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The Influence of Race, Gender, and Body Socialization on the Self-Perceptions and Relationships of Black/White Multiracial Emerging Adult Women

Dissertation

By

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Abstract

THE INFLUENCE OF RACE, GENDER, AND BODY SOCIALIZATION ON THE SELF-PERCEPTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS OF BLACK/WHITE MULTIRACIAL EMERGING ADULT WOMEN

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In 2015, one-in-seven U.S. infants was Multiracial, nearly triple the amount in 1980, and one of the fastest growing subgroups of this population is Black/White Multiracial people (Pew Research Center, 2015). Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women have not received adequate attention in research, despite the growing population. Black/White Multiracial women receive implicit and explicit messages about their racialized physical features including skin color, hair, and body size from family members and peers (Root, 1998; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007; Buckley & Carter, 2008). Additionally, remnants of racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women such as the Jezebel, a hypersexualized archetype of a light-skinned Black woman, still permeate U.S. culture and impact Black women (Watson et al., 2012). However, there is no research that explores how such interactions with family members, peers, and the larger social context impact Black/White women's perceptions of themselves and relationships with others.

The present study conducted semi-structured interviews of 10 Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women to explore the socialization messages that they receive around race, gender, and body, and how those messages influence their self-perceptions and relationships. Through conventional content analysis, the findings of the present study revealed themes including a lack of discussion about race within families, gendered, racialized messages, often rooted in anti-Blackness, about the bodies of Black/White Multiracial women within families

and peer groups, intrapsychic conflict to make meaning of conflicting messages, authentic relationships, and the expression of identity. Implications for clinical practice, community level interventions and research are discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the United States, the 2000 Census marked the first time people had the option to select multiple races to describe themselves (United States Census Bureau, 2001). This change shifted the description of the U.S. population, as ten years later the 2010 census revealed that the Multiracial population grew from about 6.8 million to about 9 million. Within this population, the 2010 census showed that the Black/White Multiracial population increased by 134%, making it one of largest and fastest growing Multiracial identities in the U.S. (United States Census Bureau, 2011). The change in demographic reporting and collection, particularly with regard to Black/White identity, represents a significant shift in the understanding of race in the U.S. The racial classification system in the U.S., rooted in slavery, initially included a "one-drop rule" referring to the traditional and legal practice that people with any Black ancestor should identify as Black. For much of the 20th century, people with a Black parent and a White parent identified with the race of their Black parent as the default (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). As shown by the Census data, more young people will grow up with Black/White Multiracial identities, and therefore more research is needed with regard to the psychological well-being of this group.

Despite the rising Multiracial population, the subgroup of Black/White Multiracial women has not received adequate attention in research. Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women are a population that requires specific research attention with regard to their identities and relationships, as little is known about their distinct experiences of socialization around their gender, race, and bodies apart from Monoracial and other Multiracial populations in the United States. Further, more research is needed on the clinical needs of Black/White Multiracial women in the pivotal developmental period of *emerging adulthood*, which ranges from late-adolescence through the twenties, and is marked by identity exploration, instability, and self-focus (Arnett,

2004). Given the focus on identity exploration in this developmental period, socialization experiences may be particularly formative and salient for emerging adults.

Women in the United States are barraged with societal messages about their bodies and sexuality. Particularly with the rise of social media, standards of beauty and social belonging are transmitted at a more rapid rate (Mingoia et al., 2017). However, most research on body image has focused on White women's experiences and perspectives (Moradi & Huang, 2008). The small area of research on women of color and experiences of sexual objectification has focused on Monoracial populations (Stephens & Phillips, 2003; West, 1995; Collins, 2002; Wallace, Townsend, Glasgow, & Ojie, 2011). Additionally, there is some extant research on how Black/White Multiracial populations experience socialization around race, and how this relates to mental health outcomes and identity (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Although this research has begun to generate an understanding of racial socialization among Black/White people, research thus far has not explored the unique messages that Black/White Multiracial women receive regarding the intersection of race, gender, and body, and how those messages impact their self-perceptions and relationships. Further, prior research on Black/White Multiracial women has not comprehensively explored the contexts in which this socialization occurs. One under-explored context of such socialization is social media. As social media has become ubiquitous in the lives of emerging adults (Pew Research Center, 2017), current research that examines the relational lives of emerging adults should include that context. A nuanced, contextual exploration of these messages and their influence on sense of self and relating to others is sorely needed, as mental health professionals will require competence in addressing the clinical needs of this rapidly growing population.

Conceptual Framing

The present study is grounded in Relational-cultural Theory (Miller, 1986; Jordan, 2001). Relational-cultural Theory conceptualizes how people learn about themselves through relationships with others. The theory holds that the primary source of suffering for most people is the experience of isolation and disconnection, and healing occurs in growth-fostering connection (Jordan, 2001). The concept of chronic disconnection refers to the self-blame, isolation, and immobilization that can occur when one acts inauthentically in relationships out of an anticipation that they will not be understood or seen (Jordan, 2001). A central component of Relational-cultural Theory is the paradox of connection, which refers to the idea that humans desire authentic connection, but fear and avoid the vulnerability associated with being authentic in relationships.

One's social context can be an arena for connection or disconnection. Relational-cultural Theory scholar Maureen Walker (2008) asserts that relational experiences are inextricably linked to one's social location, such that chronic disconnection can occur at the societal level as well as the individual. The silencing due to marginalization and domination by more powerful others creates an environment in which people can only bring certain parts of themselves into connection. Such power relations can manifest within an individual's body; our bodies are encoded with the stratified social identities, and the marginalization or domination of these identities can impact which parts of ourselves we can bring into connection with others (Walker, 2008). For example, skin color signals one's location in the White supremacist racial hierarchy in the U.S., and an anticipation of being perceived as a stereotype such as the "angry Black woman" may stop Black women from expressing anger. According to Relational-cultural Theory, part of the work of moving toward healing and growth-fostering connection is

identifying the sociocultural wounds that then become roadmaps for what individuals expect in relationship to others.

The present study seeks to explore the socialization messages that Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women receive regarding their race, gender, and bodies, and how those messages influence their self-perceptions and relationships. Relationships are relevant to the socialization processes around race, gender, and body, as cumulative socialization messages may foster a stifling of one's authentic lived experience to fit societal expectations, as a means to be accepted in relationships with others. Race, gender, and body socialization occurs in relationships, and has the capacity to influence relationships to oneself and others. The aim of the present study is to uncover those socialization messages and the processes through which they influence connection.

Literature Review

A relatively small body of research has begun to address race, gender, and body socialization among Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women. The following section will provide a brief review of the findings related to such socialization within the family and peer contexts of Black/White Multiracial women. Additionally, the following section will briefly describe the literature on the race, gender, and body socialization that occurs in the broader societal context for Black/White Multiracial women, with a focus on sexual objectification in the media and social media. The review will then address some findings on the mental health impacts of race, gender, and body socialization on Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women.

Race, Gender, and Body Socialization

Family. The family context is likely to be the first arena in which Multiracial children

learn about their racial identities and the significance of their racialized bodies (Root, 1998). Family racial socialization is defined as the transmittance of social context-based racial attitudes and beliefs by family members and caregivers to children through implicit and explicit messages, (Boykin, 1985; Hughes, 2003). An area of literature has begun to clarify how Black/White Multiracial children learn about themselves within the family context; however, more research is needed to better understand the processes underlying the connection between family socialization, race, gender, and body image.

Extant research has found that experiences of racial socialization within the families of Multiracial people has the potential to impact their racial identities (Coleman & Carter, 2007; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007), relationships with others (Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011), and self-esteem (Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). Further, current research suggests that physical appearance is a contributing factor to the challenges of Multiracial people within families, reporting evidence of familial hierarchies related to racialized physical appearance in families (Nadal, Wong, & Griffin, 2011; Nadal, Sriken, Davidoff, Wong, & McLean, 2013). Specifically, the influence of colorism, defined as "the allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin" Burke, 2008, p. 17), has been found to be present within some Multiracial families (Nadal et al., 2011; Nadal et al., 2013). As such, Multiracial people may experience objectification based on racialized physical appearance, or witness familial favoritism or discrimination based on their physical features (Nadal et al., 2011; Nadal et al., 2013). More research is needed on the consequences of such skin color-based favoritism and objectification among Black/White Multiracial people, in particular, as previous research has grouped all Multiracial subgroups together.

One of many familial factors that connects to the physical body within Black/White

Multiracial families is the race and gender of the parents (Buckley & Carter, 2008; Root, 1998). Interracial marriage trends in the U.S. indicate that Black men are more likely to marry a woman of a different race than are Black women (Pew Research Center, 2015), and this finding reflects the complex intertwining of racism and sexism in this country. As such, more Black/White Multiracial girls are growing up with White mothers and Black fathers, and may compare their own racialized physical features such as skin color and hair with that of their White mothers (Buckley & Carter, 2008). Further, if there is familial discord within the family, the child may learn to associate negative feelings toward the race of the parent with whom they have more complicated feelings (Kelch-Oliver, 2007; Root, 1998).

Peer relationships. Despite what happens within a Multiracial child's family context, the child will inevitably come into contact with other arenas of racial socialization. One such arena is peer relationships, and peers may serve as sounding boards and reflection pools for how the Multiracial person's body connects to their racial identity and sense of belonging. The literature demonstrates that, for many Multiracial children, the barrage of racial identity inquiries, characterized by the question, "What are you?" begins at school and occurs in peer interactions (Nadal et al., 2013; Kerwin, 1993; Tran, Miyake, Morales & Csizmadia, 2016). Further, Multiracial children in schools may feel pressure from other children to "choose" a monoracial racial identity or racial group with which to affiliate and socialize (Root, 1998). The racial makeup of the school environment and larger community context plays a role in which racial groups the Multiracial child is pressured to affiliate (Kerwin et al., 1993; Root, 1998). Additionally, Multiracial children may experience discrimination from peers specific to Multiracial identity such as being called an "Oreo" (Nadal et al., 2011; Root, 1998), as well as experiencing general racism as a person of color. On the other hand, Multiracial children might

become aware of the benefits they receive if they have lighter-skin or more racially ambiguous features, while at the same time experience objectification and exotification from peers (Nadal et al., 2011). Taken together, the process of peer racial socialization is inextricably tied to the body and gender of Black/White Multiracial people, and more research is needed to understand how such socialization influences how they perceive themselves and relate with others.

Research has demonstrated the different ways that Multiracial children navigate their racial identities in relationship with peers. For example, studies have found that, when faced with inquiries about their racial identities, Multiracial people tend to take on the perspective of the inquirer and offer an answer that they imagine will make the other person feel comfortable (Buckley & Carter, 2008; Jackson, 2010). Socialization around race and body become apparent in this process, as such perspective-taking and comfort-making would require that the Multiracial person access an idea about how their body is racially perceived in order to give an answer that makes the inquiring person feel comfortable. These findings give rise to important questions about perspective-taking and making others feel comfortable at the expense of speaking one's true lived-experience. For Multiracial children, their racially ambiguous bodies may be understood as an invitation for racial projection and questioning.

