didn't know I was White.'

Other parents discussed more overt negative treatment, such as discrimination and harmful comments made by others because of their relationship. Across the couples, this was discussed as an upsetting, but a rare experience when examining the length of their relationship. Julie Hayes remarked on her observation of their treatment as an interracial couple and stated, "we've been together for 23 years and like there's two [instances] that I can think of, that were literally just comments like walking down the street and people make a snide comment*."* Isabel Keane

discussed her observation of her and her husband receiving poor customer service on several occasions and her perception that this was due to their status as an interracial couple. She remarked:

> We sense jealousy… and we think it's based on race because I don't know what has happened in their lives, but when [strangers] see us "oh she's with him??" [Derek: They're not happy.] He has bad customer service or me that has bad customer service, we've had both situations of different kinds. And sometimes there's somebody that can't stand me being with him and the customer service being towards me is horrible or is vice versa. And when somebody sees me with him everything goes bad, in both occasions that we had we had to call the managers because no! When they're mad at me it's a Black female. [Derek: Mhmm] And when it's mad at him its man, Hispanic.

Sabina Morgan discussed her observation that she did not encounter issues with racism until she married her husband. Sabina and Justin discussed what this was like for them in their exchange below:

> Sabina: For me it's never been about race until you and I got married. I never really encountered race issues, it was just about me being [Middle Eastern] and Muslim and all those stereotypes that come with that. It was after you [referring to her husband] came into my life where the issue was constantly in our face from both ends. Not just White people, Black people are very racist to Biracial families, especially women—Black women—are very, very difficult toward this kind of relationship.
>
> Justin: She would get more standoffish type of things. Like she would like, you know, if we're somewhere or there's more Black people around, or she gets introduced into a

> Black crowd or something like that, they're more standoffish, maybe a little bit of attitude here and there.

Isabel and Sabina both point to gender dynamics in these interactions as well, remarking on the intersection between race and gender in these negative encounters and how this varied between women and men of color.

Across the parents, there were also differences in whether negative experiences related to their relationship occurred within their respective extended families. It was less common in this sample for parents to report negative treatment they received within their own families for marrying someone of a different race, which may reflect the larger acceptance of interracial relationships within society. In particular, only two out of the eight couples in the current study described members in their families reacting poorly (e.g., shunning them) upon marrying their partner. In both of those couples, the parents discussed this negative treatment as isolated to one or two family members, whose attitudes became more positive and accepting over time. For example, Sabina Morgan described that there was the expectation within her natal family that she would marry someone who was of the same ethnicity, and so when she decided to be with her husband and have children, she was shunned, particularly by her father. She discussed how they only re-established a relationship with her father at a family event when the father met his grandchildren for the first time. For Sabina and Justin, their children brought the mother's family in closer with them; however, for Justin, he did not entirely feel acceptance because of this. He noted:

> [The relationship with Sabina's father] is like [Sabina: still uncomfortable], it's okay with the kids, but me being Black it's still there so yea, it's still uncomfortable and [her father] says and does different things and he'll say stuff to them-- he doesn't really say anything

> to my face, but like again, I'm not stupid, you can feel out things and things that he says to them, like alright c'mon…so I mean I try to sometimes distance myself a little bit—[Sabina] hates that.

Despite the negative consequences two couples experienced as a result of their relationship, the majority of couples described acceptance they received from their families and at most, their respective parents expressing concern that the couple may receive negative treatment from society as a result of their relationship. Findings also showed that the context, specifically in relation to the racial climate and composition, of the local community shaped parents' experiences as an interracial couple and family. This is explored more in the following section.

Identity and experiences as an interracial family. An important part of the conversation surrounding race and family was exploring how each family viewed the multiraciality within their family and if identifying as an interracial family provided meaning to each family member or the family as a whole. Findings above showed that while each couple had varying levels of positive and negative experiences as an interracial couple, their identification (and the salience of such identification) as an interracial family appeared to relate more to the context in which they lived, rather than the experiences the parents had as an interracial couple or the family as a whole.

Across the families, it appeared evenly split whether or not families believed that being interracial was a salient part of their identity as a family. Four of the families believed that although they were an interracial family, there was not much significance to this beyond the simple fact that their family was comprised of a variety of races and/or cultures. For these families, they also discussed their belief that being interracial mattered more when it was pointed

out to them by others, or when they were in a context where they "stood out" more. This idea was highlighted in an exchange between the mother and father, Natalie and Chase Kent:

> Natalie: I think for me [being an interracial family] is not something I consciously, you know, just think of when I think of my family. I don't think of my interracial family, I just think of my family, but if I were to describe my family to someone, I would describe us as interracial.
>
> Chase: Yeah, I mean I think it's thought more as an interracial family when we lived in Alabama, right cause there you're…
>
> Natalie: It's more segregated…
>
> Chase: Yeah, it's like people remind you by the way they look at you and it's a pretty—I mean they're a pretty homogenous society there and so you just kind of stick out, so I think places like that where we stick out, we think about it more, but around here…no.

In the Morgan family, parents Sabina and Justin also expressed that they did not think of themselves specifically as an interracial family stating:

> Sabina: I mean I guess we consider ourselves an interracial family…I don't think—we just consider ourselves a family.
>
> Justin: She doesn't…I guess…no we don't—
>
> Sabina: We're just family—I don't…
>
> Justin: After so many years, you don't—you know how before we talked about looking at color and stuff like that? Within a relationship, no it's just…
>
> Sabina: Others see us that way, we don't see it so much I don't think.

The Keane parents discussed their awareness of the fact that they may 'stand out' more than other families in their community, but they made a conscious decision not to focus on that, and

instead focus on other values that they viewed as more important to their functioning as a family. For the Keane family, having a strong focus on being with one another and practicing their faith were more salient than their experiences as an interracial family. The mother, Isabel, spoke to this stating:

> I think the one big thing that makes us different from all the families that don't have all this multi-countries come into one household is that we both come from countries that are very family oriented. So, our priority when we got married was okay we have jobs to sustain our life, to pay the bills, but not to like our goal. It was more like our goal is to build a family, to love each other, to worship God, but sometimes you just have to pay those bills, you know, we were making sure that one of things we have done or made decisions in life as a couple is that if the work environment is affecting our life as a family, we will immediately do something about it or it will not make us happy…

The other four families in this sample discussed being interracial as a more salient identity for their family and it was important that they acknowledged and discussed this with their children. In addition, these families also highlighted the strength of being an interracial family, believing it was something that was unique and should be valued and celebrated. John Simons believed that being interracial made their family unique, as he commented, "[Identifying as interracial] just means that we're, we're not like the norm, we're different in a way. We're taking multiple cultures and putting together, and we celebrate it."

Caroline and Samuel Peterson believed their identity as an interracial family was important, and reflected on the challenges in being an interracial family that they believed ultimately made their family stronger and more connected:

> Samuel: This is the road less traveled, okay and it means that there are some that believe that you're only supposed to marry within your own race and I believe firmly that you marry who you love and that love in any same-race marriage may be a little easier, but you still deal with the same topics: financial, raising families—we could've been White and her family was rich and my family was poor and you're still dealing with the same issues in terms of you grew up differently, different part of the world, different part of the country, so there's always that push-pull in a marriage—it's not easier. And so I think love isn't the only binding agent, but it's certainly one of the most important.
>
> Caroline: Yeah it's definitely more challenging, but then, like you know, when you marry someone from the same religious background, it's just easier, when you marry someone from the same socioeconomic its easier, when you marry someone different on all those fronts, you know, there's so many challenges that most people don't have to deal with, but its I think that makes it stronger if you can go over those challenges.

Emmet and Brielle from the Douglass family both answered, "yes we are," at the same time when asked if they identify as an interracial family, and when asked if this means anything for their family, Emmet replied:

> I would say yes because I want the kids to realize that they have a part of their mother and father, I don't want any more one person's race over the other so they're a blend of both of us. So, I want them to acknowledge both heritages.

It was important for the analysis on approaches to discussing race to examine how each of these families were understanding their overall identity as an interracial family. Analysis revealed that families who viewed their identity as an interracial family as more important, and also as a *strength*, tended to also be those same families where at least one, if not both parents, described

greater value and frequency in talking about race with their children. Social context again was an important piece in this connection, as families who described living in predominately White communities where they 'stood out' as one of the few interracial families, or families of color in general, were often the same families who discussed their family identity as an interracial family as more meaningful and important when in those contexts. Therefore, some families found more meaning in being an interracial family when their race was more salient based on the racial composition in their respective communities. In turn, those families were more likely to engage in more frequent conversations about race with their children. There were exceptions to this trend, such as the Morgan family, whose interracial status was more salient in their predominately White community, and they did describe talking about race frequently, but they did not particularly identify with being an interracial family. This was interesting considering the family did note that other people in their community saw them as an interracial family, but they did not necessarily see themselves in that way. The father, Justin, theorized that this may be, in part, to the fact that others do not view his son as mixed/Biracial, but instead assume he is Black:

> I don't think he really looks mixed anyway. So, I don't think without him saying it or people knowing me, I don't think people even ask him about it or anything like that cause he doesn't look mixed, he looks more my race or Black than mixed.

Justin hypothesized that unless people saw them all together or his son talked about the racial backgrounds of his parents, others would not recognize him as Biracial and part of an interracial family. This may have played a part in why the family did not particularly see themselves as interracial.

It may also be the case that families who talk more frequently about race in general are also those living in a social context where their race is more salient (e.g., predominately White

communities), and so they are confronting issues related to race, and having subsequent conversations, on a more frequent basis. In this way, it was difficult to tease apart which piece drove the connection in the relationship between the salience of a family's interracial identity, social context, and frequency in discussing race. Another element noted by the Agnew family was the context of time and how views toward interracial families changing over time may relate to how they are perceiving the saliency of their status as an interracial family. When asked this same question about if they identify as an interracial family, Maribelle and Jacob Agnew had the following exchange:

> Jacob: You know, I do but just cause it's kind of hard, you know, it's right in our face every day but visually…was definitely not the first thing that comes to mind, not like we say get up, 'okay, what are we going to do as an interracial family today?' [laughter] That's not, that's not what we do, it's more about—but yeah, I would say yes, it's definitely there, it's definitely something that's in our minds, but I don't really see too much influence because of that.
>
> Maribelle: That's how I feel, you know all the stuff about the Loving family has been in the news and on Facebook and I was reading something actually on Tuesday night after we got home and a couple said, 'there's not a day that goes by that we don't realize we're an interracial family,' and I always think that's not my experience and I realize that was an older couple so it was a very different time when they got married.

This quote illustrates that macro-level factors beyond the family's meaning-making of their identity as an interracial family played a role in their experiences, and subsequently, the salience of this identity. As such, another point of analysis involved family member perspectives on the larger society's attitude toward interracial families.

Attitude toward interracial families. Overall, families in the current study believed that interracial families are viewed and treated more positively, or less harshly, than they have been in the past. They tended to view greater acceptance of interracial families overall, with acknowledgment that there were still those who were uncomfortable or not accepting of such unions. In addition, several families noted that where interracial families lived in the country related most directly to how that family would be perceived and treated. Fathers, mothers, and their children tended to agree with one another on the attitude toward interracial families within their respective communities. For example, when remarking on how interracial families are now viewed and treated, the father John Smith answered, "they are embraced a lot more than 50 years ago, but there are still people that are uncomfortable with it." His son, Carlo, agreed stating:

> I think people are more embracing of them, but there are always people who are mad--like mad on both sides they kind of want things to be separated like they want to make bloodlines to stay the way they are, but I think it's improved a lot and I think that the fact that people are marrying interracially now having kids is like better because they can be improving relations and stuff.

John also described his decision to have friendships and relationships with others within multiracial groups, and that he also seeks out other interracial couples in his environment, as he noted, "I personally try to find other interracial couples in the public settings, so like in a baseball game or at concerts and stuff like that and see are we the only ones out there. I mean that's something that I do." Seeking other interracial families in public settings was something the Hayes family described doing as well. Julie Hayes described how she and her husband often look out for interracial couples when they are out, "we always have the antenna up, so like we'll go out places and we'll be like, 'three o'clock [glancing to the side], eleven o'clock, okay,' like

see…other interracial couples." In this way, it seemed that the Hayes and Simons families were more attentive to the presence of interracial couples and families in their communities, possibly to know if there were other families like them around.

As mentioned above, a number of families believed that how interracial families were viewed and treated depended on where the family lived. Chase Kent described his perspective on this topic, stating:

> I mean I think it depends on where you are in America. In northern Virginia, not that—we're viewed as any other family. In Alabama, Mississippi, right, you're a unicorn […] I mean I think in 2017 there are so many interracial couples, whether it is Black and White, Black/Hispanic, there's so many different iterations that I think when people see it- again depending on what part of the country they are from- they will either look at you and think nothing of it, but if you're in the wrong part of the country where people look at you with disgust and—if it gets them angry and they want to do something about it.

Chase's statement highlights one potential reason why interracial families may also "look out" for other interracial families within their environment—perhaps as some approximation of not only the amount of those families, but the potential acceptance of such families within those communities (e.g., more interracial families around may relate to more acceptance of such families within that community). Brielle and Emmett Douglass also discussed the importance of geography when determining how interracial families are viewed and treated:

> Emmett: I'd say, geographically dependent on where you live, I think it's still an issue, but not so much an issue here in [North-central Maryland], maybe a couple states above, north of us—

> Brielle: I think it just depends on where you go and who you're around, how you're treated. Sometimes you're looked down upon, like when we go [to] our hometown, we are looked at more and like my little town I'm from and things like that, and certain places that we go and stop—we could be together—matter-of-fact—I guess it was one of our trips back to Illinois and we were together and they were—like 'hey, come here,' and they were watching you [referring to the father].

The acceptance of interracial families, or lack thereof, in their communities relates to how these families viewed being treated by community members, which was ultimately shaping how families are making sense of their experiences and identity as an interracial family. For many of the families in the current study, this meant that context, such as racial composition, climate, and events happening locally and national related to race, was largely shaping decisions on how families were talking, or not talking, about race. Attitudes toward interracial families was one element of many larger, macro-level factors that were shaping the identities, experiences, and conversations about race within families. Other macro-level elements, such as racial climate, social movements, race issues in the media, political climate, and how those elements are shaping the process of race talk in interracial families, will be further discussed in the below. However, the next section will first further explicate this process of race talk in interracial families and examine the link between racial ideology and race-related communication.

Race Talk and Racial Ideology in Interracial Families

How we talk about race. Analysis above has already begun to illustrate the many factors shaping the way in which interracial families are talking, or not talking, about race, identity, and racial issues with one another. Fathers and mothers' sense of their own racial identity and their interpretation of race-related experiences in their lives relates to the way in which parents are

communicating with their Biracial children on race-related topics. Individual-level factors such as interpretation of one's racialized experiences, immigration status, values (e.g., faith), skin color, level of racial consciousness and gender shaped how each family member was making sense of their own identity and, for the parents, appeared to relate to how they decided to communicate with their child on topics related to race and identity.

Another part of the analysis on family race talk, or race-related communication, above, elucidates the connection between family member meaning-making of their identity and experiences and how parents and their children were talking about race with one another. Race talk between fathers and mothers varied as a result of how parents were making meaning of race, their own identity, and their experiences as racial beings. Parents who held the belief that their racial identity was meaningful and influenced their experiences were more likely to engage in more frequent discussion of race with their children. Analysis of race-related messages across Black fathers and White mothers highlighted how messages were communicated by parents were rooted in their own experiences as racial beings, and for some parents, tied to experiences of immigration. There were a few families in which fathers and mothers diverged in how they wanted to talk about race with their child (e.g., Simons and Morgan families).

As noted above, most parents aligned in what they wanted to say to their children about race, including what they wanted their child to know and understand about being Biracial, being viewed as Black, and making sense of the historical context of race in the U.S. However, what appeared to vary across parents was *how* they wanted the process of talking about race to happen with their child(ren). It is important to further explore the convergence and divergence in how parents approached such conversations, including how frequently they wanted to discuss such issues, how in-depth they thought the conversation should go, and when such conversations

should be initiated. Analysis below will focus on parent convergence and divergence in these approaches to discussing race and how this shaped race talk with their children.

Conversation approach: Convergence and divergence. A majority of families in the sample (N = 7) believed that conversations that emerged related to race should be further explored and discussed to some degree with their child, while only one family, the Keane family, agreed in their approach to re-focus the conversation in a way that ultimately ended the discussion related to race. For example, in the Agnew family, Maribelle and Jacob discussed aligning their response to conversations related to race initiated by their son, Alexander. When he brings up a topic, they will ask questions to probe further. This often happened in the context of Alexander bringing home an experience or question based on something that happened at school. When asking both parents how they approached these conversations when they arose, Jacob remarked:

> Different ways I mean, like with Alexander…I'll tell him a little factoid about something, especially if it's a Washingtonian…anything around music especially cause he seems to really- something he's really latched onto. So, I try to tell him the factoids, or if I'm watching something- something comes across YouTube, I'll do that and show him…

He continued to discuss how, for him, this was related to their general parenting style, as he stated:

> We kinda ask [the kids]…I guess not about race so much, maybe just kind of goes back to our parenting style…we'll ask them when something happens, 'what do you think,' and kind of force them to really think about it and talk it out and stuff so you know I think that when something happens around race, makes them realize, you know, 'what do you think about it,' and everything.

