A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FAMILIAL RACIAL SOCIALIZATION AND ITS

IMPACT ON BLACK/WHITE BIRACIAL SIBLINGS

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Comparative Study of Familial Racial Socialization and Its Impact on Black/White
Biracial Siblings

By MONIQUE ANNE POROW

Dissertation Director:
Karen Cerulo, Ph.D.

This dissertation examines the nature of racial socialization within the families of biracial

people. Unlike previous studies of racial socialization of children with one Black and one

White parent, this project broadens the scope of influential agents of racial socialization.

Utilizing an inclusive approach, I examine the role that parents, extended family

members, and siblings play in the process of shaping the racial identity development of

biracial people. Through the use of a grounded theory approach, I draw upon data from

22 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with people who have one Black and one

White parent. I utilize their responses to questions regarding the nature of their

relationship with various family members, and the impact of those experiences. The 22

respondents included in this study composed 10 sibling sets: 8 dyads and 2 triads. These

sibling narratives were used to construct a comparative sibling design that provides a

context ripe with information about the family inaccessible through other study designs. I

elucidate the nature of messages conveyed regarding race from various members of the

family, and I theorize these complex and overlooked processes of racial socialization. I

outline agent-specific mechanisms of racial socialization within the family illustrating that parents are not the only influential agents as extant literature would suggest. I argue that many members of the family can be influential agents when engaging agent-specific mechanisms of racial socialization. Those mechanisms include: parents acting as direct and strategic agents of racial socialization, extended family members acting as indirect cultivators of group-belonging and/or exclusion, and sibling ancillary support that helps biracial people negotiate messages throughout their racial identity development. There is an interconnectedness of influence that results from these various approaches to racial socialization. I conceptualize these complex and agent-specific mechanisms, through a figure called the *Family Nexus of Racial Socialization.* This concept enhances our present understanding of how various family members engage in racial socialization, and the interconnectedness of their influence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Every time I tried to shorten this section it got longer. The length not only reflects the duration of my journey, but also reflects the immeasurable amount of support I received along the way.

I would first like to thank God, without whom this would not be possible. I do not write that lightly, nor do I write it because it reads like what a Christian should write. I write it because I LITERALLY rested on him from the beginning of this journey through to the very end, most notably in an environment where his existence is often mocked. There were many times that earning a Ph.D. appeared an impossible feat, that my obstacles appeared insurmountable, and my hope appeared un-revivable, yet at every turn he brought me through. When I had nothing, I had God, and I am humbled by the fact that he sees greatness in me that I don't always see in myself.

I owe the completion of this dissertation to the 60 respondents who shared their personal stories with me. This is especially the case for the 22 respondents in this study's sibling sample whose willingness to share all of their experiences, especially their painful ones, yielded the invaluable information that drove this analysis.

There are several people who saw great potential in my research and encouraged me along the way. The members of my dissertation committee supported my goals and timelines no matter how that impacted their schedules. I truly appreciate Arlene Stein's support of my timeline to defend, even when that timeline was incredibly ambitious, and especially when I was unable to meet deadlines. When I felt defeated, she often unknowingly expressed perfectly-timed displays of support. Arlene was often a cheerleader in my corner, willing to lend an ear when this process overwhelmed me.

I extend gratitude to Laurie Krivo, for her willingness to step in "seamlessly" as a committee member offering whatever support she felt I needed, even tapping her role as graduate director in order to provide me with the peace of mind I needed to accomplish this goal. At a time when my nerves could have gotten the best of me, she reassured me that she was committed to my success, which meant a lot to me

I am thankful to Kerry Ann Rockquemore for giving me permission to own my research. Without knowing it, her feedback helped me see the value of my ideas, encouraging me to have more of a voice in my own process. Without that push, I may not have been able to boldly explore the ideas that I allowed others, and my self-doubt, to dismiss. It is merely a coincidence that my research builds upon her work.

I am thoroughly grateful for having the opportunity to work with David Brunsma. I have great respect for his work, and much of my own builds upon the foundation that his scholarship has helped to establish. However, those feelings pale in comparison to the admiration and appreciation I have for his guidance. He truly has a gift of mentorship and his humanness and humility sincerely move me. His ability to make you feel like you (and your research) matter, within an atmosphere that feels designed to prove to you that you don't, is a gift that I am fortunate to benefit from.

I am deeply indebted to Karen Cerulo for the various ways that she helped me during my graduate career. From the very beginning of this journey until the very end, she has offered me reaffirmation as a doctoral student navigating a process that felt soul-crushing at times. As the professor of one of my first graduate courses, the new department chair at a time when I strongly considered leaving, or as my dissertation chair who was willing to advocate for whatever she felt was in my best interests, Karen has

been the kindest soul to me throughout this journey at Rutgers. She has always been one of the only faculty members who I felt comfortable calling on their cell phone without warning at any time of day if I was ever upset or worried about something. Karen is a woman who will slip away to a corner during a conference reception being held in her honor to talk you through a critical and overwhelming decision, giving you her undivided attention. Her support is greater than the sum of all of these parts and I am truly thankful that I have it.

There are those who shared parts of this journey with me, enriching my experience beyond measure like: Nia, Niki, Dawne, Jennifer, Janet, Dena, Andy, the "cool kids," my entire cohort, Tamara, Shan, Dianne, Lisa, Diane, and countless others. Whether it was in a writing group, an accountability group, a hang-out group, or just a "help" group, I am happy to have shared this journey with all of you in some way.

I have heartfelt gratitude for Elizabeth who was always willing to share whatever insight she had if she thought that it would help make my load lighter (and it usually did).

To Lisa, the remedy to my isolation, the person who made my scholarly journey easier, if only for a season, just by traveling this academic path with me. For that reason alone, you will always be loved.

And then there's my "gang." In an attempt to build a community that would hopefully prevent others from having isolating graduate experiences like my own, I was apparently engaging in a self-serving endeavor. Theresa, Brittany, Jason, Portia and Brooklynn, you guys have supported me at every turn from the moment I met each of you respectively. You all literally held me up as I pushed myself past my physical limits to finish this project. When I am presenting, no matter what time of the morning, you are all

front and center in the audience. If I am camping out in my office trying to meet a deadline, you guys are there to make sure that I have eaten and that all my needs are met. When I accomplished one of the most challenging goals of my life, you all celebrated with me as if it were your own. I have no words that can express my gratitude and love for you guys and you will never be able to convince me that I have given you even half of what you have given me. I am not worried about moving on because I know that I take you all with me.

There are also those whose paths I've crossed along this journey who have completely transcended the bounds of academia. Rick and Rosanna, in different ways you both remind me that academics are normal people too. From both of you I get academic support that only a close friend can provide, void of most filters and informed by experience. I can count on Rick for stern messages like, "hurry up and get out of grad school." And I can count on Rosie for compassion and an understanding of the circumstances that have complicated my journey. I have benefited from both approaches (only a sparing amount of Rick's approach was preferable) and I love you both tremendously for always being there for me. You both enriched my graduate experience, but more importantly you both thoroughly enrich my life.

My life is also enriched as a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., an organization dedicated to sisterhood, scholarship and service. My Sorors inspire and motivate me, but most of all they love me like only a Soror can. There are a specific few whose support I'd be remiss if I didn't mention. Whether they commiserated as a fellow doctoral candidate, delivered meals to ease the load, or prayed over the challenges and obstacles that I experienced, they all supported me in whatever way that they could. I am

so very grateful for my Specials Angelique and Melissa, My "Dr. Grand" Veronica, and My Sands Shannon. They all constantly remind me of the meaning of sisterhood through their love and support.

There aren't enough hours in the day to thank those in my circle of friends for all they have done. If I listed all of the ways they have supported me, this section would be longer than my entire dissertation. However, for each friend, there was a prominent display of support that sustained me throughout this process. For years, "nocturnal" was a word that characterized my writing routine, but it was also a word that described my friend Kahena's sleeping habits. Night after night as I typed away in my office, Kahena loaned a watchful eye, periodically checking on me throughout the night. If I left my office at night to use the bathroom, our system dictated that I had to call her to "escort" me via phone. I am not sure if this system actually made me feel safer, but it surely made me feel loved.

When I embarked upon this journey, Kanika's emotional support carried me for those first few critical years when my fortitude was constantly being tested. I was miserable for an extended period of time, exhausted by a commute from NY to NJ, a workload that included classes and teaching, and the overall stress of graduate student life. Kanika welcomed our routine conversations, talking to me the entire drive every time I made the commute. Although I am certain that her employer did not appreciate this show of support, I will always be grateful that she welcomed our conversations every single day, lending me her ear even when she knew that I'd have nothing positive to say. That truly sustained me.

My friend Saskia has always tried her best to push me out of my comfort zone so that I could realize my full potential. She is my only friend who appears unconcerned with pissing me off, so she decides what she thinks is in my best interests, and acts accordingly even when I fight her. Before I learned to enjoy conferences and how not to be overwhelmed by presenting, Sas constantly tried to encourage me. She would show up to conferences when I asked her not to, unfazed by the potential wrath that could follow. I am not sure what inspired her to do this year after year, but I suspect that it must be the fact that even when I resisted and asked her not to come, seeing her face in the crowd would always make me abundantly grateful for her support. I was never any less of a rock star to her, even after the bad presentations. She believed in my potential as a scholar before I believed that this day would ever come. Now she revels in saying, "I told you so," and *I love her the bestest* for the fact that she did.

Perhaps the hardest to thank would be Tammi and Kemba who did everything and anything in their power to help me. Tammi has literally spent my entire graduate career as the captain of my support/crisis team. She helped me pick up broken pieces from my very first semester to the very last one. When technology waged a war against me taking my data as its P.O.W., Tammi didn't rest until she found someone who could recover my lost files. When I decided that I wanted to conduct 60 qualitative interviews with biracial people, Tammi tapped every resource possible to secure potential respondents. When I was frustrated or upset, or in need of a research assistant, Tammi would wear any hat necessary to help me succeed. She is one of my biggest supporters and the most loyal friend you will ever meet. She is my sister for a lifetime.

My friend Kemba channeled super-human powers to help me accomplish this goal. There was absolutely nothing that she would not have sacrificed or done if needed. As a result of helping me through the night on several occasions, Kemba, a person who loves sleep more than any earthly possession, learned to skillfully pull an all-nighter out of necessity. In the last three months when my life reached new heights of stressful, her support included cleaning my home, doing my laundry, bringing me very specific food requests, being a research assistant, a teaching assistant, and a therapist. While attempting to adhere to an ambitious timeline, on more than one occasion, I stubbornly and unwisely refused to sleep until I accomplished a set goal. In those instances, Kemba could have reminded me that my actions were stupid and unproductive. Instead, when I stayed awake for days without sleeping, Kemba came to my office uninvited, and sat with me to monitor my status and take me home when I was ready because I was incapable of driving myself. Her level of patience is inhuman, as is her love. If she needed a kidney, I would give her both of mine so she would be covered. She is my DP for life!

And last but not least, I have family. I am not sure how lucky one person can be, but I must be in the running for first place. I owe my Ph.D. to the support and sacrifices that my family have made, both immediate and extended. I would be remiss if I didn't mention my Uncle Richard who is a master of all trades, who for many of my early years on this journey, helped me with anything that would make my life easier. If something broke, he fixed it. If I got sick, he'd take care of me and try to nurse me back to health. I'd like to think that helping me the way that he did gave him practice to become the amazing father that he is today.

There is nothing like a sibling's love. I am blessed to have the support of my brother and sister who occasionally mailed me packages with contents ranging from cookies to portable printers to keep me going. Their random Skype videos of my beloved nephew Sammie absolutely melted my heart through the stress. Though distance separates us, my heart is always with them. I am also blessed to have two cousins, my adoptive little siblings, who are literally a cheerleading squad all on their own. They offered me daily support and never turned their back on me even when I was dangerously sleep deprived and could teach scrooge how to hone his crankiness. At times they drove 70 miles to bring me a meal of my choice, to bring my mother to come see me when I was unable to drive to her, or just to give me a hug if I said I needed one. I never knew that I wanted little siblings until I got them. I truly adore them and love them more than they will ever know.

And I also have a mother. A mother who is supportive. A mother who sacrificed everything to make sure that I understood the importance of education. A mother who passed on the "American Dream" of home ownership to send my brother and me to private school. A mother who believed that investing in me would yield far greater value than any home could yield for herself, overlooking her love of hosting that would become a strain in a shrinking apartment. A mother who waited patiently for me to finish my dissertation year after year, supportive, never, ever, making me feel inadequate because it didn't happen fast enough, or in time for my father to see it happen. Yes, I have a mother, and I am who I am because of that amazing woman!

I'm a very lucky woman who couldn't write a concise "acknowledgement" section, and who isn't apologetic that she didn't. And despite the length of this section, I

am certain that I have still forgotten someone who played a critical role in helping me get

to this point. That should be charged to my sleep deprived brain, and not my heart.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my father who held on as long as he could to see me complete this project. Although he didn't see it happen in life, I know that he's eternally smiling down at his "Dr. Billy Boo."

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In January 2014, popular rapper, and actor, Drake, was the musical guest and host

of *Saturday Night Live* (Michaels 2014). Midway through his opening monologue where

he shared "fun facts" about himself, the host remarked:

> Here's another fun fact: I'm Jewish…. And needless to say, having a Jewish
> mother and a Black father made for a very interesting Bar Mitzvah experience. I
> remember it like it was yesterday [looking up to the right, as if daydreaming]. It
> was 1999, and both sides of my family were meeting for the very first time….

The scene changes and the *SNL* audience is taken to a humorous, four minute, flashback

sketch of Drake reenacting his Bar Mitzvah. Relying heavily on the use of stereotypical

depictions, Drake juxtaposed his White and Black family members, both immediate and

extended, elucidating the sometimes subtle and other times obvious interactional

differences that characterized his family relations. The flashback begins with Drake's

parents' introduction of him at his Bar Mitzvah. His proud Jewish mother tells the crowd

about his preparation for his "Haftorah and Aliyah," important rituals within the Bar

Mitzvah ceremony, to which his Black father, a former musician, quips, "Tora? Aaliyah?

Man, I know those girls. I met them on the road." Drake approaches the microphone to

greet his guests, establishing contrast at the onset: "Thank you all for being here today.

To my mom's side of the family I say, *Shabbat Shalom*. And ummm…to my dad's side

of the family I say, *Wassuuuuuuuuup*……. He announces to the crowd that "as a man" he

no longer uses his birth name, Aubrey, but instead should be called "Drake." Before he

can finish the thought, his Jewish mother swiftly steps in and whispers in his ear. Drake

returns to the microphone to issue a grudging correction: "I'm sorry, umm…Drakob."

After shaking off his seeming disappointment with his mother's Jewish version of his

new moniker, he continues with his speech:

> I want to thank my family, including my grandmothers, Bubbe [Jewish grandmother] and Madear [Black Grandmother], all hundred and fifty cousins, both real [pointing towards unseen White relatives], and play-play, waassup [pointing towards unseen Black relatives]. And I'd like to especially thank my Uncle Larry and Auntie Kim who came all the way from Memphis tonight [his Black Uncle, Larry, approaches the microphone accompanied by his companion].

"You know I wouldn't miss the chance to hear my favorite nephew say a bunch of weird

words that I don't understand…" [Larry's companion chimes in] "Mazel tov!" "Oh, oh,

this here is your Auntie Rhonda." [Larry says pointing to the woman accompanying him]

Drake asks, "What happened to Auntie Kim?" Uncle Larry Responds, "Oh, she back at

the house." Drake's conversation is interrupted by his Jewish Uncle Barry who explains

to Drake the Jewish tradition of giving monetary gifts in increments of 18, before proudly

presenting Drake with an $18 savings bond. Uncle Larry follows suit by proudly

presenting Drake with a check for $1,000, then immediately stepping in with a lowered

voice instructs Drake not to cash the check for 90 days. Amused by the behavior of both

uncles, Drake turns to his guests and explains [the lights dim]:

> We clearly have our differences, but um... I'm so proud of both sides of my culture. Uncle Barry…Uncle Larry… you're Jewish [pointing to Uncle Barry], you're Black [pointing to Uncle Larry], I'm both. We're a family! You know what? Let me tell you how it goes [grabbing the microphone from the stand]. D.J. Mordecai, hit that beat!

Drake then breaks out into a free-style rap song about his experience being biracial[1]:

[Chorus sung to the tune of "Hava Nagila"]

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[1] Throughout this study, the word "biracial" is used to describe a person with one Black and one White parent.

I'm Black and Jewish
Don't be so foolish
I'm Black and Jewish
It's a Mitzvah

[Rap-Verse]
Please don't forget I'm Black, please don't forget I'm Jewish
I play ball like Lebron and I know what a W-2 is
Chilling in Boca Raton with my mensch, Lenny Kravitz
The only purple drink we sip is purple Manischewitz
At my show, you won't simply put your hands in the air
We can also raise a chair or recite a Jewish prayer
Like: *Baruch Yitadel Yisrael*
Ve'et ha Kim Kardashian Kanye West, Amen
[Verses omitted]
I read the Old Testament, okra and matzahball, I'll eat the rest of it
I celebrate Hanukkah, dated Rihannakah
Birth right in Israel, mama from Canada,
Daddy from Africa
Best of worlds when you're Jewish with Black in ya
Challah!

Although a little heavy on trite stereotypes, the sketch was humorous for a number of reasons but largely because the main element of Drake's truth, his lived experience, was threaded throughout the entire flashback. He depicted his family experience as one that was heavily influenced by relatives with very different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Drake explicitly and implicitly emphasized the constant identity work (Goffman 1971) involved in deploying those various dimensions of his identity(s) within the same social context. This was not something he had ever had to do prior to turning thirteen, as he indicated in his monologue before the flashback sketch. The entire Bar Mitzvah scenario was structured around simultaneously accommodating members from both sides of his family. In jest, he emphasized the different ways that he relates to members on each side of his family, but also accentuated his sense of belonging within both sides of his family.

Most noteworthy about the *SNL* video is how little time was spent addressing the differences between Drake's parents. Instead, his extended family members were the focal point. This calls to attention the role that the extended family plays in the process of developing a sense of one's racial self. Although the intended purpose of this sketch was entertainment, the juxtaposition that Drake depicted loosely reflected his personal experience, one that he has shared publicly through various mass media sources.

If one is to believe that the gist of Drake's Bar Mitzvah experience wasn't wildly exaggerated, then that would suggest that extended family members are far more influential than the literature on biracial identity would suggest. Within the scholarship, the family has long been regarded as influential on the process of racial identity development (Bowles 1993; Kerwin et al. 1993; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002). However, a closer look reveals an overwhelming majority of the discourse regarding the influence of family focuses on parents to the near exclusion of other family members. There are few examples of scholars who devote equitable attention to non-parental members of the family (Brown 2001; Kilson 2001; Childs 2005; DaCosta2007). This reveals a significant lag behind other disciplines, such as family studies, where one could locate a host of studies that focus on siblings as informative socializing agents with considerable influence (Dunn 1989; Brody 1996; Howe and Recchia 2005; Kramer and Conger 2009; Cox 2010). For almost a decade, scholarship on the racial socialization of biracial children has established understandings of the strategies and approaches utilized by parents, but to date there has been only cursory dialogue regarding the nature of non-parental influence. Though the impact that parents have on a biracial child's racial

identity development is undoubtedly significant, that influence does not warrant the privileged position that it holds within studies of racial identity and racial socialization.

Drake's Bar Mitzvah flashback perfectly illustrates the need for a better understanding of the nature of extended family member relationships and their role in the racial socialization process. Broadly, this dissertation attempts to expand and enrich, the way that familial racial socialization of biracial children is conceptualized. Like all other members of the family, biracial children are inextricably embedded within their larger family context (Kreppner and Lerner 1989). Therefore, conversations about "how" siblings and extended family members engage in racial socialization are critical for the advancement of the field.

Building on a concept within family studies that frames the family as the matrix where socialization originates (Zukow 1989), I develop a multidimensional concept that I term, the *Family Nexus of Racial Socialization* (FNRS). Here I attempt to push this conversation forward with a focus on racial socialization, adding breadth to the scope of influential agents and dimensions of depth through the identification of agent-specific mechanisms of racial socialization and an elaborate depiction of their interconnectedness. By borrowing from the work of Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005), much of the structure of parental racial socialization in the FNRS was formed. However, the FNRS adds more dimension to present models by elucidating various relationship dynamics between siblings and extended family members, respectively, that respondents reported had shaped their self-understandings. The findings from each chapter of my dissertation respectively, focused on specific family members informing the development of the FNRS. This concept brings overlooked family members to the forefront and deconstructs

their relationship dynamics with biracial respondents that constitute influential mechanisms of racial socialization. The FNRS is conceptually richer than previous models, enhanced by the incorporation of agent-specific mechanisms of racial socialization that illustrate the nature in which different types of family members engage in racial socialization and the interconnectedness of their influence.

The insightful respondent narratives detailing experiences with various family members inspire the concept of the FNRS. Overall, this study is mainly concerned with two aspects of familial racial socialization. First, this study is interested in uncovering the family members that respondents report had an impact on them. Common experiences among the respondents reveal patterns with specific types of non-parental family members that inspired the incorporation of various mechanisms of racial socialization in the FNRS. Second, this study is interested in how various family members engage in the racial socialization of the biracial respondent. Accounts of specific incidents, experiences, or attitudes all provide information about patterned behaviors among certain types of family members that account for mechanisms of racial socialization. These findings inform and shape the development of the mechanisms of racial socialization within the FNRS, offering a significant empirical contribution to the literature. There is no shortage of studies that uncover the "who" or "what" of racial identity and racial socialization, however, this study, and its concept of the *Family Nexus of Racial Socialization*, thoroughly addresses the "who," "what," and "*how*" of familial racial socialization.

FAMILIAL RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

Family Dynamics

The family is the epicenter of socialization and identity formation where a person develops a sense of self (Zukow 1989; Demo, Small, and Savin-Williams 1987). Within this context, parents play a big role in shaping the biracial person's understanding of race and how they should understand themselves. Bowles (1993), Kerwin et al. (1993) and Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) assert that messages from parents shape racial identity outcomes when those messages contain racial assignments, provide validation, and/or offer clarity/support for identity negotiations. These studies glean insight into the dynamics of influential parent-child interactions informing the analysis of parental influence in Chapter Two.

Although there is a consensus across disciplines regarding the influence of parents, the racial identity literature lags behind disciplines that have embraced and explored the family dynamics of influence from non-parental family members. Minuchin (1985) asserts that the family is a complex, integrated whole, which includes parents, children, siblings, and extended family members. The field of biracial identity development would benefit a great deal on the whole if scholars incorporated insight from Minuchin into their future research. More recently, there have been a few studies on biracial identity and/or interracial families that have devoted a chapter to the analysis of the family (Brown 2001; Kilson 2001; Childs 2005; DaCosta 2007). These thoughtful and focused overviews of interracial family experiences do the work of initiating the dialogue that hopefully inspires future research.

Racial Socialization

The literature on racial socialization was founded primarily on the premise that within Black families it is necessary to actively cultivate a healthy self-concept in children who are growing up in a racist society. Parents are charged with the task of orienting their children in particular ways by communicating specific thoughts and beliefs regarding race and racial classification (Boykin and Toms 1985; Peters 1985; Phinney and Chavira1995). As the literature progressed, this definition evolved into one focused on the transmission of messages regarding race. Although primarily concerned with the experiences of Black children, over time the conceptualization of racial socialization broadened in order to become inclusive of the process through which White parents convey messages regarding race to their White children (Hughes and Chen 1999; Hamm 2001; Rockquemore et al. 2006). Within the scant existing research on racial socialization in White families, White parents are described as perpetuating positions of privilege through their avoidance or silence on matters pertaining to race. Their silence implicitly imparts to White children that "race" refers to non-Whites, indirectly promoting a lack of awareness of oneself as a racialized being (Hamm 2001; Rockquemore, Laszloffy and Noveske 2006).