Sexual Objectification

Operating alongside and within peer and familial racial socialization, the process of sexual objectification likely plays a role in the race, gender, and body socialization Black/White Multiracial women. One way this occurs is through societal messages of sexual objectification. The historical influence of slavery, sexualized views and images of Black women, and the patriarchal social structure all contribute to different forms of sexual objectification of Black women, ranging from comments and objectifying gazes to more extreme forms, such as sexual

abuse (Watson et al., 2012). Such sexual objectification can have varying effects on the mental health of Black women, including self-objectification, physical safety anxiety, eating concerns, psychological/emotional, and interpersonal issues (Watson et al., 2012). Additionally, sexual objectification impacts younger Black girls, as exposure to sexually objectifying media is related to greater importance of beauty and appearance in defining self-worth as well as in defining the value of women in general among Black adolescent girls (Gordon, 2008).

Racist and sexist stereotypes contribute to the objectification of Black women, such that they are viewed as a collection of stereotypes rather than as whole people (Stephens & Phillips, 2003; West, 1995; Collins, 2002; Wallace, Townsend, Glasgow, & Ojie, 2011). Objectifying stereotypes, created to control, dehumanize, and brutalize Black women during slavery, still permeate US culture (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). As a means to maintain control over Black women, the media has framed them as some combination of the following three racist archetypes: the asexual, maternal, self-sacrificing Mammy, the threatening, argumentative, and emasculating Sapphire, and the sexually promiscuous and irresponsible Jezebel (West, 1995).

Black/White Multiracial women are located at an intersection of privilege and oppression within the US racial hierarchy system, such that their closer proximity to Whiteness may afford them greater privilege than Black women with two Black parents (Awad et al., 2015). However, this privilege intersects with oppression given that White supremacy dictates their place in the racial hierarchy, and the benefits related to proximity to Whiteness are often paired with othering, objectification, and fetishization (Nadal et al., 2011; Root, 1998). A prominent gendered racist stereotype of Black women is the archetype of the Jezebel (Collins, 1990). Interestingly, as Collins (2002) describes, the Jezebel is often depicted as a “mulatto” woman with light skin and long hair, and is one of the most overtly sexual images of Black women to

have emerged. This is relevant to Black/White Multiracial women, as the term "mulatto" is a slur historically used for someone with Black and White heritage. The Jezebel is perceived as seductive, manipulative, and unable to control her sexual drives.

As such, it is important to consider the implications of the Jezebel stereotype with regard to the body image of Black/White Multiracial women. Currently, images of the Jezebel, in the form of the diva, gold digger, and freak, abound in the media. Representation in the media matters, and people identify with stories and characters in whom they see themselves reflected (Ward and Harrison, 2005; Bryant-Davis, 2005). In 2007, mega-famous rapper Kanye West was quoted regarding Multiracial women in his music videos, "If it wasn't for race mixing there'd be no video girls. Me and most of our friends like mutts a lot. Yeah, in the hood they call 'em mutts." This racist and sexist perspective on Multiracial women communicates that Black women are not attractive enough to be in music videos, and that the only important contribution of a Multiracial woman is her capacity to be attractive in a music video. Though this is an extreme example, this perspective gives rise to concerns about the role of stereotypes such as the Jezebel and objectification and the body image of Black/White Multiracial women.

Social Media

Related to socialization and body image, social media sites are often image-centric, and serve as convenient vehicles to communicate cultural standards of attractiveness, success, and social belonging. Many teens and emerging adults live a large portion of their lives on social media sites (Pew Research Center, 2018), and as internet personas become more and more integrated with "real life," this arena merits more comprehensive research attention. Social networking sites allow users to view and interact with idealized, and often air-brushed or filtered, images of friends and strangers. General trends in research on the impact of social media on

mental health reveal that Instagram and Facebook usage have an overwhelmingly negative impact on wellbeing, particularly with regard to body image (Tiggemann & Barbato, 2018), self-esteem (Chen & Lee, 2013), and depression (Steers et al., 2014; Feinstein et al., 2013). Despite the recent surge of research in this area, there has been almost no research on how the intersection of racism and sexism operates within social media use, particularly with regard to body image. No studies to date have explored the impact of social media use on the body image of women of color, or Black/White multiracial emerging adult women in particular, however, there have been recent reports of rampant racism on social media sites. For example, reports on trends on TikTok, a wildly popular video-sharing app, have found White users committing rampant "digital blackface," putting on stereotypically Black affectations, clothing, hairstyles, and language (Holt, 2019).

The issues at hand are complex for Black/White Multiracial women, who may experience light skin privilege, identity invalidation, and objectification experiences on social media. Recently, some young Black/White Multiracial women celebrities who are highly influential on social media, have publicly discussed the unfair beauty standards in Hollywood, such that they are granted preferential treatment for having lighter skin. For example, actress and singer Zendaya Stoermer, who has over 55 million Instagram followers, and is of African-American and German/Scottish-American descent, was quoted in an interview about beauty standards and representation. In the interview, Zendaya stated, "As a Black woman, as a light-skinned Black woman, it's important that I'm using my privilege, my platform to show you how much beauty there is in the African-American community. I am Hollywood's, I guess you could say, acceptable version of a Black girl and that has to change." Zendaya is aware of the preferential treatment she has received as an "acceptable," or closer to White, version of a Black girl, and

reports wanting to use her platform to raise awareness of colorism. Zendaya was praised in the media for taking a stand against racism and colorism, and this example reflects how a highly influential Black/White Multiracial celebrity navigates how her appearance grants her privilege in the media. This illustration raises the question of how these stars influence Black/White Multiracial women, particularly with regard to the complexity of privilege and objectification. Further, it leads to questions about how non-famous Black/White Multiracial women navigate skin color privilege, objectification, and identity invalidation both on social media and in real life.

Body Dissatisfaction and Mental Health

As the previously discussed findings suggest, race, gender, and body socialization can influence body image. Generally, negative body image is associated with a host of mental health problems including depressive affect (Stice & Bearman, 2001; Bradford & Petrie, 2008), anxiety (Aderka et al., 2014), and eating disorders (Walker et al., 2018). Race is relevant in the study of body dissatisfaction, as one's race is relevant to the body socialization that one experiences (Townsend et al., 2010). To date, there has been almost no research on body image dissatisfaction among Multiracial women specifically. Indeed, one of the only data points about body image among Black/White Multiracial women comes from a study in which they were a small sub-group of the sample, and the study found that Multiracial women had some of the highest levels of body image dissatisfaction compared with other racial groups (Ivezaj, Saules, Hoodin, Alschuler, Angelella, Collings, Sanders-Scott, & Wiedemann, 2010).

One factor that has been studied with regard to the etiology of negative body image among all women is the internalization of a thin standard of beauty. White dominant culture has dictated what is and what is not beautiful, such that women who are White, thin, and

able-bodied, are viewed as the most desirable. Research has found that Black women who internalize a thin standard of beauty have a higher level of body dissatisfaction (Rogers-Wood & Petrie, 2010), particularly among women in predominantly White contexts (Mulholland & Mintz, 2001). Given these findings about Black women and body image dissatisfaction, it seems that Black/White Multiracial women may also experience body image problems. In the racially stratified system, dark-skinned Black women are labeled as the farthest from the European beauty standard, whereas lighter-skinned, potentially Multiracial women are viewed as more attractive as they are closer to Whiteness (Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010). This may have varied damaging implications for both dark and light-skinned Black women, as they both reinforce a White supremacist objectified body consciousness in which one's value is determined via proximity to Whiteness.

It is important to study race, gender, and body socialization among Black/White Multiracial women because findings may provide insight with regard to the etiology of body image-related mental health problems in this population. Depression, anxiety, and eating disorders are connected to negative body image, and these problems may be rooted in how individuals internalize messages at a larger societal level. A better understanding of these socialization messages can better equip clinicians to provide Black/White Multiracial women culturally-competent treatment.

This is particularly salient for Black/White Multiracial women during the pivotal stage of emerging adulthood, as it is a period of self-focus, instability, identity exploration. Additionally, emerging adults are likely to experience mental health concerns, as feeling anxious or depressed is relatively common during emerging adulthood (Arnett & Schwab, 2014). In a national survey of 1029 people aged 18–29 years in the USA, 56% of them agreed with the statement, "I often

feel anxious" and 32% of them agreed with the statement, "I often feel depressed" (Arnett & Schwab, 2014). Further, emerging adulthood is a developmental period in which individuals are exploring their body-related attitudes and beliefs (Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2006). As such, emerging adulthood can be a particularly impactful time for intervention with regard to the nuanced issues of body image, race, and gender among Black/White Multiracial women.

Study Rationale and Questions

The Black/White Multiracial population is one of the fastest growing Multiracial populations in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2011), and as it continues to rise, more research is needed on the clinical needs of this group. Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women, a subgroup of this growing population, have not received adequate research attention, and little is known about their distinct experiences of socialization around their gender, race, and bodies. There are multiple contexts in which socialization around race, gender, and body may occur for Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women, and one such context is within the family. Extant literature has begun to address the complexity of racial, gender, and body dynamics in families of Black/White multiracial women; however, no studies have explicitly examined how these dynamics influence their self-perceptions and relationships. Research has found that some Multiracial children experience colorism and objectification related to their physical appearance within their nuclear and extended families (Nadal et al., 2011; Nadal et al., 2013). Additionally, prior studies have found that the race and gender of the parents of Black/White Multiracial people are relevant to their racial socialization (Buckley & Carter, 2008, Kerwin et al., 1993). To date, research has not examined how these experiences within families influence how Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women perceive themselves and their relationships with others. Given the aforementioned findings, a nuanced

exploration of the role of family in the self-perceptions and relationships of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women is necessary.

In addition to socialization within the family, more research is needed concerning the role of peers in race, gender, and body socialization among Black/White Multiracial emerging adults. Multiracial people are frequently met with inquiries about their racial identity, with questions like "What are you?" (Jackson, 2010; Tran et al., 2015). Extant literature has addressed racial socialization and how it relates to identity and mental health outcomes among Multiracial people (Franco & Franco, 2016; Miville et al., 2005; Buckley & Carter, 2008; Root, 1998); however, there has not been adequate exploration of how these experiences influence their self-perceptions and relationships. Research has also indicated that relational experiences of Black/White Multiracial women are influenced by how they imagine that they are racially perceived by others (Buckley & Carter, 2008; Coleman & Carter, 2007). In light of these findings, more research is needed to explore how these experiences influence how Black/White Multiracial women perceive themselves, and how they anticipate how they will be received/understood by others.

Another area of racial, gender, and body socialization occurs through sexual objectification at the societal level. Research on the impact of sexual objectification has largely focused on the experiences and perspectives of White women. The small area of research on sexual objectification of women of color has focused on monoracial populations, and a percentage of this scant amount of literature has examined these experiences among Black women. Stereotypes created to dehumanize Black women still linger in U.S. consciousness, and research demonstrates that these stereotypes are harmful to Black women and girls (Watson et al., 2012). Few studies have directly examined the experiences of sexual objectification of Black/White Multiracial emerging adults, though one can generalize that some of the experiences

of Black women also apply to this population. One aspect that has been explored, though not extensively, among Multiracial people is exotification and objectification as it relates to their proximity to Whiteness, and often these experiences are rooted in colorism and racism (Nadal et al., 2011). However, no studies to my knowledge have explored how such objectification experiences influence how Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women perceive themselves. Further, there are no studies that have explored how such these experiences influence relationships in this population.