Maribelle aligned with this approach and discussed how she will also further probe and ask her son questions to gauge his understanding of a race-related experience that happened, as well as use books:

> When things happen, either on the news or at school, this was years ago—Alexander was little—a darker African American had called him 'White boy' or something and he told me matter-of-factly that it happened or whatever, but then I found out later from another parent that he was really upset at what was going on. So, I use [that situation] to ask questions and kind of probe that to see like, 'why do you think people do that,' and he was well, 'it was because my skin,' or something and I can't remember what exactly, but it was something like that, like, 'what would you do if he did that to somebody else,' and those kind of things. The other thing that I try to do is buy books. So, for me, when they were little, I remember buying books that featured children of color, so they see themselves in there.

Julie and Dominic Hayes discussed a slightly different approach from one another when it came to having conversations about race with their son, Noah, and his younger brother. Dominic, described his approach as setting aside time to sit one-on-one with his sons and specifically speak to the topic and try to 'go in deeper,' as he stated:

> I usually have—break it down with the boys with just me and them and I'll probably go in deeper, be a little more raw in my language with them than I would be around their mom when it comes to certain race things, but maybe not, it just depends… I mean I probably would have said the exact same thing if she had been there, but she wasn't there when they asked the question.

Julie, however, remarked on her perspective that her and her husband explored race topics with her children by 'weaving' them into every day conversations together with her husband when they discussed race. She added to her husband's comment above:

> I feel like it's woven into a lot of our regular conversation. If we're watching the news or we're watching something on TV or listening to stuff on the radio and, I mean, it's everywhere so, I don't think we—sometimes we make a point of it, particularly if there's something on the news or something that's happened.

There were two couples who discussed divergent approaches from one another in responding to a conversation initiated related to race. In the Simons family, Sylvia, described being very passionate about further exploring and discussing race in conversations with her son, while John explained his approach in trying to limit the focus on race in these discussions. John held the belief that discussing race further would lead to a greater emphasis on race that was ultimately negative and unproductive. For example, when asked about his approach to race-related conversations, he replied:

> I try to tame [conversations about race] …basically don't give it more legs than it needs. We can all get upset about different things that happen, but we have to manage it. We have to manage it in a way where kind of, address the concerns and stuff, but also have a strategy around it just can't go out there and be reactionary toward it.

Sylvia related her different approach to the fact that she was not raised in America and that observing the injustices related to race was a new experience for her when she immigrated. She explained how this related to her desire to further talk about race:

> I feel comfortable [talking about race]. I mean, maybe because, you know, I was not born and raised here, so…I don't have history of being raised maybe in a family that was

> witnessing some particular injustice or was like, in a way, separated from some reality. I just came here and I was grown and you know about it because you are […] in Europe and you see movies or you hear things, but it is all across the other side of the ocean, and so I don't feel uncomfortable, I feel sorry—I mean I feel sad about it, you know, but again at the same time, I think it's something that needs to be talked about because if you don't talk about it…it's like saying that you're accomplice- not accomplice- you witness but you don't do anything, you become a perpetrator or something, so be aware of that.

In their explanations, one can see how parents' experiences as racial beings in the United States shaped how they believed race talk should be approached with their son. During the parent interview, John described his experiences as a Black man growing up in [a Midwest city], then living in Maryland, and also traveling around the country when in the military. He reflected on the ways he was treated negatively as a Black man over the years, and how he has come to make sense of those experiences and informs how he chooses to respond to race-related experiences (as noted above in the section on fathers). He wanted his son to learn how to prepare for these negative experiences but manage his reaction and not be controlled by those experiences. His wife described the novelty of such experiences for her, as a White immigrant woman from [Europe], and the passion and responsibility she felt to address and discuss issues of race in an in-depth manner with their son. The divergence that resulted from their differing perspectives was highlighted in the discussion below on how they should approach conversations with their son:

> John: I mean it's important [to talk about race], but at the same time it is also I would say, I mean history kind of makes it…seems like history can give people an opinion of like a negative opinion of things too…I think sometimes in our country the history of slavery

> and Jim Crow and all these things also doesn't necessarily heal the relationship, and can also bring up bad wounds and stuff, kind of, you know, it can make your kid feel uncomfortable, and then also have distrust.
>
> Sylvia: Yea well they have to-- I mean it's like saying if you're Jewish or anybody, you have to know about the Holocaust. Why? Because we should not repeat it, it's like "oh it brings back bad memories so we're not gonna talk about it." It happens! Like everything happened, all this stuff happened, the history happened, but they need to know, of course it's not, it depends on how you portray that. If you are angry, Black man, which you are not, you would most likely put a lot of this stuff, the topics, in an 'angry Black man mode,' which you don't, so you try to be more of like this is what happened and this is where we are here now and you try to, when you talk to Carlo about it, you are not try to—how you say—force the anger in him about some situation, you try to explain to him what happened, and you try to-- but he has to know everybody has to know, you cannot not know!
>
> John: I'm not saying he doesn't have to remember, I'm just saying that the question was do you feel comfortable with it, I would say no cause I think that it gives more fuel to the fire than it needs to.

In this exchange, John expresses his desire for Carlo to be aware of bias and prejudice but did not want this to lead their son to develop distrust of others because of those experiences. Sylvia discussed her belief that there was a way to have this approach, but not "force the anger" in their son by preparing him for experiences of bias or prejudice. How John and Sylvia's divergence in approach impacted Carlo's understanding of how to navigate racial issues was then explored. When asked what he has learned from his parents about race, Carlo stated:

> I guess that like there's always gonna be bias or racial prejudice but as long as you know who you are I guess, like what you are, you're comfortable with yourself then it doesn't really matter I guess what other people say I guess that's probably like the main idea.

Carlo seemed to hold together both perspectives, understanding that there is going to be bias and prejudice, but also being comfortable with who he is, is important in navigating such circumstances.

Sabina and Justin Morgan also diverged in how they wanted to approach conversations related to race with their son. In this case, Sabina wanted to curtail the conversations related to race and was wary of "fueling the fire," while Justin took the approach to explore, in-depth, ways to navigate racial issues. As discussed earlier, approaches to discussing race in the Morgan family was contentious, as Sabina and Justin held very different perspectives on how such conversations should be approached. This divergence in approach was highlighted during the family interview when asked if the family disagrees with one another about how to respond in a conversation about race, to which all family members laughed and responded, 'yes.' Sabina and Justin replied:

> Justin: If I see someone that's being racist or something like that or if there's something that's going on and we're all there, I might point it out, you know, she'll be like, 'shhh', I'm like [makes 'spish' sound] 'why not?' So in that way, we're different in that way. They're more quiet. He [referring to his son] is more like her. He's more quiet and I'm more boisterous about it, I'm like, 'let's talk about it, let's point it out, let's make the other person feel uncomfortable.'
>
> Sabina: But sometimes, you do it and it has nothing to do with race, you just wanna say it [laughing]! Like we'll be on the beach, somebody will take a double take and he'll,

maybe they'll do a double take because—I don't know—they saw our daughter or something, I don't know, he's like, 'you know why they're looking at us, cause you're with a Black man!' [laughter] I'm like, 'no, they're not!'

Justin: But again, some things she doesn't pay attention to. So I might see that from a distance to where they've already walked by before and done the same thing and I kept it to myself, but she doesn't pay any attention to it. So then, like that's what I mean they—

Sabina: I'm not dumb to it either though.

Justin: But you don't pay attention to it.

Sabina: I just don't react to it.

Justin: You don't pay attention to it.

Sabina: I know what's going on. I know in most of the situations where something is up, I do know. I just don't react to it and then we'll talk about it later and I'll be like, 'yeah, you're right, she was acting this way,' or 'she wouldn't have said that if you weren't there,' or whatever. I just don't get as…I don't know [Father: blunt] heated about it that he does.

Justin: I don't get heated. It's more blunt.

Sabina later elaborated on her perspective of why she chooses not to go deep into these conversations:

I truly do understand what's going on about it, but I also don't think it's my job to teach everybody a little sense of education. Now if I get the opportunity… then I take the opportunity to give them a little piece of education because I understand something. But I've come to see that a lot of people that hate…they hate because they don't understand. Right? Because they've been taught by second- third-generations of families or they see

> something on TV and they think every Black person has six teeth and they're drinking 40s on the corner. Or that, you know, every Middle Eastern person walks around with bombs strapped around their waist at any minute waiting to blow something up. That's what they know! It takes a lot of re-training and it takes too much energy for me to try to fight everybody that has something to say. If they're that bold to come and say it, then yes, let's have the discussion. But if it's like somebody in the store or something, I don't give a crap what they think about us. It's not going to break up our family. We're still going to keep on living!

When reflecting on how their differences in perspective shaped how their son views these race-related issues, the family discussed:

> Sabina: We don't let [conversations about race] affect our life if we can avoid it because we don't want [the kids] to stop their life, like that's my biggest qualm with him is I don't want them to be jaded. I don't want them to hate everybody because Justin does.
>
> Justin: I don't hate everybody, I really don't. I'm so—I'm such a loving person.
>
> Sabina: You are a very loving person. [son shakes his head]
>
> Justin: You don't think so?
>
> Caleb: If you know 'em.
>
> Justin: That's true I guess.
>
> Sabina: You are a very loving person and when people get to know you, they all freaking love you and it doesn't matter what color they are, but you must admit initially, you do question everybody.
>
> Justin: Yeah, that's right. Off the top, I don't trust them.

Sabina: Well what's funny I think is Caleb is an exact 50/50 of us. He doesn't hate everybody, I think he's a little bit more trusting like me, but he's suspicious like Justin. Do you agree?

Justin: I don't think he is- I think he's more like you period.

Sabina: No, no, because he's picked up some of it from you.

Interviewer: What do you think, Caleb?

Caleb: [pause] I'm not as loud as him, but I see the same stuff he does, I guess I'm more quiet like her.

Justin: They make me sound like this big, ghetto negro. [laughter]

Sabina: No, it's not loud like that, what he's trying to say is he's not as vocal about it as you are. [Justin: I know] He sees it the same as that you see it, he's just quiet in the way that he handles it like me. That's why I say he's a 50/50 split. He's not dumb to what's going on, he sees it, he just doesn't address it right away.

Similar to Carlo Simons, Caleb appears to hold together the divergent perspectives of his parents in how he chooses to navigate these race conversations. He did not describe feeling a level of distrust toward others, as his father experiences, but he did agree on sharing his level of awareness about bias and prejudice. He was also similar to his mother in that even when he did notice discrimination or negative treatment related to his race, he was less likely to say something to directly address it in the moment.

There was one couple in the sample, Isabel and Derek Keane, who shared the approach to re-focus and end any conversations that emerged related to race. They were in agreement of race "as a distraction" to other life experiences, and so their approach involved focusing on other elements in life, particularly religion, as a way to understand the world. This then related to how

they chose to have conversations with their daughter, Amber, about experiences she may have related to race. Derek believed focusing on and discussing race would inherently point out differences, and how they, as a family, chose to focus on the similarities. For example, he remarked:

> I think us being like, you know, different backgrounds we focus on the similarities. And it keeps us like zooming out looking at the bigger picture like over all of us all the time. You know we're not distracted by race or any other factor. And everybody benefits, like everybody's happy— [my wife] is organized and she keeps everybody organized, so we have a lot of order so there's no room for chaos and we're just, since we're not distracted by race, we're not really distracted by anything.

Isabel and Derek specifically discussed a time when their daughter was called 'negro' by another child at school, and how they chose to focus on 'other things' rather than race when discussing what happened. They both processed their approach to this event in their exchange below:

> Isabel: She came home and [said] "Mommy I don't know if I should feel offended, but it didn't feel right. This kid called me this." Oh my god, my blood went like to my *feet.* Like nooo!...I remember when you told her, when kids talk like that-
>
> Derek: They like her...
>
> Isabel: They want attention from her […] and it was important for us for her to forgive him because we didn't know if she was still gonna have interactions with him on a daily basis because he's a classmate, you know what I mean? So it was important for us to like put it at peace that she would not have that resentment, so then she wouldn't be scared, because she thinks to get scared and she gets into an introvert type, then that will affect

> the rest of the relationship with the class or interaction with a teacher…so like that's why we wanted her to like "You're okay, you didn't do anything wrong" stuff like that.
>
> Derek: Yeah that helps her not take it personal and then we do based on religion like we focus and we keep our open mind and look at other things so there's not just focus solely on race.

Race as a 'distraction' was an interesting concept discussed by Isabel and Derek, and related to how they saw the importance of race in their lives and in their conversations with their children. This concept was further explored with them during the family interview:

> Derek: [Race] is a distraction because to be honest … cause like in the [Caribbean] culture, we have people that are very dark skin, but they know how to use makeup and agents stuff like that and they can even pass for another race and nobody will know ever [laughs]. I mean that's the culture, so I mean those kinds of people know how to use--they know people are blinded by race and they use it and they are successful cause they know everybody is blinded by it and they kind of manipulate it, and they're very cunning and they use it to get ahead. And that happens I'm sure in all cultures, but I'm going by how I see it by [Caribbean]--everybody knows they use a bleaching cream.
>
> Interviewer: So what did you take away from that?
>
> Derek: That race can really distract people…so that's why we don't focus on race cause like I said it's a big distraction like, who makes the definition? Like cause before Arab people considered White and you know eventually that's gonna change you know and it's just like Ireland people considered Black you know one time by England, people from Ireland they consider them Black because they had dark hair. You know the history is like keeps changing it's very dynamic, right so it doesn't make sense to follow-

> Isabel: I think that in a way how race distracts you, rather than like to know the human being-- the prejudgment that race for the skin or the stereotypes that come with it that take away from what really the human being is. Forget about how the person looks in general, color, hair, etcetera, just if you didn't have that bunch of stereotypes and you address that human being just who they are, you try to get to know them, that's who they are. That individual person is that way, you can't say "oh these are the people who look like her or him are like that." And I think that's how I think the distraction come from.

When asked what she thought about this way of seeing race, their daughter Amber replied, "Well every now and then if [my parents] call somebody by their race I'll just say something like, they're just people or something, they're not different." As discussed above, the approach adopted by the Keane parents was one that embraced a colorblind ideology, and also made the entire concept of talking about race seem inherently negative, as seen in Amber's uncomfortability and worry about acknowledging or recognizing another person's race.

Racial ideology. Analysis of how parents were approaching conversations related to race highlighted the role of family members' racial ideologies. Racial ideology, as outlined in the earlier literature review, can be defined as "collections of beliefs about race and the role of race in social interaction" (Doane, 2017, p. 977), which are used to explain and justify or challenge the racial status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Although racial ideologies exist at a macro-societal level, they also exist within individuals and are used as a lens through which to understand the world and also as a way for discussing one's views with others (Doane, 2017). As described earlier above, there are two predominant racial ideology theories in the literature, color-blindness and color-consciousness, which set two distinct paths for how individuals interpret information related to race (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Color-blindness refers to the denial, distortion, or

minimization of race and racism (Neville, 2006), while color-consciousness relates to the belief that race matters and racism exists (Doane, 2017). Findings shared above demonstrated that there was a 'middle ground approach' between color-blindness and color-consciousness, which are often viewed as two ends of a spectrum. This middle ground approach was termed 'moderate racial consciousness' or color-cautiousness and refers to parents who acknowledged the role of race and racism and wanted to discuss this with their children, but with some degree of caution. These parents were less likely to acknowledge and incorporate understanding on the structural and systemic nature of race and racism in their beliefs and perspectives about race. It became clear throughout the analysis of race communication in families that parent racial ideologies were connected to components of race talk, including how highly parents valued talking about race, and their level of caution in approaching such conversations with their children.

For example, in the Keane family, there was a connection between the family's colorblind ideology and their infrequent conversations related to race. As cited earlier in the literature review, some interracial families support the idea that race doesn't matter and promote being a "transracial family," emphasizing transcendence of the limiting notion of race in their communication within and beyond the family. Interestingly, research has shown that it is most often the White/European-American parent who promotes this perspective, as they may not personally experience the negative impacts of racial discrimination (Rosenblatt et al., 1995; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). Based on this research, one may assume the Keane family lived in a social context where they were rarely confronted with discrimination or prejudice, and therefore, could decide not to focus on race. However, this family was comprised of a Black father and White/Latin American mother, who both discussed multiple first-hand experiences of racism and discrimination they have faced throughout their lives individually, and also as an

interracial couple. And yet, despite these experiences, the parents made an active decision not to focus on race and instead to emphasize approaches such as compassion and forgiveness, which related to their strong Catholic values. Derek and Isabel also reported that their identities as Black and White/Latin American held little importance for how they saw themselves. This finding points to the idea that it is not only lack of awareness or experiences of discrimination that may lead to colorblind ideology among family members, but also the belief that one's racial identity holds little meaning and importance to how one sees oneself.