Though few studies have examined the nature of White racial socialization, it is clear within the literature that parents in White families and Black families engage different approaches to racial socialization (Hughes and Chen 1999; Hamm 2001; Rockquemore et al. 2006). This contrast gives rise to an inherently complex and multifaceted racial socialization process for the biracial person. Research on this dynamic of racial socialization within interracial families took form within the literature in the last

decade. Of the extant studies, Rockquemore et al. (2006) has developed the most elaborate conceptual framework and identified three types of racial socialization: preparation for bias, cultural socialization, and racial identification, as well as establishing the role of parents' racial ideologies in that process (Fatimilehin 1999; Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005; Hughes 2006; Rockquemore et al. 2006; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2008). These findings provide a foundation for the development of this study's conceptual approach to analyzing racial socialization.

Csizmadia et al. (2012) stress the need for a more thorough understanding of the socialization techniques used by the parents of multiracial youth and their families, citing the scarcity of data regarding communications on racial matters. Through this analysis of familial socialization and development of the conceptual model FNRS, this dissertation promises to enrich both the racial identity literature and scholarship on racial socialization.

In the Methodological Appendix, I offer a comprehensive analysis of the methods and the data utilized in this study. Here, I will provide a very brief overview of my methodological approach and the respondents. As this dissertation is an examination of the nature of racial socialization within the family, I examined this process by drawing upon data from 22 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with adult, Black/White biracial respondents between the ages of 19-42 who made up a total of 10 sets of siblings; eight of which were sibling pairs, and two of which consisted of sibling triads. Respondents were asked about various aspects of their lives, identities, and experiences with their families. This sibling sample yielded 22 rich narratives that provided a wealth of information about the nature of the respondents' family relationships and experiences

and how that shaped their racial self-understandings. This study also benefited from the use of a sibling comparative design. The sample of siblings in this study was utilized to better understand the nuanced nature of respondents' internalization of racial and life experiences. The findings also inform our understanding of sibling experiences, as well as the nature of sibling influence on each other's identity development.

Terms and definitions. For the purpose of this study, I establish a working definition of the term *racial socialization* by borrowing from the definition established by Thornton et al. (1990:401-402). *Racial Socialization* is the process by which messages, attitudes, behaviors, or practices convey information about racial identity, self-identification, group membership, or social status. The transmission of ideas regarding race can be direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional, and manifest through a range of various mechanisms.

A great deal of scholarship employ the term *parental racial socialization* to signify a focus on parents, however, far too many studies of racial socialization continue to take for granted that the term *racial socialization* refers exclusively to parents, creating confusion within the literature. In this study, I use the term *familial racial socialization* to denote inclusion of all members of the family as potential agents of racial socialization. I also employ the use of other agent-specific terms like *parental racial socialization*, *sibling racial socialization*, and *extended-family racial socialization* to refer to socialization engaged by agents in specific family roles. These distinctions are critical to accomplishing the broader goals of this study.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The first chapter of this dissertation outlined the empirical and conceptual goals of this study, and the analytical tools employed to accomplish those goals. I frame this analysis as an endeavor to make an empirical contribution to the present discourse and scholarship on racial socialization within the family. I accomplish this by utilizing the racial experiences recounted by biracial respondents involving their parents, siblings, and extended family members. I explain my use of sibling sets in order to comparatively analyze these processes of racial socialization, enriching the findings from individual respondent narratives. I orient this analysis within the scholarship on racial socialization, detailing how I build upon that literature with the empirical and conceptual findings of this study. By examining respondent experiences with family members who have been neglected within the literature, like siblings and extended family members, I establish a more inclusive framework of "who" the influential agents of racial socialization are, and "how" they approach the racial socialization of biracial people.

The following is an outline of how each chapter builds and develops towards the concept of the FNRS that incorporates all of the heuristic findings from chapters two through five:

In Chapter Two, I explore the nature and impact of parental racial socialization. The analysis in this chapter is framed by four goals. First, I examine parental racial ascription through the labels and messages conveyed by parents regarding racial identification. Second, I analyze the impact of those parental messages on the respondent's racial identity and self-identification. The last two goals entail comparative analyses comparing the respondent narratives within the sibling sets in this sample. For

the third goal in this chapter, I assess the consistency of the messages that parents convey to their children regarding racial identification. And fourth, I evaluate whether siblings are impacted by their parents' racial messages uniformly. I detail and outline the findings that reveal that the most prominent patterns of parental racial ascription are tied to whether parents engage in racial identification together or independently.

In Chapter Three, I examine the nature and impact of extended family member racial socialization. I address the general neglect of extended family member influence within the literature on racial socialization. I deconstruct the influential attitudes, behaviors, and experiences that respondents report having with their extended family members. This facilitates the identification of the four mechanisms of racial socialization that capture the respondents' experiences with extended family members. This is followed by a discussion of these mechanisms as they relate to the race of the extended family members and the patterns that emerged.

In Chapter Four, I analyze the nature of sibling racial socialization and the ways in which siblings are influential in shaping the respondent's self-understanding. The findings from this analysis are outlined and reveal that siblings are influential as ancillary agents of racial socialization. I assert that when engaging in exchanges that foster support, siblings have a great deal of influence on the respondent. I outline and describe four different mechanisms of racial socialization that characterize the nature of the exchanges described by respondents, establishing a discourse within the literature on racial socialization that fully recognizes the positioning of a sibling to provide unique forms of support.

In Chapter Five, I synthesize the findings from chapters two through four. Using a multidimensional concept of racial socialization that includes parents, siblings, and extended family members, I present a concept called the *Family Nexus of Racial Socialization*. This concept grounds our understanding of the nature of familial racial socialization. By shifting the focus from parents to a more inclusive model of influential familial agents, I lay the groundwork for a better understanding of all of the actors within the family who are directly and indirectly shaping biracial self-understandings. I also incorporate the findings regarding the mechanisms of racial socialization that help to identify and illustrate specifically how these various agents are engaging in racial socialization and the interconnectedness of those influences.

In the last chapter, Chapter 6, I discuss in detail the methods that I used to conduct this study. This includes a description of the grounded theory approach and how that shaped this project. I describe in detail how I recruited respondents and the structure of the interview process. I also provide detail regarding how the data was coded and the measures used to frame this project. Finally, I elaborate on my use of a sibling sample and the analytical value that it added to the established methods in this study.

Chapter 2

Parents: Direct Agents of Racial Socialization

During an episode of *Inside the Actors Studio*, host James Lipton asked Halle

Berry to recall how her mother taught her to understand her identity. Halle responded:

> I finally got up the courage to ask her the question, "Okay you're White, I'm
> Black. Help me make sense of all this. Who am I? Who does that make me?
> Because trying to be in the middle, trying to be both, just isn't working for me.
> There's nobody around me like me and this just isn't working. It's just further
> ostracizing me from either group. So, what does one do here?" And it was really
> simple what she told me. She said, "Well, let's go, let's go look in the mirror."
> And she said, "Okay, look at me. What do you see?" I said, "White skin, blonde
> hair, blue eyes, that's you." And she said, "What do you see when you look at
> you?" I said, "Brown eyes, brown skin, brown hair." So she said, "We're
> obviously very different." And she said, "You will find it easier, I believe, to
> identify with a group that looks most like you." And I didn't really take that in at
> first because I thought that would be denying her, my primary caregiver, the hero
> of my life, the woman who sacrificed and loved me more than anybody. But I
> realized after a while, she had a point. So I made the decision early on to accept
> that I was really a Black woman who had a White mother and that it was all okay
> (Lipton and Wurtz 2007).

Growing up with one Black parent and one White parent, Halle Berry found herself

unclear about how to racially identify herself; the mismatch between her and her

mother's physical appearance complicated her identity formation process and her

understanding of her racial self. Like many of the respondents in this study, she solicited

the help of a parent to provide clarity on the aspects of her racial experience that weren't

aligned as smoothly as they often are for a person with parents of the same race. Parental

guidance during the identity formation process, whether initiated by parents or solicited

by their children, has been found to be very influential in shaping how biracial people

navigate the racial identity options available to them (Kich 1992; Root 1992; Bowles

1993; Kerwin et al. 1993; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002; Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005).

In this chapter, I build upon the existing literature on parental racial socialization of biracial children by analyzing how parental racial label assignments impact a biracial person's racial identity development. First, I assess the racial labels, if any, ascribed by parents to their biracial children. This will provide insight into the messages being communicated by parents. Second, I survey the self-reported implications of those parental racial assignments for racial identity and/or self-identification outcomes among respondents. Third, I evaluate whether sibling accounts indicate a consistency between the racial labels or messages ascribed by parents to different children. Last, I assess whether siblings report being impacted similarly. This analysis of parental racial ascription and influence is furthered by analyzing the experiences of biracial siblings. Sibling narratives facilitate the process of evaluating the consistency of parental racial assignments between siblings and the uniformity of impact reported by respondents raised by the same parents. This is an innovative approach that offers a significant contribution to our understanding of parental racial socialization by elucidating whether parents convey similar racial messages to their different children and whether their children are uniformly impacted by those racial assignments.

THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS

Much of the literature on the influence of parents and the biracial experience can be grouped into two bodies of work. One focus within the literature is on the racial labeling of children with one Black parent and one White parent. These studies have

examined parental racial labeling by analyzing the racial identification of Black/White

biracial children by their parents on surveys or forms (Qian 2004; Brunsma 2005; Roth

2005). These findings shed insight on how parents view the racial group membership of

their biracial children and, broadly, how those views are transforming over time. These

studies reveal a recent shift from "Black" racial identification of biracial children to a

blended racial-label identification.[2] This is attributed in part to weakening social

constraints affording more agency and, by default, more racial category options.

      Variance in parental racial identification of biracial children has been attributed to

several factors. It was found that higher levels of income and educational attainment are

correlated with higher levels of blended-label racial identification (Roth 2005).

Additionally, several studies have uncovered that mother's race and/or father's race, can

also play a role in the racial identification of biracial children. In mixed race unions

between Black and White people, there is a correlation between Black fathers and Black

racial identification of biracial children (Qian 2004; Brunsma 2005; O'Donoghue 2005).

These patterns of parental racial identification beg the exploration of how those

designations are relayed directly to children through socialization and the impact that

those messages have on the biracial child's racial identity development.

      The other focus within the literature on parental influence includes studies that

present conceptual models that outline the strategies and techniques used by parents to

racially socialize their children (Rockquemore and Lazsloffy 2005; Rockquemore et al.

2006). Rockquemore et al. (2006) develop a conceptual framework with which we can

analyze parental racial socialization practices. They identify three types of racial

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[2] I use the word "blended" to describe any label or racial designation that attempts to incorporate a person's Black and White heritage (Daniel 1996; Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005), e.g., Mixed; biracial; Black and White; and half and half.

socialization: preparation for bias, cultural socialization, and racial identification. These conceptual groupings lay the groundwork for understanding how parents engage strategies of racial socialization with their biracial children, and other studies have focused specifically on examining how White parents negotiate the racial socialization of their biracial children to be aware of racism and their Black racial heritage (Twine 2004; O'Donoghue 2005). The respondent narratives in this study provide insight into the messages that White and Black parents convey to their biracial children regarding race, shedding light on how parents approach discussions of race and racial classification. Also, from these accounts, I deepen our present understanding of how parents shape their biracial child's racial identity development by gleaning valuable insight into how respondents are impacted by their parents and their messages.

PARENTAL RACIAL ASCRIPTION

A majority of my respondents recall their parents conveying some sort of message about racial classification and these racial messages were conveyed in a variety of ways. Respondents like Rick recall his parents explicitly engaging in racial assignment. Rick recalls, "I was told I was biracial, I was told I was Black and White." This direct labeling involved his parents explaining on more than one occasion that he is biracial. For other respondents like Sophia, those parental racial ascriptions were more casual. She describes how her parents addressed race: "Our mother would always call us 'the golden children.' Like, she never identified us as being White, like her. And I mean… it was the same for our father. Our father never identified us as being Black. So, we were, I guess, our own race." Although Rick's and Sophia's parents approached their discussion of their child's

racial group membership differently—one directly, the other casually—both strategies conveyed their parents' thoughts about racial classification.

In Table 1, I outline pertinent information for each respondent. Overall there were four types of approaches to racial ascription that were employed by parents; some parents assigned Black racial labels to their children, others assigned a blended label, some de-emphasized the use of racial labels, which I refer to as "non-racial labels," and some parents opted to remain silent on matters of race. Silence on matters pertaining to race and racial ascription, whether intentional or unintentional, is regarded as an approach to racial socialization that yields identifiable outcomes. Although there were no respondents in this sub-sample who reported that their parents ascribed a White racial label, there were reported cases in the larger sample as well as in previous studies (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002).

The racial ideologies that parents hold often dictate the racial labels that they assign to their children irrespective of the race of the parent (Rockquemore et al. 2006). Some parents espouse color-blind views of race, described by Bonilla-Silva (2003) as a denial of racial differences as well as racial inequalities. Those who hold these ideologies often accept the racial status quo and minimize the salience of race. As a result, these parents often encourage the use of blended racial labels or de-emphasize the importance of racial labeling altogether, promoting egalitarian views on race relations (Hughes 2006)

Table 1 also outlines whether respondents experienced dual-parent racial ascription, sole-parent racial ascription, or dissonant-parent racial ascription (when two parents independently assign conflicting racial labels or messages). I list whether siblings recall their parents conveying a similar message regarding racial labels and/or racial

**Table 1. Parental Racial Ascriptions (PRA) & Impact**

Name	Age	Parent Race[i]	Parental Racial Ascription[ii]	Parental Ascriber	Sibling Uniformity of message	Impact SI[iii]	Impact RI[iv]	Sibling Uniformity of Impact[v]
Harriet	29		Black	Sole-Paternal		No	No	
Louis	31	WM/BF	Blended	Dissonant-Paternal	No	Yes(+)	No	RSI-No RSU-Yes
			Black	Dissonant-Maternal		No	Yes(+)	
Karen	30		Black	Sole-Paternal		No	No	
Eve	27	WM/BF	Blended	Sole-Maternal	No	Yes(+)	No	N/A
Rhonda	34	BM/WF	No PRA	N/A		N/A	N/A	
Jake	30		No PRA	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
Elizabeth	41		Black	Dissonant-Paternal		Yes(-)	No	
		WM/BF	Agency	Dissonant-Maternal	Yes	No	No	Yes
Vince	42		Black	Sole-Paternal		Yes(-)	No	
Sarah	29		No PRA	N/A	No[vi]	N/A	N/A	
Sophia	21	WM/BF	Blended	Dual		Yes(+)	Yes(+)	RSI-Yes RSU-No
George	19		Blended	Dual	Yes	Yes(+)	No	
Serena	27		No PRA	N/A		N/A	N/A	
Kelly	29	WM/BF	Black	Sole-Paternal	No	No	No	N/A
Hannah	39	BM/WF	Non-racial	Dual		No	No	Yes
Joy	34		Non-racial	Dual	Yes	No	No	
Natalie	24		Non-racial	Dual		Yes(+)	Yes(+)	
Alicia	23	WM/BF	Non-racial	Dual	Yes	Yes(+)	Yes(+)	Yes
Joan	32		Black	Dual		Yes(+)	No	
Thomas	28	BM/WF	Black	Sole-Maternal	Yes	Yes(+)	No	Yes
Grace	32		Blended	Dual		Yes(+)	Yes(+)	
Rick	29	WM/BF	Blended	Dual	Yes	Yes(+)	Yes(+)	Yes[vii]
Lynn	23		Blended	Dual		Yes(+)	Yes(+)	

[i] "WM/BF"-White Mother/Black Father & "BM/WF"-Black Mother/White Father.

[ii] "No PRA" denotes the respondents who do not recall any messages from their parents.

[iii] SI-Self-Identification.

[iv] RI-Racial Identity.

[v] Reported for siblings who both report Parental Racial Ascription.

[vi] Sarah is Sophia and George's half-sister. All three are Black/White biracial. They share a Black father, and Sophia and George share a White mother.

classification, including those respondents whose parents were silent regarding matters of racial classification. And lastly, I indicate whether respondents reported their racial identity or self-identification being impacted by their parents' messages and whether siblings reported being impacted uniformly. There were several patterns that emerged within this analysis of parental racial ascription.

Blending Races, Erasing Differences

There was a tendency for parents to assign certain racial labels when doing so collaboratively versus independently (see Figure 1). Many parents who engaged in dual-parent racial socialization avoided mono-racial assignments. Instead of conveying to children that they are either Black or White, these parents collaboratively told their children that they are "both races" or they deemphasized racial labeling altogether.
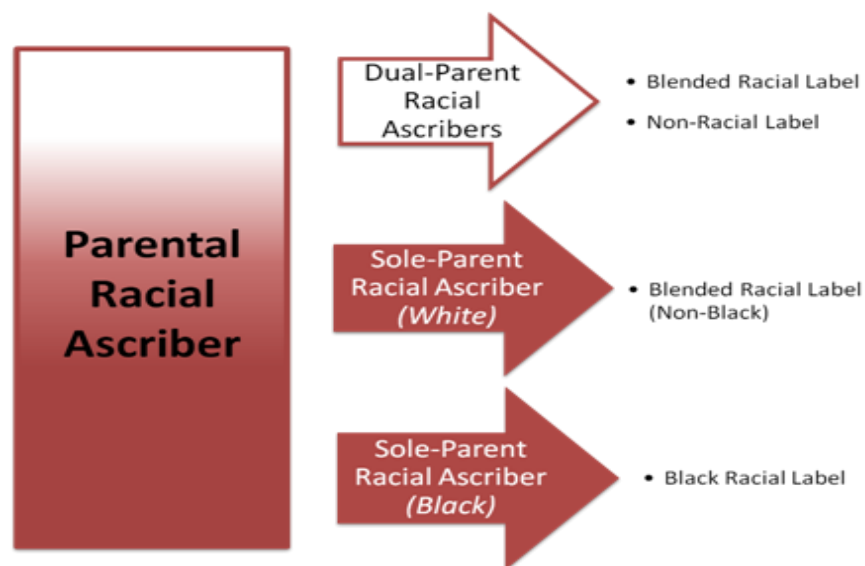
Figure 1. Patterns Among Respondent Parental Racial Ascribers and the Racial Label Assigned

Both Childs (2005) and Dalmage (2000) explored the experiences of members of interracial families and describe the ways that they navigate racial challenges. Both authors described parents in interracial relationships having views that are color-blind in nature. These views involved parents accepting the racial status quo and moving away from one-drop[3] understandings of racial classification. The parents of the respondents in this study who approach race collaboratively, did so in a way that was aligned with Childs' (2005) and Dalmage's (2000) findings. These parents emphasized that the respondent isn't a single race, as did Lynn's parents who stressed that she has a dual racial heritage. Lynn, a 23 year old recent college graduate who lives with her White mother and Black father, recalled the way that they taught her to understand her racial heritage:

> I feel like my parents have really raised us in a way that we know both ways. We celebrate Hanukkah; my mom's Jewish. We do Christmas. And I feel like I know my mom's side, the White side. I know my dad's side, the Black side. And I feel like they've raised us to make that experience, and they raised us that, you don't—there's no—you don't have to be in a box. There's all different things, and I will never change who I am. I love being Black and White because I'm different, and I love being different than other people…I think that's a good thing, because more people are mixing. But I feel, yeah, I feel like they taught us that: "You're Black and White. Okay? And that's what you are."

This understanding of racial classification was common among parents of respondents who discussed race with their children together, irrespective of their mother's race or father's race. This strategy can be described as an attempt by parents in interracial unions to foster feelings of racial inclusion.

Another strategy employed by dual-parent racial ascribers involved deemphasizing the importance of racial labeling. Parents who employed this approach to

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[3] This is a long-held convention in the U.S. that assigns Black racial labels to those with any Black ancestry (Davis 1991).

racial ascription attempted to impart that racial labels do not define the respondent as an individual, often discouraging the use of racial labels altogether. Hannah recalls this non-racial parental ascription. Hannah was raised by her Black mother and White father, and describes her parents' views in detail:

> They actually emphasized lack of race, for lack of a better word. They actually–or rather, they deemphasized race. Their attitude was: Don't feel that you have to be Black. Don't feel that you have to be White. You are who you are. You are Hannah. You are special. You are wonderful all on your own.

Hannah describes how her parents rejected racial labels and stressed that they didn't matter. This was also the racial message that Natalie recalled her White mother and Black father imparting. Natalie recalls one of the many ways that her mother and father casually conveyed that race wasn't important. She shares a story that her mom told her:

> When I was born, they asked my mom like, "So, what are you? What's your husband?" And she was like, "He's a police officer." And that wasn't what the nurse was asking her. She [the nurse] was kind of like, "No. Like, what is he?" And she [her mother] was like, "He's a police officer." Like, you're not writing this down. Like, why do you need to write this down?

Natalie gathered from her parents' stories that racial labels were not an important or useful means of identifying people. These accounts illustrate that when parents approach racial assignments together, they often do so in a way that blends the family together with labels, or attempts to unify them by deemphasizing racial differences.

Racial Solidarity

Among respondents who recall only one parent conveying messages about racial classification, there seem to be patterns regarding the messages that they relay to their children. As seen in Figure 1, when two parents collaboratively convey a message regarding racial classification, irrespective of mother's race or father's race, they often

promote blended labels or deemphasize racial labels. However, patterns of parental racial

assignment were different among the parents of respondents who recall sole-parent racial

ascriptions. Parents assigning labels independently were less inclined to convey messages

of blended and non-racial classification and more likely to relay messages regarding

racial classification that reflected their own racial group membership.

When White mothers engaged in discussions of racial classification

independently, they often did so in ways that casually dismissed one-drop rules of racial

assignment. These messages regarding racial classification did not convey that the

respondent is a blend or that racial labels aren't important. Instead these messages subtly

reject rigid Black assignments. Eve's White mother casually discouraged exclusionary

Black labels. Her mother's message was geared more towards her interest in not being

disregarded. Eve describes this message, recalling a conversation she had with her White

mother about President Obama's Black self-identification. Eve recalls her mother's

comments and her response:

> It's actually with like, the President—you know, those definitely sparked
> conversations. Because my mom, when—you know, because the media likes to
> see him as just "the Black president" and she just—she kind of felt some kind of
> way about, "Oh what if his mom was alive? Do you think she would be okay with
> him saying that?" And I'd say, "Well, how would *you* feel?" And she was like,
> "Well, I would be kind of hurt, I know, if you just said that you were just Black."
> And so, and I kind of, I tried to explain to her, "But like, in the eyes of society, if
> that's how they see you…"

In this case, Eve's White mother doesn't directly impart to her that she is a blend of both

parents. Instead, she conveys that a Black label would be hurtful to her. These are subtle,

yet important, distinctions that may frame how a biracial person will internalize the

message imparted by their parent

The pattern among sole-parent racial ascribers was strongest when the parent conveying the message regarding race was Black. Among many of the respondents who described having a sole-parent ascriber who was Black, the racial assignment that they conveyed was a Black racial label. While both Black fathers and Black mothers who independently impart messages regarding racial classification assigned Black labels, more often Black fathers engaged in parental racial ascription independently with a White mother in the home, and in one case, when the White mother explicitly disagreed with the message being imparted. This is in stark contrast to the patterns that exist when Black fathers assigned racial labels in conjunction with White mothers. It appears that when parental racial messages are imparted independently, Black fathers take that opportunity to instill one-drop rules of racial assignment.

Black fathers often indirectly cautioned the respondent against understanding themselves in any way other than as a Black person. This feeling was conveyed through the use of words like "remember" when assigning a Black racial label. Vince recalls his Black father often telling him, "'You are a Black man,' he says. 'Remember–you are a Black man.'" Some respondents recalled their Black fathers imparting to them that although they have a White mother, society regards them as Black. In instances like Karen's, her only memory of her parents discussing race was when her Black father urged her to indicate that she was Black on college applications because of the perceived advantages. This context specific ascription was also conveyed independently by a Black father.