Relatedly, social media is another arena in which body socialization may occur and is an important venue for the development of interpersonal relationships (Mingoia et al., 2017). Presently, many teens and emerging adults spend a great deal of time on social media sites (Pew Research Center, 2018), and this area merits more comprehensive research attention, particularly with regard to the experiences of women of color. Generally, research in this area has focused on White women and adolescents, and has revealed that Instagram and Facebook usage have an overwhelmingly negative impact on well-being (Tiggemann & Barbato, 2018; Chen & Lee, 2013; Steers et a., 2014; Feinstein et al., 201; Robinson et al., 2018). Furthermore, higher levels of general social media use were found to be associated with adverse mental health symptoms and lower self-esteem for Black women (Stanton et al., 2017). Studies have not examined the experiences of Black/White Multiracial women, who may experience the aforementioned interpersonal phenomena such as light skin privilege, identity invalidation, and objectification on social media. More information is sorely needed with regard to the role of social media as a means for race, gender, and body socialization among Black/White emerging adults. Further, studies should examine how such socialization on social media influences the relationships and self-perceptions of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women.

In summary, there is a need for more research in the area of race, gender, and body socialization, both in person and online, among Black/White Multiracial emerging adults, and how this influences self-perceptions and relationships. The present study sought to explore the following question:

How does socialization regarding race, gender, and body influence the self-perceptions and relationships of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women? Specifically, the study sought to understand:

1. What are the messages that Black/White Multiracial women are exposed to concerning their race, gender, and bodies?
2. How do these messages about race, gender, and body influence self-perceptions of Black/White Multiracial women?
3. How do these messages about race, gender, and body influence Black/White Multiracial women's relationships with others?

Methodology

The present study used qualitative methodology to explore the influence of race, gender, and body socialization on the self-perceptions and relationships of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women. Qualitative methodology was best-suited for this study, as there is no prior research that explicitly focuses on this phenomenon, and thus an in-depth and nuanced description was required in order to generate new knowledge on the topic. The present study specifically used conventional content analysis to describe how race, gender, and body socialization influence self-perceptions and interpersonal relationships among Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women. The conventional content analysis approach was the most appropriate for the present research questions, since it is ideal for analyzing data on a topic on

which there is limited theory or research literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The aim of conventional content analysis is to generate knowledge that describes a phenomenon in its everyday terms used by participants (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). When using semi-structured interviews to gather data, researchers use open-ended questions and probes, and then the interviews are transcribed. As outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), conventional content analysis entails immersion in the data, and grouping the data into categories and subcategories derived directly from the text. The researcher then presents and describes these categories, providing exemplars directly from the data for each (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This way, the researcher is able to describe the unique phenomenon as it is conveyed from the participants' unique perspectives.

In the present study, the researcher coded the semi-structured interviews while consulting with her dissertation chair. The researcher immersed herself in each transcript, reading it through multiple times, and carefully attending to each word in the data. The researcher then grouped small sections of text into categories based on content, in order to develop meaningful clusters. The initial list of codes were developed as the researcher and her advisor had several ongoing discussions about the meaning of each narrative. Once this stage was complete, the researcher and her dissertation chair met to discuss her findings, presenting her impressions and codes, citing examples from the data. When there was a disagreement regarding a code, the researcher presented her reasoning for the application of that code, and it was discussed with her chair until a consensus was reached. These codes were grouped together into larger categories and subcategories as a product of the discussions between the researcher and the dissertation chair, and the categories were reviewed between the researcher and dissertation chair until consensus was reached (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Scholars have presented various metrics to ascertain the quality of research, as well as strategies for researchers in order to monitor and encourage the promotion of high-caliber research (Seale, 1999; Morrow, 2005). In qualitative research, the terms *trustworthiness* and *credibility* refer to the quality of a research study. Qualitative researchers, particularly those who follow a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, have called for subjectivity and reflexivity as strategies to promote acknowledgement and illumination of the researcher's biases and assumptions that will likely impact the implementation and findings of research (Morrow, 2005). In the present study, the methods used to maintain trustworthiness of the data were through receiving consultation from the dissertation chair, engaging in self-reflexivity practices, and through member checking. Each study participant received a copy of the transcript of their interview so they could review it for accuracy.

The researcher attended to issues of reflexivity while conducting this analysis as according to the guidelines of Yeh and Inman (2007) and Morrow (2005). Reflexivity refers to the ways in which our selves shape how we interpret and construct evidence, analysis, and theory in qualitative research (Morrow, 2005). Engaging in self-reflexivity entails an acknowledgement of and interaction with this process through investigation of biases, assumptions, and expectations while conducting research. As she engaged in self-reflexivity, the researcher had ongoing, in-depth discussions with her advisor in order to be aware of the ways in which her biases, identities, and assumptions were part of this research, in addition to keeping a personal journal throughout the research process.

The researcher is an insider of the population under study, as she is a Multiracial Black/White woman, and she used self-reflexivity in order to attend to the ways in which her perspectives influenced research design and data analysis. One method for engaging in the

self-reflexivity process is personal journaling, as it allows the researcher to attend to the ways in which assumptions, ideas, hunches, feelings and choices impact the research process (Fassinger, 2005). Throughout the design, data collection, and analysis, the researcher kept a personal journal with the goal to reflect on her thoughts, values, biases, and assumptions regarding Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women and body, race, and gender socialization. This process allowed the researcher to make conscious decisions about how to address her impact on the study, and how to provide a rationale for those decisions (Morrow, 2005). Additionally, this process involved discussions with this writer's dissertation chair in order to clarify how to proceed with this writer's personal influence on the study.

Participants and Procedure

The present study recruited 10 Black/White Multiracial emerging adults to be interviewed. The choice to recruit 10 participants was based on previous studies that have used conventional content analysis, and have achieved saturation with that number (Tummala-Narra et al., 2016). The study planned to recruit more or fewer participants depending on when saturation is achieved. The researcher was aware that achieved saturation when no new knowledge emerged from the data (Fassinger, 2005).

Eligible participants were women-identified college students, have one Black parent and one White parent, and currently reside in the U.S. Participants were recruited via Black and Multiracial university affinity groups on Instagram and Twitter, email listservs for Black and Multiracial affinity groups at universities, and Multiracial organization listservs. Once participants contacted the researcher with interest to participate, the researcher conducted an initial 10-minute phone screen in which the researcher determined eligibility, explained the rationale for the study, and developed rapport.

Semi-Structured Interview

Once eligibility was determined, the researcher scheduled and conducted a semi-structured interview that lasted from 1 hour to 1.5 hours. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, a video-conferencing service. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim through an encrypted transcription service, and then comprehensively reviewed and edited by the researcher for purposes of data analysis. The interview questions were developed based on extant literature on the race, gender, and body socialization of Black/White Multiracial women (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007; Nadal et al., 2013; Buckley & Carter, 2004; Root, 1998; Tran et al., 2015). The questions were designed to address what messages participants received from family, peers, and larger society about their race, gender and bodies, and how these messages influence their self-perceptions and relationships. An example of an interview prompt addressing family socialization is, “Thinking back to your childhood and adolescence in your family, did people talk about race? If yes, can you tell me about the way race was discussed, or any messages you received around race in your family from your parents, siblings, or extended family?” See Appendix D for the full interview protocol.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Given the focus of the present study, I will be reviewing the literature in the following areas: family racial socialization, peer racial socialization, sexual objectification, social media, and body dissatisfaction in the lives of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women. Each of these areas addresses extant research on different facets of race, gender, and body socialization of Black/White Multiracial emerging adults. Additionally, the theoretical framework of Relational-cultural Theory (RCT) offers an important perspective that can inform an understanding of these areas of research. RCT provides a framework to understand how individuals learn about themselves through connections to others and the larger societal context; and the existing literature provides evidence of the types of messages that Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women receive about themselves, and how these messages may influence their relationships (Baker, 1986).

Research on Family Racial Socialization

The relatively small area of literature on family racial socialization among Black/White Multiracial emerging adults explores the varied ways in which parents deliver messages about race to their children, and provides empirical support for the idea that these messages can have implications for their self-perceptions and relational lives (Buckley & Carter, 2004; Coleman & Carter, 2007; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006). Additionally, findings from this area of research have shown that racial socialization in families occurs around gender and body image for Black/White Multiracial women (Buckley & Carter, 2004; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006). However, these studies are nearing decades-old, and more comprehensive research is needed in this area.

Kerwin et al., (1993) conducted a qualitative study of six Black/White Multiracial

families, interviewing the parents and their children about racial identity development. Themes concerning parental racial socialization emerged, including parent's discussions around racial labeling, preparation for anticipated discrimination, and location of the family. With regard to labeling, parents tended to denounce the racial classification system in the U.S., expressing frustration with the idea that people should be identified based on race. Parents reported that children began to ask questions about their race around pre-school age, and the parents responses varied, "both Black and White," "Interracial," "Mixed," "Black," and "Bicultural."

Another emergent theme among parents was preparation for anticipated discrimination, and more differences existed with regard to how White and Black parents approached this issue. Black parents described more frequently seeking out opportunities to discuss racism, with the goal of helping their children survive within a racially oppressive context. The White parents tended to less explicitly discuss racism, and one mother described wanting her kids to know that "people have difficulty with people." Another theme in the Kerwin et al. 1993 study was the parents' decisions about the geographic location of the family. For example, some parents brought up the importance of racial composition as well as and "openness" to interracial families when deciding where to settle. In addition, the families who lived in predominantly White neighborhoods did not discuss their child's racial background as a primary factor in their decision as to where to live. These findings provide more insight into the choices that parents of Black/White Multiracial children make with regard to racial socialization.

Additionally, there was a finding in the Kerwin et al., (1993) study that the female participants were found to identify primarily with their mothers, with no differences noted dependent on the race or religion of the mother or the girls' physical appearance (i.e., similarity or dissimilarity of appearance to mother). This suggests that both gender and race play important

roles in family racial socialization. Additionally, Kerwin and colleagues (1993) found that many of the younger children in the study were not quite yet sure how others perceive them racially based on their appearance, but compared themselves to the appearances of family members. One 7-year-old female participant stated,

> "I don't know . . . I don't know what I look like. I never observed myself before." She later spontaneously introduced into the conversation a description of her eye and hair coloring, as well as her skin color as compared with her Black father. This youngster was quite explicit about the variety of colors in her hair and that of family members." (Kerwin et al, 1993 p. 227)

It appears that this participant used the variety of skin colors in her family as reference points for her own. More updated research in this area is needed, as this study took place nearly 30 years ago, and interracial families continue to change as does the racial context that surrounds them.

Later, Buckley and Carter (2004) conducted a qualitative study on the racial attitudes and beliefs of emerging adult-aged Black/White Multiracial women (n=5) in the Northeast, and found that experiences of parental racial socialization were of particular importance later in adolescence and early adulthood. The study explored the complex ways in which Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women integrate implicit and explicit messages from their families about race. In general, participants reported that they received limited socialization around race from their parents, such that the parents evaded questions and discussion about race, or defaulted to the child to choose their racial identity; and that this avoidance of the subject and lack of preparation engendered a sense of identity confusion and distress in adolescence and early adulthood (Buckley & Carter, 2004). However, among the participants who reported that their

parents talked to them about race, the Black parent's racial attitudes and beliefs more directly impacted their own racial attitudes and beliefs than those of the White parent's. It is notable that four of the five Black parents of these women were fathers, and therefore, it is possible that gender plays a role in their racial socialization experiences. More research is needed in order to better understand the role of parental race and gender identity in racial socialization experiences among Black/White Multiracial women. Additionally, the parent dyads are all heterosexual couples and this may not reflect families as they are today (Pew Research Center, 2019). Further, the Buckley and Carter (2004) study was published fifteen years ago, and more updated research is needed as the larger racial context in the United States continues to change.