Analysis of the Keane family's approach to race showed that it may be the case that one's religious values (or other cultural values) conflict with approaches to navigating racial issues. The family's religious values and practices can also be understood as a type of ideology, which then shapes the way in which the family approaches various issues, including race-related experiences, with their children. Within the Keane family, values such as compassion and forgiveness, which aligned with their Catholic faith, were prioritized when their daughter was confronted with discrimination and these values served as another way for them to address the situation without discussing the relevance of race. This had a direct impact on their daughter, Amber (age 13), who expressed limited understanding of what it meant for her to be Biracial, as quoted earlier in the document, when she answered, "I don't know honestly to identify myself as Mixed when I don't know if it means much." When further asked if her family talks about race, she replied:

> No, not really not that that ever comes… I think we try to avoid the subject I think, I don't know. We don't really talk about it. [Interviewer: Okay. Why do you think the conversation is avoided?] Um I honestly don't know really. Because we just don't wanna kind of think that far and probably not insult someone I guess I don't know. It never

> crossed our minds I guess especially between me and my brothers since we just kind of try not to talk about stuff like that we usually just try to hang out with each other.

It may also be the case that Amber's age and gender, being on the younger end of the age spectrum, and also a girl, influences her parents' beliefs that racial issues were not critical to address with her. It was interesting to hear that Amber believed part of the avoidance around the conversation of race may have to do with a fear of insulting someone. It appears that perhaps Derek and his wife, Isabel, sending the message that their children should not pay attention to race, may have unintentionally created an atmosphere where concern for others' feelings, particularly around a topic as sensitive as race, caused their children to try to avoid the topic and avoid hurting someone.

There were then families in the current sample who were conscious of race, meaning that they acknowledged the role of race in their own lives, including awareness of their racial identity, as well as knowledge on the social systems that maintain racial hierarchy and White supremacy (Aldana, Rowley, Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2012). In keeping with the literature on racial ideologies, these families appeared to fall into the color-conscious or color-blind groups and as explained above, there was a third group of parents who exhibited caution in discussing and exploring such topics with their children and have been termed as exhibiting "color-cautiousness." Parents who exhibited this "color-cautiousness" included John Simons, Sabina Morgan, Chase and Natalie Kent, and Samuel and Caroline Peterson. These parents were able to discuss in detail the role of race and issues such as racism in their lives and their children's lives, however, they expressed hesitancy, or caution, in how they would have those conversations with their children. Therefore, these parents, as highlighted in the sections above, tended to have more selected conversations with their children where they were monitoring when

and how deeply they would engage in conversations related to race with their children. Individual characteristics, such as the age and gender of the child also appeared to impact the level of caution some parents held in relation to discussing race with their child. For example, Chase Kent believed that his daughter was too young to take in some of the messages related to race that he wanted to share and he was, therefore, wary of "putting preconceived notions" into her head.

Finally, there were parents, such as Justin Morgan, Jacob and Maribelle Agnew, Julie Hayes, Sylvia Simons, and Brielle and Emmet Douglass, who exhibited less caution in exploring topics related to race with their children. These parents, termed color-conscious in racial ideology theory, demonstrated that not only was it important to talk about race with their children, but they were willing to have those conversations in a way that went into more depth than those parents who exhibited higher caution. It was not necessarily the case that these parents were also talking more frequently about race, although some parents did, but instead that when conversations about race did emerge, they described less hesitancy in exploring their child's views and thoughts in those conversations while also sharing their own views and thoughts in a very open manner.

As previously discussed throughout this document, across the interviews with families, it became clear that approaches to race-related conversations parents were having with their children were intimately connected to their environment, the sociopolitical context and race-related events happening across the country, which ultimately impacted the family's experiences. How those sociopolitical realities impacted the way in which parents were engaging in conversations related to race is discussed in further detail in the next section.

Macro-level: Sociopolitical Context and Race-related Conversations

The 2016-2017 year in America was an interesting time to conduct this project for a number of reasons. The Black Lives Matter movement, which emerged in 2012 following the death of Trayvon Martin to address the anti-Black racism permeating the criminal justice system, and society writ large, was gaining momentum following a series of highly publicized police shootings and killings of unarmed Black men and boys, including Freddie Gray, which took place in Baltimore in 2015 (Garza, 2014). These series of events led to nationwide protests. Following Barack Obama's two-term presidency and what many felt was a sign of racial progress in this country, a highly contentious 2016 presidential election rocked the political and social world in the U.S. and abroad. For some, the close electoral race that ultimately ended in the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States gave rise to deep racial divisions and expressions of White supremacy that many thought were simply vestiges of the past, now seeming to come to the forefront once again. For others, this "re-emergence" of White supremacy was nothing new, but something that had been there all along. The country and its citizens had to face the reality that perhaps America was not as 'post-racial' of a society as many had come to believe and hope. Important for interracial couples and mixed-race families in particular, 2017 also marked the 50th anniversary of the *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court decision and was seen as a moment to reflect on how interracial families are now being viewed and treated in society. These were the social and contextual issues that were explored with the families in the current study. The findings shared above demonstrated that there were a number of factors related to how parents were having race-related conversations with their children. The impact of the current sociopolitical context consistently emerged as an important factor in shaping those conversations. The findings below highlight how these mothers, fathers, and

children believed this context shaped both the content and approach of race-related conversations, which ultimately related to discussion on the ways to navigate the current racial climate.

Racial climate and race relations. Families in the current study held varying perspectives on the current racial climate and race relations in the U.S, which was defined as the relations between members or communities of different races within one country. Overall, there was high convergence between family members on their views of current race relations. Parents tended to align with one another in how they viewed race relations and their children tended to agree with how their parents were viewing the current racial climate. Similar to perspectives on the attitude toward interracial families, the majority of families shared the perspective that race relations varied by regions across the U.S. Natalie Kent highlighted this perspective in her response to how she currently views race relations:

> I think it depends on what part of the country, I think some parts of the country are in better shape as far as their race relations are…I think there's probably room for improvement even in the places where things seem to be even okay. There are other parts of the country where I think that they are not in good shape at all, and it's just…yeah I think it is just kind of a regional thing and people's backgrounds and what they've been taught through generations that it just sticks.

Her husband expanded upon this idea, adding that how people experience treatment based on their race (e.g., discrimination) varies in how "covert" or "overt" such behavior will manifest, and how this has shifted over the recent changes in political administration:

> …even in communities where race relations may be fine, I think there's still a tension—I think it's become more tense across the entire nation over the last few years.

> Unfortunately, part of it is because we had an African American president and so people, who in their wildest dreams of all races didn't think that could ever happen, when it did happen, some folks were excited about it, and other folks, not so much. And that caused…some of that tension to be brought to light. And I think now, after—with the current administration…there's the covert and the overt and the folks who previously had issues covertly and I feel that there's an outlet to be more overt with their feelings.

Sylvia Simons also remarked on how she perceives race relations becoming more 'difficult' as a result of the recent shift in political administration:

> I see that's there's a rocky-- it's gonna be difficult, it's heightened, the difficulty has been heightened from the new upcoming president because it is unfortunately a lot of people feel in power now maybe give voice to the uncomfortable feeling that they had towards non-White people, putting this way. Because it's just towards Black, towards any person that doesn't look White or doesn't sound like them, can't speak English in the proper way or profess a religion that they feel uncomfortable with, whatever, so you know it has broadened that unfortunately, so I think the race relation-- would be more difficult because who is in power.

Jacob and Maribelle Agnew held a similar perspective but expressed their belief that the current climate surrounding race issues contributed to a "fear" in society around simply talking about race and race-related issues. Jacob described:

> I think there's generally today this fear of being frank about what you think or what you feel about another race or just kind of may be more attributable to another race…I think people put up this real strong filter these days for fear of reprisal, being called a racist and so I think we have, I think that would be a negative aspect of what we've gained, I mean

> while we've kind of gained this-- I can say more freedoms I guess, more accepting of other people from different races, we've kind of lost that honesty where we kind of talk about certain things and I do see a lot of people who are ridiculed as being racist when it's really not that at all, at least I think, so.

Their son, Alexander, agreed stating:

> I agree with my dad and people are afraid to say what they really think because they're afraid of being called a racist and I was sort of paying attention to politics and stuff last year or two, so I don't know if it's that, but I noticed a lot of people being accused of being a racist.

Maribelle agreed and added that for their family, race being such a 'sensitive' topic made it feel that race was 'taboo' to talk about within their son's school community:

> In some ways though I think it's such a sensitive topic that we [referring to society} never really discuss it in a way that, I don't know, it's just still kind of taboo to talk about…to talk about race in, when I think about the school, the elementary school they all went to when we started, it was very much a different school then it is now and it was very-- you can tell like the divide of when the newer families started coming in the older grades, but nobody wanted to talk about how race played a part of that and it was very much a part of that, but nobody wanted to touch it because of afraid of offending people…

Despite their perception of society having a 'taboo' on talking about race, the Agnew family felt open to having such conversations with their children, although they did acknowledge that they felt they could be having more conversations than they currently were having with their son. Brielle and Emmett Douglass held a similar view on race not being discussed at the societal

level. They also described how they believe the recent shift in the administration has, in some ways, forced the conversation about race to the forefront in society:

> Brielle: I think that they…on the outside, I think the country, as a whole, tries to make it on the outside look like it's this great community, everybody gets along, everybody is treated equally, but inside, when you look a little deeper wherever it is, whether it's at your job or just outside or like restaurants or anything, it's much different than it actually—they're trying to perceive it to be. It's much worse.
>
> Emmett: I think racism is alive and well and still exists. I think it's being ignored and not talked about, but the current political—the current president that we have-- its bringing things to light as far as the sense of entitlement of White man's privilege and its constantly being thrown into your face, so I think it's…is not being talked about, it's still prevalent and I've seen it in the workplace of course.

A couple families described the intersection between race and social class in describing their views on the current racial climate in the U.S. John Simons described the impact of socioeconomic issues on race relations stating:

> There are fragments of that community that gets disjointed because of social, economic things so if they are living in very rural places in those factories or companies that left them in that environment then they gonna have a different kind of take on life than their suburban counterparts so that does impact race, race relationships and things like because lot of the prejudice I think are learned behaviors that are taught by their parents or uncles or whatever, roles they observe or things like that so those are adoptions, they adopt to their environments and then take on those things and they take on.

Dominic Hayes expressed a similar view, but noted his belief that 'race issues' often get 'disguised' as class issues:

> I think in certain situations [race relations are] absolutely fine and in certain situations it's not fine. The times when it's not fine, it's not necessarily about race, it just really depends on the moment. I think a lot of class and money issues—it gets disguised as race issues when it's really about class and money.

The Keane family qualified their response about race relations by once again stating the distracting nature of race in society, but they also believed that based on their positive, personal interactions with others in their community, that race relations were overall positive and that more people were willing to be open-minded and listen to others. Their daughter, Amber, agreed stating:

> Well kinda like what my parents said [race relations are] pretty good. Some personal experience because of my school we get along through race pretty well. I know a few friends from Pakistan, El Salvador, and one from India. We get along pretty well. We don't see anyone fight quite either and it's kind of so-so.

The Peterson family believed that race relations were generally improving across the country. Of note, the Peterson family was asked this question a few days following the White supremacist march in Charlottesville, Virginia that created widespread media attention. Their response to the question of race relations, as a result, took into account the impact of this very recent event:

> Caroline: I still, I think that [long pause] that [race relations are] pretty strong, like I think that in general—I mean what we're seeing right now-- today is an interesting day to ask that question—but like that White supremacist stuff, where did that come from? And like who are these people and they're getting this new voice and Donald Trump won't even

say like, you are like—this is not okay. So he's enabling that, but so many people—everybody I know—I don't care what they're—even if they're Trump supporters, are still not cool with this…

Samuel: I would agree with Caroline. I think that the microscope under a small group of people right now, they're so far in the minority in terms of race relations in this country, but there is a growing fear of foreigners in this country whether its Muslim, whether its Mexican, but overall we are—we have been, just in general, the progress that this country's made in 40, 50 years time, no other country is this planet has done that. So I think that race relations are good. Could they be better? Oh my God, yes. A lot better, but you know, again, I'm one—I believe in the art of war, that conflict is good and that this will bring us to a better place. I much prefer seeing my White supremacists—who they are—at least I can see them rather than them operating behind some hidden cloak and whether it's a political arena, whether it's a classroom, at least I know them now. That's a good thing.

The next section will further detail how the racial climate, in addition to the current political climate and social movements related to race, were influencing the family's approaches to race conversations.

Political climate and social movements: Influence on race talk in the family. Across the child, parent, and family interviews, participants were asked to describe their views on how current political and social events nationally (e.g., Black Lives Matter, 2016 election) or locally (e.g., protests following the death of Freddie Gray) were influencing how they were approaching and engaging their children in discussions about race. More than half of the families (N=5) described how the current political and social climate surrounding issues of race have either (1)

increased the frequency of race-related conversations in their family and/or (2) created a greater intentionality to have more direct conversations with their children surrounding specific topics (e.g., how to interact with the police). As noted above, Sylvia Simons discussed her general belief that race relations were becoming more negative due to changes in political administration. However, she also remarked on the protests happening locally in Baltimore following the death of Freddie Gray and how that created an opportunity to partake in this march with her son and how this gave her the chance to expose him to that event and have conversations related to that issue:

> We talk about [police brutality] and then also when there were, after the riots, there was the march that they did downtown, so Carlo and I went, and it was nice to kind of go together…which was nice, so I think that was a way to kind of feel part of a group where people were at that point upset, but upsetting in a positive-- towards some kind of positive discussion and so that was a way to expose him, because you can't shelter, cause if they just see the stuff on TV is not really like-- so I think going there was good.

These moments appeared to shape how Carlo was understanding ways to navigate the current political and racial climate. When asked about his perspective on what he talks about with his parents when it comes to race, Carlo answered:

> Well especially this election year with all the turmoil behind Trump's election and stuff and all the racial conversations that came up about what would happen when he became President…just talking about how to navigate since seeing people were willing to voice their [pause] racially biased opinions now that he had run his campaign so it's being able to like make sure you're taking care of yourself, but also not saying something that would

> trigger anyone to do something to you and stuff like that. Or how to verbally defend yourself against people who are being racially biased towards you.

Due to these shifts in political and racial climate, Carlo's parents were providing him with specific strategies on how to navigate his world as a person of color and balancing that with ways he can verbally defend himself against people who are discriminating against him. Chase Kent, as noted above, described how the racial climate had shifted from covert racial tensions to more overt racism across the country. This motivated Chase to increase the frequency of conversations about race, specifically with his son and how he conducts himself, partly due to the son's upcoming transition to college:

> I think with me…it drives me to have some of those conversations more frequently with [son] before he goes off to college. I don't want him to go to college and be driving around as a Black college kid, you know, late if you're—and if you got friends in the car who've maybe had a little too much to drink and they're jacking around and you do some swerving thing because—then you get pulled over, what's going to happen? Again, I want him to be aware, so you have to have some—more serious conversations about consequences, potential consequences because of your race. Whereas I guess in the era of covertness, you know, you wouldn't necessarily have that same conversation because it's just not as—it didn't seem as prevalent.

Natalie Kent agreed, adding that these events have shaped the specific content they are deciding to discuss with their son at this time, and the realization that they will also need to have these conversations soon with their younger daughter, Avery:

> Yeah, I think it kinda determines the topic, with speaking about specific incidents and examples of what happened to those individuals, but yeah, and just a lot of what Chase

> said of, you know, a year away from sending our son off to college and even with Avery, you know, she's in middle school now and its starting to get into the grown-up-- she's not a little kid anymore and so having to realize that we need [to] have these discussions with them now.

Julie Hayes shared a similar perspective and believed that events such as the BLM movement have given her and her husband the opportunity to provide more context to the issues happening across the country:

> Yeah, I think it just—as [these events are] more prominently featured in the news, we have more opportunity to give some context or jump in on what's happening, which I think if all of this wasn't…bubbling up is not the right word, but that's what I'm going to say—in the way that it has, we may not be having as explicit of conversations as we have, so I actually think it maybe makes us talk more about it then we would have if, you know, things weren't so volatile.