In the literature on parental racial labeling of biracial children, father's race has been found to be correlated with the assignment of certain racial labels (Qian 2004;

Brunsma 2005; O'Donoghue 2005). Qian (2004) found that White mothers and Black fathers had a tendency to racially identify their children as Black, and Brunsma (2005) argued that Black fathers have a tendency to racially identify their child as Black. Here I found that collaboratively White mothers and Black fathers assign blended racial labels or non-racial ascriptions, contrary to Qian's (2004) assertion. My findings add to Brunsma's (2005) assertion that there is a connection between Black fathers and Black label assignments, revealing that this occurred in cases of sole-parent racial ascriptions. My findings also conditionally support assertions made by Roth (2005) in her study. Roth's study revealed that parental racial identification of biracial children on forms is influenced by the race of the head of the household, specifically when that parent is Black, and especially if that parent is a Black mother or a White father. In this study, the majority of Black sole-parent racial ascribers were head of their household and they did, in fact, assign Black racial labels. However, there were several Black parents who were the head of household but assigned a blended racial label when doing so in collaboration with the other White parent. This speaks to the possibility that what parents are doing on forms may be incongruous with what they are saying to their children. When racially identifying children on forms, collaboratively or independently, White mothers and Black fathers may have a stronger tendency towards Black racial labels. However, in regard to the messages that they convey directly to their children, the racial assignments may change depending on whether one parent is conveying the racial assignment or both.

Physical Appearance

Many of the respondents in this study reported a parental racial ascription that was consistent with their sibling's. This can be attributed to the fact that parental racial ascriptions are often a product of the racial ideologies that parents hold, and as a result, parents view the racial classification of a child with one Black parent and one White parent in a concrete way. This often results in parents imparting their views of racial classification to all of their children. However, there were cases where a respondent's account of his or her parents' message regarding racial classification was discordant with their sibling's account. These respondents reported that their Black father indicated that they were Black but their sibling did not report the same parental racial ascription.

Preparation for and/or an explanation of bias was a motivating factor for some parents to impart to their children that they were viewed as Black by others in society (Rockquemore et al. 2006). This was described by more than one respondent in this study as a racial socialization technique that they recall their Black father employing. These fathers either attempted to prepare their child for the bias that they would experience being perceived as a Black person in society, or they attempted to explain why an experience with racial bias occurred. While this was a common practice among Black sole-parent racial ascribers, in more than one case a respondent recalled their Black father imparting that message, while their sibling did not recall hearing a similar message.

Harriet, a 29 year old who was raised in a predominantly White neighborhood, recalls many experiences being discriminated against because of her race. Many of these experiences involved either being accused of theft or being followed around retail stores. Harriet noted that her parents didn't discuss race or racial classification often, but that it

came up after negative experiences. She briefly describes one of those incidents and her

Black father's reaction:

> I mean, it was never—it just wasn't part of conversation in the house….unless
> something happened. At the mall, one time, I was like, followed around in *The
> Gap* when I was like 16 or something. And it was like, and it was like, "Well, you
> know that's because you're Black." Like, "That's why they were following you."
> Like, my dad said that.

This is in contrast with her brother Louis's memory of his father explaining to him that he

is multiracial. What stands out about the inconsistent messages that these siblings recall is

the observed race of each sibling. Harriet is a brown skinned woman with thick, curly

hair whose observed race is Black. This is in stark contrast to her brother Louis who has a

lighter complexion and straight hair, whose observed race is Hispanic.

Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) suggest that one of the factors that shape

how parents approach racial socialization is their child's physical appearance. This is

supported by respondent accounts like Harriet and Louis'. This also holds true for Kelly

and Serena. Serena has very light skin and a Hispanic observed race. She describes

herself as resembling her White mother, whereas she describes her sister Kelly as

resembling their Black father. Kelly has darker skin and her observed race is Black. Kelly

recalls their Black father telling her mother that he was strict because he was training her

for the racial realities of life that would involve people being hard on her because she is

Black. Serena doesn't recall their father conveying any messages regarding racial

classification at all. Both Harriet and Louis', and Serena and Kelly's, Black fathers could

be described as engaging in differential racial socialization based on their perception of

how their children would navigate the world with different physical appearances. The

observed race of their child may have impacted their need to prepare them for bias and

impart that they are perceived as Black people. This finding furthers our understanding of

what parents are actually saying to their children regarding racial classification, especially because we see that parents have a tendency to assign different labels together than when doing so independently.

Several patterns among the respondents in this study shed light on the nuances of parental racial ascription that have been overlooked by previous studies. The findings here suggest that the role of family context is an important aspect of parental racial socialization. While the approaches to parental racial socialization employed by the parents of respondents reflect those identified in previous studies, the narratives in this study show that there is a relationship between dual-parent ascription and sole-parent ascription, and the specific approaches that are employed by parents. It was revealed that parents who approach racial ascription together often resist one-drop rules in favor of blended labels or a de-emphasis of labels. This is in contrast to the approach taken by parents who ascribed labels independently. Those sole-parent ascribers more often embraced one-drop rules when the parent was Black and resisted one-drop rules when the parent was White. Although siblings generally reported consistent approaches to parental racial socialization, in the instances when sibling accounts of parental socialization were inconsistent there was a notable difference in the physical appearance of the siblings. These findings offer depth to our understanding of parental racial socialization and the divergent outcomes among different families.

IMPACT OF PARENTAL RACIAL ASCRIPTIONS

Patterns were found among respondents that reflect the complexity of parental racial influence. The data showed patterns regarding dual-parent racial ascriptions and

sole-parent racial ascriptions and their impact on the respondent's self-identification and racial identity (illustrated in Figure 2). These patterns reveal that the likelihood of respondents reporting that they were influenced by their parents' racial assignments is related to who was doing the assigning. These patterns held irrespective of the actual racial assignment. In addition to this aspect of racial socialization, the impact of parental messages were either mitigated or strengthened by the respondent's relationship with the parent. This further underscores the dynamic nature of parental influence.

Parent/Child Relationships and the Internalization of Parental Racial Ascriptions

Both positive and negative relationships with parents had a spillover effect, resulting in the respondent's feelings or emotions towards their parents and impacting how they perceived their messages regarding race. This is a useful way of conceptualizing how a biracial person's relationship with their parents may impact how they internalize their parents' racial ascriptions. Positive relationships with both parents could impact the biracial person's desire to be inclusive of both parents' race, adopting a blended label. Alternatively, a positive relationship with one parent could lead to a biracial person aligning themselves with the race of that parent versus their other parent. Respondent Karen, who was raised by her White mother and Black father, is close to both of her parents and refuses to self-identify in a way that denies either parent. She explains, "So I just feel like they both had credit in raising me, and that's just who I am. So I would never deny either race, or either person, basically." Karen self-identifies as biracial and asserts that the adoption of any other label would be disrespectful. For Karen,

a blended label serves the purpose of inclusion and represents an expression of her regard for both of her parents.

When both parents are not in the home, a sense of loyalty may develop to the parent who raised the respondent. The racial identity and self-identification of the biracial person may become aligned with the racial group membership of the parent who raised them. Rhonda, a woman who never knew her White father, explained how she feels about her Black racial identity and self-identification. She states, "I think it's because I was raised by a Black woman, with all West Indian cultures, and that neighborhood was mixed at the time…. so I mean, there were White people around. But my mother raised me, I guess. You know?" In more than one instance, Rhonda describes her loyalty to her Black mother not only impacting how she racially identifies, but also which family members she will interact with. This was echoed by Thomas who was raised with his Black mother and White father until the age of eight when his father left the home and became estranged from the family. Thomas self-identifies and understands himself as Black and elaborates on why he feels this way: "When it comes down to it, if you're given both choices, and you make a decision on what you feel…again, I was cut off at eight years. I don't know what would have happened if I stayed around my father's family." Thomas seems to recognize that his father's absence led to his strong identification with being Black, and had his father never left the home, that outcome may have been different. Both Rhonda's and Thomas' experiences demonstrate the impact of a parent's absence from the home. This impact was particularly noteworthy in Rhonda's case, considering that her Black mother was silent regarding the topic of racial classification and never discussed how Rhonda should racially identify.

A negative relationship with a parent, even when raised by that parent, can influence how a person views that parent's messages regarding racial classification and also how they view members of the racial group to which that parent belongs. Elizabeth was raised in a home with both parents, however she describes her Black father as an alcoholic who was verbally abusive to her mother. This impacted how she viewed all Black men and her association with Black racial labels. Elizabeth explained:

> See, my father—I loved him dearly, but again, he was an alcoholic, sometimes very nasty, verbally abusive, and in my mind, as a child, you know, when you're like five, six, seven, eight, and you see that every day—you know, he was talking to my mom a certain way, cursing her out, cursing me and my brother out, I think to myself: Is that how Black men are?

Elizabeth describes having experiences with her dad that impacted her view of Black men and her aversion to being viewed as Black. She strongly rejects the notion that she is exclusively Black, a message that her father often imparted independently, and describes feeling tormented by everyone who insisted that she was Black growing up.

The respondents in this study describe relationships with their parents that are not atypical from the parent/child relationships of those in intra-racial families. However, in the case of those with parents of different races, these parent/child relationships have spillover effects on the ways that biracial people view their racial selves and self-identification, and also the way that they internalize their parents' messages regarding racial classification.

Teamwork. For many respondents in this study, when both parents ascribe a racial label, regardless of what racial label is assigned, there was a tendency for that assignment to have a positive impact on both their racial identity and their self-identification (see Table 1 and Figure 2). This shifts the focus in the literature away from both the racial message and mother's or father's race to the racial socializing agents who are delivering

the message. By exploring dual and sole parent racial ascriptions, it is revealed that the

most effective parental racial socialization strategy among my respondents was for

parents to convey racial assignments together. In those instances, parents are not only

more impactful, they are more likely to impact both the self-identification and racial

identity of the respondent.
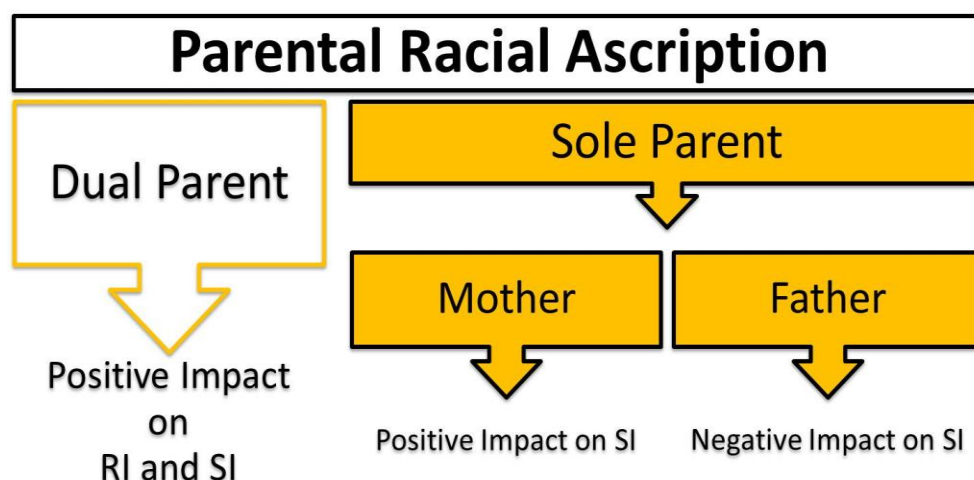
Figure 2. Patterns of Reported Respondent Impact of Parental Racial Ascription on Racial Identity and Self-Identification

Maternal Influence on Self-Identification. A quick glance at Table 1 could lead to

the impression that parents' racial ascriptions didn't show patterns of being more

impactful on either the respondent's racial identity or self-identification. However,

respondent accounts help paint a more nuanced picture of parental influence, building

upon the existing literature by elucidating which aspects of racial identity development

are being impacted and by whom. In a majority of cases where respondents report that

their parents positively shaped their self-identification, their mother was part of the

ascription process. Dual-parent racial ascription was proven to be impactful on racial

self-identification, and mothers are clearly part of that process. However, in the cases of

sole-parent racial ascription, the respondents who reported being positively impacted

were those whose mother was the parent assigning the racial label (see Figure 2 and

Table 1). This pattern generally holds whether the mother is Black or White, and whether

the label assigned is blended or Black. If a mother ascribed a racial label, independently

or in collaboration with a father, there was a strong tendency for the respondent to adopt

a similar label for themselves. This indicates that the positive influence of parental racial

ascription on self-identification is strongly maternal among the respondents in this study.

This is illustrated by Halle Berry's experience highlighted at the onset of this chapter, and

respondent Eve's experience whose mother thought that President Obama's Black self-

identification would be offensive to his White mother had she been alive. Even when

respondents had reservations about their mother's racial ascriptions, they often self-

identify in the way that their mother indicated they should. In Halle's account, she self-

identified as Black like her White mother instructed, despite feeling like that racial label

would deny her mother and the important role that her mother played in her life. In the

case of Eve, she self-identifies as biracial, an internalization of her mother's perspective

on exclusive Black racial labels, but she also expressed having a Black self-

understanding. She distinguishes between her self-identification and her racial identity:

"I'm not going to not say what I am, but I do identify as Black. But I'm not going to say,

like—like I said, if someone asked me, or if I was a public figure, I would still want

people to know I was biracial." Eve makes an important distinction between her Black

racial identity and how she self-identifies to others.

When respondents experienced dissonant parental racial ascription, the outcome

reflected this pattern of positive maternal influence. Elizabeth experienced dissonant

parental racial ascription and recalls that her White mother and Black father would

disagree about racial classification:

> "Remember, people view you as Black. So you need to be Black." So that's what
> he would tell me. And you know, my mother would say, "People view her as she
> wants to be viewed, and just leave it at that—Whatever makes her comfortable.
> Don't—don't force the issue on her."

Elizabeth describes that her mother's guidance helped her reject the restrictive one-drop

rules of racial classification that others, including her father, often attempted to impose

on her. Elizabeth's closeness to her mother and negative relationship with her father both

contributed to the way that she internalized their messages.

This pattern of positive maternal influence on self-identification is in stark

contrast with the pattern of negative paternal influence on self-identification among

respondents whose fathers engaged in sole-parent racial ascription (see Figure 2). At first

glance of Table 1, it appears that there is an overall pattern of rejection of Black racial

assignments. However upon closer examination, it appears that Black labels assigned by

parents can have a positive impact when assigned by both parents or a Black mother

independently. This sheds light on the nuanced role that race plays in mother's and

father's overall influence on the racial identity development of their biracial children.

The Impact of Silence and De-emphasis of Racial Labeling

Respondents whose parents either de-emphasized the importance of racial labels

or who chose not to discuss racial classification reported negative feelings associated

with their parental racial socialization. Those who had parents who discouraged the use

of racial labels often expressed that their parents' approach fostered an unrealistic

perspective of race relations in society. It was not uncommon for a respondent to describe

that they were confronted with the harsh realities of racial self-identification later in life.

Hannah and her siblings often discussed the trials that they experienced learning the

meaning of race in society after they left for college. Hannah recounts:

> What we've discussed is that they have also done us a disservice because we
> didn't recognize how important race is in our society as children. Like, we
> really—and that seems like a really naïve thing to say, but we, as children, and I
> think, growing up, even into our high school years, were very naïve about race
> because we kind of grew up in this area where our parents really protected us—
> people were not—we didn't have to deal with a lot of people saying, "Okay.
> You're different." "There's something wrong with you because you're Black," or
> because you're a "different color."

Hannah saw the value in her parents imparting that she is more than a racial label,

however, when she went to college, she felt ill-prepared to deal with the realities of race

relations and the discovery that racial distinctions do indeed matter.

Parental silence regarding racial classification has been found to have a negative

impact on a biracial person's racial identity development (Kilson 2001; Root 2001;

Rockquemore and Lazsloffy 2005). This parental approach to racial socialization can

prevent the biracial child from feeling like they can discuss matters of race with their

parents should issues arise. This was a problem for Sarah who described extreme

psychological distress resulting from her confusion regarding her racial identity and her

parents' disregard of her experience. When asked about the conversations that her parents

had with her regarding racial identification, she responded:

> Um—as in like, either of my parents being attuned to the fact that any of the kids in the family may need to have, like, talks about how we manage our life? ... I mean, like, when I was younger, at a very early age, like, there were racists constructing my life. That's a fucked up thing to have to reconcile with yourself.

She goes on to explain the resentment that she feels as a result of knowing that her White

mother was aware that she was having issues regarding her racial identity yet never

addressed the matter with her. Sarah recalls a conversation that she had with her mother

as an adult. In this exchange, Sarah's mother tells her about a conversation that took

place years prior. The conversation followed a friend's inquiry into how Sarah was doing

at the time:

> And my mom said to her, "You know, I don't think Sarah is doing that well." And I don't—She never really came back to me with that conversation. But she kind of just said that. Yeah, and she said it to me! And I said, you know … and I was kind of like, "God, that would have been so amazing if you had, like, relayed some of these things to me."

Throughout Sarah's interview she conveyed a deep emotional pain that resulted from her

experiences with race. She acknowledges how difficult her experience with race was and

how that was compounded by her parent's disregard of issues pertaining to race, leaving

her feeling helpless. Like Sarah, many respondents who report that their parents either

avoided discussing race or suggested that race wasn't important also mention the negative

impact on their racial identity development. The common sentiment expressed by most of

these respondents is a feeling of being inadequately prepared to deal with the realities of

race relations.

Broadly speaking, for the respondents in this study the most predictive aspect of

parental involvement in the process of racial identity development is whether racial

ascription efforts are independent or collaborative. Parents who engaged in dual-parent racial ascription were likely to avoid mono-racial assignments, whereas parents engaging in sole-parent racial ascription had a tendency to assign Black racial labels if the parental ascriber is Black, and reject Black assignments if the parental ascriber is White. I assert that parental racial assignments are efficacious, specifically when both parents are involved. Those dual-parent racial assignments are often determinants of the respondent's self-identification, and more often impact racial self-understanding than sole-parent assignments.

Although it was clear among my respondents that parents play a prominent role in the racial socialization process, the influence of family is not limited to parents. Often how a person views themselves and develops a sense of belonging, involves their ties to extended family members as well. According to Bea Hinton (2013), having an absentee White father significantly shaped her "unequivocal" identification with being Black and, similar to respondent Thomas, Bea intimates that it is possible that she could have viewed herself differently had she known her White father and White extended family. In her childhood musings, she imagined what her life would be like actually having a White father and a White extended family:

> At an early age I unconsciously internalized the "white savior" complex, often daydreaming about how life would be with not just any dad, but a *white* dad. How great my life would be if I were brought up with my white family! I'd live like all the happy white children on television! I fantasized about the day my father would come and save me from my atypical existence. It never happened (Hinton 2013).

Bea articulates what she imagined would be different had she not been fatherless, but also how her life would be different knowing her White extended family. Thus far, there is scant research on the experiences that biracial people have with extended family

members, and far less research on the influence of extended family members on racial

identity development. Our understandings of this process, and racial socialization in

general, are deepened by an analysis of racial experiences with extended family

members, which is the focus of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Extended Family Members: Indirect Agents of Racial Socialization

In Chapter 2, I examined the strategies of racial socialization utilized by parents and the reported impact on self-identification and racial identity. Although many in this study identified parents as direct and explicit agents of racial socialization, their narratives reveal that the influence of family on racial identity development reaches beyond the immediate family, a concept that I explore in this chapter. It has been established that parents are often the most influential among family members in the process of biracial identity development (Kich 1992; Root 1992; Bowles 1993; Kerwin et al. 1993; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002; Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005), however much of the literature is silent on the racial experiences that biracial respondents have with extended family members. This absence in the literature is noteworthy due to the fact that interracial marriages, specifically those between Black and White people, more often end in divorce (on average[4]) than those between people of the same-race (Wang 2012). As a result, biracial children have a greater chance of being raised in a single-parent home with a unique racial family structure. In these instances, biracial children are raised by a mono-racial parent, and may only be exposed to extended family members on one side of their family. Considering that the family is often central to one's feelings about group membership and self-understanding (Hartigan 1997:184), the experiences and messages conveyed by extended family members can be an important source of validation or conflict and these experiences are explored in this chapter. The broad

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[4] The divorce rate for White women/Black men is higher than the divorce rate for same-race marriages, however the divorce rate for Black women/White men is lower than that of same-race marriages (Wang 2012).

research question that guided this analysis is: What are the mechanisms through which extended family members impact biracial identity development?

RACIAL SOCIALIZATION AND THE EXTENDED FAMILY

The essential differences between the parental racial socialization practices in Black families and White families elucidate the necessity to deepen our understanding of familial racial socialization within interracial families, encompassing the role of extended family members. Recent studies have endeavored to explore the experiences that interracial couples have negotiating their relationships with members of their extended families (Kilson 2001; Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2005; Childs 2005; Childs 2006; Rockquemore et al. 2006; Twine 2006; DaCosta 2007). It has been found that the strength of family ties between a couple and their respective families, in part, are determined by the families' acceptance of the union. This directly relates to the approval of a chosen partner by one's family members and for interracial unions race is often a salient factor in the approval process. According to a recent Pew Research survey (2012), 63% of Americans indicated that it would be fine if a member of their family was in an interracial marriage. These data reflect shifting racial attitudes that have yet been reflected in studies evaluating the actual experiences of interracial couples and their extended families. Often, a person's general views regarding interracial unions are discordant with their views and/or reactions to interracial marriage within their own family (Twine 2006). Simply put, it is not uncommon for someone to approve of interracial marriage, yet disapprove of a family member being involved in one. In addition, it is also possible that a person's hypothetical views regarding interracial

marriage within their family can be incongruous with their actual reaction to interracial unions within their family (Childs 2005; Childs 2006; DaCosta 2007). Feelings and opinions held by relatives also tend to intensify when introducing the idea of having children within that interracial union (Childs 2006; DaCosta 2007). These conflicting views elucidate the need to understand how mono-racial extended family members react to biracial children within their families, because these reactions and subsequent interactions serve as mechanisms of racial socialization of biracial children.

Though some of the emergent scholarship on interracial families addresses extended family member views and reactions to biracial children (Kilson 2001; Childs 2005; DaCosta 2007), there is a glaring absence of the biracial person's perspective on these experiences. Extended family members engage in behaviors that are mechanisms of racial socialization and the biracial person's interpretation and internalization of those experiences can play an important role in biracial identity development. In this chapter, I aim to broaden our present scope of "the family" in the analysis of familial racial socialization. This builds upon our present knowledge by examining the behaviors of, and racial experiences with, extended family members as recalled by biracial adults. Through this analysis, I am able to uncover extended family member mechanisms of racial socialization and the nuanced experiences with both White and Black extended family members. This informs our understanding of how these relatives engage in racial socialization and the impact that they have on biracial respondents.

EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS AS AGENTS OF RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

According to many respondents in this study, extended family members played a role in their racial socialization, albeit in less direct ways than parents. With the exception of one set of siblings who did not have a relationship with any of their extended family members, each respondent described knowing both sides of their family in some capacity. In most cases, proximity, family structure, and racial attitudes were cited as the reasons that respondents were closer to members on one side of their family versus another. Also, both closeness to and estrangement from extended family members were influential in shaping a sense of self and belonging. Although positive experiences and close ties with extended family members often positively impact the respondent's racial identity, most often if the respondent made mention of an experience involving race, it was in regard to an impactful negative experience. I proceed with my findings by identifying the most prominent mechanisms of racial socialization among respondent narratives. This includes the ways in which members of the extended family enforce one-drop rules of racial assignment and foster feelings of rejection or validation. I also identify how these racial experiences are internalized by biracial respondents.

Black Extended Family Members and the One-Drop Rule

When respondents describe the messages that their Black extended family members conveyed regarding race, it was common for them to describe a family member explicitly telling them that they are Black. Racial identification is an approach to racial socialization that involves imparting messages about racial group membership that orients a biracial child towards a particular racial identification (Rockquemore et al.

2006). It was common for respondents to describe their Black extended family members, most notably Black cousins, approaching their enforcement of the one-drop rule as an informative process. In some cases, declarations were made in order to inform others that the biracial respondent is indeed Black. In other cases, Black extended family members make assertions to the respondent in order to remind them that they are Black if their words, behaviors, or actions indicate otherwise. Among the respondents who reported being told that they are Black by members of their Black extended family, there were different accounts regarding how that message was internalized. Being ascribed a Black label can be affirming for someone who questions their acceptance by Black people or the acceptance of their Black self-identification. However, those who prefer not to be identified as exclusively Black may find that a Black racial ascription invalidates the racial identity or self-identification that they have adopted as most suitable.