The role of family racial socialization was salient in Kelch-Oliver and Leslie's (2007) qualitative study on racial identity development among Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women in the mid-Atlantic area of the US. One notable finding was that a number of the participants highlighted that their relationships with their mothers were highly significant with regard to their racial identity experiences. Multiple participants with White mothers reported that, though they had positive relationships with their mothers, they felt that their mothers could not provide sufficient racial guidance due to the chasm in their experiences. Another theme with regard to race, gender, and socialization was that some of the participants were estranged from their Black fathers, and participants discussed the painful experience of feeling disconnected from the Black part of themselves due to this absence. Indeed, one participant stated,

> 'And I hated my dad, I hated him. And I hated everything that I associated with him, and I associated being Black with my dad . . . and it's not good to walk around with those feelings about yourself. And, when your only relationship to being Black is your father and your only feelings toward

> your father are negative, then, that's not a good place to be when you're trying to be, you know, a happy and whole person. (Participant A, Focus Group #1)" (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006, p 64).

The participant discussed the fragmentation that occurred when she experienced abandonment from a parental figure who came to symbolize blackness. In addition, the majority of participants in the study by Kelch-Oliver and Leslie (2006) reported that a lack of extended family's acceptance or willingness to discuss race led to feelings of hurt and distrust of family members and/or their respective racial groups.

Parental racial socialization practices have implications for mental health among Black/White Multiracial individuals (Coleman & Carter, 2007). A quantitative study about racial identity, social pressure around racial identity, and mental health outcomes among Black/White Multiracial adult women (n=44) and men (n=16) by Coleman and Carter (2007) found that the participants whose parents encouraged them to singularly identify as African-American, when they actually identified as Biracial, had higher anxiety and depressive scores than participants whose parents validated their Biracial identities. However, some of the highest rates of anxiety and depression in the study were among participants who had protean (did not classify themselves by race) or transcendent (racial identity shifted based on context) identities, and who reported little pressure from parents to identify with a particular race. This suggests that there is complexity in the relationship between parental racial socialization and mental health outcomes, such that too much pressure or too little guidance around racial identity may contribute to mental health challenges.

Other research on family racial socialization among Multiracial families has grouped all Multiracial subgroups together such that all racial compositions are included and analyzed

together. As such, there is a gap in research that looks specifically at the family racial socialization experiences of Black/White Multiracial individuals. Despite this gap, these studies do provide information about racial socialization generally across different Multiracial subgroups. In a study of parental racial socialization, Franco and McElroy-Helzel (2018) found that cultural humility, characterized by openness to other cultures without being color-blind, promoted positive racial identity development among multiracial people. Further, they found that participants whose primary caregivers had higher cultural humility had fewer depressive symptoms, higher multiracial pride, and fewer multiracial challenges. Salahuddin and O'Brien (2011) found family to be a central component of Multiracial challenges, such that a lack of acceptance and experiences of racism within the family were related to diminished social connectedness and self-esteem, and increased depressive symptoms.

Body and Gender Racial Socialization

The studies by Buckley and Carter (2004) and Kelch-Oliver and Leslie (2006) indicated that family racial socialization also includes messages about gender and the physical body among Black/White Multiracial emerging adults. In the study by Kelch-Oliver and Leslie (2006), one participant highlighted that her White mother was unable to teach her how to take care of her hair, and thus she felt that her mother was not able to understand and relate to her experience. The participant stated,

> "'I think that there are certain issues that Black women on a whole have to deal with and when your mother is White, she really doesn't . . . like just hair and everything, she just doesn't know how to . . . especially when you don't have like anyone Black to relate to. All I had was my mom and she really didn't know what to do. (Participant A, Focus Group #1).'" (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006, p. 63).

This participant realized that her mother's hair was different from her own, and that her mother did not know how to do her hair, and future research could explore how such experiences may influence the self-perceptions and relationships of Black/White emerging adult women. There was a similar finding in the Buckley and Carter (2004) study, in which participants expressed the complexities of being a Black/White Multiracial daughter of a White mother, with two of the participants recalling positive, intense memories of combing their White mother's hair while idealizing its silky and straight texture.

In addition to parental racial socialization around gender and body, relationships with siblings also contributed to socialization in the studies by Buckley and Carter (2004) and Kelch-Oliver and Leslie (2006). The participants, who were all women, referenced noticing differences in the experiences of their brothers based on their gender such that their brothers' appearances are not criticized as much as their own, "One participant reported that coming to terms with her physical appearance was more challenging for her than it was for her brother. She stated, "Boys don't get pestered about that kind of stuff [physical appearance]." Another woman said, "Since boys are not as concerned with looks, it wasn't as big a deal for my brother" (Buckley & Carter, 2004, p 55). A participant in the Kelch-Oliver and Leslie (2006) study described similar experiences regarding her observing the treatment of her brothers. She stated, "Most of the half and half dudes I know, they get jocked and they get sweated, and everybody thinks they're cute. I have never seen a Black dude have problems trying to date a White girl. Like, White chicks were always like, 'oh, he's a stud' around my brothers and stuff, 'oh, he's cute. Look at his hair.' Not me, it's totally different being a chick. (Participant A, Focus Group #1)'" (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006, p. 69). It appears that, within their families through comparison to siblings, the participants in these studies were socialized to believe that their

physical appearances were problematic, more so than their brothers' appearances.

Other research that has generated knowledge in the area of racial, gender, and body image socialization in Multiracial families has grouped together the different Multiracial subgroups (Nadal et al., 2013). In a qualitative study examining microaggressions within families of Multiracial people, Nadal and colleagues (2013) found that the majority of participants reported familial favoritism such that family members favored lighter-skinned Multiracial children or Multiracial children with more Euro-centric features. As such, this study found the influence of colorism, defined as "the allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin" Burke, 2008, p. 17), operating within families. One Black/White Multiracial participant in this study (Nadal et al., 2013) explained that she and her sister were treated differently by their grandmother: "'I know that my sister used to get a lot of shit from my White grandmother. Even though my skin was darker, I had straight hair, I had the White features and I behaved the way a White girl should behave, and so my grandmother always favored me and was much nicer to me and horrible to my sister. That's my whole hang up [about being a] biracial person. You know, it feels like you're getting special privileges; you know you should be nice, but like it just causes much more friction with everybody you know all around." In this case, the participant noticed how her more European hair and facial features afforded her privilege within her extended family, which generated significant internal conflict.

Relatedly, Nadal and colleagues's study (2013) revealed a theme that some Multiracial people experienced objectification within their families, such that their family members expressed a preoccupation with their physical attributes because of their racially ambiguous phenotypes. One Black/White Multiracial woman stated, 'I also remember being with my cousins in Trinidad and them admiring my hair because my hair was so silky," while another

Black/White female participant stated ‘‘My White aunt is always kinda commenting on physically what I look like a lot and I don’t know if she would be doing that if I was White . . . but it’s always like, ‘Wow, look at you! Oh wow!’” (Nadal et al., 2013, p. 197). It appears as though these Black/White Multiracial women experienced objectification and skin-based favoritism within their families, raising further questions regarding how such racial socialization experiences influence how Black/White Multiracial women perceive themselves and relate to others.

Research on Peer Racial Socialization

Previous research has found that peer racial socialization is an area of significance with regard to the racial identities and experiences of Black/White Multiracial women (Root, 1998; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007; Franco & Franco, 2016; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Buckley & Carter, 2004; Coleman & Carter, 2007). The studies in this area have focused on different developmental stages including peer racial socialization experiences in childhood (Kerwin et al., 1993), adolescence (Kerwin et al., 1993; Root, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), emerging adulthood, and adulthood (Root, 1998; Buckley & Carter, 2004; Buckley & Carter, 2004; Coleman & Carter, 2007). Throughout their lifetimes, repeated experiences with peers including racial identification inquiries like “what are you?” (Root, 1998; Tran et al., 2015 Kerwin et al., 1993), identity denial (Franco & Franco, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie), racial hazing (Root, 1998; Franco & Franco, 2016), and navigating the racial composition of one’s school context (Kerwin et al., 1993; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002) all have implications for how Black/White Multiracial emerging adults perceive themselves and relate to others. Furthermore, these peer racial socialization experiences among Multiracial people are often tied to gender and body image (Root, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002;

Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007). This research area leaves unanswered questions with regard to the connection between peer racial socialization, gender, and body image among Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women, and future research could address these gaps.

Peer Racial Socialization and the Social Context

In one of the earliest empirical studies on Biracial identity, Kerwin and colleagues (1993) conducted qualitative research, interviewing 9 Black/White interracially-married parents and their children, which included 9 Black/White Biracial children whose ages ranged from 5-16. One of the major findings in this study was that Black/White Multiracial children often learn about how they are racially-perceived by others through interaction with peers and observation of racial dynamics at school, particularly during early adolescence. For example, one 13-year-old participant stated, "'Like at school the kids section themselves. The Black kids stay together and the White kids stay together.' She reported about 'mixed' kids, 'Some of them go with the Black kids. They act Black and go around with them all the time. Some of the mixed kids go with the White kids, I guess. There isn't a mixed group. I guess mostly they [mixed kids] pick one.'" (Kerwin et al., 1993 p. 226) This participant expresses her observations of the complex racial dynamics of her school and how she understands these may have implications for where she sees herself. Another 16-year-old participant stated, 'Yeah, I often get asked by a lot of my friends, just, you know, 'What are you?' in general. I always say, 'My mom's Black and my dad's White' and so ... that's about the extent of it. I mean, I never really go into it'" (Kerwin et al., 1993, p. 226). Many of the parents noted that children's questions about their racial identities coincided with when they began to attend preschool. Though the parents did not directly mention this in interviews, it may be because these Black/White Biracial children began to contend with questions from and observations of peers in their new school context.

Other research has examined the factors that influence how Black/White Multiracial people racially identify. In a quantitative study that examined the factors that contribute to how Black/White Multiracial people's racial identities, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) found that the racial composition of participants' peer groups was influential with regard to racial identity. The study delineated Multiracial participants into the following racial identity groups: those who singularly identify as Black, those who identify as Black/White Multiracial and are validated in that identity, and those participants who identify as Black/White Multiracial and are not validated in that identity. The findings differed based on racial identity such that participants with a singular Black identities were more likely to grow up in predominantly Black contexts, participants with validated Black/White Multiracial "border identities" were more likely to grow up in predominantly White contexts, and participants with unvalidated Black/White Multiracial "border identities" were more likely to grow up in predominantly Black contexts (Rockquemore and Brunsma, 2002). They study found that, among validated and unvalidated Biracially-identified participants, experiences of racism from White people did not result in feeling pushed away from that racial group, but experiences of personal discrimination and hostility from Black people did push them from relating to that group. Relatedly, they found that Black/White Multiracial people with validated border identities reported the highest incidences of negative experiences (personal discrimination or hostility) with Black people. It is possible that these participants were generalizing from a few negative experiences with Black people as they were more likely to grow up in predominantly White contexts.