When it came specifically to the discussion on how to interact with police, Julie noted the 'awkwardness' she felt in trying to convey the role of police officers to her sons:

> I feel like it's a very awkward conversation and, you know, when you're talking about policing for example, I think I've had both conversations about how police protect you and help you when you need it and there's this long history of police brutality again, particularly, men of color and there are all these shootings of unarmed Black men by cops and I literally have had both of those conversations…

Some families discussed the direct effect the shift in the current administration, and subsequent perceived shift in racial climate, had on how they were approaching conversations related to race in their family. Brielle and Emmet Douglass remarked on how this shift has changed their

conversations with their children, again with a similar theme noted above on being concerned with their son soon leaving for college:

> Brielle: Yes, [our conversations] changed a lot cause till—to understand that we have a president now that we disagree with a lot, I mean you might vote for him, but the things that are happening that is being allowed, it's actually kind of shameful that the United States is becoming that because there's a whole other America that believes in that so, as he said the other day on TV, 'it's okay for police brutality,' he was just sharing that and that's really not okay, and for everybody—like over half of America, they all voted for him, to agree with that, and its actually kind of scary to think what's happening and I have two kids getting ready to—I can only protect them for so long and becoming adults and having to deal with that on their own.

Emmet agreed with his wife, and discussed the impact of a recent event at a local university where a young, Black college student was fatally stabbed:

> Emmet: Having a son going to [college] and kids on the Alt-Right group stabbed that other student so…I'm worried. I can just talk to him and try to prepare him for life, but ultimately, they have to make the decision.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah, do you feel like they're prepared? I mean, I guess your son is older…
>
> Emmet: I think that he is. My daughter…
>
> Brielle: Well I think she's prepared, but I think, again, she's young and she's not experienced things in the world so she's a little naïve, but she does realize and when people…but she also, that's the whole thing, she realizes, but she has to understand boundaries, that you might disagree with somebody, but for your safety, could be life or death—you keep it to yourself till later, things like that.

To these parents, these conversations were about survival skills-- teaching their children how to make decisions on how to behave across various situations that could ultimately affect their safety and wellbeing. They felt that their ability to protect their children from such potentially life-threatening situations was limited and becoming increasingly limited as their children grew older and prepared to leave the home. These moments prompted increases in talks with their children surrounding issues of safety and how to monitor themselves.

In the Keane family, where race was actively dismissed in conversations, the sociopolitical events happening locally and nationally did not appear to shift their perspectives on discussing race with their children. Derek and Isabel Keane felt that when race was discussed in the media, it was often from a negative perspective and so they found themselves dismissing the news and events being portrayed by the media because of their perceived bias in the news to only highlight the negative. Isabel also described how, when it came to politics, they chose to stay focused on political beliefs and how it might affect their family:

> I think for me, it's not so much about the race it's how the political beliefs might affect our family, views, goals, and our personal goals. Because whatever agenda in the political party in current presidency right now for example, we have right now has, if it benefits my kid then it's gonna be wonderful […] We are more into like what behaviors are fine and what we believe. We should bring certain things that we are more focused on that. How the government is gonna integrate all these issues of the beliefs and liberties is going to end up impacting how I want my kids to see themselves.

In addition to the current political climate, families were also asked about their views on current social movements, particularly the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, and in what ways this movement was shaping conversations related to race within their family. There were a range of

perspectives on the BLM movement, from those who saw value in the movement and believed that it was calling attention to the issue of police brutality against Black men and boys and "starting a dialogue", to those who did not necessarily disagree with the movement but believed that efforts could be focused on other issues within the Black community. About half of the families in the current study described how the BLM movement directly sparked conversations within their family. Specifically, conversations focused on the concern of police brutality and publicized incidents of police shootings and killings of unarmed Black men emerged most frequently, and what that meant for their children navigating the world as people of color, which has already been highlighted in quotes earlier in this section and other sections of the document. Gender was once again brought into these conversations as parents discussed more explicitly having conversations with their sons. Sabina Morgan describes the influence of BLM within their family and conversations they were having with their son, once again emphasizing how her husband had a greater role in these talks:

> The discussions about race have increased a lot in the last several years. After all of the speculation on the White police shooting the Black boys and Black Lives Matter, that has really opened up a lot of conversations even in our household where we talk very freely, where you know, if [our son] and his friends are out, I think it was my sister and I-- we watched a documentary about a kid in Florida, the kid was doing nothing, they were bumping really loud rap music in their car, and a White guy just pulled out his shotgun and shot him. Jordan Davis. For no reason!... So we do talk about it, me less, [Justin] talks about it *all* the time! Especially with him [referring to their son] cause he's the boy. You know, what you see on TV is the White police officer, most of the time, targeting the

> Black man, not a woman, besides Sandra Bland, which…we're still not exactly sure how she died, but it was in the hands of the police.

Several of the children in the current study also discussed what the BLM has meant to them and how it impacted conversations within their family. Across several families, discussion of "Black-on-Black crime" were also mentioned in discussing the importance of BLM standing against police brutality. For example, in the Douglass family, Brielle, Emmett and Andrea discussed their varying viewpoints on the issue and, in particular, how the mother's thoughts on the issue had shifted as a result of their conversation together with her children:

> Brielle: So they were talking about Black Lives Matter and I jokingly said, 'well my life matters,' and they kept going on and on and I was like, 'it was a joke,' [laughing] so I was like, but 'I matter'—so I understand how they said the Black Lives Matter, and I do see it more because of our long discussion, but when they're saying it, it seems to me, sometimes looking in that their only concern was for Black people, not for everybody else. However, since they started, I have seen…my eyes have opened up to what is really happening. I don't know if I had blinders on or it wasn't as prevalent, or what about police brutality and just discrimination and things like that, that wasn't…
>
> Emmett: And I just want to—so Andrea was all gong-ho cause I guess her and her peers and classmates were talking about Black Lives Matter so, I understood what she was trying to say, but I don't think she understood—I think she's misinformed about the movement itself, and I just wanted her to realize that all lives matter, I know there's a lot of injustice within our community, but I wanted her to be a little bit more informed about, you know, the opinions that she had about Black Lives Matter, so yeah we had a really big discussion about that.

Brielle: And also, part of the conversation was too, that their—they say that Black Lives Matter, if you look at 'Black on Black crime,' if you just look at [redacted] City and all the politicians, a lot of them are African American and they are not helping […] So it's—so they wanna say Black Lives Matter and these people wanna jump on the bandwagon, but they [should] really look within themselves and help each other.

Interviewer: Andrea, how do you feel about the movement? What are your thoughts about it?

Andrea: Well, when you [referring to her mother] said you were joking, in the moment, you weren't really. Which irritated me, which set everything off, and so then I kept trying to explain, but she kept saying, 'but my lives matter, but my lives matter,' and so then eventually, she understood, so.

When asked to discuss a time that really stuck with him when his parents had a conversation with him about race, Carlo and his family described the impact the death of Freddie Gray and BLM had on their conversations with one another:

Carlo: Probably after they killed Freddie Gray, just talking about police brutality and then like not only like police shootings, but killings like between Blacks as well and stuff and talking about ways like ways they can both the problems, can be fixed and then how you have to be concerned about both of them and like equally those are two major problems that if they were to be resolved which is very hard cause there's always gonna be conflict, but like if they were to be resolved then they would make just living, like being Black in American so much easier.

Sylvia: Yeah. I guess we have different takes on that.

> Carlo: It wasn't like a different take, it was more like, he was more, dad was more concerned about 'Black on Black crime' and then you were more concerned about police brutality but we all agreed that it was a problem I think.
>
> Sylvia: Yeah we touched that, we tackled the issue from different sides in a way.
>
> John: Right…you know I was…my concern was that you know that no life should be left behind, nobody should be a victim of brutality, police brutality and anything like that but I think that the amount of energy that we can elevate against police brutality versus some of the other things that really impact the Black community are unbalanced. So if we can balance the amount of energy that's really impacting the culture across the board then it would seem a lot more beneficial to the community.

Families in the current study reviewed various incidents, events, and images related to race that were being portrayed in the media (television and social media) and noted how such exposure created more opportunity to discuss issues of race, discrimination, oppression, and race relations with one another. The negative events that were happening across the country, frequently being broadcasted via the media, clearly influenced many conversations parents were having with their children, resulting in perceived parental responsibility to discuss such events with their children in order to prepare them for what they may encounter as people of color.

Interestingly, there were few families in the current sample who described ways in which events in the media were stimulating other types of conversation, such as conversations related to identity exploration or development of racial pride. There was, however, one child in the sample, Clara Peterson (age 14), who discussed how the news and certain TV shows have sparked conversations related to identity within her family:

> We'll talk about stuff we see on the news, just how we identify ourselves, and then sometimes we watch the show *Blackish*…we watch that show a lot and there's this one episode I remember in particular when Rainbow was talking about how she didn't know how to identify herself and after that we talked about that and how we identify ourselves, and yeah we talk about that a lot.

Overall, analysis explored how race talk in interracial families is encouraged or limited by the larger context of race relations and how families are viewing and processing race-related events portrayed in the media and in relation to social movements central to the topic of race (BLM). These events directly influenced to shift conversations focused on the understanding and impacts of race from the private, to the public sphere of their lives.

Putting it all together: An emergent model on interracial family communication

Overall, findings from the current study demonstrate that there is a spectrum of 'race talk,' or race-related communication, occurring within interracial families in the United States. The conversations interracial families are having about race range in frequency, value, and level of caution in how parents approach these types of conversations with their Biracial children. Based on the responses of the families in this study, a model emerged (located in Appendix G) in which this race talk spectrum can be visualized as a continuum with three main levels:

1. **Frequent conversations**: parents place high value on having race-related conversations and express low caution in approaching such conversations with their children. As a result, parents described having frequent, open conversations with their children where they encouraged them to explore the issue at hand in detail, examining their thoughts and feelings about the topic and encouraging them to reflect on why such experiences were occurring.

2. **Selected conversations**: parents place high value on having race-related conversations, but also express high to moderate caution in approaching such conversations with their Biracial children (e.g., fear of talking 'too soon' or saying 'too much'). This caution was often related to parental belief that approaching race-related conversations could potentially bias their child toward other racial groups, create more fear or worry within their child, or 'put ideas into their head' that were not formed based on their own opinions and experiences. As a result, parents were careful about how they would approach conversations related to race and tended to have fewer, more selected conversation than parents who exhibited less caution.

3. **Infrequent conversations**: parents place low value on having race-related conversations, and also express high caution in having such conversations with their Biracial children. For these parents, it was not important to talk about race and, instead, other cultural factors (e.g., faith values, political beliefs) were often prioritized in conversations with their children. When racial issues did emerge in their child's or family's experience, parents approached the topic with great caution, and would often ultimately dismiss the role of race in the experience or incident that was being discussed.

This race talk continuum appeared to relate to the racial ideologies of family members, and the family as a whole. Analysis found that race-related communication, particularly the frequency, value, and caution utilized in approaching race conversations, was related to the parents' racial ideologies. How and when those race-related conversations happened also relates to that same ideology, which suggests a bidirectional relationship as both are occurring and influencing each other simultaneously. It is important to note that while the current study data demonstrate that race talk, and racial ideology are related, the causation of racial ideology leading to race talk, or vice versa, cannot be said for sure. This is symbolized in the current

model with cyclical arrows, demonstrating the bidirectional, non-causal relation. The racial ideologies expressed across families in the current study can also be visualized as having three levels that fall along a continuum. While two of these levels (color-consciousness and color-blindness) were first described in the racial ideology literature as referenced above (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, [2003], 2014), the current analysis highlighted a third, 'middle ground' approach that emerged from the family narratives.

1. **High racial consciousness**: 'Color-consciousness'- Parents within this ideology acknowledge and strongly emphasize the role of race in conversations with their children. Conversations often concern the hierarchy of race in society and institutions, such as White supremacy and systemic racism, and the impact those have on the experiences of themselves and their Biracial children. Parents with this ideology acknowledge and incorporate an understanding on the systemic and structural nature of race and racism in American society.

2. **Moderate racial consciousness**: 'Color-cautiousness'- Parents expressing this ideology have a moderate level of racial consciousness but hesitate in approaching and having such conversations about race in-depth due to their high levels of caution in what may happen should they discuss such topics with their Biracial children. These parents are often carefully weighing the 'how' and 'when' of initiating race-related conversations with their children. Parents with this ideology are less likely to acknowledge and incorporate an understanding on the systemic and structural nature of race and racism in American society.

3. **Low racial consciousness**: 'Colorblindness': Parents expressing this ideology deemphasize and dismiss the role of race in the lives of themselves and their children and, as such, tend to have little to no acknowledgment on the racial differences that exist between

individuals and groups of people and little to no acknowledgment on the racial barriers that exist in society.

Findings from the current study found that the higher families fall on the racial ideology spectrum (e.g., high level of color consciousness), the more likely they are to talk to their kids about race, and vice versa (e.g., families that fell higher on the race talk spectrum tended to express a higher level of racial consciousness on the racial ideology spectrum).

Where families, including parents and children, fall on these spectrums is determined by individual, micro- and macro-level factors. As discussed throughout the section on family member identities and experiences, individual factors shaping race talk and racial ideology across family members include the father's and mother's sense of identity, which is shaped by components such as their personal experiences related to race, immigration status, values, skin color, and level of racial consciousness. The parent's understanding of their sense of identity shapes their child's understanding, particularly how their children come to make sense and meaning of their Biracial identity. Factors such as skin color, age, and race-related experiences also shape Biracial children's sense of identity. Gender also plays a role in the interaction between parents and their daughters versus parents and their sons and how the messaging related to race varies.

Micro-level factors, including the family's values, faith practices, parenting approaches, and the salience of their identity as an interracial family, also shape this race communication process within interracial families. For example, when other values are prioritized in conversations with their children (e.g., religion/faith practices), this seemed to impact the way in which some families approach conversations related to race (e.g., deemphasizing the role of race). In addition, families who viewed their identity as an interracial family as both salient, and

a strength (e.g., believing it was something that was unique and should be valued or celebrated), were more likely to discuss such positive notions of Interracialism and having a Biracial identity with their children.

The current findings also highlighted the convergence and divergence in perspectives between mothers and fathers and parents and children when it comes to approaching and discussing race in the family. Results showed that children tended to converge with their parents' perspectives on race-related issues and topics. Greater divergence was seen between mothers and fathers; however, this divergence was most often related to 'how' conversations about race should be approached, rather than the content of such conversations, which parents tended to agree. Overall, there were only two families where this divergence in perspective was more distinct between parents. Yet, children of parents who held divergent perspectives still appeared to agree with both parents and held together both perspectives in how they understood race and racial identity issues in their lives.

Finally, findings also demonstrated that macro-level factors also shaped how and what parents were discussing race-related issues with their children. In particular, the following factors emerged as important components shaping the process of race talk in interracial families: racial climate and race relations; community racial composition; attitudes toward interracial families; social movements; political climate; and race-related experiences in the media. The findings showed that many mothers, fathers, and children in the current sample believed these larger social and political factors shaped both the content of and approach to race-related conversations (most often increasing the conversation related to race within the family), which ultimately related to greater discussion on the ways to their children should navigate the current racial climate of the United States.

Chapter IV: Discussion

The current study expands our understanding on how parents and their biological children in interracial Black/White families in the United States, approach and discuss topics relevant to race and identity, and the multitude of factors that shape this process within the family. The current findings support existing research on racial socialization processes in interracial families, and also expands this research in a number of ways, firstly, by including more information on the ways in which a parent's understanding and meaning-making of their own racial identity and race-related experiences, in interaction with their partner's differing racial identity and racialized experiences, informs the way in which race-related messages are communicated to their children. Through interviews with the children themselves, who are in the midst of their own racial identity development, it also expands our understanding on how these conversations impact Biracial children. By having a series of three interviews across each family, perspectives on these topics of race and racial identity were triangulated to assess areas of convergence and divergence in perspectives between children and their parents. This allowed further exploration into the interactional nature of race communication and the role parents play in the identity development of their child from both the perspective of the parent and the child. Finally, the current research expands our understanding of the ways in which various components of social context and macro-level factors, such as racial climate, community racial composition, and political climate, shape the process of race talk between parents and their Biracial children.

Findings demonstrated the connection between the saliency of a parent's racial identity, importance of other cultural identities, race-related experiences, skin color, values, level of racial consciousness, and suggested how these elements impacted how parents were talking about race and identity with their children. These individual-level factors in parent experiences and identity

appeared to have less impact in shaping the content of racial socialization messages shared by parents to their children, but greater impact on differences in the process of how race talk occurred. There were several layers to this finding. First, and not surprisingly, parents who held the belief that their racial identity was meaningful and more central to their overall identity were more likely to engage in frequent discussion of race with their children. On the other end of the spectrum, those parents who viewed their race as holding little meaning to their experiences or how they say themselves were engaging less frequently with their children on race-related conversations. The salience of racial identity versus other cultural identities of family members, such as their religious identity, also impacted the process of race talk in the family. This finding was most apparent in the Keane family as they were parents who described greater salience of their religious identity over their racial identity and were subsequently less engaged in discussions related to race. Secondly, among the parents who were talking about race with their children, the way in which these messages were conveyed varied across parents. This variation in how parents talked about race appeared to relate to how they were making sense of their own past racialized experiences as Black men and White women, which shaped the ways in which they wanted to enter into race-related conversations with their children.