Natalie is 24 years old and recalls being ascribed a Black racial label by one of her Black extended family members:

> I have an older cousin. She's probably like in her early 40s, and she's all Black. So, she has like curly, long, black hair, and she's always like, "Oh, you're Black." Like, if people—like if she takes me somewhere, and people are asking me, she says, "That's my Black cousin."

When asked how she feels about being told that she is Black, Natalie says she has no issue with her cousin's ascription, exclaiming, "She's right." Fondly, Natalie describes how her cousin's assertions and racially descriptive introductions convey feelings of acceptance, which she values. Natalie, a woman with green eyes and blonde hair, is often racially identified as White. She describes herself as being able to blend-in with White people but indicates that White people are more likely to think that she is Hispanic or Italian when she is by herself. She also notes, "I think a lot of Black people just assume

that I'm White with curly hair." Having spent many years of her life growing up in

Harlem, NY, she interacted with Black people often and describes those experiences as

feeling like a different kind of Black girl. Best likened to Simmel's (1950) concept of

"The Stranger," Natalie asserts that in many instances involving her Black peers, she was

part of the group but didn't necessarily fit in completely. Consequently, feelings of

validation are fostered whenever her cousin identifies her as Black. Although she does

not self-identify as Black, nor does she describe having a Black racial identity, she feels

affirmed by her cousin's introduction, warmly reflecting upon those memories.

Conversely, Elizabeth, a 41 year old woman from NJ, did not feel reaffirmed by

the messages imparted by the family members on her Black father's side of the family

and describes these messages as causing her great pain. Throughout her life, her Black

family members, most often her cousins, insisted that she was Black and often criticized

her behavior and speech characterizing them as "White." Elizabeth sees herself as a

biracial woman who strongly opposes choosing a "side." Born in the early 1970s,

Elizabeth had a difficult experience trying to resist rigid one-drop rules of racial

assignment. Her biracial identity was often invalidated by others but the invalidation

from Black family members was the most impactful:

> You know, it's—when I think about my life, it's so complex. I mean, just growing
> up. Some people just don't understand or get it. You know? Like, that whole,
> trying to identify with—because I felt like I was being forced by my father's
> side—never my mother's side—they never said to me—they never made issue of
> race to me. They never said, you know, "You're White. You need to act White,"
> or "You're Black." They never had those discussions with me. But it was my
> father's side of the family that said, "You know, you're not White. So don't try to
> act White," or "Don't try to talk White," or—and I didn't like hearing those
> conversations because I just wanted to be what I felt comfortable being, and I felt
> like they were trying to force me—like, my cousins would say things, and that
> made me uncomfortable….because of that, I think I put up a wall, as a child, with

them. And it hasn't been until recently as an adult that I've started reaching out to them more and talking to them more.

Elizabeth describes her longing to "be herself" and her Black family members not affording her the space to do so which caused her emotional turmoil. "It was this constant indecisiveness—like, and I really, that really drove me insane, to the point of almost suicide, like, it's just better to not be here." Those pressures negatively impacted Elizabeth and resulted in compromised relationships with her Black family members, stressors on her mental health, and a racial self-understanding fraught with conflict.

White Extended Family Members and the One-Drop Rule

White extended family members often conveyed one-drop rules of racial assignment implicitly through other messages or actions. Unlike the Black family members of respondents who directly address one-drop rule understandings of racial classification through racial identification, some White extended family members ascribed pejorative labels or treated biracial respondents like an outsider, which underscored existing racial differences. In some cases this involved the use of racial epithets and in other cases it was a far more subtle differential treatment. Most noteworthy about these accounts is that the White family member responsible for the negative encounter was almost always the respondent's White grandmother.

Racial distinctions were drawn for Kelly by her grandmother at a young age. Although she describes her White maternal grandmother as loving and doting, she recalls an incident that drew attention to her race in a hurtful way:

My grandma would go into her Alzheimer's, and she would throw out the word, "nigger." And we were like—I had never heard my mom say that—I mean, my grandma say that. I think it was—it was either that my little sister, Susan—she

was doing something and she was like, "F-ing niggers." Like, she didn't know who we were. Like, and then when that word came out, and I looked at my mom, and she was like, "You know, it wasn't that easy for me and your dad to get together." Like, that's what she grew up listening to and hearing. But she—my grandmother never made us feel like that when we were younger. She would always say—she would actually go out of her way to say how beautiful we were. And any time we came over, she was like, "Oh, lay out the blankets," and she was always buying us stuff at Christmas. She never made us feel like that when we were younger. That's why I was shocked at that word actually—that she actually used that word.

Here and earlier in her interview, Kelly noted that her White mother indicated that her maternal grandmother was "a little racist." Kelly also mentioned that her grandmother called her a "nigger" on more than one occasion and describes those events as hurtful but says the racial epithets didn't change her feelings towards her grandmother. She was able to overlook her grandmother's use of a racial slur because her other experiences with her grandmother were positive, however, incidents like these shaped Kelly's Black racial self-identification growing up. Until college, Kelly self-identified as Black because many of the cues that she received from others indicated that she had no choice. Her grandmother, although loving, conveyed this message as well.

Natalie did not describe her grandmother as loving or kind to her throughout her childhood. While she has no memory of her White maternal grandmother explicitly saying anything negative about her or to her, she remembers constantly feeling slighted by her or treated differently than her White cousins:

One time, I asked my grandma for a vanity table, and I didn't know at the time why she was doing it. But now I know. And then she gave it to my cousin. She called my cousin right away, my cousin's mom, and asked her if she wanted it because she didn't want to give it to me. And then, we'd go to like, family holidays and Christmases, and she'd always present my cousin with like, a fur jacket or gifts, and we didn't get it. So now, thinking about it, I know why she did it. But back then, we were just like—you know, you're just a little kid, and "Why does she get one and I don't?"

When asked to describe her current relationship with her grandmother:

Oh, we're cool. Like, everything's all fine. Like, all that bitterness—like, I guess it leaves with age. And she never really did like, anything like that, like to our faces, or deliberately to hurt our feelings. Like, it was just the way she is. Like my mom says, she was just a very, very mean, miserable person. But now, she's not like that.

Similar to Kelly who excused her grandmother's use of a racial slur, Natalie characterizes her grandmother's behavior as innocuous. Kelly's grandmother's Alzheimer's disease was reason enough to excuse her behavior, and Natalie viewed her grandmother as a miserable person who meant no harm. Both Kelly and Natalie were able to overlook their grandmother's hurtful behavior despite their mothers reporting of their grandmother's previous racial transgressions.

These narratives illustrate the nuances of extended family member enforcement of one-drop rules of racial assignment. For Black family members, racial label ascription, a direct approach often espoused by parents, is utilized by cousins and other family members to ensure that the biracial respondent is clear about their Black racial identification. On the other hand, White family members maintain one-drop assignments through alienating behaviors that emphasize racial differences that, intentionally and unintentionally, ostracize the biracial respondent.

Extended Family Member Acceptance of Interracial Marriage and Biracial Children

Interactions and close ties with mono-racial family members certainly play a role in positively impacting how a biracial person understands themselves in racial terms. Among respondent narratives, favoritism, positive interactions, inclusive behaviors, and close relationships foster a sense of belonging and group membership. This was found to be the case whether those extended family members were Black or White.

Favoritism. Extended family members engage in favoritism in a variety of ways. One noteworthy method of expressing favoritism that emerged among the narratives in this study is colorism. Described by Alice Walker (1983), colorism occurs when social status is determined by one's skin color. This practice bestows privilege on those with lighter skin. Siblings Joan and Thomas both describe having this experience with their Black mother's family members. Thomas describes how his Black cousin viewed his physical appearance, and notes that his complexion was, "sought after because darker skin runs in the family. He always wanted that favoritism. They always thought we got the nice hair, the pretty color, etc, etc. And you know, 'Thomas is light skinned, versus you know me, I'm dark skinned.'" In Thomas' account, he was favored because of his lighter skin and that inspired jealousy from his cousin.

Joan similarly recalled experiencing colorism and also notes the cognitive dissonance that created as someone who was ostracized by her White peers. She describes her school environment:

> To be honest I had a very strange self-concept concerning my own Blackness. Because we were outnumbered, I felt way Black-er than I actually looked. You know we were walking around and they were calling me "zebra" and they were calling me "brillo head".… So I just think my own self-concept is in my family, 'cause within the family, I am this light skinned kid, "Oh Joan is so beautiful, blah, blah, blah." These weird polar experiences happening—I just became very clear that in certain places I was considered very attractive, and in other places I was considered to be ugly and unwanted. And I was like, "Okay that's how the world works."

When asked, "Within your family you felt very attractive?" Joan responded, "Yeah, because Haitians are very color conscious." Joan attended predominantly White schools until high school. Within that context she was often made fun of for not being White, however, within her Black extended family, she was given preferential treatment for having skin that was lighter than that of her other family members. Both Joan and

Thomas are very close to their Black extended family and have limited contact with their White extended family. This resulted in the internalization of favorable and preferential treatment by their extended family members who are a strong source of belonging for both respondents.

Close ties. Serena, a 27 year old woman, described her White racial self-understanding and the factor that she believes shaped that identity. She explains, "Culturally, I identify more with my Caucasian side, just being closer with my mom's side of the family." Serena seems to be aware of the ways that her racial identity was shaped by growing up with strong ties to her White extended family. This impact was also reported by respondents who grew up with strong ties to their Black extended family members. Eve, a 27 year old woman who has a White mother and a Black father, has always had a Black racial identity. When asked to explain what shaped her Black identity she stated that her identity was formed, "partly by being brought up around my Black family." For both Eve and Serena, their sense of self was strongly impacted by the extended family members who strongly fostered their sense of belonging.

Extended Family Member Opposition to Interracial Marriage and Biracial Children

"I grew up knowing I was the fruit of something forbidden by family, strangers, you name it." —Stephanie Georgopulus (2013)

It was commonly reported that extended family members conveyed explicit messages expressing their disapproval, and sometimes outright rejection, of the respondent's interracial family. Respondents note that relatives, most notably grandparents, often had strong feelings about interracial marriages within their family. In a segment of "What Would You Do?" (Quiñones 2012), a Primetime hidden-camera

television show that focuses on bystander reactions to various issues, a scenario was

staged that involved a White father, Jeff, being introduced to his daughter Olivia's Black

boyfriend, Carlton. Set in rural Brigham City, Utah, this scenario was staged at a booth in

a diner and several takes were filmed. In one take, during a contentious introduction, Jeff

interrogated Carlton and explicitly rejected him on the basis of him being Black. After

Olivia and Carlton storm off upset, Jeff, staying in character, engaged in a conversation

with a few patrons who witnessed his family exchange. Jeff asked, "I mean, you see

where I'm coming from, right?" A fellow patron, Debbie, emotional and supportive,

responded. She articulated a point that perfectly illustrates the disjuncture between

people's general views on interracial marriage and their feelings about interracial

marriage within their own family. Debbie, a White middle-aged mother of a White

teenaged girl, agrees with Jeff and wipes her tears away saying, "Oh, I do." She

continues:

> I have a daughter—that—she has a friend that's Black. And I told her, I said,
> "He's fine to be your friend, but you are never gonna get involved with him." And
> she says, "No, Mom, I'm not. He's just a friend." And they're just friends, but—
> you know what I'm saying? … I worried about that.

Several minutes later when John Quiñones, the host of the show, arrives to disclose to

patrons that Jeff, Olivia, and Carlton are actors in a staged scenario, he asks Debbie to

elaborate on her perspective. Debbie explains: "You know, back in the old days, you

know, that just wasn't the thing. And so it's a new thing now, and I think it's okay. But, I

don't know—I guess, I just…" John chimes in asking, "Not for your family?" And

Debbie responds, "Not for my family. You know, but, I—I, I love them. I think they're

wonderful people." At no point in the segment, including when she was unaware that she

was being filmed, did Debbie make explicit disparaging remarks about Carlton or Black

people. However, Debbie's fear of her daughter possibly dating her Black friend brought tears to her eyes as she witnessed Jeff's predicament, empathetically responding to his apparent distress.

Often parents and other family members have visceral reactions to the thought of interracial unions within their family. Among respondent narratives, some report extended family opposition towards one or both parents. Others report hostility towards, or the rejection of, the entire interracial family. These sentiments were expressed by both Black and White extended family members and resulted in strained or severed relationships between the respondent and either one family member, or an entire side of their family. Severed ties with an entire side of one's family can impact how a biracial person develops their racial identity, especially if the absence is the result of rejection. This type of rejection can be critical to the understanding of one's self as a member of a particular racial group, or as an outsider to a particular racial group.

Black extended-family opposition. The opposition to interracial marriage that respondents recalled from Black family members ranged from subtle hostility to outright rejection. Several respondents who recalled hostility from Black extended family members, often recalled their Black aunt asserting her views and feelings about either the respondent's parents' marriage, their White mother, or in one case, a Black mother.

In an example of subtle comments made by Black family members, Karen recalls something that she often overheard her Black aunt saying. "I remember a couple times, like when we saw my dad's family. So it would have been the Black side…and I kind of remember vaguely during childhood having, maybe like in the house, my aunts and somebody saying something about White people." Karen describes very casual instances

when she witnessed her Black aunt talking about White people and wondering how that

pertained to her White mother. She does not describe hostility directed at her mother, but

this stuck out in her mind as uncomfortable, causing her to question her aunt's acceptance

of her mother.

Alicia on the other hand, recalls hostility directed at her White mother. She

attributes these views to her Black family members and makes specific mention of two

Black aunts.

> A lot of them have issues, or had issues, with my mother. So whether or not—like
> my aunt, there's mainly specifically two of them that—you know, one of them
> wore white to my mother's wedding. They just—the racial thing is there. It's sort
> of that mentality of, "Oh, you took one of our good Black men." Because I've
> heard that numerous times from—just from lots of people in that circle.

Black aunts appear in many of the narratives in this study and in previous studies (Childs

2005; DaCosta 2007). They are often reported as holding strong opinions about the

interracial marriage and most often direct their animosity towards White mothers.

However, there were instances like Rhonda's where the Black extended family

members exhibited hostility towards the Black parent. In Rhonda's case, her Black

extended family members expressed resentment that was rooted in their assumption that

Rhonda's Black mother believed her marriage to a White man afforded her a social status

that was superior to the rest of the family. Rhonda noted, "I felt like, you know, my

mother was ostracized by her family for marrying a White person…more so, they thought

that she thought she was better than them because she married a White person." Their

comments weren't limited to her marriage. Rhonda also recalls: "One time, my mother's

sister, who obviously is Black—my mother and her were having a big argument…and

they were arguing about something very arbitrary, and just out of the blue, my aunt goes,

'You know, your kids aren't White.'" These encounters left an impression on Rhonda in

the same way that it did for Alicia. Alicia explains the impact that it had on her: "So I think I am closer with—I think my mother's side is more accepting, which is why we're closer—besides my grandmother. And my father's side—it's taken time. The love is there, but they are standoffish to us." Both Rhonda and Alicia expressed a distance and treatment from the members of their Black extended families that significantly strained their relationships with them.

White extended-family opposition. Among the respondents in this study, White grandparents disapproving of their parents' interracial marriage was common. Unlike the accounts of Black extended family members that include various family members asserting their views, the accounts of White extended family members were limited to grandparents. Respondents commonly reported that their mothers shared stories of opposition that they faced from their parents. White grandparents often sought to discourage the interracial union from occurring, citing an aversion to close association with Black people, as well as concern for the challenges that potential children would face. Natalie is one of many who described the resistance that her White mother faced before marrying her Black father.

> I actually just had this conversation with my mom today about how, like, my grandmom didn't want them to get married and how she wrote my mother, like, this five-page letter of straight venom, and my mom was kind of like—okay—she read the first page and ripped it up, and was like, "Whatever, Mom."

Natalie's grandmother tried her best to prevent her parents from getting married and she rejected Natalie, her sister, and her parents for years to follow.

Perhaps the greatest fear expressed by White grandparents pertains to potential biracial children. Two themes emerged from the accounts of fear of biracial grandchildren. First, grandparents express a concern for the biracial child's well-being

when faced with the challenge of negotiating race in society. Whether this concern is disingenuous or sincere, White grandparents portray the life of a biracial child as fraught with rejection, and caution their children against bringing a biracial child into the world. Second, notions of racial purity evoke an aversion to the introduction of Blackness into the family's bloodline.

Perhaps an example of both underlying themes of opposition to biracial children, Alicia's White grandmother forewarned her mother about the trouble that would await her if she had children with her Black fiancée. Alicia's grandmother's negative views of her Black father caused her to reject him and she justified her opposition by indicating the implications for potential biracial children.

> I first realized that my grandmother turned my father's hand—you know, he asked for my mother's hand in marriage. She turned him down. She said, "He's too dark, too dumb, too old." She said, "It won't matter now, but it will matter when you have children." So that was the first time I got wind knowing my grandmother was racist.

Alicia goes on to explain that her grandmother insisted that Alicia's mother was not aware of the implications of having children with a Black man. Her indication that it "won't matter now," underscores her fear of miscegenation and her perspective on the outcome. She implies that a Black racial heritage will deem her biracial grandchild genetically inferior. In Alicia's case, her father was a light-skinned Black man, yet her grandmother still viewed him as "too dark." This exemplifies an absolute fear of racial mixing. The apprehension towards tainting the family's bloodline was a concern expressed by several White grandparents, as reported by respondents.

In a common script, White grandparents negotiate with their children who are in interracial relationships in an attempt to thwart the growth of that relationship towards marriage and eventual children. In these cases, parents refrain from explicit rejection of a

Black partner in return for confirmation that their child will avoid advancing the

relationship. Elizabeth recalls a story told to her by her White mother:

> And my grandparents knew she was living with a man, but you know, my grandpa was like, you know, "You never mention this man you are living with. Why?" and, "Is he Jewish or something?" Then my mom was thinking, "You wish he was Jewish" You know? So, she just did a whole, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* thing. She just said, "Oh, I'll just bring him over for dinner one night." So, she didn't even tell them. She just brought him over for dinner. Yes! That's my mom! That's how she rolls. So, I'm thinking, my grandparents' mouths were on the floor. And my grandma was like, "Well, you're not going to marry him, are you?" and she [Elizabeth's Mother] was like, "No," and then they get married like, a year later, and she [Elizabeth's grandmother] was like, "Well, you're not going to have kids with him, are you?" and she was like, "No," and then she had my brother. And then my grandma was like, "Well, he's not dark, is he [referring to her brother]?" And you know, just crazy stuff. You know? And then, she was like, "Well, don't have any more with him," and then she had me.

Elizabeth's White grandparents, like many others, appear to negotiate out of fear. This

often involved the acceptance of the interracial relationship under the condition that their

child doesn't get married, or the acceptance of an interracial marriage under the condition

that they don't produce any children. Motivated by fear, there is no outright rejection of

the Black partner. Instead, there is limited acceptance with hopes of stymieing the

progression of the interracial relationship.

While some opposition from White grandparents involves the rejection of their

biracial grandchildren, other White grandparents reserve their opposition exclusively for

their child's Black partner. These grandparents often do not view their grandchild as

Black; they consider the biracial grandchild an exception by virtue of being an extension

of themselves. Joy's Black mother appeared to be the only object of her White

grandmother's hostility. For years, Joy's family took road trips from California to Arizona

to visit her grandmother. Although her Black mother accompanied the family on those

trips, unbeknownst to Joy, her mother was not allowed in her grandmother's home.

> We saw her—you know, a decent amount of times, I guess, all things considered, for a woman that lived in another state. But we probably would have seen her more if she had been willing to see my mother, but she wasn't. She would come with, but then my grandmother would not let her in the house. So… we would go in the house. My mother would go—so we would all pack up and drive to Tucson, we'd get to my grandmother's house. Mom would make an excuse and say she wanted to go to the hotel because she was tired, and we would stay with my grandmother and my father, and then mom would come and get us later.

When White grandparents single out one parent and embrace the remaining members of the interracial family, a tension is often created within the biracial person. Those who experience this tension have to reconcile how they feel about family members who embrace them, yet reject one of their parents. Despite being fully embraced by their White grandmother, they may still internalize the racist treatment of their Black parent as if it were directed at them. For some biracial people, this will foster loyalty to the rejected parent while straining ties with the extended family member.

The changing tides of racial opposition. Common among many narratives regarding opposition from extended family members is the sentiment that family relations improved over time. Biracial children can act as a buffer to ease the tension and hostility that existed between their parents and grandparents prior to their birth. This occurred in many of the families of respondents in this study. Elizabeth explains that she only knew of her grandparent's opposition to both her parents' marriage, and having children, from her mother's stories:

> Because my mom and I used to talk about it all the time because, you know, I used to love the stories, listening to stories—like, oh my God, what did Grandma and Grandpa do when you brought Daddy home? You know? And she said, "You know, they were shocked, but at the end of the day, Liz, they just wanted me to be happy. And they knew that I was happy with your dad. So, you know, they accepted him, and they would do anything for him." You know, if he needed money, whatever. They were very giving and accepting of my father and grew to love him very dearly.

Elizabeth contemplates on all of the stories that her White mother shared about her grandparents' resistance. She notes, "…and it was crazy because my grandparents, my mother's parents, were the sweetest, most loving grandparents you could ever have." It is easy for Elizabeth to dismiss her White grandparents' early opposition because she had no memory of them expressing those views. By the time she was born (a year after her older brother), they had embraced her family in what she describes as a very loving dynamic.

Natalie's White maternal grandmother was adamantly opposed to her parents getting married and wrote her mother a long letter expressing her disapproval. Her grandmother exhibited hostility towards her parents and often slighted Natalie and her sister throughout their childhood. However, Natalie notes: "We're like her favorite grandkids now, out of six. Like, she wants to see us. My dad's her favorite son-in-law now. Like, it totally reversed because she's definitely eating all the words that she wrote in that letter to my mom now." The dynamic in this family improved over the years and a strong relationship was cultivated between her White maternal grandmother and the rest of her immediate family. This evolution of feelings was mirrored in many of the accounts that outlined early hostility from White grandparents, however, it was not reflected in the accounts of respondents who experienced hostility from their Black extended family members. Although far fewer respondents reported hostility from their Black extended family members, those who did described a persisting hostility that contributed to weak family ties.

Internalizing extended family opposition and rejection. The narratives in this study expose patterns of interpretation and internalization of opposition and rejection by

extended family members. These patterns reveal a loyalty to mothers that influenced how the respondent processed their extended family members' alienating behaviors.

Black mothers. Joy describes having weak ties to her extended family on her White father's side. She attributes this to her White paternal grandmother's unwillingness to see her Black mother. She explains that her grandmother was always open and receptive to her and her siblings, but that around the age of 12, she learned of her racist treatment toward her Black mother. When Joy discovered the reason that her mother never accompanied the rest of the immediate family on visits to their White grandmother's house, her feelings shifted:

> I was about 12. My mom told me. She said, "Your grandmother is a racist." She was very straightforward. I was like, "Okay." You know? And I said, "Well, why would you say that?" and she told me the whole thing, and I said, "Wow! I didn't know that about Grandma." And you know, then I asked her the obvious question, which was, "Well, then why the heck does she let us in the house?" My mom was like, "I don't know." She was like, "Cause you guys were her grandchildren. It was different to her."

Joy's mother offered an explanation as to why her White grandmother didn't ostracize her and her siblings but that did not change Joy's feelings about the matter. Her awareness of her grandmother's feelings about her mother strained her relationship with her grandmother as well as her desire to see her. Furthermore, Joy describes feeling like her grandmother's treatment of her mother was an indirect disapproval of her. Joy internalized the rejection of her mother as if it were directed at her and limited the contact that she had with her White extended family.

Rhonda's parents divorced when she was young. This led to an estranged relationship with her White father and her father's side of the family. They always exhibited distant behavior towards her Black mother and after her parents divorced the

family ties were severed with all but one White uncle. Years later, several of her White

extended family members attempted to reconnect and build a relationship with Rhonda,

however, she was not amenable to their efforts:

> I feel it's like a slap in my mother's face. Like, these people never really reached
> out to her, or helped her, or said anything over all those years, and I feel like, you
> know, kind of like, my mother is like, still here. Like, I really can't be so friendly
> to you people. I don't know. It's just weird. Childish, maybe.