Body Image and Peer Racial Socialization

Regarding another area of peer racial socialization, research has demonstrated that internalized comments about body image from peers can influence the mental health and racial

identities of Multiracial people (Root, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, (2006); Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007). In her mixed-methods study Root (1998) found that gender was important to peer racial socialization around body image, such that girls experienced more ridicule and rejection around phenotype such as hair, hairstyles, body size, eye color, eye shape, hair color, and bust size. Furthermore, in their quantitative study, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) examined the role of appearance in racial identity and found that skin color is not associated with racial identity, but socially-perceived appearance is significantly associated with racial identity. This finding points to the reflexive process of socially-perceived racial appearance, as Black/White Multiracial people may internalize feedback they receive from others and such feedback plays an important role in how they racially identify.

Moreover, Kelch-Oliver and Leslie (2006) found that many of the Black/White Multiracial women in their sample reported that experiences of colorism drove a wedge between themselves and other Black women. One participant stated, “I felt like everywhere people think I think I’m better because you’re light-skinned, long hair, because you’re this, because you’re that . . . because in a lot of ways they thought that I thought that I was better, and they’d look at me like, “Bitch, you think you’re cute because of your curly hair!” (Participant B, Focus Group #3)” (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006 p. 60). Another participant stated, “You think you’re better because you’re light skinned, or you got pretty hair. You know, all the boys want to talk to you. All light skinned girls are stuck up (Participant B, Focus Group #1).” One participant in the reflected on how these interpersonal issues reflected larger anti-Black societal injustice, stating, “[I don’t fault Black women for feeling that way] because I know there are issues within the Black community about race, and, you’re light-skinned, you’re dark-skinned, you’re brown-skinned, you know, the whole history about that. You know, light-skinned people were given preference.

(Participant A, Focus Group #3)"

Related to peer racial socialization around physical appearance, extant research has found that one of the most common experiences of Multiracial people is being a recipient of the question, "What are you?" regarding their racial descent. In a qualitative study examining the racial attitudes and beliefs of Black/White Multiracial women, Buckley and Carter (2004) interviewed 5 Black/White Multiracial women in the Northeast. They found that the Black/White Multiracial women mentioned peer relationships frequently with regard to how participants came to understand their racial beliefs. One way in which peers emerged in their narratives was with regard to personal boundary violations, such that participants recalled that other people felt entitled to inquire about their racial identities with questions like, "What are you?" Participants experienced their racial self-definition as a public event rather than a private, personal matter, and such inquiries felt invasive. One woman stated, "'I'm always a little insecure about my decision to be myself–that is to say that I'm Biracial. Knowing that people think I'm strange for thinking I'm Biracial affects how I see myself. I'm always questioning who I relate to and how I get along with people. Filling out things that asked me to describe my race, I always said Black because that's what other people said . . . I didn't know I had another option.'" (Buckley & Carter, 2004 p. 51) Another participant reported that in grade school she began to simply identify as Black so people wouldn't ask so many questions (Buckley & Carter, 2004).

Peer Racial Identity Invalidation

Indeed, one form of peer racial socialization among Black/White Multiracial people occurs in the context of racial identity invalidation as perpetrated by peers (Root, 1998; Coleman & Carter, 2007; Franco & Franco, 2016). In a qualitative study by Root (1998), the author explored themes related to racial identity development among pairs of biracial siblings. The

author conducted semi-structured interviews of 40 participants who made up 20 sibling pairs, aged 18-40 (m 24.9), and Multiracial subgroups were grouped together in the sample such that the majority of participants were Black/White, and the rest were of Asian/White or Asian/Black descent. One of the major emergent themes in the study was the traumatic interpersonal experiences of racial hazing, which refers to a demeaning process of racial authenticity testing in which a person must prove that they sufficiently embody stereotypical characteristics of members of a racial group in order to be worthy of belonging. Participants reported experiencing racial hazing more common in middle to late adolescence.

Relatedly, Coleman and Carter (2007) conducted a quantitative study on the impact of racial identity, on trait anxiety, social anxiety, and depression, among Black/White Multiracial people. Their sample included 44 women and 16 men with a mean age of 28.47. Participants completed a packet of self-report measures on biracial identity, trait anxiety, social anxiety, and depression. The study found that pressure from peers to identify as monoracial was found to predict social anxiety and fear of negative evaluation among Black/White Multiracial people. These troubling findings relate to the relational dynamics that exist when a Black/White Multiracial person feels that they are unable to identify authentically for fear of negative evaluation. More research is needed to better understand the process by which the outcome of social anxiety may come about in this population.

In a qualitative study on identity invalidation and cultural homelessness among a sample of 221 Black/White Multiracial people, Franco and Franco (2016) found that identity invalidation by Black people is the most frequent and most hurtful form of identity invalidation among Black/White Multiracial people, and that it engenders a sense “racial homelessness” and challenges with racial identity. Racial homelessness refers to the experience that one does not

have a racial community in which they feel they belong. These findings align with past research which has found that discrimination by White people results in a sense of general negativity, while discrimination from Black people suggests identity invalidation (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002).

One component with regard to peer racial socialization has to do with identity denial when Multiracial people are miscategorized. Studies in this area have grouped Multiracial subgroups together. A quasi-experimental study by Chen and Hamilton (2011), a sample of adults were shown real and digitally-created Black, White, and Black/White faces and asked to identify their race in a computer program. They found that adults made fewer concordant categorizations of Multiracial people than monoracial Black or White people. Similar to Chen and Hamilton (2011), Roberts and colleagues (2017) found that Black/White Multiracial children were more likely to be categorized as Black than White by Black and White adults. These findings have implications for peer racial socialization experiences of Black/White Multiracial people.

Other research that has mixed different Multiracial subgroups together has found that peer identity invalidation is a common and harmful experience for Multiracial people (Albuja et al., 2019; Nadal et al., 2011) A mixed-methods study study by Nadal and colleagues (2011) that grouped the experiences of Black/White and Asian/White participants together, found that microaggressions that had to do with the denial of Multiracial identity were the most common. A study by Albuja and colleagues (2019**)** looked at identity denial as a threat to wellbeing among both biracial and bicultural adults. The study grouped Multiracial subgroups together 38% Asian/White, 28% Black/White, 20% White/Latino, mean age was 24.26 years, 69% women**.** Biracial participants who reported more frequent identity questioning and denial from strangers

reported feeling less able to freely choose their identity and perceived greater conflict between their identities, which was associated with higher depressive symptoms and stress**.** For the biracial sample, social belonging was the only significant mediator, indicating that denial experiences are linked to lower psychological health primarily through thwarted social belonging.

Sexual Objectification

Stereotypes of Black Women

One way in which race, gender, and body socialization occurs is through societal messages of sexual objectification. Emerging from second and third-wave feminism, the concept of sexual objectification refers to "being treated as a body (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 174). Self-objectification occurs when the objectified individual internalizes the gaze of others, transforming their body into an object that meets or deviates from externally-imposed oppressive standards of desirability. The objectified person takes an observer's stance on their own body, rather than existing and experiencing from within.

Objectifying stereotypes, created to control, dehumanize, and brutalize Black women during slavery, still permeate US culture (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The media has framed Black women as some combination of the following three original racist archetypes: the asexual, maternal, self-sacrificing Mammy, the threatening, argumentative, and emasculating Sapphire, the unscrupulous, tax-dollar-abusing Welfare Queen, and the sexually promiscuous and irresponsible Jezebel (West, 1995). As these original stereotypes have mutated over time, Stephens and Phillips (2003) authored an analysis of updated versions of these stereotypes. This analysis is now nearly 20 years old, and the sexual scripts have likely evolved as the media

continues to change rapidly, but they include: the Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Earth Mother, Gangster Bitch, and the Baby Mama (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). These racist and sexist stereotypes contribute to the objectification of Black women, such that they are viewed as a collection of stereotypes rather than as whole people (Stephens & Phillips, 2003; West, 1995; Collins, 2002; Wallace, Townsend, Glasgow, & Ojie, 2011). As the present study focuses on Black/White emerging adult women, it is important to highlight the experiences of Black women, as Black/White Multiracial women are also likely to have some shared experiences given the shared identity. These sexually objectifying stereotypes have the potential to influence how Black women and Black/White Multiracial women think of themselves, how they relate to others, and how others think of and relate to them.

As such, in their analysis, Stephens and Phillips (2003) paint vivid images of these updated archetypes, and some of the most ubiquitous in US culture include the Diva, the Gold Digger, the Freak and the Dyke. The Diva is a stereotype of a Black woman who appears to be a "toned-down" version of the Jezebel, characterized by medium to light skin, long hair, a slender build, middle to upper-class standing, and a penchant for trading sex appeal and attractiveness for ever-increasing social status. In contrast, the Gold Digger stereotype, which is an amalgamation of the Jezebel and Welfare Queen stereotype, is characterized by a Black woman who explicitly trades sex for money, and is from a lower-class background than the Diva. The famous lyrics from Kanye West's 2005 song "Gold Digger," describe this stereotype "So stick by his side/ I know there's dudes ballin', and yeah, that's nice/ And they gonna keep callin' and tryin', but you stay right, girl/ And when you get on, he'll leave yo' ass for a white girl." These lyrics describe how a Gold Digger should stay with a man from her own lower-class background, but when he finally gets rich, he will leave her for a White girl. This message reflects the idea

that the Gold Digger's attempts to move up in social class are in vain, because, Black men with power will ultimately choose a White woman as it becomes an attainable way to increase their own social status (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The stereotype of the Freak is a hypersexualized Black woman with an insatiable appetite for sex, who is not motivated by money or status. Another stereotype is the Dyke, an archetype of a Black woman who enjoys sex, but not with men, and this is represented as unnatural and disgusting. The narrative around the Dyke stereotype is that to the idea that hating men made them a lesbian, or that they just haven't had good sex with men. Dyke scripts are applied when a woman is in-control or self-determined, regardless of sexual orientation, and have origins in the Mammy stereotype (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

Research on Stereotypes of Black Women and Sexual Objectification

Consequently, such stereotypes influence the mental health of Black women (Jenkins et al., 2017; Anderson et al., 2018; Watson et al., 2012; Watson et al., 2013). A growing area of research has explored this idea and the findings are quite disturbing, albeit unsurprising, with regard to the impact of racist stereotypes and sexual objectification. In a qualitative study that investigated Black women's experiences of sexual objectification, Watson and colleagues (2012) found that the historical influence of slavery, sexualized views and images of Black women, and the patriarchal social structure all contributed to different forms of sexual objectification, ranging from comments and objectifying gazes to more extreme forms, such as sexual abuse. Participants in the study described a number of effects of sexual objectification, including self-objectification, physical safety anxiety, eating concerns, psychological/emotional, and interpersonal issues. The researchers used semi-structured interviews, and provided a definition of sexual objectification at the beginning of each interview for the participants. The 20 participants were all Black women,

and their ages ranged from 18-53, with a mean age of 30. In a particularly illuminating and poignant quote, one participant stated,

> I'm thinking about how Black women were portrayed even during the slave era where our bodies were not owned. I mean, our bodies were not ours, but they were owned by someone else. That still has great effects even today as far as the stereotypes of Black women either being the Welfare Queen, the Mammy, the Jezebel, or even the Gangster Bitch. All of that still is heavily rooted in slavery and during that era where Black women, and Black people in general, were seen as objects . . . I still think that heavily plays a role today as far as Black women being the owners of their body, being the owners of their spiritual and intimate selves. Where it seems now, even still now in society, pieces of women, and particularly Black women, are there for the enjoyment of others and not for the person. Not for the person herself. (Watston et al., 2012, p. 465)

This participant illustrates the historical context of the psychic implications of racialized sexual objectification. Black women are made to feel that they do not have bodily autonomy, and that their bodies are a spectacle, with the sole purpose of entertaining others.