The messages Black fathers passed along to their children primarily focused on understanding what it means to be Black (historically and currently), awareness and preparation for how they will be treated as people of color, strategies for responding to discrimination, and advice for how their children should monitor and control their behavior to navigate situations as people of color. Less common themes in conversations with their children focused on the strengths or positives of having a Biracial identity. Analysis of past racialized experiences and how these fathers were interpreting what they've encountered as Black men showed that it was

through these racialized experiences that fathers were learning how they should manage and react, particularly to instances of racism and oppression. These experiences were then also informing how they approached race-related conversations with their children. Based on their experiences, fathers varied in whether they believed they should talk about race with their child frequently. Fathers varied in approaches, either highlighting and calling attention to what their child may encounter so that they could be prepared to manage their reaction or believing they did not want their child to develop the mindset and perspective they have throughout years of hate and discrimination, and so they approached such race-related conversation with great caution.

Among the White mothers in the sample, there were also differences noted in those who wanted to engage more frequently and have in-depth conversations related to race with their children, and those who wished to curtail, and end race talk with their children as soon as possible. These differences also related to each woman's interpretation of her racial identity and experiences as a White woman. Almost half of the mothers in the current sample were first-generation immigrants to the U.S., and therefore, described the ways in which their identities as White women were less salient and meaningful than other ethnic and cultural identifications. These mothers described the unique process of learning about race upon entering into the U.S., which for two out of the three immigrant mothers, was the same time they married their partners. However, it was not only the salience and meaningfulness of their identity as White women that appeared to shape differences in approaches to race-related communication. Indeed, level of racial consciousness emerged as another factor relevant in shaping differences particularly in how mothers were engaging in race talk with their children. Some mothers appeared to hold higher levels of racial consciousness, as observed in their discussion on topics such as White privilege and the way in which issues related to race and racism influenced their understanding

on the role of race in their lives. Mothers who displayed this higher level of racial consciousness were more likely to bring general awareness of racial injustices, social issues, and historical context into their conversations with their children. Women who described less reflection on what it means to be White and little to no reflection on their identities as White women and how that impacts their awareness of race issues, can be described as having lower levels of racial consciousness. These mothers described focusing more on what their children may encounter as Biracial beings and tended to echo the messages shared by their partners, and less likely to initiate messages on their own. These mothers were also more likely to highlight their racial identities in relation to their husband and children, referencing their roles as White mothers of Biracial children or White wives of Black husbands.

The racial identities and interpretations of race-related experiences among the Black fathers and White mothers interacted to shape the ways in which the Biracial children were making meaning of their own racial identities and race-related experiences. One sentiment shared across the Biracial children interviewed was that they currently identified as Biracial or Mixed, and this identification was supported and encouraged by both parents. There were no children who discussed parents telling them to 'pick a side,' and instead, most children described parents encouraging them to embrace both sides of their racial and cultural heritage. However, it was less common for parents to discuss the strengths or positives on being Biracial to their children. Despite this finding, there were differences across the children in how meaningful and influential they believed their Biracial identity was in their lives. There were some children who expressed that their Biracial identity held little to no meaning or influence in how they navigated and experienced the world. Age may have played a factor in that younger children may have had parents who simply talked less about race and identity due to their child's young age, and as a

result, the child may have had less reflection on what it means to be Biracial. However, there were also children on the younger end of the age spectrum (e.g., 13-14 years old) who did have parents more frequently talk about race and identity, and these children also believed their Biracial identity held greater meaning and influence in their lives. Among the children in the sample, there was also a pattern noted between those who interpreted their Biracial identity as having the potential for more positive or negative experiences, which shaped how they viewed navigating the world as Biracial individuals. This also related to the types of experiences the child had already encountered in their lives thus far due to their race, as well as messages their parents were sharing with them. These findings on the meaning of one's Biracial identity, and the role of parents in shaping how their children were interpreting their racial identity expand previous research on the factors at play that impact how Biracial children decide to identify (Root, 1990, Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008).

Findings showed that across all families, communication between parents and children about how to navigate the world as Biracial beings, more often than not, focused on how to prepare for and navigate potential challenges and barriers, rather than on the positive aspects or strengths of being Biracial. In some families, there appeared to be a connection between messages parents were communicating to their child on the positive and negative aspects of being Biracial, and their child's understanding of their racial identity, while in other families the connection was not as clear and there appeared to be other factors at play. In particular, exposure to racialized experiences emerged as influential in shaping child perspectives on the meaningfulness and valence of their racial identity. Therefore, it appeared that parental messages to their child, in addition to the child's own exposure to and interpretation of race-related

experiences in their life thus far impacted their meaning-making on being Biracial and how they navigated the world as such.

The current study explored parent and child perspectives on the importance of learning and talking about race with another. Findings showed that while many families believed race is important to acknowledge and have awareness around the importance in discussing race-related issues together with their children varied across families. The differing approaches discussed by families highlighted two opposing views: (1) talking about race and what your child may experience is a way to protect and help prepare them for what they will experience and (2) talking about race and highlighting differences in how others are treated based on their race may unintentionally create prejudice and fear or worry in one's child and, therefore, parents must protect their child by avoiding such conversations. Some families fell somewhere in the middle of those two viewpoints, believing that they would talk about race if their social environment makes it clear that it is necessary to do so. The theme across these viewpoints related to protection and the desire parents felt to either protect their child from or prepare them for the realities of race and racism in this country.

Regarding experiences of the family as a whole, there were differences observed in families who stated that their identity as an interracial family was not meaningful to how they saw themselves, compared with those other families who believed that not only was it an important identification, but being interracial was also a strength for their family. Families who viewed their identity as an interracial family as more important, and also as a *strength*, tended to also be those same families where at least one, if not both parents, described greater value and frequency in talking about race with their children. However, the role of social context, particularly community racial composition, was relevant in this connection, as families who

described their interracial status as more salient (e.g., they "stood out") in their communities were also families who described their interracial family identity as more meaningful, particularly due to the context they lived (e.g., predominately White communities).

Overall findings demonstrated that it may also be the case that families who are talking more frequently about race in general are also those families living in social contexts where their race is more salient (e.g., predominately White communities), and so they are confronting issues related to race, and having subsequent conversations, on a more frequent basis. Findings relevant to the sociopolitical context showed that various factors, including community racial composition, racial climate, attitude toward interracial families, social movements, political climate, and race-related experiences in the media, were shaping the process and content of race talk across the families. More than half of the families described how the current political and social climate surrounding issues of race have either increased the frequency of race-related conversations in their family and/or created a greater intentionality to have more direct conversations with their children surrounding specific topics (e.g., how to interact with the police).

As noted in the literature review, Obre (1999) reviewed the available research on interracial family communication on race at that time and found four different orientations interracial Black/White families took in their approach to communicating about race, including (1) embracing the Black experience (2) assuming a commonsense approach, (3) advocating a colorblind society, and (4) affirming the multiethnic experience. The current study supports this research and shows that many families interviewed here communicated about race in a way that affirmed the multiethnic experience. Central to this approach is the refusal to engage in dualistic thinking that families must either choose to be Black or be White, challenging traditional

thinking about racial classifications. Many families in the current study challenged this dualistic thinking and the idea that their child would need to choose to be Black or White, and instead, encouraged their child to identify with both parts of their racial heritage. While many families believed it was necessary to focus on the meaning and realities of being Black in America, and as such, focused a great deal of their conversations with their children on preparing for bias and discrimination, parents also valued the fact that their children were both races and believed they should embrace the richness of their multiple identities. Ultimately, most parents wanted their children to understand that they embodied both racial backgrounds, despite how narrowly society may view and treat them based on their appearance.

Findings also expand the previous research by demonstrating that families may potentially hold multiple orientations. For example, the Keane family overall advocated a colorblind society, encouraging their children not to pay attention to race and view others as human beings regardless of racial differences. However, they also affirmed their child's multiethnic experience and identity, encouraging their child to embrace both parts of her racial identity. There were also families who incorporated elements from the 'embracing a Black experience' approach, preparing their child to live in a society that will view and treat them as Black, regardless of how they and their child personally identifies. This approach did not necessarily come from parents viewing their child as Black, but instead appeared to emerge from their recognition that society may narrowly define their identity as such. Therefore, findings demonstrate that the orientations Obre (1999) outlined (e.g., embracing the Black experience, affirming the multiethnic experience) may make more sense as a spectrum of race talk, meaning that families may incorporate elements from more than one orientation, rather than having one specific orientations, in communicating about race.

The current study also sheds light on the ways in which racial ideologies and race-communication in families are related. As noted above, current study data demonstrate that while race talk and racial ideologies are related, there was not sufficient data to show causality of racial ideology leading to race talk, or vice versa. Previous research on racial ideologies highlights the concepts of color-awareness (or color-consciousness) and color-blindness. These ideologies highlight the degree to which people are aware or not of race and the attitudes and worldviews that humans hold in relation to their experiences as racial beings. They also relate to the degree individuals acknowledge racial differences and challenge institutions such as racism and White supremacy. Color-consciousness and color-blindness are often viewed as two ends of a spectrum when it comes to ideological approaches and perspectives toward race (and racism) and how to talk about race. However, a 'middle ground' approach was observed in the current study, which was termed '*color-cautiousness,*' or moderate racial consciousness. This again refers to the idea that individuals are aware of race and color, but also hesitant and 'cautious' in how that level of awareness is raised and, subsequently, integrated into their communication and discussions on race within the family.

Findings showed that while parents may highly value the role of race in their lives and the lives of their children, they may have great caution in approaching such conversations with their children, which related to worries and fears parents had on what may happen if they had such 'heavy' discussions with their children. Some parents worried that they would put 'preconceived ideas' into their children's minds, possibly creating prejudice where none yet existed, while other parents worried that they would cause their child to have greater fears and worries than may be warranted based on what they may actually encounter or experience in their life. Therefore, parents believed that cautiously approaching such topics was protective.

However, other parents believed it was necessary to have such conversations without caution, believing that they would not protect their child if they did not warn them of the realities related to race and frequently discuss racial topics with their children.

Oftentimes, race was viewed as a more important topic for discussion when families viewed issues related to race as more salient based on social contextual factors. In particular, community racial climate and race relations; community racial composition; attitudes toward interracial families; social movements; political climate; and race-related experiences in the media emerged as factors relevant to the process of race talk in families. The findings showed that many mothers, fathers, and children in the current sample believed these larger social and political factors shaped both the content and approach to race-related conversations. Families living in predominately White communities, especially those with negative racial climate, were more likely to discuss the importance of having conversations about race than those living in more diverse communities or communities with positive racial climate. In addition, most parents remarked that due to the current social and political climate surrounding issues related to race across the country (e.g., increases in White supremacist actions, racist rhetoric used by the current president and his supporters), they were having increased conversations about race with their children, especially around specific topics (e.g., how to interact with the police). Therefore, the influence of the social and political context factors on this process of race communication in the family cannot be overstated.

Implications

There are a number of implications of the current study, both in terms of further understanding the process of race-related communication among parents and children in Black/White interracial families in the United States, and also in understanding the role of

macro-level, social contextual factors shaping this conversation process. First, this research helps us to understand the way in which a parent's understanding of their racial identity, specifically the salience, centrality, and meaningfulness of this identity, in addition to how they have come to interpret and navigate racialized experiences in their own lives, and their level of racial consciousness, shapes the way in which they go about approaching race conversations with their children. Factors such as skin color, values, age, gender, and experiences of immigration related to the ways in which individuals understood their experiences as racial beings. By taking an in-depth exploratory approach via parent interviews, the current research was able to elucidate how parents were making meaning of their own racial identity, how they have interpreted their lived experiences as Black men and White women, and how their variation in experiences influenced their strategies and approaches to race talk with their Biracial children.

This research helps us to further conceptualize how interracial family members converge, or diverge, in their perspectives related to race and racial identity. Findings showed that there was high convergence among parents on the content of race-related messages communicated to their children; however, there was greater divergence in how parents wanted to approach such conversations. In addition, children appeared to largely agree with the messages shared with them by both of their parents, even when parents held differing viewpoints, children tended to acknowledge and agree with the validity in both perspectives. This finding highlights that there may be greater agreement among members of interracial families on race-related topics than may have been assumed given the differences in identities and experiences that exist within such families. Additionally, it may be the case that interracial families are finding the space to hold multiple viewpoints and perspectives based on their experiences in a way that allows these various perspectives to coexist. This was not the case across all families, as there were a few

families where parents held differing approaches in talking about race (e.g., one parent engaging in such conversations while the other curtailed the conversation), and so the perspectives provided within these families became unbalanced between parents. However, it became clear throughout the interviews that Biracial children are bridging their parents' experiences, identities and perspectives, which makes their perspectives valuable not only within the family, but in society as well.

As stated throughout this document, the current political and racial climate in the United States greatly impacted the necessity many parents believed existed in talking about issues related to race. The increase in White supremacist marches, the anti-immigrant rhetoric aimed at Latinx and Muslim communities, surges in racially-based hate crimes, and the continued killings of unarmed Black men and boys have shaped the continued demonizing and dehumanization of Black and brown bodies, which has appeared more and more difficult to ignore. These events and others served to remind many, including families in the current study, that racial tensions were not as healed as some may have previously believed and, indeed, were only inflamed by the divisive language and political agenda of the current administration. These social and political conditions caused parents in the current study to feel greater intentionality and necessity to discuss racial topics with their children, especially in relation to monitoring their appearance, behavior, and surroundings. This begs the question: if racial tensions do heal (at least on a surface level) will families find themselves having less need and urgency to discuss race with their children?

The current study also highlighted the way in which race is conceptualized across families and the connotation of 'race talk.' In some families, talking about race was sometimes viewed an inherently negative discussion, although the goal was protective- focused on the

dangers, consequences, and conflict surrounding issues related to race and being part Black, or a person of color, in America. Several parents did not want to discuss race because it would 'fuel the fire,' highlighting the contentious nature of race as a topic to discuss. For some families, this mirrored the nature of race talk in society; a subject that is often approached with caution, or simply ignored, due to fears and worries of what may happened if such a conversation is broached. In some families, positive themes related to race (e.g., racial pride) were rarely discussed. During the Hayes family interview, the mother, Julie, asked to share a comment their son, Noah made, following the first day of interviewing:

> Julie: I know after we met on Tuesday—can I share the comment that you made?
>
> Noah: Oh yeah.
>
> Julie: He said he didn't like to talk about race because it was very serious. Um and that was just interesting to me to think that it's a serious…like a…but when I think about it, it's usually not a good conversation.
>
> Dominic: Yeah we tend to not celebrate the positive differences, it's usually the negative differences coming up when it comes to race.

This sentiment was seen across several families and points to the overall difficulty in having such conversations about race and where the appropriate balance may be in positive, protective, and negative messages shared on race. The issue of how to talk about race in a way that balances the different types of messages (e.g., positive versus negative) presents a challenge not only to families, but also within society. The current study findings demonstrated that one potential solution lies in balancing race talk in a way that emphasizes both the strengths and challenges, or positive and negatives, related to the realities of race in our country. When the messaging related to race becomes one-sided, either emphasizing only the challenges or discussing solely the

positives, it may impact the way in which individuals are able to navigate the realities of race in their daily lives, which may over- or under-prepare them for what they may actually encounter. However, what became clear throughout the interviews is that what individuals may encounter is difficult to define and varies based on where one lives and the climate and composition of one's community. Therefore, being attuned to the social and political realities, both locally and nationally, was important to provide families greater context to what they and their children could expect to encounter when navigating race issues in their lives.

Finally, it is important to note that conducting these interviews about race and identity with the families in the current study could have had an impact on the families themselves, which may have implications for the ways in which these families approach race talk with one another in the future, or how the Biracial children continue to reflect and process their understanding on their racial identity and race-related experiences. This was the case for at least one father in one family, Jacob Agnew, who, during the second day of interviewing (family interview) when asked if it is important to talk about race, stated:

> Jacob: You know since our first interview, I mean, I'm thinking it might be good to kind of have more conversations around [race]. Like I said, I think we've done pretty well, you know, just kind of letting our culture come into him and our other children just through bleeding through, but it might be good to have more explicit conversations I think, but um you know, like I said we haven't really right now.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. What do you think could be good about it?
>
> Jacob: I think it would help-- [our son] mentioned seeing other things from different perspectives so I think it'll help with that. I think it'll help with his identity as far as if he needs to figure out who he is and just kind of realize that, what's on both sides, things

> you can take on both sides, which I would consider a very big asset and just kind of—and when you are at that particular point where you're feeling hurt, just maybe to give him some knowledge so they can handle it in an adult way.

Therefore, it may be the case that other families in the current study, although they did not directly articulate it as Jacob did, may alter how and when they talk about race with their children as a result of the ideas and reflections stimulated during the project interviews.