The sentiment expressed by Rhonda indicates that loyalty to her Black mother trumped

building a relationship with her White extended family members. Neither Rhonda, nor

Joy, describe their Black mother encouraging the rejection of their White extended family

members, but both respondents align themselves with their mothers.

White mothers. There was a tendency for those with White mothers to align

themselves with their mother's perspectives. Respondents whose White mothers

maintained relationships with their White maternal grandmothers who engaged in

alienating behaviors were very understanding and excused their grandmother's actions,

even when deeply hurt by them. These interpretations often reflect a cognitive dissonance

in the respondent's thoughts and feelings about their White grandmother. Among the

narratives, many explicitly referred to their grandmother as "racist," yet proceeded to

describe her in loving ways.

Alicia gives a detailed account of her White maternal grandmother's differential

treatment. She describes how her grandmother treated her and her sister differently than

all of her White cousins. She didn't understand why until her other White extended

family members explained it to her. "And then, as we got older, everybody said she

isolated my sister and I. And what other reason could be, but that our father was Black?

So, that, I think, messed me up in my head a little bit." Although Alicia refers to her

grandmother as "a racist" in her interview and describes the impact of her rejection, she also stresses that she loves her a great deal. Alicia not only excuses her grandmother's behavior, characterizing it as a generational issue, but she explains that being ostracized by her grandmother didn't preclude strong, loving familial ties with her.

> I can love someone who has these ignorant thoughts and ignorant views, and does it matter? She's in my family. She'll always be. You know, I love my grandmother. I love her to death. But I can accept her for who she is. You know? I don't have to be like, "F- you. I'm never going to talk to you again." You know, people are the way that they were raised. You know? And unfortunately, you grow up with these mindsets, it's hard to change your outcome. You know, does she feel that way about us now? I have no idea. I doubt it. I think she loves us. She loves my dad.

Although Alicia is not completely certain that her grandmother no longer espouses those negative views, she expressed her love for her and understanding that her grandmother is a product of her upbringing. Alicia also indicated that her grandmother's snubs sparked a curiosity in her about her German heritage. Alicia explained, "You know, like, I always, my German side, my grandmother's German, and the fact that she was so cold to us, I don't know why, it makes me want—I want to know more about my German side. It's a weird thing." Despite indicating that her grandmother's behavior negatively impacted her racial identity development, Alicia is curious about learning more about her grandmother's heritage. Alicia seems to internalize her grandmother's slights differently than she did her Black aunts' standoff-ish behavior. She does not express loving feelings or forgiveness when describing her aunts and their behavior which was directed mostly at her mother, nor does her aunts' behavior illicit a desire to know/learn more about her Black heritage.

Serena internalizes her grandmother's behavior similarly. She portrays her White grandmother in a very positive light but describes her grandmother's use of a racial slur towards her and her siblings:

> And we love Grandma. She was the best. She was, you know, the ultimate grandmom. You'd go to her for anything. But when she would get mad, you know, when we were running around, making a mess and not listening to her, she would shout out the N-word. "You little N-words better listen to me," and I remember looking at her and we'd get mad and we'd say something really nasty back. So then, at the end of the day, I'll tell you I thought that was interesting—because we still loved her as Grandmom, but we were able to see that, wow, even if she loves us, it can be—like, you saw that it was just her ignorance, to some degree, coming through.

Serena recognizes that although she had a loving and close relationship with her grandmother, "ignorance" could cause her to say inflammatory things to her and her siblings. She also indicates that she engaged in hostile exchanges by responding to the racial slurs in anger:

> I felt like, "How dare you!" I felt like she stabbed me with a knife. Like, we were—we were like, "You dumb White ……" Like, we had potty mouths, because she had a potty mouth. And it's like we felt the need to defend ourselves against our own grandmother. And I think, after experiencing that—you know, if somebody who loved me so much can say that—it hurts a lot less when other people say things. I'm able to look at it as like, "You just don't know any better. Because that's how we looked at our grandmom."

Serena clearly describes the hurt and anger that her grandmother caused, yet instead of focusing on those feelings or her internalization of that pain she characterizes those experiences as training her to deal with racist strangers. Both Alicia and Serena describe their grandmother's actions as causing them deep pain, and both describe their grandmothers as not knowing any better. This allowed them to excuse any hostile behavior, preserving their strong family ties.

Understanding Extended Family Member Mechanisms of Racial Socialization

Respondent accounts of their experiences with extended family members elucidate the nuances of racial socialization engaged by both Black and White relatives. The narratives in this study suggest that extended family members are racial socializing agents who often impact the biracial identity development of the respondent through indirect mechanisms of racial socialization. There were three pronounced patterns that emerged from the narratives in this study: both Black and White extended family members were enforcers of one-drop rules of racial assignment, extended family members often act as cultivators of inclusion and exclusion, and the internalization of extended family member rejection and opposition was tied to the race of the respondent's mother. Among these patterns there were marked mechanisms of racial socialization, which are outlined in Figure 3. The following section provides an analysis of each mechanism.

Race-specific approaches to one-drop rule enforcement. It appears that both White and Black extended family members reinforce one-drop rules of racial classification, and there were similarities among the approaches taken by White family members and Black family members. For Black extended family members, racial identification is a common approach to racial socialization through which they impart to a biracial child that they are Black. Childs (2005) explains that Black extended family members often believe that biracial children will be viewed as Black and therefore oppose biracial self-identification. This assertion is supported by the narratives in this study. The respondents whose Black family members impart messages regarding one-drop racial classifications appear to do so in response to their impression that the
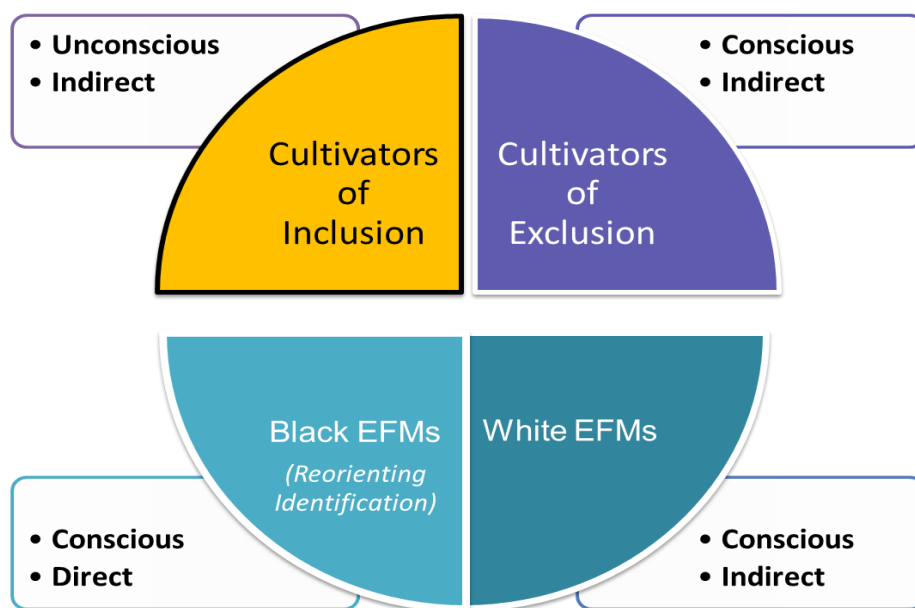
Figure 3. Extended Family Member (EFM) Mechanisms of Racial Socialization

respondent does not self-identify as Black or does not appear Black to others. Although

racial identification is a direct approach to racial socialization that is most often utilized

by parents, in instances where Black family members observe biracial respondents who

they don't believe self-identify as Black, they step in to impart to the respondent that they

are Black. This mechanism of racial socialization could be best described as an attempt to

reorient some aspect of the respondent's racial identification. This was the case for both

Natalie and Elizabeth, among other respondents.

Natalie, a woman with a White physical appearance, has a Black cousin who

constantly describes her as Black and introduces her as a Black cousin to others. Her

cousin appears to do this to remind Natalie, and inform others, what may not be apparent

from Natalie's physical appearance. This is also the case for Elizabeth who offers the

most compelling evidence for this pattern. Earlier in this chapter, Elizabeth is quoted

describing the constant pressure from her Black family members to stop "acting White"

or to make sure that she is aware that she is Black. She describes having endured

tremendous pressure from her Black family members, however, she goes on to describe

her brother, Vince's, experience with Black extended family members. Elizabeth states:

> Well, you know, it's funny, because I think my brother identifies more with the
> Black side, just in everything. It's funny because—and I say that because you
> know, just, you know, the way he dresses, the music he listens to, who his friends
> are, he definitely identifies more with the Black side. He's closer to my father's
> family because they did not say the things to him that they said to me. Why?
> Maybe because I was a girl. I don't know. But, they—it seemed like they were
> more accepting of my brother than they were of me, growing up. I don't know
> why. And so, he related more to my—he related to both sides. He got along with
> both sides of my family, but he identified more with my father's side of the
> family.

Vince does not describe any pressure or negative experiences with his Black family

members, which aligns with Elizabeth's account of his experience. This differential

treatment may reflect the feeling shared by the Black extended family members of

several respondents that it is their responsibility to directly socialize their biracial

relatives who are unaware that they are actually considered Black in the eyes of society at

large. In Vince's case, it appears that he gave his Black extended family members the

impression that he viewed himself as Black. However, Elizabeth's behavior indicated

otherwise, inspiring the need for what I would term as "reorientation identification" by

her Black extended family members.

White extended family members also enforce one-drop rules of racial assignment,

however, their approach to imparting those messages were implicit in nature. White

grandmothers did not explicitly engage in racial identification. Instead they conveyed

messages regarding race and racial classification through their use of derogatory comments, racial epithets, and alienating treatment towards the respondent, as evidenced by Kelly's and Natalie's narratives. These experiences impacted both respondents in a number of ways that shaped their self-understandings and self-identification. For Kelly, having close ties to her White extended family played a large role in shaping her biracial identity. She explained that she strongly relates to her White family and White peers, however, messages conveyed by her White grandmother and White peers impressed upon her that she was Black. Kelly self-identified as Black as a result of her feeling that she had no choice. Although that racial label never reflected her self-understanding, Kelly self-identified that way until she went to college in Florida. Her encounters with others there led her to reassess the amount of agency she had to adopt a non-Black racial label. Kelly's story is compelling because the same family member who she describes positively impacted her sense of belonging also drew lines of distinction, marking her as an outsider. This underscores the complexity of biracial identity development and illustrates how the same family member can both positively and negatively impact the biracial identity development process.

Cultivators of inclusion and exclusion. One of the most impactful mechanisms of racial socialization identified by respondents involved extended family member behaviors that fostered feelings of inclusion or exclusion. The relevance of these behaviors has been overlooked in the extant scholarship and the experiences recalled by respondents in this study demonstrate the need for a better understanding of the nature of this indirect influence. Extended family members that engage in behaviors that cultivate feelings of inclusion seem to have the strongest positive impact on a respondent's racial

identity. Many respondents in this study clearly state that inclusive behaviors and strong family ties shape their racial self-understanding and sense of belonging. These statements were the most pointed of all accounts of familial influence. Several respondents were clear that they understood themselves in a specific way as a result of closely identifying with the extended family members on one side of their family. This was reported with both Black and White extended family members, however, regardless of which side of the family fostered inclusion, it was more likely to have a strong impact when the respondent also reported limited contact with their other side of the family.

The impact of inclusion cultivated by members of one side of the extended family appears to be enhanced by exclusion from the members of the other side of the family. This is particularly noteworthy for people who have a dual racial heritage because these dynamics may dictate the exposure that a person has to feeling connected to one side of their racial heritage. Bea Hinton, the author of "When White Fathers Leave Their Black Children," describes the absence of her White father and his family from her life, noting that racial opposition from her Black extended family members compelled him to abandon her.

> Through the missed holidays and countless uncelebrated birthdays and graduations, I never actually came to hate by biological father, until one day in 2013 when I had the chance to meet someone from my white family for the first time—my uncle Scott. Scott informed me that my father had not had any contact with me for two main reasons, (1) he experienced racism by my (black) family immediately after my birth and still carried the pain and resentment from that experience, and (2) he was now married to a German woman, with whom he has a son, and so his pride (and wife) would not allow him to acknowledge his past (Hinton 2013).

Bea's experience illustrates the complexity of the racial issues that often plague many interracial families. For her, this involved opposition from her Black family members that led to her being estranged from all of her White relatives. She was both directly, and

indirectly, impacted by the actions of her Black extended family members. While they cannot be held responsible for Bea's father's abandonment, as a result of their hostility towards her father he chose to sever ties with Bea, hindering the formation of relationships with any of her White family members. This resulted in her Black family being her only source of reference for a sense of belonging and familiarity, shaping her identity as a Black woman.

The behaviors that fostered feelings of exclusion were not limited to the complete estrangement from extended family members on one side. Feelings of exclusion were also cultivated by the hostile treatment that many respondents reported experiencing from members of their family. Both Black and White relatives engaged in behaviors that effectively ostracized the respondent in some form or fashion. Black family members were noted as imparting hostility in two main ways. First, at times they engage in re-orienting identification that directly ascribes Black racial labels to respondents who do not wish to be identified as Black. This is internalized as a rejection of the respondent's adopted racial identity and creates a hostile environment for the biracial person within their family. Second, several respondents recall having a Black aunt who exhibited hostility towards one of their parents. Collins (2000) describes the conflicted feelings that many of these women face loving their brothers' biracial children who are the product of an interracial relationship. These children force Black aunts to reconcile how they feel about the number of Black men who intermarry and the implications of their mate choices for Black women. Although this may only explain some of the hostility conveyed by Black aunts, several respondents in this study identify their Black aunt as having been hostile towards their White mother, describing these behaviors as a persisting hostility.

White grandmothers were identified, almost exclusively, as the cultivators of exclusion within White extended families. White grandparents express concern and opposition to the notion of interracial families, often citing "the Problem of the Children" (Childs 2006; DaCosta 2007). Examples of this opposition to biracial children are evidenced by the experiences outlined in many of the respondent narratives. Many biracial people were left with emotional scars inflicted by grandmothers who opposed their parent's marriage, subsequently ostracizing the respondent from their White family. This dynamic is complicated by the fact that White grandmothers are more often maternal grandmothers. As a result, White mothers may be more inclined to maintain a relationship with their parents despite their disapproval of their interracial family. Dacosta (2007) asserts that the parents and siblings of those in interracial marriages who were initially opposed to the union and possible children, tend to come around once the biracial children are born. This was the case for many respondents who describe having close family ties with the family member who invoked hurtful, alienating racial distinctions. Respondents like Natalie, Alicia, Kelly, Serena, and Elizabeth all describe white grandmothers who "came around" despite their initial or ongoing aversion to some aspect of their interracial family.

Mother's race and forgiveness. Among the respondents in this study, mother's race played a role in how the respondent interpreted the extended family member opposition that they experienced. Respondent interpretations of the hostility they experienced tended to reflect an alignment with their mother. Those who had White mothers de-emphasized the role that race played in the hostility or rejection experienced from White extended family members but did not necessarily apply that logic to

opposition from Black family members. Those who had Black mothers were color-conscious and less likely to move beyond, or forgive, the racist behaviors of their White grandparents.

Many White extended family members who expressed opposition or hostility towards the respondent or their interracial family eventually expressed a change of heart or an increased desire to develop family ties. This was the case for Natalie, Alicia, Kelly, Serena, and Elizabeth, and all of these respondents developed close ties to their White grandmothers despite any alienating behaviors which she may have engaged or continued to engage. Childs (2005) asserts that the interpretation of various incidents regarding race are often contingent upon whether a color-blind discourse de-emphasizing race or a race-conscious discourse emphasizing the role of race is adopted. As adults, all of the aforementioned respondents espouse color-blind views of race to process and excuse their White grandmother's behavior. These color-blind justifications for their grandmothers' behavior enabled these respondents to maintain the relationship despite actions that indicate their grandmothers' limited acceptance of them.

Alicia's narrative exemplifies the complex nature of these interpretations. She describes her Black family members as hostile towards her mother and somewhat stand-offish. She cites this reason for not having closer ties to that side of the family. However, she is far more forgiving of her White grandmother who she recalls exhibited an obvious preference for her White cousins until recently. Alicia offers various rationalizations for her grandmother's behavior and paints her Black aunts as petty and bitter.

Joy does not appear as forgiving of her White grandmother's behavior towards her Black mother. Joy was unaware of her White grandmother's unwillingness to see her

mother until about the age of 12 when Joy's mother explained to her that her grandmother is racist. This shifted something in Joy's feelings about their relationship. Like Rhonda who likened a relationship with her White extended family members to a slap in her Black mother's face, Joy adjusted her feelings towards her White extended family to reflect her position of loyalty to her mother. They both take this position despite the fact that neither recall the hostility being directed towards them. This is in stark contrast to those with White mothers who were also explicitly told by their own mothers that their White grandmother is racist, and who were also on the receiving end of their grandmother's hostility and rejection. These respondents overwhelmingly forgave and excused their White grandmothers and also spoke very fondly of them. As a result of this dynamic, it was common among respondents with White mothers to identify their White grandmother as both the most impactful cultivator of inclusion and the most impactful cultivator of exclusion.

All of the narratives that detailed examples of extended family member hostility towards the respondent and/or their interracial family showed patterns related to the respondent's mother's race. Respondents whose White mothers maintain relationships with their racist White grandmothers typically adopted rationalizations excusing their grandmother's behavior as unrepresentative of her love for them. This enabled the respondent to also maintain a relationship with the White grandmother who espoused hostile views or committed hostile acts, even when those acts were directed at the respondent. There was a similar alignment of respondents with their Black mothers. In contrast to the narratives of those with White mothers, these narratives often detailed the rejection of the extended family members who exhibit hostility towards the respondent's

Black mother. In these instances, a line is drawn between those who treat the respondent's mother favorably and those who don't. These patterns demonstrate that experiences with extended family members are very complex and a myriad of factors play a role in the interpretation and internalization of those experiences.

Many relatives play a role in the process of racial identity development among biracial children, however, parents tend to be the focus of most studies that examine familial racial socialization. By examining other important family members, like grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, this study broadens our understanding. Although studies have neglected to examine the role of family members outside of the home, they have also neglected to address the role of non-parental family members within the home. Other family members, like siblings, are often raised in the same home, which provides a unique context from which we can glean a wealth of information, allowing for the comparative analysis of their experiences. However, beyond comparing their experiences, it is important that we further examine the role that siblings play as racial socializing agents on each other, which is the focus of Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Siblings: Ancillary Agents of Racial Socialization

In Chapter 3, I uncover how extended family members act as agents of racial socialization and the impact they have on racial identity development. In general, the scholarship on racial socialization suffers from a myopic scope of the family that emphasizes the role of parents at the expense of a rich understanding of the role of other members of the family. In this chapter, I focus on the most taken for granted agent of racial socialization in the family: the sibling. Of all family ties, sibling relationships are one of the most influential on an individual yet most neglected within the extant literature on family dynamics across disciplines (Bedford 1989; Dunn 2005). Here, I endeavor to narrow this gap in the literature on racial socialization by probing the nature of sibling influence on racial identity development.

THE ROLE OF SIBLINGS

The study of socialization has long focused on parents almost to the exclusion of siblings (Lamb and Sutton-Smith 1982). A little over 25 years ago, a marked interest in sibling relationships took form within family studies research, fittingly shifting some of the attention towards this neglected agent of socialization. This spurred a steady growth of scholarship that examined the influence of siblings and the nature of their relationships (Dunn and Kendrick 1982; Zukow 1989; Azmitia and Hesser 1993; Brody 1996; Jenkins and Dunn 2009; Milevsky 2011). Initially, many of these analyses addressed sibling dynamics like sibling rivalry, the impact of birth order on cognitive development and

achievement, the centrality of sibling relationships in an individual's life, and older
sibling influence on antisocial and delinquent behaviors (Azmitia and Hesser 1993; West
and Farrington 1973; Minnett, Vandell and Santrock. 1983; Whiteman, Becerra and
Killoren 2009; Milevsky 2011). These studies established that for siblings, both age
spacing and birth-order, and the general quality of their relationships, impact the
likelihood of specific outcomes in their development. Through these analyses of family
constellation variables and sibling outcomes, much is learned about the role that siblings
play in the socialization process which has significant relevance to the understanding of
sibling influence on racial identity development.

The methodological sophistication of emergent family research has shown great
promise in revealing sibling outcomes that arise out of various family dynamics.
However, these advances within the scholarship come at the expense of understanding
the richness of sibling experiences and the nuances of sibling relationship dynamics. As a
result, there are a lot of answers to the question asking "what" is happening, and even
"why" it is happening, but extant research falls short of truly painting a picture of "how"
it is happening. Evidence of a shift in the dominant approach to studying siblings exists.
This growing recognition of the empirical value of understanding the nature of sibling
relationships is evidenced by recent contributions to the literature. Some recent
scholarship offer analyses of the mechanisms of socialization engaged by siblings and
provide theoretical grounding for future sibling studies (Whiteman et al. 2009;
Whiteman, McHale and Soli 2011), which has sizable value for an interdisciplinary study
of racial socialization.

Extant research on racial socialization and racial identity development lag behind that of other disciplines in their recognition of the important role that siblings play in a child's development and well-being. This is especially the case for studies of biracial children. The scant research on the racial identity development of biracial siblings remind us that there are differential identity outcomes among siblings raised in the same environmental context (Root 1998; Kilson 2001). Reflecting the early patterns of sibling research within family studies and other disciplines, Root's (1998) and Kilson's (2001) studies were primarily concerned with the "what" and "why" of sibling influence. Both analyses focus on the factors that influence differential racial identity outcomes but neither evaluate the role of siblings as racial socializing agents short of a brief mention by two of Kilson's respondents who remark that older siblings "paved" the way for them.

To date, few studies on biracial identity have endeavored to enrich our understanding of the nature of sibling influence and the role of siblings as agents of racial socialization. Absent within the literature on racial identity is a study that focuses solely on the sibling and the nature of their influence on each other's racial identity development, deconstructing their relationship dynamics, and elucidating their role as racial socializing agents.

Although not the focus of their studies, both Brown (2001) and DaCosta (2007) accept the undertaking of initiating a dialogue on sibling racial socialization in brief sections of chapters on the family within their respective books. In Brown's (2001) study, *The Interracial Experience*, she describes the difficulties reported by her respondents who had limited contact with family members on a particular side of their family. Brown asserted that older siblings modeled biracial identities and coping skills that could

mediate the impact of limited family contact. In DaCosta's analysis, *Making Multiracials*
(2007), a marked attempt was made to address the sibling's influence on the racial
identity development process. Dacosta identified common themes regarding the role of
siblings and their influence that emerged from her multiracial respondents' narratives.
Many of those respondents identified their siblings as helping to shape their
understandings of race through modeling, shared experiences, similarities, and
differences. Although the scope of her study didn't afford a detailed exploration of
sibling relationships, nonetheless DaCosta's work serves as a useful springboard on
which a deeper analysis can build. Here, I shed light on the nature of sibling
relationships, identifying the mechanisms through which siblings act as racial socializing
agents. Delving into this neglected, yet significant, source of influence, I explore how
biracial people describe their relationships with their siblings and how they feel those
relationships had an impact on their racial self-understandings over their life course. I
also comparatively analyze the narratives of my sibling respondents to uncover a more
objective perspective of the ways in which siblings appear to influence each other.