Continuing with this line of research, Watson and colleagues (2013) conducted a quantitative study that examined the role of sexual objectification on disordered eating and body image among college-aged Black women. The study had a sample of 278 Black women undergraduates, and found that when participants experienced higher rates of sexually objectifying experiences (e.g. getting whistled at in the street), they were more likely to internalize dominant standards of beauty, which was then associated with increased body surveillance, body shame, appearance anxiety, and disordered eating. They found that

participants who had higher internalized multiculturally inclusive racial identity, defined as an affirmation of one's own race while also maintaining an inclusive multicultural perspective, had lower rates of body image and eating issues, suggesting that this inclusive perspective acts as a buffer (Watson et al., 2013).

Expanding this research area, Barrie and colleagues (2016) looked at how the endorsement of stereotypes and impression management influence the psychological well-being of African American adolescent girls. The participants in the sample (n=144) ranged from ages 12–19 years old and were from predominantly African American contexts in the Chicago area. The study found that the girls who were aware of and were affected by negative stereotypical beliefs about African Americans were more likely to endorse higher impression management behaviors, and, in turn, reported higher levels of perceived stress. Additionally, the results suggested that moderate to high levels of collective self-esteem significantly decreased the impact of internalized stereotypes on impression management, which in turn, lessened the impact on perceived stress. This is similar to the findings of Watson and colleagues (2013), such that a general sense of personal pride and value in their shared identity as African American girls was enough to effectively combat the harmful effects of the endorsement of stereotypes on impression management as well as the indirect effect on perceived stress levels.

Relatedly, Jenkins and colleagues (2017) conducted a quantitative study on the impact of meta stereotype awareness, defined as the awareness that others hold a negative stereotype about one's group, on the mental health of Black women. The sample (n=609) consisted of college-aged Black women from both predominantly White universities, and historically Black universities. To measure metastereotype awareness, the study used a scale that called upon the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes, such that items created to reflect the Jezebel stereotype

included notions of Black women as more seductive than other women, sexually wild and uninhibited, and manipulative, and Sapphire stereotype items included constructions of Black women as bossy, argumentative, stubborn, and controlling. The study found that meta stereotype awareness among Black women predicted negative mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, hostility), which, in turn, predicted diminished self-care behaviors and greater drug and alcohol use for coping. These findings extend this area of literature to suggest that simply having awareness of the stereotype is enough to do psychological harm, rather than endorsing the stereotypes.

Finally, using eye tracking technology and an implicit association task to study the sexual objectification and dehumanization of Black women, Anderson and colleagues (2018) demonstrated that Black women are sexualized at higher rates than White women. Among a sample of White adults (n=38) who completed an eye-tracking task, they found that participants targeted Black women in the form of the objectifying gaze more often than their White counterparts. Consistent with the Jezebel stereotype, this effect increased under conditions of sexualization, with participants fixating more often on the sexualized body parts of Black women. Additionally, among another sample of White (n=131) participants who completed implicit association tasks, Anderson and colleagues (2018) found that Black women were implicitly dehumanized to a greater extent than White women, likened to both animals and objects. These findings provide clear evidence for how the world can be a hostile place for Black women.

Black/White Multiracial Women and Sexual Objectification

Returning to the highly sexualized Jezebel stereotype, Collins (2005) describes that the Jezebel is often depicted as a mulatto woman with light skin and long hair, and is one of the most

overtly sexual images of Black women to have emerged. This is relevant to Black/White Multiracial women, as the term “mulatto” is a slur for someone with Black and White heritage. If the Jezebel archetype is represented by a Black/White Multiracial woman, it is possible that the root of the stereotype still lingers regarding Black/White Multiracial women. The “mulatto”-ness of the Jezebel stereotype suggests that this highly sexualized archetype has some closer proximity to Whiteness than a darker-skinned Black woman. As such, this stereotype, though it is not the only one that Black/White Multiracial women may contend with, may be one lens through which they are viewed and interacted with in society.

These stereotypes stoke the flames of generalized narratives that contain the limited mental representations of Black women that persist in US dominant White supremacist culture. Black/White Multiracial women who exist within this climate may find themselves externally and internally contending with such stereotypes. Colorism plays a role in what stereotype may be applied to them, and the Jezebel stereotype may be invoked if their phenotype includes light skin. As Collins (2005) writes, White supremacy has dictated that Black women are the deviant, hypersexual foil to the chaste, innocent white woman. This has implications for where Black/White Multiracial women may find themselves, as they may contend with the stereotypes of Black women, but also experience proximity to Whiteness. As discussed in the previous section on peer racial socialization, this dynamic of proximity to Whiteness and social stratification between Black and Black/White Multiracial women can play out in interpersonal relationships. Awad et al., (2015) found that many Black women spoke of within group stratification, such that light-skinned women were rewarded for their appearance and proximity to whiteness. However, this privilege intersects with oppression given that White supremacy dictates their place in the racial hierarchy, and the benefits related to proximity to Whiteness are

often paired with othering. Future research can look at the effect of the "mulatto" Jezebel's legacy on Black/White Multiracial women.

Social Media

Social media is another source of race, gender, and body socialization for emerging adults. TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram, the most popular social media sites among teens and emerging adults, are image-centric, and may serve as vehicles to communicate cultural standards of desirability and social belonging. As many teens and emerging adults are living a large portion of their lives on social media sites (Pew Research Center, 2018), this arena merits more comprehensive research attention. Social networking sites allow users to view and interact with idealized, and often air-brushed or filtered, images of friends and strangers. A growing research area has examined how appearance-based social networking sites, such as Instagram and Facebook, impact the mental health of adolescent girls and young women. Despite the increased research attention in this area, there has been almost no research on how the intersection of racism and sexism operates within social media use, particularly with regard to body image. No studies to date have looked at the impact of social media use on the body image of women of color.

A recent study focusing on social media use among US teens ages 13-17 found that the majority of teens report feeling positive about the impact of social media on their lives, reporting that it helps them feel connected to friends, feel emotionally supported, and interact to a more diverse group of people. However, teens also report that social media can lead to interpersonal drama and pressure to only post certain types of content (Pew Research Center, 2018). Teens navigate norms around what to post on these photo-based sites, and when it comes to "selfies," self-portrait photos taken on a smart phone's front-facing camera, some 45% of teens say they

often or sometimes post selfies on social media, with 16% saying they do this often. However, posting selfies differs demographically, as girls and Black teens report posting selfies more frequently (Pew Research Center, 2018). The study did not report on the differential uses of selfies among Black girls and boys. Taken together, teens self-report that social media plays a significant, mostly positive, role in their lives, however pressures around what to post and interpersonal drama make it at times difficult.

The mostly positive findings from the aforementioned study of teens by the Pew Research Center are in nearly direct contrast to the growing body of psychological research on the mental health impact of social media usage. General trends in this area reveal that Instagram and Facebook usage have an overwhelmingly negative impact on wellbeing, particularly with regard to body image (Tiggemann & Barbato, 2018), self-esteem (Chen & Lee, 2013), and depression (Steers et al., 2014; Feinstein et al., 2013). One study by McLean et al., (2015) found that girls who regularly shared self-images on social media, relative to those who did not, reported significantly higher overvaluation of shape and weight, body dissatisfaction, dietary restraint, and internalization of the thin ideal. One study found self-objectification to be the link between social media use and increased depressive symptoms (Lamp et al., 2019). Further, research suggests that the negative mental health consequences of social media use are intensified for women who have pre-existing vulnerabilities such as an eating disorder (Griffiths et al., 2018), or a tendency to compare oneself to others (Kleemans et al., 2018). For a review on social media and body image findings, see Mingoia et al., (2017).

Race and Social Media

To date, research on the psychological impact of social media reflects the experiences of predominantly white, affluent women. Very little research has examined the unique experiences

of women of color when it comes to the impact of social media on wellbeing, and no studies have examined the experiences of Black/White multiracial women. The intersection of racism and sexism is likely to complicate the social media experiences of women of color, as proliferation of racist stereotypes and colorism exist on social media just as they do in offline life.

To illustrate, recent reporting on trends on the wildly popular app TikTok, which allows users to publicly create and share short videos, have found that many White app users commit rampant "digital blackface," changing their accents to African American Vernacular English, imitating stereotypically Black mannerisms for comedy, and changing their appearances or hairstyles to typically Black ones (Holt, 2019). In another example, in 2016, Snapchat came under fire for their "beautification filter" when users noticed it lightened skin tones in an attempt to make selfies more attractive. Additionally, social media users have utilized their platforms fight against such oppression, as Black women have mobilized hashtags such as "#prettyforadarkskinnedgirl" to resist colorism and racism. Despite the potential for activism on social media, research shows that it can still be detrimental to mental health, as Mills et al., (2018) found that posting selfies was related to more depressive affect and lower body image among majority White US college-aged women. As the Pew Research Center reports, Black teens are posting more selfies than any other racial group, and paired with the findings of the Mills et al., (2018) study, this leads one to wonder, how does selfie-posting impact Black teens?

Social media has the potential to be a force for empowerment and self-love for women of color. In an analytical paper, Joy Harden Bradford, Clinical Psychologist and founder of Therapy for Black Girls, describes hashtags such as #MelaninPoppin and #BlackGirlMagic, as movements to center, normalize, and celebrate the experiences of Black women (Bradford,

2017). These social media movements have often been led by Black women as forces to counteract the otherwise often hostile online and offline atmosphere that they face (Bradford, 2017). In addition, women of color celebrities such as Jameela Jamil have been advocates for body positivity and anti-body shaming with movements like Jamil's "#Iweigh" movement on Instagram, which encouraged people to post descriptions of their weights in terms of their positive values, rather than a number on a scale. However, the connection between women of color, social media, feminism, and empowerment is complicated.

One of the few studies that examined the impact of social media on Black women's mental health looked at the positive and negative mental health correlates of social media use, particularly of Black-oriented, feminist blogs (Stanton et al., 2014). Contrary to expectations, greater Black-oriented blog use was associated with higher anxiety symptoms, depressive symptoms, and hostility. Furthermore, higher levels of general social media use were found to be associated with adverse mental health and lower self-esteem for Black women. It is possible that these black-oriented blogs, though meant to inspire, can activate feelings of powerlessness with regard to the oppressive system in which Black women exist.