Limitations

While the current research makes multiple contributions to the areas of interracial family communication, Biracial identity, and the role of sociopolitical context in family race communication approaches in the United States, there are several limitations as well. First, due to the qualitative nature of this study, a small sample size of only eight Black/White interracial families was interviewed in order to gain a more in-depth exploration on the processes and questions of interest for the current research aims. While having a sample of this size allows for greater in-depth exploration and interpretation into the complex concepts and processes under investigation, it is important to remember that the narratives shared by family members represent each participant's own life experience, which is situated in their various social contexts, family history and life circumstances and, therefore, cannot be generalized to other interracial families. While the factors central to the model that emerged in the current study related to the narratives of these participating families, there was ultimately not enough data collected to know for sure that this model captures all of the factors that may be at play in how interracial families communicate about race. As noted in the methods section, there was also not enough data collected to establish theoretical saturation for the current study. While the interviewing of more families may have brought to light new analytical insights not seen in the

current families interviewed, these eight families nonetheless provided a rich source for the exploration and initial development of this emergent model.

There were a number of other sampling limitations in the current study. One limitation is that only families who self-identified as having one Black/African American parent and one White/European American parent were recruited in the current study. In addition, recruitment yielded only families with Black fathers and White mothers, despite attempts to sample both Black fathers and mothers and White fathers and mothers. As such, the researcher was not able to explore the gendered experience of race among Black-White interracial families with Black mothers and White fathers and how this process of race talk looks similar or different in those families. As described in the literature review above, the difficulty in recruiting interracial families with Black mothers and White fathers may relate to the overall lower percentage of that particular interracial family make-up. Due to the specific type of interracial parent couple recruited, statements cannot be made on whether the findings of the current study can be applied to other interracial families of varying racial make-ups. In addition, families were only accepted into the study if parents were currently cohabiting together with their biological child. Therefore, the current study does not capture the experiences of other interracial family compositions, including families with single parents, separated/divorced parents, adoptive children, or families where other adult caregivers are involved in the parenting of the children (e.g., foster parents, step-parents, grandparents). Additionally, it is important to note that the intactness of the family and the high quality of relationships observed between family members in the current study may relate to the overall level of convergence and agreement between family members on the current topics of investigation. It may be the case that families that are less intact or demonstrate higher conflict may show greater divergence in perspectives on topics, including race and identity.

Secondly, families were only sampled from one geographic area in the Northeast region of the United States. This limits the ability to explore the variation in race talk and how sociopolitical and other community contextual factors impact the process of race talk across families residing in other parts of the country. In addition, it limits the ability to explore the variation in Biracial identity development and expression, which previous research notes as variable across regions of the U.S (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2008). All of the children in the current study identified as Biracial and, as a result, exploration on how race talk may have varied among Biracial children with other racial identifications (e.g., singular Black or White identity, transcendent racial identity) was not possible. Instead, we can understand the findings and experiences shared by these children and parents as a representation of each family's lived experiences, which is situated in their various social contexts, family history, and life circumstances.

Another limitation was that all families recruited represented a lower- to upper-middle class socioeconomic background. The majority of parents completed some college or graduate level educational attainment and held various 'white collar' jobs/careers representative of the low to upper middle-class range (e.g., teacher, attorney, business owner). Previous research has clearly demonstrated the intersection between race and class in shaping the experiences of families, including the ways in which daily life activities are organized, how language is used, opportunities for social connections, and interactions with various institutions, among other factors (Lareau, 2002). Due to the lack of variation in the socioeconomic statuses of the families in the current sample, statements cannot be made on whether the findings in the current study would apply to families of other socioeconomic backgrounds. Overall, the current sample limited the researcher's ability to examine the true complex interaction of race and race talk across

interracial families, which vary across a multitude of dimensions, including family constellation, family dynamics (e.g., level of closeness/conflict), geographic region, socioeconomic class, and more. The current study was also limited in examining the intersectional identities among interracial families and how experiences related to race differ among parents and their children who vary across dimensions, such as gender identity, sexual identity, socioeconomic class, nationality, disability status, religion, etc.

Aside from sample limitations, there were also limitations related to the methodology of the current study, which utilized a series of three semi-structured interviews with the child (individual interview), parents (dyadic interview), and the child and parents together (family interview) over a series of two days. While an in-depth exploration into the topics of interest during the interviews was conducted, observation of families in their daily lives was not incorporated into the research design. Therefore, the researcher was not able to observe the multitude of ways family members may engage one another in discussions or interactions related to race and identity. What families express verbally to one another is also not the only mechanism through which families can engage in the process of racial socialization and helping their child(ren) to learn and understand race. Since the current study did not conduct observations of families in their daily lives, the researcher was not able to capture other ways through which parents engage in the process of racial socialization with their children.

Family members were also asked to discuss what they could recall about such conversations related to race and identity throughout their lives thus far. Therefore, what participants shared may be biased by limitations in the accuracy or completeness of the recollections shared about their experiences in the past. It may be the case, for example, that negative experiences related to race were more salient, and therefore, more memorable than

positive experiences related to race in the lives of the fathers, mothers or children. In addition, both children and parents may have varied in their comfort in talking with me about these topics, especially the children in the sample who described rarely talking about these topics or when they do, it's in a negative manner. Therefore, family members may not have been comfortable in sharing all details related to their thoughts on the conversation they have had around race and identity. Furthermore, the current study did not interview other family members (e.g., siblings, extended family members) who may have also had a role in the racial socialization process within families.

Finally, as a Biracial woman and someone who grew up in an interracial family, I am aware that my life experiences as someone who is an 'insider' to this community had an impact on which questions to ask during the interview, how questions were asked, how responses were further explored, and the ways in which I interpreted and analyzed the data. In addition, there is a strong possibility that the participants answered the questions during the interview in a way that may have differed if the interviewer was someone who did not identify as Biracial or who did not grow up in an interracial family and, therefore, seen as an 'outsider.' Furthermore, by the nature of studying this topic of race talk in families, I acknowledge that I have an inherent bias that race is important to talk about, which may have biased how the questions I asked during the interview were heard, the ways in which they were answered, and the ways in which I interpreted the data. In order to address these issues and enhance the credibility of this dissertation, I frequently engaged in the process of reflexivity, which was critical in understanding my role as an active participant in the research setting, relationships, and interpretations in the research process (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Being aware of my worldview and being an active participant in engaging in constant reflexivity throughout this research has aided in the process of

understanding where my biases are influencing the research, and using methods, such as peer debriefing and the reflexive journal, in order to bring those biases to light and correct for them. In addition, engaging in the process of peer debriefing was critical in reducing any potential biases I may place on interpretation.

Future Directions

Based on the information gathered in the current study and gaps that still exist in the literature, there are multiple directions for future research. First, research on interracial unions and Biracial identity development has most commonly occurred among Black/White interracial couples and Black/White Biracial individuals. However, previous research has noted differences in the racial identity development process, which varies greatly within and among various Biracial populations. In addition, research highlights the different types of experiences interracial couples may encounter based on the varying levels of acceptance of different types of interracial unions, in addition to other factors. Therefore, future research should replicate the current study with other types of interracial families and Biracial children. It would be informative to compare and contrast the experiences of various types of interracial families to see the ways in which race-related communication varies across families of differing interracial compositions.

In addition to exploring the process of racial socialization via past recall of conversations related to race and identity, future research should examine the multitude of methods by which interracial parents may engage their children in the process of racial socialization. Previous reviews on the literature relevant to racial socialization have noted that racial socialization is embedded in many other ways within families, such as via the parent-child relationship quality, disciplinary practices, autonomy-granting behaviors, positive and involved parenting, and academic involvement at home and school (Hughes et al., 2006). There are also many culturally

relevant practices, such as Lewis' (1999) description of combing hair in African American families, that are deeply embedded into the daily cultural practices and routines that are not captured easily via self-report or interviewing methods (Hughes et al., 2006). Therefore, future research in this area can be improved with the use of other methodological approaches, such as participant observational studies.

The current study focused on communication and the way family members were conceptualizing and talking about the role of race and racial identity in their lives, specifically in how parents' identities and experiences shaped their child's understanding of their own racial identity and experiences related to race. There was not as much focus in the current study on other factors relevant to racial identity formation and development. However, previous research has demonstrated the multidimensional nature of racial identity, particularly in that it is not simply how an individual racially identifies that matters, but it is the interaction between self-identification and how others identify and view that person's race that impact the incorporation of an individual's overall sense of identity. Researchers have suggested that the measure of racial identity is more comprehensive when it includes the respondent's self-reported identification as well as that of someone close to the respondent, as well as acquaintances and strangers "who have only phenotypical characteristics and contextual cues upon which to base their ascription," (Vargas & Kingsbury, 2016, p. 723). The use of quantitative scales would also be useful in capturing other factors relevant to biracial identity development, such as The Multiracial Experiences Scale (Yoo, Jackson, Guevarra, Miller, & Harrington, 2016), the Multiracial Challenges and Resilience Scale (Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011) and the Racial Identity Invalidation Scale (Franco & O'Brien, 2018). These scales measure other components relevant to biracial identity development, such as perceived racial ambiguity, racial identity invalidation,

and self-esteem. Therefore, it would be important for future research to use other quantitative or mixed-methods methodologies, such as surveys and other measures in combination with qualitative methods, to capture the multidimensional nature of racial identification.

Future research could also examine the ways in which the gender of the parent interacts with the gender of the child in a way that may shape differences in messaging related to race. For example, research could examine similarities and differences in how Black versus White mothers discuss race with their Biracial daughters versus their sons and how Black versus White fathers discuss race with their Biracial sons versus their daughters. The way in which the parent identifies with their child based on their own gender and the gender of the child is important to examine in order to further explore the role of gender in shaping race-related communication within interracial families.

The current study also recruited families from one geographic region and the parents who self-selected into the study represented one socioeconomic group as well. Future research would benefit from exploring this process of race communication in interracial families living in different regions of the country, particularly in the South where effects of the one-drop rule continue to impact the ways in which Biracial Black/White individuals identify, specifically in identifying with a singular, Black identity. In addition, as noted throughout this document, issues of class are deeply intertwined with race and, as such, future research would benefit from exploring the process of race talk and Biracial identity development of children in families representative of other socioeconomic groups.

In the current study, it was clear that this process of racial socialization, race communication, and identity development is fluid, changing throughout time and shifting as children became older. Although this research provides a snapshot into where each family was in

this process of racial socialization at the time of the interview, it fails to truly capture the developmental nature of this process. Therefore, future research utilizing a longitudinal design could capture multiple time points of data from families over the span of years, particularly from each child developmental stage, including early and middle childhood and adolescence. This type of methodology could help portray the differences and similarities in race-related communication and racial socialization practices as children gain greater cognitive capacity and ability to participate in such conversations, and also how socialization practices look different for children in younger versus older age groups.

Future research could also build upon the current research by developing a quantitative measure of racial ideology based on the types of ideology that emerged in the current study. This could take the form of a scale which measures one's level of racial consciousness. This scale could then be used to assess how one's level of racial consciousness, and how frequently one talks about race, relates to various other physical health, mental health, and academic outcomes, to name a few. This could help to expand the implications of racial ideology and race talk on the health and wellbeing of individuals across various social contexts. In addition, while the data were interpreted in this study to produce racial ideologies best conceptualized as falling along a spectrum, future research could explore whether these observed racial ideologies are more appropriately conceptualized as categories versus a spectrum. Future research could also compare categorical versus continuous conceptions of racial ideology and apply this to the examination of race talk patterns within families. This research could help to delineate whether the concept of racial ideology is best understood in terms of dimensions or categories.

Finally, as noted in the implications above, the role of social context in shaping race-related communication cannot be overstated. Therefore, future research would greatly benefit

from examining this process of race talk in interracial families living under varying societal situations and contexts, such as families living in different countries, particularly countries with differing systems of government, social and moral codes, and distinctive histories of race relations. As several immigrant mothers in the current sample noted, their countries of origin did not label and categorize people by race, which begs the question of how such communication on topics of race occurs within families living in societies that do not have the racial classification and hierarchy firmly in place in the United States.

Concluding Remarks

Although there were numerous findings to parse in the current study, there was one overarching theme: race talk in families is complex. For the eight families in this study, figuring out how, when, and what to say when talking about race was a messy process, with no well-defined rules or guidelines provided to them on what is the best way to approach, or not approach, such conversations. Although many families shared similarities with one another in how they communicated about race and racial identity, each family had also developed their own unique approaches to discussing race, which findings showed was related to the interaction between each individuals' meaning-making of their own racial identity and race-related experiences, the divergence and convergence in family member perspectives, and both micro- (e.g., family values) and macro-level factors (e.g., racial and political climate). The findings related to how 'we', meaning the interracial family members who participated in this study, talk about race provide insight not only into the inherent complexities of this process within families, but also highlight how 'we' as Americans struggle with how to discuss issues of race in society.

In Werner Sollor's 2000 book entitled, *Interracialism*, which explored Black-White intermarriage in American history, literature, and law, one of the chapter authors, Joel Perlmann,

writes “the way that the ‘multiracial issue’ is being treated, both at the Census Bureau and in the media, tells much about the state of American thinking about race” (Perlmann, 2000, p. 508). As interracial families and multiracial individuals are becoming more commonplace within American society, they have become a population that is harder to ignore. Public and private discussion on the topic of multiraciality, historically and in the present day, is also indicative of how Americans are thinking about race, how racial categories and racial identities are conceptualized, and what it means to for all of us to be racial beings (Sollors, 2000). If we want to understand the problems related to race that plague America today, such as the deeply imbedded and persistent issues of inequality and racial disparities, we cannot ignore people’s racial origins and how individuals understand their racial identity. The way in which individuals view their racial identity informs so much of how they view themselves and others, how others will view and treat them, and how they navigate through the social world as racial beings.

Throughout the interviews, some family members expressed the sentiment that they did not want to “have” to talk about race. For some of the White mothers in the sample, for example, feeling “forced” to talk about race with their children, due to the undeniable realties of racism in this country, was unfair. They knew from their own lived experience that these conversations were not happening in most White families, and this was seen as an injustice. For the first time in their lives, these women were afforded the opportunity to understand the role of race from an entirely different perspective-- as the mothers of Biracial children and the partners of Black men. In fact, many individuals of different races may spend their entire lives ‘with blinders on,’ only understanding the function and meaning of race based on the experiences they have had as a result of the racial group they were born into. And yet, being a member of an interracial family appears to provide individuals with the unique opportunity to understand race from an entirely

new perspective due to the experiences shared between their own family members who hold different racial identities and realities. Therefore, interracial families have a unique outlook to provide when it comes to understanding the ways in which individuals in society can integrate these multiple racial realities and perspectives in a way in which all perspectives are valid and co-exist.

The complexities of race talk within interracial families share many parallels with the complexities of such discussions in society writ large. Many individuals of all races often wish that the problems of race would be resolved, once and for all. As such, it seems that some individuals have adopted the strategy to simply stop talking about race. As the Morgan family expressed, perhaps just talking about it would 'fuel the fire,' ultimately leading to greater conflict, animosity, or frustration. Others have taken the color-blind approach, minimizing the importance of race and racial differences in hopes that society would eventually move beyond the limiting notions of race. Some go as far as to say that any mention on the impacts of race or racism is 'race-baiting' or 'playing the race card.' There are also those who continue to acknowledge and discuss the importance of race and believe it is necessary to talk about it in order to understand how our racial identities shape the ways in which we view and treat others, and, in turn, how others view and treat us. So what is the right way to talk about race? I would argue that these families show that if we as a society truly wish to address the oppressions, disparities, and injustices due to race, we must not only acknowledge its existence, but we must develop the language to talk about such realities with respect for the divergence that may exist in others' perspectives and lived experiences. We must also talk about race in a way that celebrates the diversity and beauty in our differences, rather than in a way that stereotypes and assaults others. As most of the participating families also model, these conversations should start at

home, between parents and their children. In particular, as participants in the current study demonstrated, families can provide an intimate and comfortable space for children and parents alike to process their own experiences related to race, and also gain insight into the experiences of their family members, which may be shared or distinct. The hope would then be for family members to grow comfortable discussing issues of race in their private lives, and subsequently, have greater confidence and comfortability to discuss race-related issues in their public lives.