MECHANISMS OF SIBLING RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

I begin this analysis of sibling influence by outlining the mechanisms through
which siblings act as agents of racial socialization. Each mechanism of sibling racial
socialization that emerged from the narratives in this study elucidates the unique
opportunities for influence inherent within the sibling relationship. Whereas parents were
often found to engage in racial socialization through conscious and direct mechanisms
like racial identification (see Chapter 2), respondent narratives indicate that siblings most

often approach racial socialization unconsciously. I proceed by outlining the four main mechanisms of racial socialization that emerged from the sibling narratives in this study: reorienting identification, collaborative internalization, modeling, and reaffirmation (Figure 4). By doing this I uncover the unique and impactful role that siblings occupy as agents of racial socialization who influence each other's racial identity development.
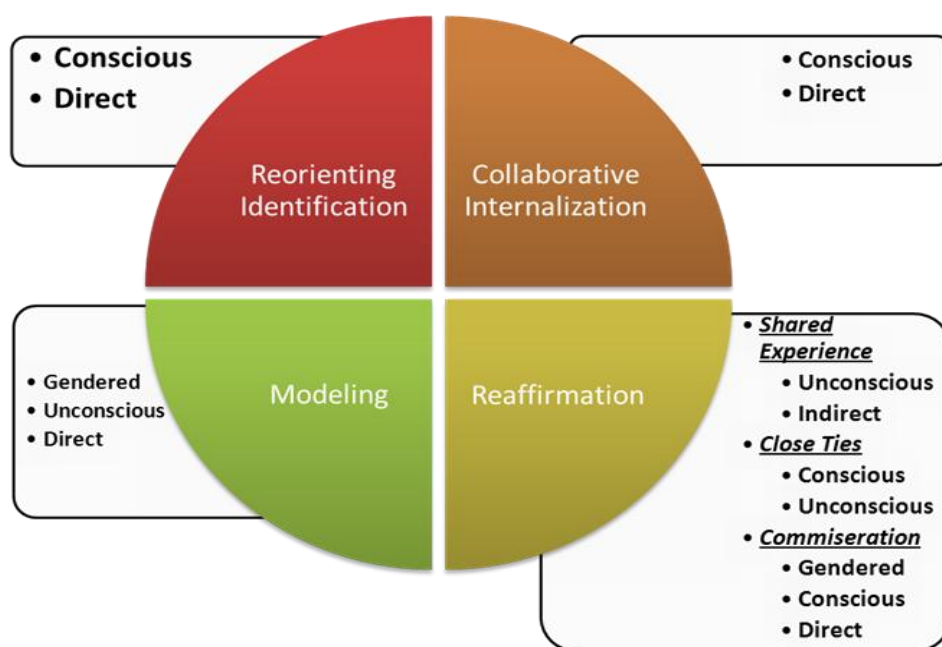
Figure 4. Sibling Mechanisms of Racial Socialization

Reorienting Identification

  Directives. A few respondents recall conversations with their sibling(s) that involved either direct or indirect approaches to the ascription of racial labels. Siblings Harriet and Louis, raised in a predominantly White rural area, both describe very similar accounts of their sibling exchanges regarding self-identification. At a young age, Louis,

who is now 31, had several defining experiences that shaped his Black racial identity. Although he has light skin and appears Hispanic to others, he had strong convictions about the fact that the world regarded him as Black and thought that it was important that his younger sister, Harriet, adopt that racial self-understanding as well. Harriet, a 29 year old woman with a Black physical appearance didn't share those convictions regarding the way that others racially identified her. Harriet recalled numerous experiences growing up where she experienced racial discrimination or differential treatment like Louis. Despite those encounters, Harriet felt strongly that she was both Black and White, and rejected the notion that she should identify exclusively as Black. Harriet describes one of many conversations with her brother about self-identification: "…and my brother would be like, 'You're Black. Like, it doesn't matter what people think or whatever you say, you're Black. People see you as Black.' And I used to, I remember being like six, and I'd be like, 'No! I'm Black and White.'" This is a clear example of Louis' attempt to convince Harriet that she is Black. She recalls several occasions when he took issue with the fact that she didn't self-identify as Black. According to Harriet, Louis was adamant that no matter who told her otherwise, she should understand that she is Black.

In Louis' interview, he also indicated that he felt it was his responsibility to let Harriet know that she is Black. He describes their conversations similarly:

> She had a harder time growing up accepting the fact that she's Black, and she's a lot darker than I am. And I always used to tell her, "You're Black," and she'd never—she never got it. Until, I think, she went off to college. Because she had like—she grew up with nothing but White friends that she hung out with. But now, she's hanging out with Black girls and Caribbean girls, things like that. But she had a real hard time coming to terms with the fact that people looked at her as a Black girl. But now, she's like, super Black. She gets like, *Black Enterprise Magazine* and she's, you know. You know, it's just like, she's come to—not only come to terms with it, but she's kind of embraced it now.

Louis' account mirrors that of Harriet's. It also shows how birth order shaped his perception of the racial identity evolution that Harriet experienced. He describes Harriet in a way that portrays her as a naïve younger sister who eventually came to realize that he was right about her self-identification. He appears proud of Harriet's present self-identification and relived that she is now in, what he believes is, a healthy place. Louis underscores that sentiment: "…but it took a while. She always—she always said, 'Well, we're Black and White.' You know? And I'm like, 'No!'…Now, she's a Black girl, and now, like, she just accepts it." Although, Louis' account indicates that Harriet often responded by saying, "We're Black and White," he makes no indication that she attempted to change his mind or reorient him to how he should self-identify. Rather, she is portrayed as rebutting his assertions by expressing her perspective. This is supported by the fact that Harriet never indicated that she attempted to "teach" Louis what she felt was an appropriate self-identification. She only describes defending her perspective and choices.

Identification "nudgers." Respondent Natalie described a more indirect approach to her attempt to reorient her sister's self-identification. Older sister, Natalie, recalls a phase when her younger sister, Alicia, self-identified as Black. Both Natalie and Alicia recall their parents instilling in them that racial labels did not matter and that they should avoid defining themselves with racial labels. Their parents also rejected one-drop rule designations and both siblings internalized those views. However, during high school, Alicia experienced a phase where she self-identified as Black. While filling out college applications, Alicia's personal statement caught her older sister's attention. Natalie recalled inquiring about Alicia's essay:

> And I remember my sister—we were talking about it. She filled out one application, and she was like, "I'm Black," and she wrote, like, her college essay for some of them, and she was like, "I'm a Black girl from Harlem, and I don't like my room messy," and basically trying to tell her roommate about her, and I was just like, "Were you doing that on purpose, like, to come off kind of strong?" And she was like, "No, that's who I am. That's what I'm feeling right now."

Natalie explains in more detail that she questioned Alicia's motivation for portraying herself in that manner and self-identifying as Black. Natalie's inquiries relayed to Alicia that she did not approve of her personal statement and her Black self-identification. Natalie highlighted the ways in which she felt Alicia veered from their shared understanding of racial identification. By doing this she drew attention to Alicia's choices, indirectly attempting to sway her back to the self-identification choices previously espoused.

Bottom up influence. Sisters Sophia and Sarah illustrate that younger siblings can also attempt to reorient older sibling racial understandings. In this case, older sister Sarah's racial identification choices were limited by the dominant one-drop conventions that were more pervasive in society when she was born 8 years before Sophia, who is now 21 years old. Those rules of racial classification were internalized by Sarah growing up as a student in school environments that were predominantly White and alienating. Ostracized and disheartened by many of her experiences negotiating her racial identity, Sarah was awakened by her younger sister Sophia's perspective on self-identification. Unlike Sarah's experience, her half-sister Sophia was raised and schooled in racially diverse environments almost a decade later. Those experiences, and Sophia's parents' ascription of blended racial labels, shaped her understanding of her own identification choices. Sophia strongly resisted one-drop rules of racial assignment and shared that perspective with her sister Sarah who felt enlightened by them. Sophia remembers:

Recently, actually, Sarah came over, and she was asking what we had put down in the boxes when we were, because they wouldn't—she said that they use to make her check one, and me and George [the sisters' younger brother] were like, "Well, we always put two." Like, we always just did that. That's how we identified. So it wasn't really a question."

This led to a long conversation between the three siblings, Sarah, Sophia, and their younger brother, George. They exchanged stories of people attempting to limit the identification options that they had. Sophia explained to Sarah that both she and George always checked two boxes and that she shouldn't allow others to place restrictions on her identity choices. Sarah admired what she felt was her younger sister's brave approach to self-identification. Sarah sighed explaining, "But she is like, has, her whole being, and she just has been so, I feel like, brave, as a young person, to be able to do that. And I just didn't." Sarah gleaned insight from Sophia's perspective on agency and self-identification. At that point, she began to entertain the possibility of less restrictive self-identification options, subsequently fostering a shift in her own understandings.

Collaborative Internalization

In Chapter 2, I examined parental racial ascriptions and the uniformity of their impact on siblings. In my findings, I detailed the tendency among my respondents to uniformly describe the impact of parental racial ascriptions. The respondents' narratives in several sibling sets indicated that this uniformity of impact may be closely tied to the way that they collaboratively process the messages conveyed by their parents. Some respondents indicate that they discussed parental messages about race or racial classification with their sibling. In these discussions, they exchanged ideas regarding

their parents' messages, and through those conversations they mutually shaped each other's perspective on whether they agreed or disagreed with their parents.

Grace, Rick, and Lynn compose a sibling triad who all independently reported that their White mother and Black father felt strongly about their children self-identifying as biracial. All three siblings were interviewed independently in their parents' home and the entire family was present the day of their interviews. After the completion of the interviews, their Black father wanted to discuss the interviews with me but, most importantly, wanted to know how I self-identify. I attempted to avoid answering the question for many reasons. In the interview setting, and in my role as a researcher, I did not want to disclose my personal views, so I reassured him that the purpose of my research is to elucidate the process of biracial identity development because those with one Black parent and one White parent identify in different ways, for a myriad of reasons. Despite my attempts, I was unable to avoid answering his question without appearing rude. Eventually I responded, explaining my personal views in the context of my research goals and findings. He politely offered feedback as to why my views were unfortunate, expressing hope that I would eventually be enlightened. I found this noteworthy not because I was offended, but because it spoke to the fervor that likely characterized his (and his wife's) messages to his children regarding their biracial identities.

Grace, Rick, and Lynn are siblings who see each other regularly at their parents' house several times a week and describe having close ties. While they all describe their self-identification similarly, their narratives paint a portrait of different lived experiences, gleaned from their expressed interests, thoughts, mate selections, and friendship

networks. Their acknowledgement of those differences was illustrated by Lynn's mention of them teasing each other. Lynn says, "Oh, Rick will make fun of me, 'Oh, you think you're Black,' or we'll call Grace 'White.' I don't know. And I call Rick, like, 'Hispanic,' because he thinks he's Hispanic, and because he only dated Hispanic girls all the time." Their narratives, and Lynn's description of their mutual teasing, indicated that they all seem to racially understand themselves differently, although they all decisively self-identify as biracial. There were striking similarities among all three siblings' descriptions of their parents' messages regarding racial classification. Oldest sibling, Grace said, "…and I think we were raised, you know, just that, you know, 'You're both,' and 'You know, you have both, and be proud of it,' and it's something to be proud and to not be ashamed of." Rick, the middle sibling, also says, "I was brought up that way. I was told I was biracial, I was told I was Black and White. And it's just—it's just, gosh, it's just we were raised virtually, I mean, I don't know how else, I have no other way to say it." Lynn, the youngest sibling echoed her older siblings' sentiment, "…and I feel like they've raised us to make that experience, and they raised us that, you don't—there's no—you don't have to be in a box." These three accounts reveal a noteworthy similarity. The use of the word "raised" by all three siblings indicates that their parents didn't simply tell them at some point that they are biracial. The word "raised" invokes notions of consistent and frequent messages. On many occasions, these siblings found themselves discussing their parents' perspectives, exchanging interpretations of those messages and, by default, shaping each other's views. This process of mutually accepting their parents' messages reinforces the resolve within each sibling that a biracial self-identification is categorically appropriate, even in light of different lived experiences and understandings

of themselves. By simply rehashing the views conveyed by their parents, they did the work of emphasizing to each other the importance of racially inclusive self-identification and a sense of pride in those labels.

During Hannah's interview she mentioned having many discussions with her siblings about their parents' messages regarding race. Her Black mother and White father were very clear that racial categories were not important distinctions and they should refrain from understanding themselves through the use racial labels. Hannah's sister, Joy, succinctly described their parents' perspective, "My parents thought it was foolish to identify with either Black or White." Hannah describes how her and her siblings felt about their parents' de-emphasis of race:

> It's interesting that from all three of our perspectives, we've recognized that our parents raised us with this de-emphazation on race. So, we all recognize that. Like, from myself, being the oldest, to my sister, who's the youngest, that didn't change. And so, we think that, at times, we're grateful for it. At times I think they did us a disservice.

The ambivalence that Hannah expressed regarding her parents' messages was both discussed and shared with her siblings (her middle sibling was not a part of this study). Overall, Hannah reports that they collectively agreed that their parents did them a disservice, which posed challenges to their negotiations of race outside the home.

Rhonda and Jake did not agree with their Black mother's views regarding race. Their mother never discussed racial classification, per se, however she did often share her views regarding racial hierarchies. Their mother believed that society valued whiteness, a view Rhonda indicated her mother was taught and internalized growing up. Rhonda's mother also imparted suggestions regarding how her children should negotiate that reality. Rhonda explained talking to her brother about their mother's views:

> My mother was raised to believe that White is right, and the whiter you are, the better you are, and the straighter your hair, the better you are. So we would have a lot of conversations about that…She never told me that I should say I'm White. But she told me my kids would have a better life if I married a White person…The whole, White is right—basically making fun of our mother [referencing the basis of her and Jake's discussions regarding their mother's views].

Neither Rhonda nor Jake agreed with their mother's beliefs regarding the inherent superiority of White people. They discussed their mother's views often which typically involved humorous exchanges and jokes. Considering that Rhonda and Jake's only conversations regarding their mother's views occurred in the context of ridicule, they collaboratively shaped and reinforced each other's opposition to, and rejection of, their mother's views. The respondents in each of the three sibling sets all exemplify the subtle ways that siblings collaborate to establish their positions on their parents' messages.

Modeling

Younger siblings often look up to their older siblings as a guide for how they should approach life. They learn lessons from their older siblings, and often unconsciously mimic their behaviors and decisions. Although much of the literature within family studies focuses on birth-order influence and the adoption of delinquent behaviors, the concept of birth-order can explain many patterns of influence observed among siblings in this study. Some look to their older siblings to help make sense of a complex racial experience. Instead of independently struggling to figure out how to negotiate the multiplicity of variables that impact the biracial identity development process, younger siblings often use their older siblings as a "cheat sheet," imitating their behaviors and patterns of self-identification. Ultimately, older siblings are often a

resource for younger siblings to "learn" race. This is especially true for the sibling sets in this study that were comprised of sisters.

Alicia details her experience negotiating her self-understanding with her older sister to look to. Born one year apart, Alicia explained how Natalie was of tremendous support in ways that Natalie was unaware of. Alicia details how Natalie played a role in her negotiation of her racial identity:

> Because it was like, if I came home and I thought something was wrong with me, and I look at my sister and she was confident in that area, it would be like, "Oh, well then I'm fine." It's done. You know what I mean? Like then you start, like realizing and looking within yourself—like maybe it's not what's going on with me. Maybe it's how they're perceiving me. And if I'm okay with that, then there should be no issue. You know? And especially if I have her there.

Alicia viewed her sister, Natalie as self-assured and confident, which was in large part a validation of her own racial identity. Holding an older sibling in high regard, particularly a sibling of the same gender, can be an asset to a younger sibling negotiating their own issues, especially if the older sibling appears to have a positive racial self-understanding.

Sibling triad, Sarah, Sophia, and George espouse feelings about each other that paint a colorful picture of the age-gender dynamic that shapes sibling perception of role models. In the previous section outlining younger sibling racial identification, Sarah learned from her younger sister that she had more agency to self-identify than she previously thought. Although Sarah characterized Sophia's blended self-identification as brave, Sophia still described looking up to her older sister and striving to follow in her exact footsteps. Sophia says, "When I was younger, I wanted to be exactly like her. I wanted to go to every school that she did, wear everything she wore…So I really emulated my sister growing up." These feelings represent a common sentiment regarding

older siblings held by their younger siblings, particularly of the same gender, and irrespective of the age gap.

Younger sibling perception of older siblings as role models was an uncommon brother/sister dynamic. George, Sophia's younger brother, does not describe Sophia as a role model and articulates distaste for Sophia's conscious attempt to buffer his experiences. Sophia describes her intentional efforts to shield her younger brother as part of her role as his older sister. She contrasted her emulation of their half-sibling Sarah, 8 years her senior, to her relationship with her full-sibling George, 1 and a half years her junior. She explains, "But my brother and I have like, a special relationship where like….I feel like I shielded him from a lot." Sophia attempted to guide George's decisions in an attempt to protect him from painful racial experiences as well as family issues. George echoed Sophia's account, describing his resentment towards her for invalidating his views and perspectives. "She acts like she's five years older than me. She's a year and four months older than me. It's not that much of a difference. You know, we both have our different smarts…You know, she'll talk down to me. I can't—I'm sick of that. Like, I go crazy. I mean, of course, because she's my older sister. That's what the older sister does." George seemingly understands that Sophia's behavior is a standard expectation for the role of older sibling, yet he does not describe Sarah in the same way although she is ten years his senior. The large age-gap between George and his half-sister Sarah fostered his admiration of her:

> She's just cool. I don't know. I've always thought she was really cool. I've always looked up to her. She was like a—when was she born? What? 1980. Yeah. So, she grew up in the 80s, and was a teenager during the 90s. So, growing up, whenever I got to see her, whenever she would stay here, I would always look through her album collection.

The complex gender dynamics inherent within the patterns of sibling influence are evidenced by this sibling triad's narratives. Several sibling sets illustrated that the closer in age brothers and sisters were, the less likely the younger sibling viewed the older as a role model. This was the case whether the older sibling was a brother or a sister. The opposite can be said for patterns of older sibling role models among same-sex siblings. When examining age span dynamics, same-sex siblings, particularly sisters, were more likely to have a younger sibling who emulated their older sister, whether they were very close in age or far apart.

Reaffirmation

There are a number of unique developmental functions that arise out of the sibling relationship and the positioning of siblings within the family context allows for so many avenues of support that are unconscious in nature (Sroufe et al. 2005). For some, having a sibling in the home had a positive impact on their racial identity development. There were themes that emerged which centered on the respondent's description of their sibling as a source of comfort as they faced external challenges negotiating matters of race. Here, I identify three types of reaffirming sibling dynamics that were reported as impactful on how respondents understood themselves.

Close Ties. There is a saying: "Best friends are the sisters that we choose for ourselves." While there are many versions of this saying, the fundamental point remains the same: best friends represent the ideal sister. But what is to be said of the respondents who consider their sisters their ideal best friend? How does this impact their lived experience and their racial identities? The respondents in all four of the sister/sister

sibling pairs described their relationship with their sister as "close." Additionally, sisters in three of the sibling sets also indirectly impart the strength of the bonds that they share with their sisters throughout their interviews, revealing how that shaped their self-understandings. Respectively, sisters Karen and Eve, Natalie and Alicia, and Kelly and Serena, reveal remarkable similarities in their lifestyles, life choices, and racial understandings. Throughout the interview, these respondents made a great deal of direct references to their sister but also a number of indirect references through the use of plural personal pronouns like "we," and responses to personal-level questions with sibling-level responses[5].

Respondent use of the plural personal pronouns "we" or "us" was evidence of how they interpret and internalize certain memories. Without exception, although to different extents, each respondent in the sister/sister sibling sets utilized a plural pronoun in response to a direct question about a personal experience. This was a reasonable way of recalling certain memories, particularly memories that pertain to shared experiences, as is the case for siblings of any race (Weisner 1989). This is illustrated by statements like, "We moved to a different neighborhood." However, for many respondents the more often the plural pronouns "we" and "us" were used, the closer they described their relationship with their sister. This elucidates the nature of close sibling ties and how they influence the internalization of racial experiences. Siblings who have a close relationship more likely think about their racial experiences as shared experiences instead of individual experiences.

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[5] This project evolved into a sibling study, so at the time of the interview, it was not presented to the respondents as a sibling study. They had no reason to believe that I was interested in their sibling's experiences in reference to their own, outside of direct questions asked about siblings and other members of the family.

Recalling shared experiences was most common among close sisters, however, among sisters who report being extremely close, their responses not only included the use of plural pronouns for shared experiences, they described individual experiences as if the sisters were a single unit. Describing an identity or feeling using a plural pronoun is indicative of an internalization of racial experiences as inextricably shared with a sibling. In response to a question about her observed race, Alicia describes the similar perception others have of her and her sister: "Natalie and I, we're very in sync with each other. So we always understood how people perceived us." This comment is noteworthy for several reasons. Alicia and Natalie do not resemble each other and their observed race is different by their own accounts, as well as by my assessment. Natalie indicated that others often view her as White, and at other points in the interview, Alicia mentioned that others view her [Alicia] as Hispanic. Alicia also explained that when people discover that she has sister, they ask if the two look alike. She describes her response to that question with some sadness "because my sister is blonde-haired, green eyes. I'm brown-haired, brown eyes. And people are always asking, 'Do you look like your sister?' and my answer is, 'No.'" This comment is in stark contrast to her earlier statement regarding their shared experience with observed race and being in sync. If Alicia and Natalie resembled each other, or if their observed race was similar, Alicia's sibling-level response aligning her own observed race with Natalie's would follow a logical reasoning. However, her response indicates that far more of her racial self-understanding is a sibling racial-understanding—a very powerful illustration of the influence of close sibling ties.

Shared experience. Some respondents describe their sibling as a reminder that they were not alone in their racial experience. This particular perspective involves the view of a sibling as one who mitigates the alienation of the biracial experience. This feeling is different than those expressed by respondents who saw older siblings as role models. Emulating a sibling who has blazed a trail of racial identity often leads to the construction of racial self-understandings that reflect an older sibling's experience. The underlying feeling described by younger siblings in these cases was "sameness." However, respondents who described feelings of validation from shared experiences, express notions of "comradeship." This is rooted in the feeling that one's experience is shared, even if it is not identical or similar. These respondents viewed their siblings as teammates who were with them on the ride as they navigate the terrain of racial identity. Siblings often developed this feeling as family members, close in age, who navigated life within the same family context. Brothers and/or sisters often represent the sole people who understand each other's family experience through a similar lens. For respondents in this study, that feeling was intensified by their sibling's shared racial heritage. As two main facets of the respondent's life, family and biracial identity present lived experiences that are unique, and perhaps challenging, that would otherwise be navigated alone. It was often reassuring for respondents to know that someone else knew what it was like to negotiate identities in similar environmental contexts.

The alienation that is mitigated through shared experiences was not often explicitly articulated by a respondent yet was easily discernible within the narratives. Respondents like Harriet, who grew up in a predominantly White rural area, never encountered other people who shared her dual racial heritage. She states, "I literally

thought my brother and I were the first mixed people ever in the entire world." This statement underscored her general feeling that her brother, Louis, was the only person that she knew with parents of a different race. His presence helped Harriett make sense of herself, although they both recall their constant disagreement on self-identification. Their appreciation for each other's presence while growing up in a racially homogenous, White environment, was not diminished by the fact that Louis firmly believed that they should self-identify as Black and Harriet believed that she was biracial. This example demonstrates that at times the most impactful support that a sibling can offer may not involve explicit discussions of race or of racialized experiences, but simply being a partner along for the figurative ride.

Commiseration. Although some respondents gleaned support from their sibling's comradeship, others sought their sibling's support in more tangible ways. The most common support mentioned by the respondents in this study was commiseration. Although the experiences of biracial people are not monolithic in nature, biracial people can often relate to various aspects of another biracial person's experience. This is especially true for biracial siblings who share many specific aspects of their lives, including possible physical resemblance, family structure and relationships, and environmental contexts. All of these social context variables play a significant role in the life of an individual during the identity development process. When negotiating challenges within these contexts, siblings can often relate to the respondent's issues and perspective.

There are many variables that impact how an individual negotiates their racial identities with members of the outside world. Physical appearance impacts this process

differently for many biracial respondents. Those who have a Black observed race may experience issues of colorism, or rejection, as reported by several respondents. However, those who have more of a racially ambiguous physical appearance may be confronted with challenges from others questioning their racial heritage. This was commonly reported by respondents in this study, as was turning to a sibling to cope with these invalidating experiences. Sarah describes venting to her younger sister, Sophia, "My sister and I definitely, like, talked about that, like, why people are always just like, 'What are you?' those kind of like, questions...That's such a strange way to raise a question" Sarah expressed feeling isolated by questions regarding her racial identity and dehumanized by the wording of many of those inquiries. She often turned to her sister who also had issues negotiating her physical appearance. They offered each other a mutual support and an outlet in which they could express their feelings with the expectation of empathy. This was a great resource for many respondents who felt like they always had a safe place to vent and be understood.