The issues at hand are complex for Black/White Multiracial women, who may experience light skin privilege, identity invalidation, and objectification experiences on social media. Recently, some young Black/White Multiracial women celebrities, who are highly influential on social media, have come out and discussed the unfair beauty standards in Hollywood, such that they are granted preferential treatment for having lighter skin. For example, actress and singer Zendaya Stoermer, who has over 55 million Instagram followers, and is of African-American and German/Scottish-American descent, was quoted in an interview about beauty standards and representation. In the interview, Zendaya stated, "As a Black woman, as a light-skinned Black

woman, it's important that I'm using my privilege, my platform to show you how much beauty there is in the African-American community. I am Hollywood's—I guess you could say—acceptable version of a Black girl and that has to change." Zendaya is aware of the preferential treatment she has received as an "acceptable," or closer to White, version of a Black girl, and reports wanting to use her platform to raise awareness of colorism. Additionally, actress and activist Amandla Stenberg of *The Hunger Games* and *The Hate U Give*, who is of African-American and Danish descent, was quoted in an interview in *Variety* magazine, stating,

> "Something interesting has happened with me and Yara (another Black/White Multiracial actress) and Zendaya — there is a level of accessibility of being biracial that has afforded us attention in a way that I don't think would have been afforded to us otherwise. Me and Yara and Zendaya are perceived in the same way, I guess, because we are lighter-skinned black girls and we fill this interesting place of being accessible to Hollywood and accessible to white people in a way that darker-skinned girls are not afforded the same privilege." (Wagmeister, 2018)

This subject came up after Amandla reportedly turned down a lead role in the *Black Panther* movie because she believed it should go to a dark-skinned actress. Amandla is also highly influential on Instagram with 2.2 million followers, and often posts about social justice. She is also known as an LGBTA+ activist after she came out as bisexual to her followers on Instagram. Most recently, on Twitter, *Game of Thrones* actress Nathalie Emmanuel, who is of Caribbean and English descent, shut down a suggestion that she play the role of Princess Tiana, Disney's first and only Black princess. After someone on Twitter suggested that she play the role, she

responded in a tweet, “Nah, that part has to go to an even more melanated sister.” The stars have been praised in the media for taking a stand against racism and colorism, and these examples all reflect the ways that highly influential Black/White Multiracial celebrities navigate how their appearances grant them privilege in the media. The examples also lead one to wonder how these stars are influencing young Black/White Multiracial women, particularly with regard to the complexity of privilege and objectification. Further, it leads to questions about how non-famous Black/White Multiracial women navigate skin color privilege, objectification, and identity invalidation both on social media and in real life.

Body Dissatisfaction, Emerging Adulthood, and Mental Health

As the previous overview of the literature has demonstrated, implicit or explicit messages about one’s physical body are inextricably linked to family racial socialization, peer racial socialization, social media, and sexual objectification. Research has not explicitly addressed how these dynamics may impact Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women. The connection between different forms of socialization and body image is an important research area, as empirical research has revealed that negative body image is associated with a host of mental health problems including depressive affect (Stice & Bearman, 2001; Bradford & Petrie, 2008), anxiety (Aderka et al., 2014), and eating disorders (Walker et al., 2018). Race is relevant in the study of body dissatisfaction, as one’s race is relevant to the body socialization that one may experience (Townsend et al., 2010). To date, there has been almost no research on the mental health sequelae related to body image dissatisfaction among Multiracial women.

Additionally, the connection between body image and mental health issues is particularly salient during the pivotal stage of emerging adulthood, as it is a period of self-focus, instability, identity exploration (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adults are likely to experience mental health

concerns, as feeling anxious or depressed is common during emerging adulthood (Arnett & Schwab, 2014). In a national survey of 1029 people aged 18–29 years in the USA, 56% of them agreed with the statement, "I often feel anxious", and 32% of them agreed with the statement, "I often feel depressed" (Arnett & Schwab, 2014). Further, emerging adulthood is a time where emerging adults are exploring their body-related attitudes and beliefs (Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2006). This suggests that emerging adulthood could be a particularly impactful time for intervention with regard to the nuanced issues of body image, race, and gender among Black/White Multiracial women.

One of the only findings about body image among Black/White Multiracial people comes from a study in which they were a small subgroup of a much larger sample, and the study primarily focused on binge eating among a general sample of young adults (Ivezaj et al., 2010). Ivezaj and colleagues (2010) presented an alarming finding that Multiracial women had some of the highest rates of body image dissatisfaction and anxiety among their sample of 959 young adults. More specifically, they found that Multiracial women who endorsed binge eating behavior and who were overweight reported greater levels of anxiety than all other groups and greater levels of depression than White women and White men. Additionally, Multiracial women who endorsed binge eating behavior and who were overweight reported greater body image dissatisfaction relative to Black women and White men. These findings must be taken alongside the study's significant limitations, as the Multiracial participants only made up 6% (n=52) of their sample. Further, Ivezaj and colleagues (2010) did not report which Multiracial subgroups were included in the sample. Despite these limitations, the findings merit deeper empirical investigation.

Though there is a lack of research on Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women and

body image, there is a small area of research on the predictive and protective factors related to negative body image among Black women. One predictive factor that has been studied with regard to the etiology of negative body image among all women is the internalization of a thin standard of beauty. White dominant culture has dictated what is and what is not beautiful, such that women who are White, and thin, able-bodied, are viewed as the most desirable, and the degree to which women internalize that belief as their own has been found to be associated with body dissatisfaction (Bradford & Petrie, 2008). This relationship between thin ideal internalization and negative body image has also been found among Black women (Rogers-Wood & Petrie, 2010), particularly among women in predominantly White contexts (Mulholland & Mintz, 2001).

For example, in a quantitative study of the relationship between internalization of societal beauty ideals, body dissatisfaction, and eating disorders among college-aged Black women (N=322), Rogers-Wood and Petrie (2010) found a link between exposure to societal pressures for thinness, and disordered eating. The study demonstrated that Black women who were more frequently exposed to thin ideals were more likely to internalize societal beauty ideals and have body image concerns, which was then directly related to disordered eating. Additionally, Black women who had a stronger ethnic identity were less likely to internalize thin ideals, thus identifying ethnic identity as a protective factor (Rogers-Wood & Petrie, 2010). Furthermore, other studies have found that a strong racial and ethnic identity buffers Black women from body image problems (Watson, Ancis, White, & Nazari, 2013; Flowers, Levesque, & Fisher, 2012).

To further illustrate, Flowers and colleagues (2012) conducted a quantitative study on body image dissatisfaction, racial identity, and disordered eating among college-aged African-American women. The study's sample included Black women from a predominantly

White institution (n=59) and a historically Black institution (n=26). The primary contribution of the study demonstrated that self-hatred of one's race and rejection of African American membership was related to greater unhappiness regarding body size and appearance, and, in turn, greater binge/purge disordered eating behavior. These findings suggest that Black women who are in racial identity statuses characterized by more internalized racism may idealize Whiteness and reject their own bodies and appearances as they attempt to conform to Whiteness (Flowers et al., 2012). These findings have implications for Black/White Multiracial women, who may have a closer proximity to Whiteness while also having Black heritage, and research has not addressed how Black/White Multiracial women integrate potentially conflicting messages regarding Blackness, Whiteness, and body image.

Other research has examined what factors apart from body size influence body image among Black women (Awad et al., 2015). Awad and colleagues (2015) conducted a qualitative study of 31 Black women, interviewing the participants in focus groups. The study revealed that Black women's hair is central to their body image, and it is both a source of racist victimization and self-definition. Multiple participants (n=22) emphasized that their hair was often the focus of microaggressions committed by non-Black people. One participant stated,

> They really don't get it...So when they hired me I had that really short hair, it was curly. A little while later I got my extensions and the secretary said: 'oh your hair looks different. Are you wearing it down?' and I was like: 'Yeah, whatever, I'm wearing it down.'...Eventually I had to explain to her that these were extensions. And I had to explain the process of extensions. So then I had them out for a while and when I had them out she was like:

> 'Oh my, you cut all your hair off.' And I was like, did I not just explain that I had extensions? And then I got my natural hair straightened and when I got my hair straightened: she was like 'Oh your hair is so different, now did you cut it again?' And I said 'it is longer because I have it straight.' And when I got my extensions again she said 'Does your hair just do that by itself? Does it curl up like that?' I don't understand what they don't get. I think that's part of the problem. (Awad et al., 2015, p. 6)

This participant illustrated the ways in which her hair was seen as a spectacle to be remarked upon. Future research should examine how such othering body-related experiences influence mental health. In contrast, many participants additionally described their hair as a source of versatility, joy and self-definition (n=18). The study by Awad and colleagues (2015) points to further expansion of research on body image to include hair to make this research area applicable to Black women. Additionally, findings from the small area of research on Black/White Multiracial women revealed that hair is an important part of body image in this population as well (Buckley & Carter, 2004; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006).

Relational-cultural Theory

Relational-cultural Theory (RCT) can help inform the implications of the findings in the aforementioned research areas. RCT conceptualizes how people learn about themselves through relationships (Jordan, 2001). The concept of chronic disconnection refers to the self-blame, isolation, and immobilization that occur when one acts inauthentically in relationships due to the anticipation that they will not be understood (Jordan, 2001). According to RCT, chronic disconnection can occur at the societal level, as marginalization creates an environment in which

people can only bring certain parts of themselves into connection (Walker, 2008). This model is helpful for informing family racial socialization, peer racial socialization, sexual objectification, and body dissatisfaction, because RCT provides a framework for understanding how messages from others regarding race, gender, and body become internalized, and influence how individuals hide or contort parts of themselves due to an anticipation that they will not be accepted by others. RCT can also inform how women engage in relationships not only in person but also online via social media. As social media has been an increasingly significant context of relational life for emerging adults, it will be important to examine socialization messages and women's approaches to relationships in this medium.

The framework of RCT emphasizes the primacy of relationships, and the importance of messages that people receive about themselves. RCT helps inform how to understand family racial socialization, as some of the first messages around race, gender, and body that Black/White Multiracial women receive occur within their families. If Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women learn within their families that they must stifle a part of their identities by identifying with one race (Coleman & Carter, 2007), that their appearance will only be valued if it is Eurocentric (Nadal et al., 2013), or that they will not be understood if they talk about race with their White parent (Buckley & Carter, 2004), they may keep parts of themselves hidden from others, experience disconnection, and sacrifice their authenticity. Similarly, RCT informs the implications and importance of peer racial socialization, such that the theory centers relationships and connectedness in the psychological well-being of individuals. If Black/White Multiracial women experience racial identity invalidation from peers (Franco & Franco, 2016), they may hide parts of themselves in order to fit the expectations of those peers. Additionally, sexual objectification at the societal level and on social media can teach them that their

acceptance and approval in society is conditional upon the degree to which their bodies can be objectified. RCT places relationships and connection at the center of psychological well-being, and helps inform how to synthesize the findings of research in the previously reviewed areas.

Present Study

Multiracial people in the United States are born into a system in which their racial identity is often treated as an anomaly, and an invitation for surrounding people to ask the question, "What are you?" However, despite this conception, the Multiracial population is rapidly increasing. In 2015, one-in-seven (14%) US infants were Multiracial, nearly triple the amount in 1980 (Pew Research Center, 2015). One of the fastest growing Multiracial subgroups is the population of Black/White Multiracial women, who navigate the complicated intersection of privilege and oppression, and may contend with anti-Black racism (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), colorism (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007), sexual objectification (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007), and identity invalidation (Franco & Franco, 2016), all occurring in the contexts of their families, interactions with peers, or within the larger social context. As the population of Black/White Multiracial women continues to increase, research in the area of Black/White Multiracial identity and mental health remains sparse.

It is particularly critical this research focus on the experiences of those in the formative developmental period of emerging adulthood, defined as the period of age 18 through 25, as it is characterized by leaving home and individuating from one's family of origin, developing an identity, experiencing emotional instability and self-focus (Arnett & Schwab, 2014). Additionally, those in this age group are at higher risk for mental health challenges, as feeling anxious or depressed is common during emerging adulthood (Arnett & Schwab, 2014). This phenomenon appears to be intensifying, as university counseling centers are witnessing

unprecedented demand for therapy services (Thielking, 2017). There is a need for mental health providers and caregivers to be informed about the experiences that Black/White Multiracial emerging adults experience.