The racial composition in America is changing, and social science research should strive to explore and understand the experiences of all individuals, which means that previous theories specific to racial identity development and the formation of racial attitudes and beliefs (e.g., racial socialization) need to continue to take the interracial population into account. This dissertation was one small step in the direction toward including interracial families in the empirical literature on race and identity, specifically when it comes to understanding how children and parents communicate and co-create their conceptualizations of race and racial identity. The family was an important context to examine the development and communication on these important concepts of race and identity, as this may be the first context in which individuals attempt to understand their identity and ask questions, such as "who am I," "who are we (as a family)," and "what does that mean in the social world we live?" However, it is important to remember that we are individuals imbedded within complex systems and tied to socio-cultural realities that cannot be ignored when trying to understand how individuals or families think and talk about race. During the completion of this dissertation, as discussed throughout this document, a multitude of events in society (e.g., the election of Donald Trump as president, the continued killings of Black men by police, the calls to build a wall and deport immigrants, the increase in racially-based hate crimes) created the re-emergence of a very old

conversation around race and racism. While I argue that we must acknowledge and discuss the realities related to race happening around us at this time, I would be remiss if I did not mention the inherent danger that has existed and continues to exist for those who are willing to challenge and speak against the racial hierarchy and institutions of White supremacy that pervade our society. These dangers cannot be ignored as many have, and continue to, risk their lives and wellbeing by speaking truth to these injustices. However, I believe, as many others do, that silence is not an option. As the American novelist James Baldwin once eloquently said, “not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

Appendix A: Conceptual Interview Guide

Broad Topic Area	**Sub-topics**	**Example Interview Child/Parent/Family Questions**
Broad Topic Area #1: Understanding of Race and Racial Identity ***Aim: To understand how all family members experience race, view their racial identity and the identity of one another, and factors relevant to their racial identity development***	Defining Race	*How would you describe or define what race is? How do you remember learning what race is?*
	Racial Identity Expression and Formation	*How would you describe your racial identity? Can you point to the very first moment you remember understanding your racial identity? Is how your child racially identifies important to you?*
	Experiences as a Racial Being	*What positive experiences with race [either examples involving yourself or others] do you remember? What negative experiences with race do you remember? What does it mean to you to be a person who identifies as [insert racial self-identity] in America?*
Broad Topic Area #2: Racial Socialization Messages ***Aim: To understand parental racial socialization messages communicated within the family***	Types of socialization messages (e.g., proactive, protective, cultural pride)	*Tell me about a time you remember having a conversation with your child about race. Tell me about a time you remember your parents talking with you about race. How do you go about discussing issues of racism, discrimination, prejudice, etc. in your family? To parents: Tell me about a time you talked with each other about race.*
	Frequency of socialization experiences	*When did you first begin discussing issues of race and racial identity with your child? How often would you say you discuss issues of race with your child currently (has this changed over time)?*
	Racial and cultural heritage	*Tell me about your family's racial/cultural heritage. Is your family's cultural heritage important for you? Is it important to discuss with your child(ren), how so? What cultural traditions (e.g., celebrations) are important in your family?*
	Ideological	*What is important for your child to learn and*

	perspectives on race and race-relations	*understand about race? Do you think it's important for them to learn about race? How would you describe current race-relations where you live (follow up: in the country)?*
Broad Topic Area #3: Race and Social Context ***Aim: To understand perspectives on broader social and ecological factors related to race and understandings of racial identity, such as racial composition, racial climate, attitudes toward interracial unions***	Racial composition and climate within various communities (e.g., local community, school, work)	*How would you describe the racial composition of your community where you live? How would you describe relationships and interactions between individuals of different racial backgrounds within the community? Have you or other family members experienced racism, discrimination, or prejudice (in the community, at school, etc.)?*
	Attitudes toward interracial unions and families	*How do you feel being a member of an interracial family? How do you think people in your community view you as an interracial family? How do you think our country views and treats interracial families?*
	Processing of race-related experiences in the personal sphere	*How have negative racial experiences (e.g., discrimination) shaped how you view yourself and your family? How have these experiences shaped how you talk about race in your family?*
	Processing of race-related experiences in the public sphere	*How have larger, national events relevant to race in our society (e.g., the election of Barack Obama as President, Black Lives Matter Movement, etc.) influenced how you talk about race with your children?*

Appendix B: Child Interview Guide

Opening Script: *First of all, I want to thank you for participating in this study and being here and talking with me today. Before we begin, I'm going to go over the informed consent, which will review your rights as a participant in this study. [Go over informed consent form] It is important that you understand your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to say you don't want to be in the study anymore and leave at any time, without consequence. Your parents are also aware you are taking part in this study and have given consent (permission) for you to participate. This interview will be audio recorded so that it can later be typed up for analysis, but please be aware that all efforts will be made to make sure all information is kept confidential. This means that, for example, any names, places, or other terms mentioned that might be tied to identifying you or your family, will be removed when writing up the transcript and as soon as the transcript has been made, the audio file will be erased. You may have heard from your parents or from my fliers for this study that I am interested in talking to individuals who belong to an interracial family, having one Black/African American parent and one White/Caucasian parent. During this interview today I will be asking you some questions about your racial identity, your parents, family, and various experiences you've had growing up. I will also be meeting with your parents to ask similar questions, and then we will have one family group interview together on a later date where we will discuss related topics. I plan that overall this interview today will last between 1 to 2 hours. If you need a break at any time just let me know and we can pause the recorder and take a break. If you'd like to skip any questions please let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

I. Racial Identification and First Experiences with Race

[*I'm first going to ask you a little bit about race and try to understand how you see yourself in terms of race.*]

1. How would you describe or define what race means?

2. I want to you think about your life so far. Sometimes people can point to certain events, people, or issues in their lives where they remember learning about race for the first time. How do you remember learning what race is? [Follow up questions: who was involved? where were you? what happened? what did it mean for you to learn about race?]

3. How do you identify your race? Since you are a person of mixed-race ancestry, sometimes people may ask how you identify or a question people sometimes ask me, "what are you,"…have you been asked that question? How do you respond?

1a. How do you identify your race on forms [i.e. government forms?]

4. Have you ever felt like you've made a change in how you identified racially over the years?

a. Are there times when you identified as Black?

b. Are there times when you identified as White?

c. Are there times when you identified as Biracial? [Can you give me a specific example for each and what lead you to identify in that way?]

5. [If yes to previous question] Can you tell me a little bit about what caused you to change from identifying with one race to another?

6. Is there a difference between how you identify your race and how others identify you?

a. What do you think people typically guess or assume about your racial identity when they first meet you?

b. Do you identify yourself the same way your parents identify you (both your mother and father)?

7. How would you describe your physical features [i.e. hair, eye color, skin color]?

a. Would you say your physical appearance has effected how you see yourself and your race? If yes, how so?

8. What positive experiences with race [either examples involving yourself or others] do you remember when you were younger till now?

a. What do you think led or contributed to this being a positive experience?

9. What negative experiences with race do you remember from when you were younger till now? Any times when you felt you were treated badly by others because of your race? [i.e. racism, discrimination]

a. By whom, what, where?

b. What do you think led or contributed to this being a negative experience?

c. How do you remember responding?

d. How did your parents/family respond?

10. What other identities (e.g., gender, nationality, religion) are important to who you are? How so?

II. Racial Socialization and Family

[*Now I am going to ask you some questions about your parents and family and how you think they've shaped how you see race. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, just answer how you feel.*]

1. How would you describe your family? What are they like?

2. How do you feel about your family [what is your relationship with them like]?

a. How would you describe your relationship with your mother? Your father? Your siblings [if any]?

3. How would you describe contact you've had with your mother's side of the family [extended family]? [Follow-up: Do you see them often? How is your relationship with them?]

4. How would you describe contact you've had with your father's side of the family [extended family]? [Follow-up: Do you see them often? How is your relationship with them?]

5. Does your family ever have conversations about race? [If yes: What kinds of things will you talk about?]

a. What kinds of things will your mom talk with you about when it comes to race or your racial identity?

b. What kinds of things will your dad talk with you about when it comes to race or your racial identity?

c. Are there other ways outside of having conversations/talking that you think your parents help you learn or understand more about race (e.g., by observing them with others)? [If yes:] Could you tell me a little bit more about that?

6. Do your parents ever use any books, videos, or other ways to help you learn about your racial identity?[1]

7. Have your parents or anyone else in your family told you how you should identify your race? [If yes:] What was that like?

8. Have you ever had times where you disagreed with your parents or other family members about racial topics/issues (e.g., such as how you should identify your race; what is considered discrimination/racism; perspectives on other racial groups)?

III. Race experiences in school and community

[*Now we're going to switch to talking a little bit about your school and your neighborhood where you live*.]

1. Tell me what your school is like [how would you describe it to someone whose never been there before; what are the students and teachers like]?

2. How would you describe the racial make-up of the students in your school [meaning: what is the mixture of various racial groups in your school like]?

3. Do you feel that you've learned about race and/or racial issues (such as what is racism, discrimination, racial pride, Black history, etc.) while at your school or previous schools you've attended? If so, could you tell me about what that was like?

a. Are there any specific examples you can think of for times when you were at school, either interacting with other students or teachers, talking about race/racial issues? If so, could you tell me more about that?

4. What are your friends like? Could you describe your relationships with them?

5. Have you ever had conversations about race with your friends?

a. What are some of the races of your closest friends? Do you have friends who are also mixed-race or part of interracial families?

6. Now we're going to talk about your neighborhood where you live. What's your neighborhood like?

a. We talked before about the racial make-up of your school. What's that like for your neighborhood? Is it similar/different? [Follow up: How about the racial make-up of any other places you visit frequently in your community? For example, do you attend church? What

is the racial make-up there? Any other important community places you visit that you'd like to discuss?]

7. Any experiences you've had with race (either involving yourself or others) in your neighborhood where you live? What was that like? [Follow-up: What about at specific places like church (if answered yes above to attending church or other important community organization), any experiences with race that you've had there?]

a. Any experiences you or your family has had in your neighborhood as an interracial family that you think other non-interracial families do not experience?

IV. Race and the National Context

[For this last section, I'm just going to ask you some more general questions about how you think things that go on around the country outside of your family, school, and neighborhood influence how you think or learn about race and your racial identity.]

1. What does it mean for you to identify as [insert racial self-identity] in America?

a. Do you think that influences, positively, negatively or in any other way, how you go through life?

2. Our country has a long history of events that have happened (e.g., slavery, the Civil Rights Movement) that influences how people of different races are viewed and treated. Do you ever hear about any important events in the media (e.g., in the news, internet, on TV) currently that you think shaped how people of different races are being treated today? Tell me more about that.

a. Do you think any of these events influence how you or your family members are viewed, treated or interacted with?

V. Wrap Up

1. Is there anything else you want to add about what it's like to be [insert racial identity] or part of an interracial family?

2. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences that I did not already ask that would be important for me to know?

Appendix C: Parent Interview Guide

Opening Script: *First of all, I want to thank you both for participating in this study and being here and talking with me today. Before we begin, I'm going to go over the informed consent, which will review your rights as a participant in this study. [Go over informed consent form] It is important that you understand your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right withdraw from this study at any time, without consequence. This interview will be audio recorded so that it can later be typed up for analysis, but please be aware that all efforts will be made to make sure all information is kept confidential. This means that, for example, any names, places, or other terms mentioned that might be tied to identifying you or your family, will be removed when writing up the transcript and as soon as the transcript has been made, the audio file will be erased. You may have heard from your child or from my fliers for this study that I am interested in talking to individuals who belong to an interracial family, having one Black/African American parent and one White/Caucasian parent and a mixed-race child. During this interview today I will be asking you some questions about racial identity, your family, various experiences you've had related to race, how you both discuss racial topics with your child(ren). I will also be meeting with your child to ask similar questions, and then we will have one family group interview together on a later date where we will discuss related topics. I plan that overall this interview today will last between 1 to 2 hours. If you need a break at any time just let me know and we can pause the recorder and take a break. If you'd like to skip any questions please let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

I. Understandings of Race and Identity

[To start off, I'm going to ask you some questions about race and identity, and I'd like to hear what you both think about each question, so for each question, if I can have you each answer one

at a time, that would work best. For these questions, I want to note that when I ask you about 'your child' I am firstly referring to (name of child) who is participating in the interview. However, after you answer that question for that child, if you have other children, feel free to answer it for your other children as well].

1. How would you describe or define what race is?

    a. When do you remember learning about what race is? What happened? Who was involved?

2. How do you each identify racially?

    a. Is this an identity that is important to you? How so?

    b. For each parent: What other identities (e.g., gender, nationality, religion) are important to who you are ? Any identities important to you both as a couple/family?

3. How do you racially identify your child(ren)?

    a. How does your child racially identify her/himself? (First answer for child who is completing the interview, then if there are other children, answer for them as well).

    b. Is how your child(ren) racially identifies important to you? How so?

4. What positive experiences with race [either examples involving yourself or others] do you remember from your life that really stick out to you?

    a. What do you think caused these positive experiences?

5. What negative experiences with race do you remember? Any times when you felt you were treated badly by others because of your race? [i.e. racism, discrimination]

    a. By whom, what, where?

    b. What do you think caused these negative experiences?

    c. How do you remember responding?

d. How did others (e.g., family) respond?

6. Tell me about any experiences you've had being in an interracial relationship. What is that like?

II. Racial Socialization and Family

[*Now I am going to ask you some questions about how you both as a couple, how you all function as a family, and how you discuss race-related issues. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, just answer how you feel.*]

1. How did you two meet?

a. What was dating like?

b. Did you have any concerns entering into an interracial relationship? If so, what were those concerns? Do you still have any of those concerns, or new concerns, currently?

c. How did others (e.g., family, friends) respond to your relationship?

2. How would you describe your family and yourself as parents?

a. What values are important in your family?

b. What lessons or knowledge do you think is important to pass along to your children?

3. How do you go about discussing issues of race and racial identity in your family?

a. Tell me about a time your remember having a conversations with one another about race.

b. Tell me about a time you remember having a conversation with your child(ren) about race. Did you go in with a plan for the discussion with your child(ren) or did it emerge as you talked with them (e.g., was the content of the conversation planned or spontaneous)?

4. When did you first begin discussing issues of race and racial identity with your child(ren)?

a. How did the topic of race come up with your child?

5. How often would you say you discuss issues of race with your child(ren) currently (has this changed over time)?

a. Are these conversations typically prompted by something happening or do you find yourself planning these conversations?

b. What methods do you use (such as books, videos, etc.) to help your child(ren) learn about race and racial identity?

6. Do you think it's important for your child(ren) to learn about race?

a. What is important for your child to learn and understand about race?

7. Tell me about how you each approach having conversations about race with your child(ren).

a. Do you find you have the same or different approaches?

8. Have you ever had times where you disagreed with one another or your children (or other family members) about racial topics/issues (e.g., such as how you should identify your child's race; what is considered discrimination/racism; perspectives on other racial groups)?

a. What was that experience like? How was the disagreement resolved?

III. Race experiences in the community

[*Now we're going to switch to talking a little bit about your neighborhood and community where you live*.]

1. What is your neighborhood like?

a. How would you describe the racial make-up of your neighborhood?

b. How long have you lived in this community? What other communities has your family lived in? What were they like in comparison?

c. How important is your neighborhood community to you? [Follow-up: How frequently do you engage with others and visit places within the community?]

2. How would you describe relationships and interactions between individuals of different racial backgrounds within the community?

3. How do you feel as an interracial couple living in this neighborhood?

a. Do you think your family is treated differently than any other families in your neighborhood who are not an interracial family?

b. How do you think people in your community view you as an interracial family?

4. Have you or other family members experienced racism, discrimination, or prejudice in your community (e.g., places such as your neighborhood, work, school, etc.)?

a. What was that experience like?

IV. Race and National Context

[For this last section, I'm just going to ask you some more general questions about how you think things that go on around the country outside of your family, school, and neighborhood influence how you think about race and racial identity.]

1. What does it mean for you to identify as [insert racial self-identity of both parents] in America?

a. Do you think that influences, positively, negatively or in any other way, how you go through life?

2. Our country has a long history of events that have happened (e.g., slavery, the Civil Rights Movement) that influences how people of different races are viewed and treated. Do you

ever hear about any important events in the media (e.g., in the news, internet, on TV) currently that you think shape how people of different races are being treated today? Tell me more about that.

a. Do you think any of these events influence how you or your family members are viewed, treated or interacted with?

3. How have larger, national events relevant to race in our society (e.g., the election of Barack Obama as President, Black Lives Matter Movement, etc.) influenced how you talk about race with your children?

V. Wrap Up

1. Is there anything else you want to add about what it's like to be in an interracial relationship or part of an interracial family?

2. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences that I did not already ask that would be important for me to know?

Appendix D: Family Interview Guide

Opening Script: *It's great to see all of you again today. Thank you all for your time in talking with me thus far. We have one more interview to go through today as a family. As you know, so far I've talked with [child's name] and [parents' names] and asked a lot of questions about race, racial identity, and how you feel about various experiences in your life. For our last interview today, I'm going to ask you all some questions together as a family, again about race and identity, some will seem really similar to those I asked yesterday and some that are a little different than the questions we already went through before. For this last interview today, I'm really interested in exploring these topics together with one another and what you all honestly feel. Again, there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, so please feel free to say what you honestly think. Again, I plan that overall this interview today will last between 1 to 2 hours. If you need a break at any time just let me know and we can pause the recorder and take a break. If you'd like to skip any questions please let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

I. Family Racial/Cultural Background

[To start off, I'm first going to ask a few questions about your family's background].