Parental racial ascription emerged as impactful on the racial self-identification of the respondents in this study. This indicates that the way that parents approach racial identification greatly shapes how their children will negotiate their self-identification with others. Hannah, 39, and Joy, 34, both described their parents' de-emphasis of the use of racial labels. Although they internalized those views growing up, both sisters experienced difficulty maintaining that perspective on racial identification when they went away to college. Although they attended different universities on the East coast, they both recall challenges asserting that racial labels didn't matter and were confronted with rigid one-drop rules of racial classification. This was the first time that they were

made aware that others regarded them as Black. Both sisters adapted to the feedback within their new environments by adopting Black identities. However, as they experienced this shift in their understandings, they each expressed dismay regarding their parents' approach to race and how that left them ill-prepared to deal with others. Hannah explained, "My siblings and I have had similar conversations. We have discussed what I just said to you—the way we were raised and struggled to identify with a race. We have discussed that extensively because obviously we've gone through it together." Throughout their interviews, Hannah and Joy describe taking for granted that racial labels didn't matter and having frequent and extensive discussions with their siblings regarding their rude awakenings. They offered each other support, advice, and validation. Their narratives suggest that they regarded each other as a team who (they also spoke of their brother who was not interviewed in this study), when sent out into the world ill-prepared, came back, formed a huddle of support that would enable them to get back on the field. They never indicated that they consulted with each other regarding how to personally approach this challenge. Instead, they offered constant support and an empathetic ear which validated their sense of self coming to terms with society's conflicting views on racial assignment. This, among many other examples, elucidate that sibling relationships can provide a therapeutic outlet that fosters catharsis and validation.

Mono-Racial Half-Siblings

When a respondent is a member of a blended family, they are often joined with the children from their parents' previous relationships. In this increasingly common family structure, the biracial respondent may have one or more half-siblings who are

White, Black, or biracial. The literature on familial racial socialization pays scant attention to the influence of siblings, and the scope of those few sibling analyses are not inclusive of the unique position that mono-racial siblings occupy.

The number of respondents in this study who were raised in a blended family calls for an exploration of this specific sibling dynamic. Twelve of the twenty-two respondents in this study have half-siblings, and five of those respondents have mono-racial half-siblings[6]. Each respondent who indicated that they have a mono-racial half-sibling also indicated that they share close ties, though none of those particular respondents delved into the nature of those relationships or addressed sibling influence as it related to their mono-racial siblings. Additionally, only two of the respondents with mono-racial half-siblings lived in the home with their sibling as part of a blended family. Therefore, in order to explore this neglected sibling dynamic, I utilize the narratives of two respondents from the larger sample of 60 Black/White biracial respondents, from which this study's sibling subset derives. These two narratives respectively illustrate the positive impact and negative impact that a mono-racial half sibling can have on a respondent's racial identity development when raised together as part of a blended family.

Harold, a 33 year old man, was the youngest of four siblings raised in a blended family that consisted of his White father, Black mother, and her three Black daughters from a previous marriage. Harold maintains a very close relationship with his Black half-sisters and shares a home with one of them. Like all of his sisters, Harold views himself as Black and when asked what factors contributed to his understanding of himself as a Black man, Harold stated, "You know, the most defining factor is the fact that I have

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[6] Of the twelve respondents who have half siblings, seven have half-siblings who are also Black/White biracial.

three older sisters who are Black. Hands down. Because if I had three White sisters, I'd be White. In my mind, I would identify myself as White." Harold categorically credits his relationships with his three Black sisters as the main factor that shaped his Black identity. He asserts that his sisters' influence was not race specific, and instead attributes it more to gender, birth-order and sibling size. By Harold's account, his sisters engaged several mechanisms of racial socialization as three role models who not only guided his racial development but also reaffirmed his Black identity through their strong inclusive sibling bonds. Harold's narrative offers compelling evidence that the potential positive influence of mono-racial half-siblings conceivably rivals the influence that biracial full-siblings have on the racial identity development process.

Harold and Fred were raised in homes with very similar family structures and racial composition. Fred, a 35 year old man, was raised in a blended family with his White father, Black mother, and her Black son and Black daughter from a previous marriage. Like Harold, Fred developed a Black identity, however, he details that being raised in the same home with his Black half-brother had a negative impact on his racial self-understanding. There was a tension between him and his brother that Fred believed was inadvertently created by his Black mother. Throughout his childhood, Fred recalls that his mother exhibited preferential treatment towards his Black half-brother:

> My brother was very dark skinned. And you know, my mom has told us that when she was growing up, she was made to feel ugly simply because she was so dark. And so I guess, by way of overcompensating for that, she would go out of her way to make my brother feel like he was very attractive. So without realizing it, I mean, this created a conflict, obviously, between me and my brother because I felt she favored him. And I felt a lot of that had to do with the fact that he was darker, you know, and she could, I guess, relate to him more than to me. And so there was a tension or a conflict there, I think, between me and my brother.

According to Fred, his mother engaged in pride building strategies of racial socialization to ensure that her Black, dark skinned son developed a healthy self-concept in a society plagued by racism and European ideals of beauty. Inspired by her own racial experiences, she anticipated the issues that her Black son would encounter, and attempted to actively thwart off those negative messages. She did not consider Fred in need of these pride building strategies, likely assessing that his very light skin and Hispanic physical appearance would gain him favor in society, or at minimum, would insulate him from internalizing the self-hatred that European ideals of beauty can promote. However, her exclusion of Fred from her identity-validating practices with her mono-racial Black son, unintentionally fostered Fred's feelings of exclusion and his feelings of resentment towards his Black brother. Fred ultimately spends a great deal of energy into adulthood actively and consciously asserting his Black identity in hopes that his mother would validate his Black identity.

Ancillary Agents of Racial Socialization

Siblings can be characterized as ancillary racial socializing agents who directly and indirectly help each other sort through their racial experiences and self-understandings. The patterns that emerged in this study reveal four mechanisms of racial socialization that siblings engage in both consciously and unconsciously (Figure 4). Those mechanisms are: reorienting identification, collaborative internalization, modeling, and reaffirmation.

Reorienting Identification

There were a few respondents who made a conscious attempt to instruct their sibling on how to self-identify or whose sibling made a conscious attempt to instruct them. Racial identification, a mechanism of racial socialization common among parents, arises out of the need to teach someone how they should view themselves racially. Like extended family members discussed in Chapter 3, siblings appear to engage in this approach out of a need to reorient the respondent away from what they believe is a troublesome self-identification. Whether directly or indirectly, these siblings attempt to "correct" or "re-identify" the respondent, guiding them toward what they feel is an appropriate self-identification. According to Zukow-Goldring (2002), older siblings act as socializing agents who instruct the younger sibling in learning cultural ways. In this study, older siblings were motivated by their perceived responsibility to help guide their younger sibling in the right direction, however, younger siblings were not amenable to this "directive" approach to socialization. Parents were reported as influential on the self-identification of respondents in this study. Considering this parent-child dynamic, when older siblings decide to reorient younger siblings, they are often met with resistance. Whether this is due to the internalization of parental ascriptions and opposition to conflicting messages or a general refusal to submit to older sibling directives, younger siblings are not often receptive to reorienting identification.

Although it was not commonly reported by my respondents or identified as a common occurrence in the findings from previous sibling studies on birth order and sibling influence, it is possible for younger siblings to influence older siblings (Dunn1983). Dunn explored the multifaceted nature of sibling relationships that allow for

both reciprocal influence and complementary influence. She asserts that sibling relationships can be impacted by birth order, with older siblings having complimentary, parent-child-like influence, and they can also be impacted by reciprocal influence with older and younger siblings having direct influence on each other. The patterns of racial reorientation in this study support the nuanced picture of influence that Dunn describes.

Sarah's narrative supports this assertion. As an older sibling born in a different generation, Sarah had experiences and views on racial identification that differed from her younger sister, Sophia. Although Sophia encountered challenges and trials negotiating her racial self-identification as a result of individual level variables, her racial identity development was not impacted as severely as Sarah's. Root (1998) identified traits, for example temperament, as a micro-lens through which different sibling racial identity outcomes could be understood. Sophia's personality, among other variables, shaped her perceived level of agency to racially self-identify how she chose. Sarah admired Sophia's courage to resist one-drop designations and confront challenges. Granted, it is more common for younger siblings to take their cues and direction from older siblings, however, Sophia's urging of Sarah to resist one-drop designations serves as compelling evidence that birth order does not outright dictate the directionality of sibling influence.

Collaborative Internalization

Collaborative internalization is a mechanism of sibling racial socialization that is directly related to parental racial ascription. A pattern emerged that indicated that siblings consciously discussed the messages that their parents imparted regarding race and racial

identity. Jenkins and Dunn (2009) posit that there are sibling interactions that promote social understandings. The respondents who engaged in collaborative internalization illustrate this point. Through discussions about the messages that their parents convey, they collectively shape and affirm each other's feelings. This mechanism of racial socialization is the clearest example of the ancillary nature of sibling influence. While parents have been shown to be primary, and highly influential, agents of racial socialization, the literature has long overlooked how parental influence on a child can be either bolstered or attenuated by their siblings.

In this study, the respondents in several sibling sets describe coming together to discuss their parents' racial messages. Grace, Rick and Lynn collectively affirm their parents' biracial ascription and their deliberation resulted in each sibling's adoption of a self-identification that not only reflects their parents' messages, but also their collective interpretation of those messages. For Hannah, Joy, and their brother, the need for collaboration arose out of a change in environmental contexts that posed challenges to their racial understandings. When discussing their parents' approach to race that rendered them ill-prepared to deal with societal racial norms and expectations, they found that their other siblings' experiences mirrored that of their own. They were able to share ideas and collectively establish that they reject what they believe were misinformed views espoused by their parents regarding the salience of racial classification and racial labels. Whiteman et al. explain, "Siblings also shape their own relationship in the context of their social exchanges, such as by reciprocally reinforcing positive or negative behaviors and by observing and imitating one another. Most family contexts provide ample opportunity for these social learning processes to operate (2011:131)." This supports the parent-child-

sibling dynamic of influence that emerged from the narratives. For respondents in the two aforementioned sibling sets, their shared belief in whether they should accept their parents' ascriptions or reject their parents' ascriptions, respectively, bonded them as siblings and validated them as individuals.

Modeling

Though some respondents explicitly instruct their siblings how to negotiate various matters of race, many younger siblings learn how to manage different aspects of their lives by watching how their older siblings approach matters in similar scenarios. In relation to peer interactions, older siblings serve as a guide to navigating social settings for the younger sibling (Zukow-Goldring 2002), illustrated by sisters Natalie and Alicia who often navigated most of their social settings together. This modeling was also common among older siblings who shaped their younger sibling's racial identity development by serving as a role model or a standard by which they could relate and evaluate their own identity and self-identification. Although, it has been established that modeling is a common mechanism of sibling socialization (Bandura 1977; Whiteman et al. 2009; Milevsky 2011), little research has been conducted on the influence of sibling modeling on racial identity development. This study, lending from the extant family studies scholarship, builds our present understanding of this process. The modeling of racial behaviors and lived experiences can be best understood through Bandura's learning theory (1977). He describes the dynamics reported by respondents who are younger siblings looking to their older siblings to get a better understanding of themselves and how they should behave. In a study by Azmitia and Hesser (1993) they found that

younger siblings imitate and seek guidance from their older siblings more than a familiar older peer. This indicates that sibling relationships have a significant amount of influence that traverse through many facets of a person's life.

Racial identity is an important aspect of life that young biracial people seek guidance navigating. Bandura stressed the importance of observational learning, indicating that younger siblings learn from modeling by older siblings. Respondents in this study reported looking to older siblings to glean information on a wide variety of racial issues like how to act, embody self-assurance, and negotiate challenges. This is especially true for sisters. The lack of brother sibling sets in this sample precludes any assertions regarding all same-sex sibling sets, however, there were important findings yielded from the four brother/sister sets, four sister sets, and two brother/sister/sister sets. These findings suggest that there is a sex/age-spacing/birth-order effect as it pertains to which younger siblings regard their older siblings as role models. Minnett et al. (1983) examined the effects of these family constellation variables, concluding that sibling status impacts the nature of the sibling relationship. Among children, they found patterns regarding the behaviors of sisters, brothers, and siblings in same-sex dyads. The findings in this study support several of these patterns. I found that among sisters, there was a strong tendency for younger respondents to look to their older siblings as role models on how to racially self-identify. This was the case despite age spacing, although the influence seemed stronger among sisters with fewer years of age between them. This was in contrast to the pattern among brothers and sisters. There were no younger sisters who reported an older brother serving as a role model. However, a younger brother appeared more likely to identify an older sister as a role model if there was significant age-spacing,

which mirrors a recent finding of Whiteman et al. (2011). Whereas a one-year age-spacing between sisters may increase the chances of a younger sister viewing the older sister as a role model, a one-year age-spacing between a younger brother and an older sister decreased the chances of the younger brother identifying the older sister as a role model. Age-spacing, birth-order, and sex appear to shape how siblings influence each other.

Reaffirmation

Reaffirmation is the fourth mechanism of sibling racial socialization that emerged from the narratives. For many respondents in this study, siblings engaged in behaviors that reaffirmed the respondent's sense of self and/or racial understanding. Three themes emerged among the respondent accounts of reaffirmation. Respondent identities were validated and reaffirmed through: shared experiences, commiseration, and through close ties with siblings.

Shared Experiences. Often, siblings spend more time with each other than with anyone else, including peers, parents, and family members (McHale and Crouter 1996), and research has shown that sibling relationships provide unique opportunities for influencing development (Jenkins and Dunn 2009). A unique bond is often cultivated as a result of shared familial experiences among siblings. For biracial respondents, there is an additional racial aspect of their lives that they also share with their sibling that forges a bond of solidarity that can transcend issues of compatibility (Dunn and Kendrick 1982). The respondents in this study were comforted by just knowing that someone understood their experience. Even in cases where a respondent did not express having close ties to

their sibling, it was possible for them to still speak of the bond that arose out of shared familial and racial experiences.

    Commiseration. Siblings in this study enjoy a bond that resulted from shared experiences that are unique from any other relationship. Respondents in this study also have an additional facet to their shared experience that captures their racial understandings. That bond cultivates a forum in which siblings meet to discuss their feelings and cope with the challenges they face negotiating race (Conger and Mcguire 2009b; Kramer 2010). Above all family members, studies have found that siblings discuss their emotions most often with each other (Jenkins and Dunn 2009), making siblings the perfect therapist for each other. Several respondents in this study recalled engaging in exchanges with their siblings where they offered each other an outlet and support. For many, the bond of shared experiences creates a safe zone where respondents can go to be heard and understood from a family member who understands their racial experience. This safe zone is a place where siblings comfort each other, providing empathy unavailable from other mono-racial family members.

    Close Ties. Beyond validation from shared experiences and therapeutic sibling commiseration, respondents exhibit evidence that the close ties that they have with their siblings impacts their racial development. Among siblings who have a close relationship, there can be a crossover effect that can be described as an emotional contagion: when the feelings, thoughts, and emotions of those in a close relationship are infectious (Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson 1993). Considering that siblings spend a great deal of time with each other during their childhood years in emotionally uninhibited relationships (McHale and Crouter 1996; Deater-Deckard, Dunn, and Lussier 2002), their potential influence on

each other's racial identity development is great. Respondents in this study demonstrate this contagion through the use of plural pronouns to describe their racial experiences. Siblings Natalie and Alicia also exhibit what I would call a "racial contagion." Having shared experiences from so many facets of their lives, they have melded their own experiences and perspectives into one "sibling racial identity."

These findings underscore the importance of broadening our understanding of the influence of sibling relationships on other aspects of development. It is not enough to state that siblings often share similar experiences. It is imperative that the literature pushes towards an understanding of the nature of sibling influence by more thoroughly analyzing the mechanisms of sibling socialization, some of which were presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5

The Family Nexus of Racial Socialization

In this dissertation, I have outlined several mechanisms of familial racial socialization that have gone underexplored or unexplored in the literature on biracial identity development. Broadly, patterns emerged among the narratives in this study that indicate that parents were not the only influential agents of racial socialization within the family; siblings and extended family members also engaged in distinct behaviors that impacted how the respondent understood themselves. The narratives also revealed that certain mechanisms of racial socialization were common among specific types of family members. The emergent patterns within this study of familial mechanisms of racial socialization deepen our understanding of the nature of family influence.

In Figure 5, I introduce an inclusive *Family Nexus of Racial Socialization* that incorporates how non-parental family members engage in racial socialization. This conceptualization frames the varied mechanisms engaged by different types of family members. Figure 5 illustrates that parents often acted as direct agents of racial socialization, ascribing racial labels to their children through racial identification. Extended family members, on the other hand, acted as indirect agents of racial socialization; they impacted racial identity development most through behaviors that cultivated feelings of inclusion or exclusion. Siblings influenced each other in specific ways as well. Through behaviors that fostered support, siblings often acted as ancillary agents of racial socialization. In this regard, they supported and reaffirmed each other in ways only possible with someone who shared their experience.
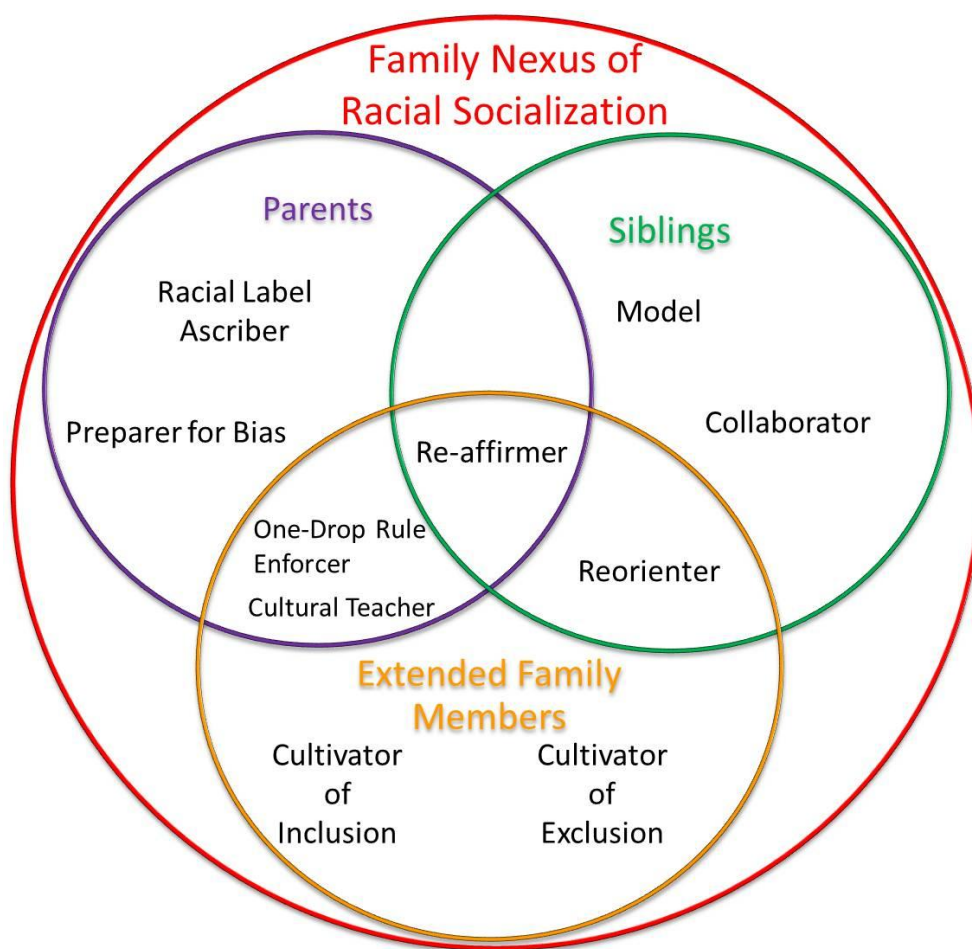
Figure 5. Family Nexus of Racial Socialization (FNRS)

There were four main findings in this study regarding the roles that various family members played in the process of racial socialization. These findings elucidate prominent patterns among each type of family member, revealing the nature of their approach to racial socialization and the nature of their influence. The first three findings exemplify a different component of the FNRS, respectively. The fourth finding illustrates the interconnectedness of each component of the FNRS.

First, parents were direct agents of racial socialization who most often engaged in racial identification. I found that among the respondents in this study, both the racial label

that was ascribed by parent(s) and the impact of the racial label ascription were tied to which parent(s) participated in the racial identification process. Dual-parent ascribers, parents who engaged in racial identification together, regardless of the race of mother or father, were more likely to ascribe blended labels or de-emphasize the importance of labels. However, sole-parent ascribers, parents who engaged in racial identification independently, were more likely to ascribe labels that were aligned with that parent's race. In regard to impact, dual-parent racial ascription was often reported as impactful on both self-identification and racial identity outcomes. Sole-parent racial ascription was only reported as impactful when mothers were the parent ascribing the label and those ascriptions were only impactful on self-identification. Overall, respondent narratives indicate that parental approaches to racial identification, and their influence on respondent self-identification and racial identity outcomes, were most strongly tied to whether parent(s) engaged in racial identification together or independently.

Second, extended family members were often indirect agents of racial socialization who influenced respondents most through their behaviors that cultivated feelings of inclusion or exclusion. The extended family member mechanisms of racial socialization outlined in Chapter 3 reveal a marked pattern. The narratives indicate that the race of the respondent's mother impacted how they interpreted and internalized the ostracism that they experienced from their White extended family members. Respondents who had White mothers, were much more likely to excuse the alienating behaviors from their White extended family members, particularly their White grandmothers. In these instances, respondents describe the actions of White extended family members as hurtful, yet excuse the behaviors, allowing the respondent to maintain that relationship and justify

having positive feelings towards a family member who ostracized them. Respondents who had Black mothers did not describe the exclusionary behaviors of White extended family members similarly. Those with Black mothers aligned themselves with their mother, despite the fact that the respondents described the negative treatment as not directed at them. Nonetheless, these respondents condemned their White extended family member's behavior, citing it as the cause of their estranged relationships, precluding the formation of close ties. In these cases, respondents also expressed their objection to the initiative taken by those White extended family members to form or strengthen their family ties. It was evident from many of the narratives in this study that the race of the respondent's mother influenced both how they interpreted and internalized White extended family member ostracism, and their desire to maintain family ties with White exclusionary family members.

Third, full-siblings were portrayed as ancillary agents of racial socialization who offered support to the respondent in unique ways. The shared experiences of siblings having the same racial heritage, growing up in the same family context, within the same social environment, positions them to offer the respondent a unique form of support (Kramer 2010). Of the various ways that siblings offered support, the most compelling pattern emerged from the narratives of sisters who shared close ties. Respondents who were close to their sisters described a racial identity development process shaped by a contagion effect. The strong bond shared by some sisters strengthened their influence on each other, resulting in them echoing each other's thoughts and views regarding race. These shared perspectives were evidenced by the respondent's use of plural pronouns, such as "we" or "us," in response to questions posed about their personal experiences.

They also exhibited a collaborative interpretation and internalization of their experiences and perspectives. This was illustrated by the respondent's tendency to speak for her sister, implicitly conveying that their views were one in the same. Mate choices and friendship networks also revealed sibling-level deployment of their racial understandings. Their choices often mirrored each other's and, in some cases, friendship networks even consisted of the same friends. Ultimately, close ties exhibited a racial contagion effect that led to what can be described as a sibling-level racial understanding.

Fourth, in this study I found that a family nexus of racial socialization includes various family members who have a dynamic and interconnected influence on the respondent's racial identity development process (see Figure 6). Within this family nexus, parents often laid the groundwork of directing children as to how they should understand themselves, navigate racial identification, and view race relations in general. Extended family members were the agents of racial socialization who validated or invalidated how the respondent felt about their racial selves, through behaviors that either bolstered or contradicted the messages conveyed by parents. Although there are a number of situational variables that determine the impact of parental messages regarding race, extended family members sent messages that either strengthened or mitigated the impact of those parental messages. Siblings also played a role in this process by reaffirming the respondent; they influenced the respondent by helping them sort through external messages. Siblings often guided each other's internalization of experiences and messages. As illustrated in Figure 6, each of these different familial agents of racial socialization was reported by respondents as impactful. They were all described as playing a different, yet interconnected and critical, role in shaping the biracial identity development process.
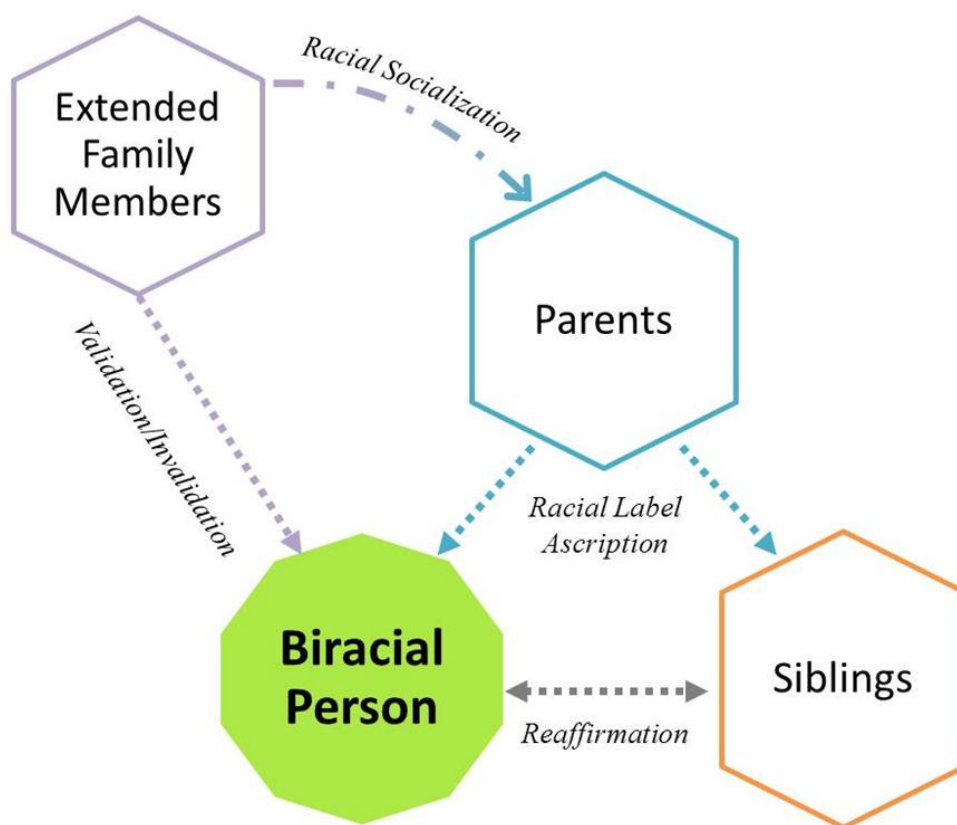
Figure 6. Interconnectedness of Familial Influence on Biracial Identity Development.

Different types of familial agents were more likely to be described as influential when they engaged specific mechanisms of racial socialization. For instance, parents were very effective when they engaged in the racial identification of their biracial children, however, both siblings and extended family members who engaged in "reorienting identification" were not influential and were often met with resistance. This is evidence that many mechanisms of racial socialization are agent-specific in regard to their level of influence on the process of racial identity development. It is this finding that underscores the need for the *Family Nexus of Racial Socialization* depicted in Figure 5,

which deepens our understanding of the nature of the mechanisms of racial socialization employed by various agents within the family.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE

This study's novel approach expands and deepens our understanding of familial racial socialization. By broadening the scope of influential family members, I establish a more inclusive conceptualization that reaches beyond parents. Incorporating siblings and extended family members into the analysis of the family nexus, I elucidate the complexities of racial socialization within the family. Additionally, using siblings as an analytical tool facilitated a deeper understanding of the racial socialization process, strengthening the contribution of this project. The heuristic findings of this study should encourage research that further examines the nature of familial racial socialization elaborating on the mechanisms outlined in the FNRS presented in this study.

The two main groups of underexplored family members prominent in this study are extended family members and siblings. The incorporation of extended family members into the analysis of familial racial socialization is an empirical contribution to the literature that has primarily concerned itself with parental mechanisms of racial socialization. This analysis uncovered and outlined mechanisms of racial socialization common among Black and White extended family members, and explored the impact of their often racialized experiences. Extended family members were found to engage in racial socialization mainly through approaches that were less direct and less conscious, nonetheless, respondents commonly reported them as influential. These findings suggest

that extended family members occupy an important place within the FNRS and that this development informs a broader understanding of familial racial socialization.

Siblings have also been neglected within the literature on racial socialization. Family studies, and scholarship within other disciplines, have established the role of the sibling as an influential agent of socialization (Kramer and Conger 2009a). However, this project is one of the first to take an in-depth look at the sibling as an agent of racial socialization. In this study I establish the sibling's role as an agent of racial socialization, and outline the nature of their influence. I examined sibling dynamics, detailing common mechanisms in which siblings were reported as having influenced the respondent's racial identity development. I assert that siblings reaffirm each other, mainly through unconscious mechanisms of support and guide each other through the process of interpreting and internalizing racial messages. This finding exposes a critical gap in the literature that has neglected this group of family members within analyses of racial socialization. This should encourage new directions in research, including innovative analytical approaches that fully explore the centrality of sibling influence within the process of racial identity development.

In Chapter 4, a section on co-resident, mono-racial half-siblings raised questions for further investigation regarding their noteworthy influence on biracial respondents, a dynamic revealed by Fred's and Harold's narratives. Many biracial people have half-siblings and the nature of those relationships range from estranged to co-resident with extremely close bonds. High divorce rates among interracial marriages between White and Black people, on average (see previous endnote in Chapter 3), translate into the increased likelihood of a biracial child being raised by a single mono-racial parent (most

often a White mother) or in a blended family. In a new blended family, there is a great chance that step-parents, step-siblings, and potential half-siblings will all be mono-racial. The identity work (Goffman 1971) required to racially orient oneself and to negotiate racial experiences within a mono-racial, multiple family-member home is substantial in nature. For some biracial people, such an undertaking would result in detrimental consequences for their developing self-understandings.

Occasionally, a biracial child in a blended home may not even be aware of the race of their non-custodial parent due to estrangement or death. Such was the case for Michael Fosberg, raised by his biological White mother and White step-father. Michael's mother did not disclose to either Michael or his step-father that his biological father is Black and for Michael's entire life he believed that he was White, just like his two younger White half-siblings. In Michael's thirties, when his mother and step-father divorced, his mother revealed his biological father's race. After a successful search and reunion with his Black biological father, Michael penned a book about his experience discovering that he wasn't White titled, *Incognito: An American Odyssey of Race and Self-Discovery*. Michael's experience was echoed by a few others in this study's larger sample. Until late adulthood, Kathy thought she was Black, unaware that her biological father was White. She was raised with four Black half-siblings who she believed were her full siblings. Growing up within mono-racial families, one White and one Black respectively, Michael and Kathy were burdened with the task of reevaluating their racial self-understandings upon discovering their biological fathers' race as an adult. This proved to be a long and devastating process for Kathy, and emotionally and psychologically challenging for Michael. Although not a common experience for biracial

people, these cases represent the potential boundless intricacies of family structure and the implications for racial self-understandings.

In this sibling study, a number of biracial respondents reported having a mono-racial half-sibling, and several indicated that they lived in the same home. Respondents with co-resident mono-racial half-siblings commonly described their influence in some ways that mirrored that of full sibling influence. A shared family context and upbringing, promoted an influential sibling dynamic that increased the potential avenues through which mono-racial half-siblings could shape the respondent's self-understandings. The preliminary analysis in Chapter 4 suggested that mono-racial half-siblings influence respondents in ways that were characteristic of both full-sibling influence and extended family member influence. The increasingly common occurrence of co-resident mono-racial half-siblings necessitates further investigation into the nature of their potentially significant influence, which would situate this specific sibling-type within the concept of the *Family Nexus of Racial Socialization*.

Sibling Studies

I employed an innovative approach to this analysis of familial racial socialization, utilizing a sample consisting of sibling sets to more thoroughly interrogate the mechanisms of racial socialization engaged by various family members. This approach offered an analytical contribution to the literature, illustrating the wealth of information on familial racial socialization that can be gleaned from a sibling study. By using siblings as an analytical tool, I was able to examine familial racial socialization, while controlling for environment, which informed three specific dynamics that add depth to this study's

findings. First, sibling narratives provide insight into socializing agent consistency of approaches to racial socialization. In this study, I examined whether agents of familial racial socialization engaged the same mechanisms of racial socialization and convey the same messages regarding race with all of the respondents in a sibling set. This yielded information regarding the nuances of racial socialization that result in family members conveying different messages to different siblings, a pattern worthy of further investigation. Second, sibling narratives avail themselves to the assessment of uniformity of impact of familial racial socialization. This offers insight into the nature and strength of familial influence within a given family context. Third, and possibly most important, sibling narratives elucidate the interconnectedness of familial influence. Within the home, different agents of familial racial socialization simultaneously engage agent-specific mechanisms (see Figure 5). The mechanism of sibling racial socialization, *collaborative internalization* (see Figure 4), illustrates how the influence of parental mechanisms of racial socialization, like racial identification, can be either strengthened or mitigated through collective deliberation among siblings. Within the narratives of some sibling sets, it is revealed that siblings collectively processed their parents' messages regarding race and racial identification, acting as intervening influences on parental racial socialization. The findings from this study that show patterns of sibling uniformity of parental impact may not reflect the strength of parental influence alone. Instead, they may also reflect the strength of the siblings' intervening influence. This is one example of the dynamic and interconnected influence of socializing agents within the family nexus of racial socialization. This signals a myriad of possibilities for further exploration of family dynamics of influence. Comparative sibling analyses provide valuable insight. The utility

of this analytical tool is not limited to studies of family dynamics—it is also promising for the enrichment of broader studies on racial identity development.

This study offers an empirical and conceptual contribution to the literature on racial socialization. The family nexus of racial socialization (Figure 5) is a concept that incorporates this study's inclusive framework of familial agents of racial socialization. This concept also outlines the mechanisms of racial socialization that were employed by different familial agents, and uncovered in this study. Racial socialization begins within the family context. The narratives in this study revealed that parents had a tendency to directly influence the respondent's self-identification choices, however, other family members, such as grandmothers, cousins, and siblings, played an equally prominent role in shaping racial identities.

Generally, family members remind us of who we are in both direct and indirect ways. The evolution of this project into an analysis of familial racial socialization was inspired by the prominence of family member influence within many of the narratives in this study. Respondent experiences involving their parents were often mirrored within the scholarship on racial socialization, however, their dynamic relationships with siblings and extended family members were not. Respondent accounts detailed shared perspectives, impactful experiences, and influential relationship dynamics with extended family members and siblings. Their lived experiences and articulations of influence emerged as interactional patterns that were often internalized similarly, but weren't reflected in the literature on biracial identity development. Only a handful of studies have explored the nature of a biracial person's experiences with siblings and extended family members, but none have endeavored to thoroughly deconstruct these complex and impactful family

dynamics. The respondents in this study shared personal accounts that illustrated the nature of influential familial relationships, and the complex ways in which that influence was internalized. These experiences informed the development of the family nexus of racial socialization. This conceptualization of a familial racial socialization framework for biracial people begins the work of capturing the complexities of family dynamics and experiences that shape the racial identity development of biracial people.

Chapter 6

Methodological Appendix

This project examined the influence of family on the racial identity development of those with one Black parent and one White parent, a narrowed focus of a larger study on biracial identity development. I utilized a convenience and snowball sample to obtain respondents for the larger study. This process began with the recruitment of participants via an email sent to colleagues, associates, and friends soliciting potential respondents. The email requested that my contact information be forwarded to those willing to participate in an in-depth study. Respondents were sought who had "one Black parent and one White parent." It was left to the discretion of the respondent whether their parents were White or Black. This is noteworthy because in the larger sample from the broader study of biracial identity development, there were respondents who had one White parent, and a Black parent who also had White parent. During the interview of two respondents who identified themselves as having one Black parent and one White parent, when discussing their experiences with extended family members, they indicated that one of their grandparents on their "Black" parent's side was White. This indicated that those two respondents both regarded their biracial parent as Black, whether through their own assessment or through their parent's assertions. One of the two even indicated that her biracial father is Black because his dark complexion precludes anyone from viewing him as anything other than Black, but that her lighter skin afforded her the ability to see herself as biracial. Considering the long history of the one-drop rule and the likelihood that many of the respondents' Black parents also had some White ancestry I chose to

include those two respondents. I did, however, exclude a respondent who expressed

interest in participating in an interview, confirmed that they had one White parent and

one Black parent, only to reveal in their interview that they had one Black parent and one

parent who was Korean.

In the email soliciting respondents, the word "biracial" was intentionally omitted

for two reasons. First, the goal was to avoid the bias that would result from the use of the

word "biracial" to describe the potential respondent. Soliciting "biracial" people may

have deterred those who identify strongly with being either Black or White. For similar

reasons, deliberate efforts were made to avoid the solicitation of respondents from

multiracial organizations, groups, chat rooms, and/or forums. This approach to recruiting

biracial individuals would yield a majority of individuals who identify strongly with their

dual racial heritage and/or likely self-identify using a blended racial label. The goal was

not to avoid respondents who espouse these views, but to strive for a sample that best

reflects the biracial population. The second issue concerning the use of the word

"biracial" was the possibility that it would condition the respondent to use that label to

self-identify themselves in cases where that may not reflect the label(s) used by that

respondent regularly.

Respondents eligible for this study were American born, over the age of 18, and

residing on the North-East coast (for the convenience of an in-person, in-depth

interview). My goal was to avoid children during their identity formation stages.

Moreover, I wanted to assess how experiences with family members, among other things,

had an impact on their biracial identity development and how that impact endured into

adulthood. Considering that racial paradigms vary significantly across countries, people not born in America were not included in this study.

Respondent Demographics

Overall, 60 people were interviewed for the broader study on biracial identity development. As the dissertation evolved, the focus narrowed to an analysis of the experiences of a subset of siblings. The subset of 22 respondents was comprised of those in the 60 person sample who had at least one sibling who was also interviewed in this study. Those participants made up a total of 10 sibling sets, 8 of which were sibling pairs and 2 of which were sibling triads. Those in the 22 person sibling sample had a mean age of 29.7 years, ranging in age from 19-42 years old, with an average age span of 4.3 years between siblings (Table 2).

The sample in this study consisted of 4 sister/sister pairs, 4 brother/sister pairs, and two brother/sister/sister triads, totaling 16 women and 6 men (Table 2). The disproportionate number of women in the subset was the result of the response rate to both the convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Overall, women were more open and willing to respond to the solicitation for respondents to participate in this research. This pattern was also reflected in the response rate from the snowball sampling that requested sibling respondents. The brothers of both male and female participants in this study were less willing to participate in the research than were the sisters of respondents.

Table 2. Respondent Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Parent Race	Structure Of Household	Hometown State	Full Siblings	Half Siblings
Harriet	29	WM/BF	Two-parent household until 11 years of age. Father became primary caretaker.	NY	One Brother	N/A
Louis	31	WM/BF	Two-parent household until 13 years of age. Father became primary caretaker	NY	One Sister	N/A
Eve	27	WM/BF	Two-parent household	PA/NJ	One Sister	N/A
Karen	30	WM/BF	Two-parent household	PA/NJ	One Sister	N/A
Jake	30	BM/WF	Single mother.	NY	One Sister	Paternal Biracial Half-Sister
Rhonda	34	BM/WF	Single mother.	NY	One Brother	Paternal Biracial Half-Sister
Elizabeth	41	WM/BF	Two-parent household	NJ	One Brother	Maternal White Half-Sister
Vince	42	WM/BF	Two-parent household	NJ	One Sister	Maternal White Half-Sister
George	19	WM/BF	Single mother.	NY	One Sister	Paternal Biracial Half-Sister
Sophia	21	WM/BF	Single mother.	NY	One Brother	Paternal Biracial Half-Sister
Sarah	29	WM/BF	Single mother.	NY	N/A	Paternal Biracial Half-Sister and Half-brother
Serena	27	WM/BF	Two-parent household	PA	Three Sisters/two brothers	N/A
Kelly	29	WM/BF	Two-parent household	PA	Three Sisters/two brothers	N/A
Joy	34	BM/WF	Two-parent household	CA	One sister/one brother	N/A
Hannah	39	BM/WF	Two-parent household	CA	One sister/one brother	N/A
Alicia	23	WM/BF	Two-parent household	NY	One Sister	N/A
Natalie	24	WM/BF	Two-parent household	NY	One Sister	N/A
Thomas	28	BM/WF	Single mother.	NY	One Sister	One paternal biracial half-sister and one maternal Black half-Sister

Joan	32	BM/WF	Single mother.	NY	One Brother	One paternal biracial half-sister and one maternal Black half-Sister
Lynn	23	WM/BF	Two-parent household	NJ	One sister/one brother	Two paternal Black half-sisters and one paternal Black half-brother.
Rick	29	WM/BF	Two-parent household	NY/NJ	Two brothers	Two paternal Black half-sisters and one paternal Black half-brother.
Grace	32	WM/BF	Two-parent household	NY/NJ	One sister/one brother	Two paternal Black half-sisters and one paternal Black half-brother.

I found this to be the case for those who reported in their interviews that they had either a close relationship with their brother or a strained relationship with their brother. There were 7 sets of siblings who had White mothers/Black fathers and 3 sibling pairs who had Black mothers/White fathers. The disproportionate number of respondents with White mothers/Black fathers reflected the persisting gendered pattern of intermarriage between Whites and Blacks in America. According to the Pew Research Center's report (2012), between the years 2008-2011, Black males were more than twice as likely as Black women to marry someone outside of their race. Also, during those years (2008-2011), the rate at which Black men intermarried increased at a higher rate than Black women, although overall the gap between the two groups' rates of intermarriage has narrowed over the last two decades.

Interviews

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were completed during the Summer and Fall of 2010, and consisted of questions which facilitated a discussion of the respondent's experiences growing up, the racial makeup of their family, their relationship with various members of their family, and any memories of experiences involving race, past and present. The average interview lasted about an hour and was conducted at a location convenient for the respondent. Consent was obtained for each interview to be audio recorded and for the respondent to be photographed. Notes were taken regarding the respondents' physical appearance and interviews were subsequently transcribed and coded by hand.

Analysis

This study utilized a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to the analysis of familial experiences. Several general questions about family experiences were asked of each respondent, allowing for their unrestricted discussion of their interactions with family members and identification of impactful memories, experiences or relationship dynamics. I reviewed the narratives many times, in order to discover various phenomena that occurred among the respondents. Upon identifying common patterns, the coding process began, by hand, to define the variables/categories which would guide this analysis. This process was repeated many times as the relationships between different variables revealed a depth that had yet been explored.

Sibling Comparison Design

> And the biracial experience? Can't say I understand that entirely, either. Depends on what we look like, on what we're mixed with, on how we identify. I love this aspect of being biracial, but it's also what makes it alienating. My sister has had a completely different biracial experience than I've had. We share the same parents—the same blood—and our experiences are disparate. Growing up, we had different friends, different hobbies. And it wasn't a coincidence. —Stephanie Georgopulus (2013)

A sibling comparison study offers a wealth of information that deepens our understanding of the nature of family influence on racial identity development, expanding what we presently know about how parents, extended family members, and siblings themselves, engage in racial socialization. Sibling studies have the capacity for various levels of analysis. This study was the first to take an in-depth look at the racial self-understandings and experiences of respondents in siblings sets culling data for the comparative analysis of multiple dimensions of the sibling experience and of their relationship. The design was executed by utilizing respondent narratives of biracial people whose sibling was also interviewed in this study. Each respondent was interviewed separately and their sibling was typically obtained through a snowball sampling. None of the respondents in this study were aware that this was a sibling comparison project. Over the course of this study, the shape, focus and form of it have evolved a great deal. As a result, this research design was adopted after the interviews had already been completed. The narratives inspired the comparative design, and this study is a first of its kind.

Only two prior studies on biracial identity have utilized some form of sibling comparative design. Root's (1998) preliminary analysis over 15 years ago was the first study to utilize sibling accounts in order to inform a study of racial identity development. By comparing the self-identification of respondents in 20 sibling pairs composed of

various racial combinations, she asserted that siblings often had differential outcomes. Root's study utilized the sibling narratives to uncover the four types of general experiences that influenced an individual's identity process. Shortly after Roots study, Kilson's (2001) analysis of biracial adults in the post-civil rights era also engaged sibling comparisons, albeit indirectly. Although her study's participant sample included several respondents who were siblings, the methods did not privilege that analytical positioning. Much of the data that informed her analysis, were obtained from responses to a question posed to an entire subset of her sample consisting of those who had a sibling, whether or not that sibling was included in the study. The question posed asked respondents to reflect upon how their experience differed from their sibling's. Whereas Root's contribution to the understanding of sibling experiences informed what was known about the potential for differential self-identification outcomes, Kilson's contribution informed what was known about the causes of those differential outcomes. Both studies were novel approaches to the analysis of complex biracial respondent outcomes.

The greatest benefit of sibling comparison studies is the ability to conduct a study at various levels of analysis. This dissertation utilized a methodological approach to sibling comparison that gleaned insight from various aspects of the narratives. The sample of siblings in this study were utilized to better understand the nuanced nature of respondents' internalization of racial and life experiences. This was a fruitfully promising endeavor because siblings *share* a great deal, including: portions of their genetic make-up, family context (including shared roles of child/sibling within it), and environmental context growing up. These common aspects of their lives also position them to have a unique and significant influence on each other's identity development. Accordingly, they

are the most overlooked racial socializing agent in the family. I exploit the narratives in this study as a means of exploring the nature of sibling influence on each other's racial identity. These qualitative, in-depth interviews availed a thorough analysis that offers a substantial contribution to present scholarship on racial identity. The findings also inform our understanding of sibling experiences, as well as the nature of sibling influence on each other's identity development.

Measures

The development of multidimensional conceptualizations of the biracial experience has enhanced the trajectory of research in this field (Harris and Sim 2002; Brunsma 2006). This study employs a framework that distinguishes between *racial identity*, *observed race*, and *self-identification*. Racial identity is a construct that captures an individual's racial self-understanding, observed race describes how others assign racial labels to someone based on phenotypic observations and/or interactions, and self-identification describes the labels that are adopted by an individual based on social availability and context (Rockquemore et al. 2009). This is a crucial distinction that pushes our understanding further than previous one-dimensional conceptualizations of race. For many people who have parents of the same race, all three of these facets of their racial experience are likely to be aligned, meaning that their observed race is similar to how they self-identify and understand themselves racially. However, for those who have parents of different races, these various facets of race are less likely to be aligned (Harris and Sim 2002; O'Donoghue 2005; Brunsma 2006; Roth 2010). For the purpose of this study, distinguishing between each facet of race helps to more precisely elucidate which

aspects of the biracial experience are impacted by various aspects of their familial dynamics and experiences.

In Chapter 2 of this study, I evaluate the nature and impact of parental racial ascription. I make a distinction between "parental racial ascription" and "parental racial identification." When referring to parental racial identification, I am describing the ways that parents racially classify their children on forms and surveys. This reflects the parents' understanding of the racial group membership of their child, but may not reflect what they actually convey to their children. For that reason, my use of the term "parental racial ascription" described the labels that parents assigned explicitly to their children as part of a socialization process. These racial assignments are the messages regarding racial classification that children actually hear and often internalize as "directives." I refer to both labels and messages as strategies utilized by parents engaging in racial ascription. When the word "label" is used, I am referring to instances when parents use explicit labels. When using the word "messages" I am referring to instances where parents convey messages about racial classification in less direct or abstract ways, which may or may not involve ascribing a specific label.

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