1. Tell me about the people you consider part of your family.
    a. What are your extended family members (e.g., grandparents) like?
    b. What are the racial backgrounds of all immediate and extended family members?
2. Tell me about your family's racial/cultural heritage.
    a. Is your family's cultural heritage important for each of you? How so?
3. What cultural traditions (e.g., celebrations) are important in your family?

a. How do you practice these traditions?

4. Do you consider yourselves an interracial family? If so, what does that mean for you? If not, what does it mean that you do not identify in that way? [Follow up: Is being in an interracial family important in understanding how you function as a family? How so?]

II. Racial Perceptions in Personal Sphere

[Now I'm going to ask you all about your thoughts on various racial topics in your personal life, and I'm going to direct the question to each of you first, and then the others will have the chance to respond].

1. [To child]: What do you believe you've learned from your parents or other family members about race?

a. What have you learned about who you are as a racial being (as someone who identifies as [insert child's racial identity]?

2. [To parents]: What do you think about what [your child] just said? Do you have anything to add?

3. [To child]: Can you tell me a story about a time that really stuck with you when your parents had a conversation with you about race?

a. What was the conversation about? How did the conversation start? How did it end?

4. [To parents]: Does that story resonate with you? Do you remember this event and conversation? Do you remember anything differently from your perspective?

5. [To child]: Tell me about any positive experiences you've had related to race or experiences that you believe you had because you are mixed-race or part of an interracial family.

6. [To parents]: Did you know about that experience for them already? What did you think when they first told you. What do you think now?

7. [To child]: Tell me about any negative experiences you've had related to race (e.g., discrimination, harassment, microaggressions) or experiences that you believe you had because you are mixed-race or part of an interracial family.

8. [To parents]: Did you know about that experience for them? What did you think when they first told you. What do you think about that now?

9. [To everyone]: Is it important to talk about race in your family?

a. In thinking about race, what is important to talk about with one another?

10. [To everyone]: Have there ever been any times where you've disagreed with one another about how to respond in a conversation about race?

a. What was that like?

b. Are there topics/issues you typically agree on and issues you typically disagree about?

III. Racial Perceptions in Public Sphere

[Now I'm going to ask you all some questions, thinking more broadly outside of what happens in your personal life].

1. Race relations can be defined as "the relations between members or communities of different races within one country." How would you describe how race relations are in our country today? [Follow-up: What makes you say that?]

2. The election of Barack Obama, a man of Black and White ancestry, as our nation's first African American (or mixed-race) President was a very large and important historical

moment in recent American history. What do you all think about his election as president and what that means for your family, as an interracial family?

a. Do you think the past eight years of his presidency have changed how you talk about race in your family? How so?

3. Another social movement that has been gaining popularity over the last couple of years is the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. What are your thoughts about this movement?

a. Do you believe it has sparked conversations about race within your family? If so, what was that like?

4. I want to talk about one more important historical event. You [insert names of parents] may know this story more so than [insert name of child], but in 1967 the Supreme Court struck down all remaining laws in the United States that banned interracial couples from getting married. Prior to that decision, it was against the law in certain states to even marry someone of a different race. Today, it is almost fifty years after that Supreme court decision. As members of an interracial family in 2016/2017, how do you think interracial couples and families are now being viewed and treated in America?

a. Are there any other events that you think have influenced how interracial couples and families are viewed and/or treated in this country?

5. Are there any other national events related to race that you think are important in shaping how you have in the past, or currently, talk about race in your family?

IV. Wrap Up

1. Is there anything else you think it's important for me to know about what it's like to be a member of an interracial family and your experiences with race and identity?

2. Anything else anyone wants to share about your experience that's important for me to know?

Appendix E: Brief Demographic Survey

ID# _____ (for researcher only) Interview Date:_____

Circle one: CHILD PARENT

1.) Age: _____ years

2.) Gender: _____

3.) Where were you born? (City, State): _____

4.) Where do you live now? (City, State): _____

4a.) How long have you lived here? _____

5.) What other places have you lived and how long?

_____

6a.) FOR PARENT: What is your highest level of education completed? (Please circle one)
8th grade or below
Some high school
High school graduate
Some College
Associate's Degree
Bachelor's Degree
Graduate School
Other: _____

6b.) FOR PARENT: What is your current job/occupation?_____

6c.) FOR CHILD: What grade are you in right now? _____

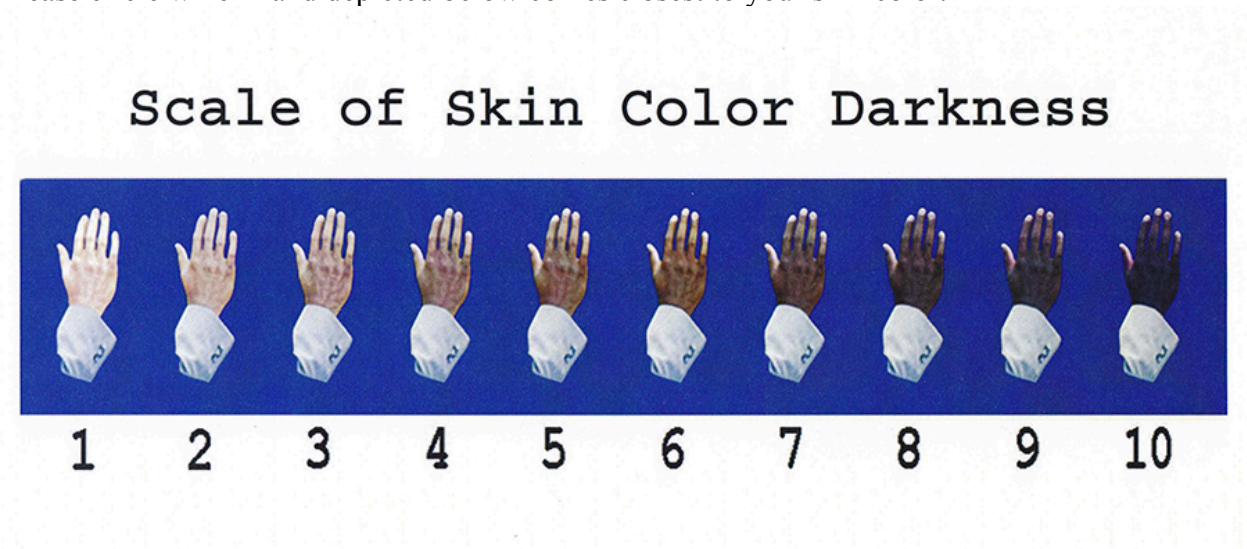
7a.) What is your primary language? _____

7b.) If applicable, what other languages do you speak?_____

8.) How do you identify your race and/or ethnicity? _____

Brief Skin Tone Questionnaire:

1. As you know, human beings display a wide variety of physical characteristics. One of these is skin color. Displayed below is a skin color scale that ranges from 1 (representing the lightest possible skin color) to 10 (representing the darkest possible skin color). The 10 shades of skin color are represented by a hand of identical form, but differing in color. Please circle which hand depicted below comes closest to your skin color.



2. How much discrimination have you personally faced because of your skin color (e.g., light, medium, or dark)?
a. A great deal
b. A lot
c. A moderate amount
d. A little
e. None at all

3. How much discrimination is there in the United States today against dark skinned [people of your self-identified racial group]?
a. A great deal
b. A lot
c. A moderate amount
d. A little
e. None at all

4. How much discrimination is there in the United States today against light skinned [people of your self-identified racial group]?
a. A great deal
b. A lot
c. A moderate amount
d. A little
e. None at all

Appendix F: Recruitment Fliers
Child version

SHARE YOUR VOICE

FAMILY, RACE, AND COMMUNITY PROJECT

If you are

- **a child between the ages of 13-17 years old**
- **have one Black/African American parent and one White/Caucasian parent**
- **live with both of your parents**

I am interested in hearing about your life, your understanding of race, and your experience within your family & community

SHARE YOUR VOICE

Anonymous Participation
$60 given
to each family

If interested, talk with your parents to see if it's okay for you to participate in short (1-2 hour) individual & family interview. Your parents are also required to participate. Contact Lindsay Emery if interested or if you would like more information.

Your participation will be anonymous and your family will be given a total of $60 for your time and participation.

E-Mail:
lemery1@umbc.edu

Phone:
(410) 455 - 2973

This study ( ) is approved by the UMBC Institutional Review Board (410) 455-2737

Share your experience and get paid $60
lemery1@umbc.edu
(410) 455 - 2973

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(410) 455 - 2973

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(410) 455 - 2973

Share your experience and get paid $60
lemery1@umbc.edu
(410) 455 - 5658

Share your experience and get paid $60
lemery1@umch.edu
(410) 455 - 2973

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(410) 455 - 2973

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(410) 455 - 2973

Parent Version

SHARE YOUR VOICE

FAMILY, RACE, AND COMMUNITY PROJECT

If you are

- **the parent of a child between the ages of 13-17 years old**
- **in an interracial Black/White relationship and live together with your partner and child(ren)**

I am interested in hearing about your life, your understanding of race, and your experience within your family & community

SHARE YOUR VOICE

Anonymous Participation
$60 compensation for each family

If interested, this project will involve short (1-2 hour) interviews with parents, their child, and the family as a whole.

Contact Lindsay Emery if interested in scheduling to see if you are eligible to participate!

Your participation will be anonymous and your family will be given a total of $60 for your time and participation.

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Appendix G

Tables and Figures

Table 1

Family Demographics

Family	***Participant pseudonym***	***Family Role***	***Age***	***Sex***	***Race/Ethnicity (self-identified)***	***Parent Job/ Child Grade***	***Geographic residence***
1. The Simons Family	Sylvia	Mother	51	Female	European/White	Graphic Designer	North-central Maryland
	John	Father	54	Male	Black	Executive of a corporation/artist	North-central Maryland
	Carlo	Son	16	Male	Mixed Race (White/Black)	11th	North-central Maryland
2. The Keane Family	Isabel	Mother	42	Female	White/Hispanic	Home school teacher/business owner	North-central Maryland
	Derek	Father	43	Male	Black	Enrolled agent, Associate CPA	North-central Maryland
	Amber	Daughter	13	Female	Mixed	8th	North-central Maryland
3. The Morgan Family	Sabina	Mother	41	Female	White/Middle Eastern	Health care worker	Northeast Maryland
	Justin	Father	40	Male	Black	Stay at home father	Northeast Maryland
	Caleb	Son	15	Male	Black and Middle Eastern/Mixed	9th	Northeast Maryland

4. The Agnew Family	Maribelle	Mother	46	Female	White	Direct marketer	Washington, DC
	Jacob	Father	50	Male	Black	IT worker	Washington, DC
	Alexander	Son	16	Male	Mixed	10th	Washington, DC
5. The Kent Family	Natalie	Mother	46	Female	White	Receptionist	Northern Virginia
	Chase	Father	47	Male	Black/African American	US Military; Analyst	Northern Virginia
	Avery	Daughter	13	Female	Biracial	8th	Northern Virginia
6. The Hayes Family	Julie	Mother	45	Female	White	Social Worker	Central Maryland
	Dominic	Father	47	Male	Black	Attorney	Central Maryland
	Noah	Son	13	Male	Mixed	8th	Central Maryland
7. The Douglass Family	Brielle	Mother	47	Female	White	Medical Officer coordinator	North-central Maryland
	Emmett	Father	45	Male	Black	Investigator; Retired police officer	North-central Maryland
	Andrea	Daughter	17	Female	Black/White	12th	North-central Maryland
8. The Peterson Family	Caroline	Mother	47	Female	White	Teacher	North-central Maryland
	Samuel	Father	45	Male	Caribbean/ Black	Teacher	North-central Maryland
	Clara	Daughter	14	Female	Biracial	9th	North-central Maryland

Table 2

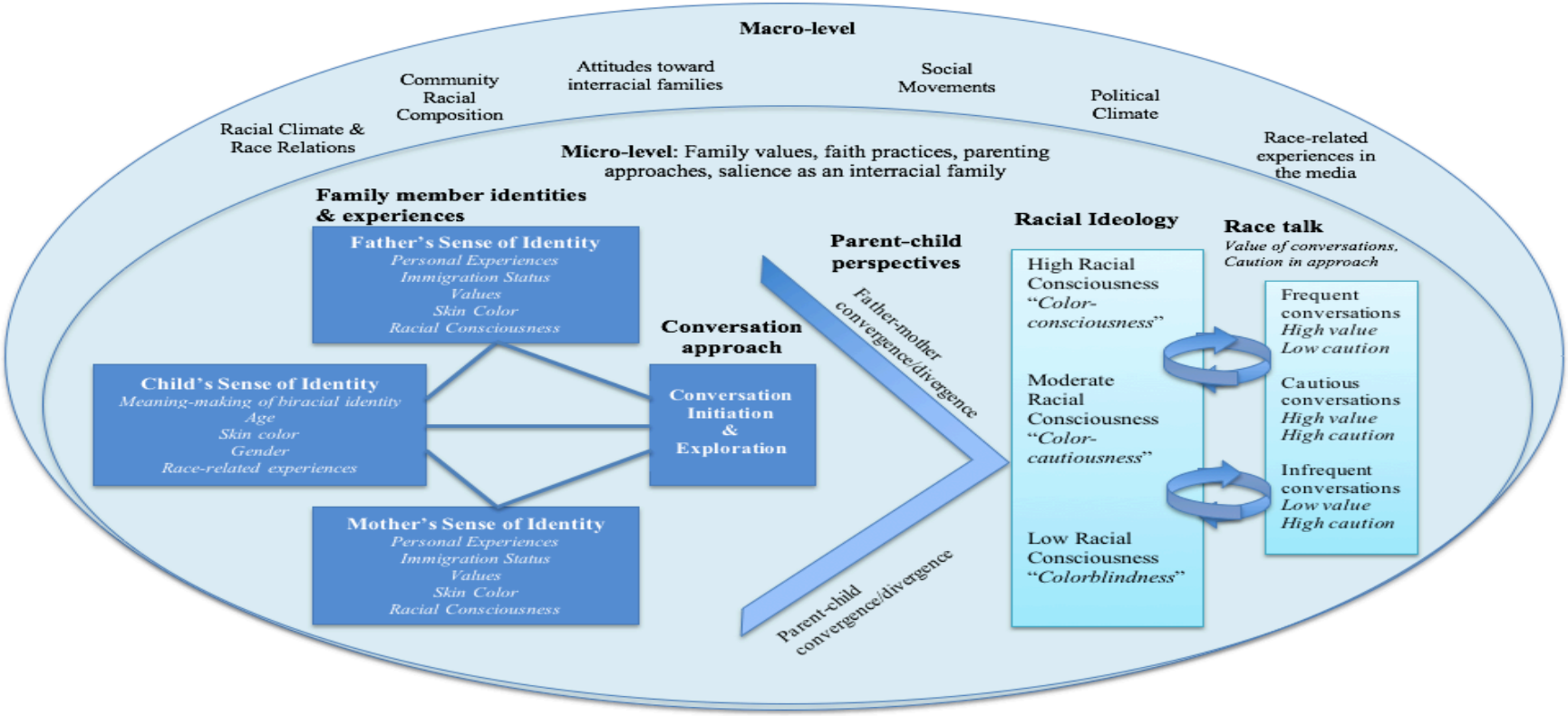
Skin Tone Questionnaire Results

Family Member Role	Question 1 *The 10 shades of skin color are represented by a hand of identical form, but differing in color. Please circle which hand depicted below comes closest to your skin color. (1= lightest, 10=darkest)*	Question 2 *How much discrimination have you personally faced because of your skin color (e.g., light, medium, or dark)?*	Question 3 *How much discrimination is there in the United States today against dark skinned [people of your self-identified racial group]?*	Question 4 *How much discrimination is there in the United States today against light skinned [people of your self-identified racial group]?*
Mothers	*M* = 2.13, *SD* = *0.64*	*M* = 4.63, *SD* = *0.52*	*M*= 2.38, *SD* = *1.50*	*M* = 3.50, *SD* = *1.20*
Fathers	*M* = 6.13, *SD* = *1.88*	*M* = 2.50, *SD* = *1.3*	*M* = 1.88, *SD* = *1.00*	*M*= 2.88, *SD* = *0.84*
Children	*M* = 4.38, *SD* = *0.52*	*M* = 4.25, *SD* = *0.71*	*M* = 2.25, *SD* = *1.28*	*M* = 3.00, *SD* = *1.20*

1 = A great deal
2 = A lot
3 = A moderate amount
4 = A little
5 = None at all

Figure 1

Emergent Model: Interracial family communication on race[*]



[*] This model represents key features from the family narratives that emerged in the current study. Of note, the order of the family member sense of identity boxes do not indicate an order in which these identities develop and, instead, are a graphical representation on how they are related. The cyclical arrows on the right side of the model denote the bidirectional nature of the relationship between racial ideology and race talk, while the large arrow in the middle of the model demonstrates the convergence of parent-child perspectives, which then lead to shaping racial ideology and race talk in the family. The lines connecting the family sense of identity boxes and conversation approach box symbolize how these elements are related but do not imply causation.

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