Relatedly, socialization is a large component of emerging adult identity development, and it refers to the messages that are implicitly and explicitly communicated through socializing agents including families, peers, and the larger society. These messages can dictate what parts of our identities are socially acceptable and valid. Relational-cultural Theory posits that self-blame, isolation, and immobilization can occur when one acts inauthentically in relationships out of an anticipation that they will not be understood or seen (Jordan, 2001). This is relevant to the socialization processes around race, gender, and body, as these messages may engender disconnected views of oneself within relationships, as they may convey that certain parts of self are unacceptable. For example, learning that certain Eurocentric physical features elicit admiration and favoritism from family members, as found in Nadal and colleagues' (2013) study, may teach Black/White emerging adult women that they must fit a certain standard of beauty in order to connect authentically with others and be accepted.

Previous research has delineated a variety of contextual factors that shape racial, gender, and body socialization of Black/White Multiracial emerging adults (Kerwin et al., 1993; Coleman & Carter, 2007; Buckley & Carter, 2004; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006). Within the family context, the genders of the parents have implications for racial socialization, and, notably, it is more common for Black/White Multiracial people to have a White mother and a Black father (Pew Research Center, 2015). Extant research has found that the Black parent may talk more openly about race and racism with the child (Kerwin et al., 1993; Buckley & Carter, 2004), and Black/White Multiracial women may feel that that their mothers cannot not provide

sufficient racial guidance for them, due to the chasm in their experiences (Buckley & Carter, 2004). In addition, research has suggested that body socialization occurs within families of Black/White Multiracial people (Kerwin et al., 1993; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2006; Nadal et al., 2013), and family members communicate the implications of one's racialized physical appearance through favoritism and objectification of Multiracial children with more Eurocentric features (Nadal et al., 2013).

In addition to race, gender, and body socialization within their families, Black/White Multiracial emerging adults experience such socialization through interactions with peers. Repeated experiences with peers, including racial identification inquiries like "what are you?" (Root, 1998; Tran et al., 2015 Kerwin et al., 1993), identity denial (Franco & Franco, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie), racial hazing (Root, 1998; Franco & Franco, 2016), and navigating the racial composition of one's school context (Kerwin et al., 1993; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002) all have implications for how Black/White Multiracial emerging adults perceive themselves and relate to others. Furthermore, these peer racial socialization experiences among Multiracial people are often tied to gender and body image (Root, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007). To illustrate, Root (1998) found that Black/White Multiracial women reported ridicule and rejection around phenotype such as hair, hairstyles, body size, eye color, eye shape, hair color, and bust size.

Beyond the level of interpersonal relationships, race, gender, and body socialization can occur at the societal level, as remnants of racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women such as the Jezebel, a hypersexualized archetype of a light-skinned Black woman, still permeate U.S. culture and impact Black women (Watson et al., 2012). However, there is no extant research that explores how such interactions with family members, peers, and the larger social context impact

Black/White women's perceptions of themselves and their relationships with others.

Within the larger social context, social media is a vehicle that transmits race, gender, and body socialization messages, and as it becomes more and more encompassing for younger generations, it is highly important to attend to its role in the lives of emerging adults. More specifically, TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram, the most popular social media sites among teens and emerging adults, are image-centric, and communicate cultural standards of desirability and social belonging. Research on the impact of social media on mental health has focused primarily on affluent, White emerging adults, and has found negative mental health impacts (Tiggemann & Barbato, 2018; Chen & Lee, 2013; Steers et al., 2014; Feinstein et al., 2013). One can imagine that the aforementioned negative social media findings might generalize to women of color, though more research in this area is sorely needed. Furthermore, the intersection of racism and sexism is likely to complicate the social media experiences of women of color, as proliferation of racist stereotypes and colorism exist on social media just as they do offline.

In addition to social media, Black/White Multiracial representation in television and movies may influence how Black/White Multiracial emerging adults are socialized around their gender, race, and bodies. Popular Black/White Multiracial actors such as Zendaya and Amandla Stenberg have spoken in the media about their experiences with favoritism and skin-color privilege in Hollywood. Previous research has not addressed the implications for Black/White Multiracial emerging adults of seeing these influential Black/White Multiracial performers cast on television and in movies, and more research in this area is needed, as it may be a factor in how they see themselves and relate to others.

In addition to examining the process of race, gender, and body socialization of Black/White Multiracial emerging adults, there is a need for information on the mental health

impact of such socialization experiences. Body image is a particular area of focus in the present study, as it is a mental health issue that connects with race, gender, and body socialization. Negative body image is associated with a host of negative mental health symptoms, including depressive affect (Stice & Bearman, 2001; Bradford & Petrie, 2008), anxiety (Aderka et al., 2014), and eating disorders (Walker et al., 2018). To date, there has been almost no research on body image dissatisfaction among Multiracial women specifically. Indeed, one of the only data points about body image among Black/White Multiracial women comes from a study in which they were a small sub-group of the sample, and the study found that Multiracial women had some of the highest levels of body image dissatisfaction compared with other racial groups (Ivezaj, et al., 2010).

This manner of framing Multiracial identity development as cumulative internalized socialization experiences will have implications for therapeutic interventions as well as future research on this population. Given the novelty of this approach and the lack of research in this area, an in-depth, qualitative study was required in order to provide ample space for an analysis of participants' stories. Qualitative research allows the researcher to attend with flexibility to the influence of the researcher's self in the design and implementation of research, the depth and nuance of participants' stories, and the role of context (Yeh & Inman, 2007). The conventional content analysis approach was the most appropriate for the present research questions, since this approach is ideal for analyzing data on a topic on which there is limited theory or research literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Using conventional content analysis, the present study aimed to elucidate influential socialization experiences of Black/White emerging adult women, and how such experiences influence their self-perceptions and relationships.

Relational-cultural Theory, the theoretical framework of the present study, can guide an

understanding for how family racial socialization, peer racial socialization, sexual objectification, social media, and body dissatisfaction potentially influence the self-perceptions and relationships of Black/White Multiracial emerging adults. Each of these areas addresses different messages that Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women receive about themselves, and RCT suggests that these messages can teach these women what parts of themselves are safe to bring into connection with others, and what parts are not. Guided by RCT, the present study addressed these gaps in research by examining the following questions:

1. What are the messages that Black/White Multiracial women are exposed to concerning their race, gender, and bodies?
2. How do these messages about race, gender, and body influence self-perceptions of Black/White Multiracial women?
3. How do these messages about race, gender, and body influence Black/White Multiracial women's relationships with others?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The present study used qualitative descriptive analysis to explore what race, gender, and body socialization messages Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women receive, and how those messages influence their self-perceptions and relationships. Qualitative descriptive analysis is a form of naturalistic inquiry in which the researcher comprehensively describes the experiences and perspectives of participants, without venturing far into interpretation of the data (Sandelowski, 2000). In particular, the present study used conventional content analysis, which is a type of qualitative descriptive analysis that is useful for studies on topics on which there is little research, as it presents the participants stories as they are told by the participants without applying a pre-existing theory to analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This method is conducive to comprehensive, thick descriptions of phenomena that have been underrepresented in research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The topic of the present study merited this form of exploratory analysis, as very little is known about the race, gender, and body socialization experiences of Black/White Multiracial emerging adults. The present study followed a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, such that the aim of the study is to elucidate the multiple truths of participants' experiences, rather than seek to uncover a singular objective reality, as a post positivist framework would encourage (Morrow, 2005). Further, this paradigm allows for a thorough analysis of the role of the researcher's constructions and identities as they influence the research (Morrow, 2005). As this group has been existing in the margins of psychological research, this form of analysis allowed their stories and lived experiences to be at the forefront of the presentation of the data.

Paradigmatic Underpinnings

Before describing the specific methodology that the present study used, the paradigmatic

underpinnings of such methodology must be addressed. A paradigm, defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) is the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, and the research methodology that that investigator employs is secondary to their paradigm. A paradigm represents, "a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world," the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts…" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994 pp 107). The basic beliefs that define a paradigm are the following: ontology (i.e., the nature of reality), epistemology (i.e., what is knowledge, as it reflects the relationship between the knower and the would-be known), axiology (i.e., the role of researcher values in research) and methodology (i.e., the process of research) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ponterotto, 2005). The paradigms most commonly used in qualitative research are postpositivist and constructivist/interpretivist, and most qualitative methodologies can be placed on a spectrum between postpositivism and constructivism (Ponterotto, 2005). The ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology of the present study most align with a constructivist/interpretivist framework, in contrast to a postpositivist paradigm, which assumes an objective reality that a researcher can discover (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

As such, the goal of the constructivist approach is to describe the "lived experience" of the individual who is living and constructing that experience (Schwandt, 1994, 2000). The ontology of a constructivist paradigm is such that realities are accessed through multiple intangible mental constructions, which are based on individual experiences and social beliefs. Constructions are alterable, and these multiple constructions of reality may contradict each other, without making one construction more or less true. Constructivism/interpretivism follows a hermeneutical approach, such that meaning is hidden and must be uncovered through deep reflection, which can occur in dialogue between the researcher and participant (Guba & Lincoln,

1994; Ponterotto, 2005). This is in contrast with a postpositivist paradigm, which posits that there exists an objective reality, and the goal of the research is to uncover that reality, albeit imperfectly, through falsification (Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

Further, the epistemology of the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm posits that knowledge that comes from research is co-created by the researcher and participant through dialogue (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This subjectivist and transactional stance is central to the goal of describing the lived experience of the participant, while acknowledging the influence of the researcher's constructed realities (Ponterotto, 2005). Again, this is in contrast with postpositivism, which centers on an objective, dualistic separation between researcher and participant, with the acknowledgment that the researcher may have some influence on that being researched, but objectivity and researcher–subject independence remain important guidelines for the research process (Ponterotto, 2005). The axiology of constructivist-interpretivist paradigm is such that the values of the researcher and participants are integral to and inextricable from the research process (Ponterotto, 2005). The researcher should acknowledge, describe, and "bracket" his or her values, but not eliminate them (Ponterotto, 2005; Morrow, 2005). Whereas, in a postpositivist paradigm, the values of the researcher have no place in scientific inquiry, as they would obfuscate the objective reality that the inquiry attempts to reveal.

Moving from beliefs to practice, the methodological beliefs that underlie constructivism suggest that constructions can only be accessed through a dialogue between the researcher and participant, with the final goal of distilling a consensus construction. Whereas, postpositivism implies that there exists an apprehendable objective reality, and the goal of research is to control the effects on any extraneous variables that would obscure or distort that singular objective reality.

Given the aforementioned points and the aims of the present study, a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm was most appropriate. The present study addressed racial, gender, and body socialization among Black/White Multiracial emerging adults, and a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm allowed for the participants to construct and interpret their own realities in response to such socialization messages that they have received throughout their lifetimes. This paradigm was best suited to address the present study's focus on socialization messages of Multiracial emerging adults, because Multiracial people are often tasked with constructing their own racial identities, as identifying with multiple races contradicts the single-race racial categorization system in the U.S.. Research suggests that there is a great deal of variability in how Multiracial people racially identify (Coleman & Carter, 2007), and what kinds of messages regarding gender (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007), race (Franco & Franco, 2016), and physical appearance (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007) they receive. Therefore, a paradigm that allowed space for multiple constructed realities was most conducive to capturing the nuanced experiences of individuals within this population. Another paradigm, such as postpositivist, which focuses on a single, objective reality may have overlooked the great potential for variability in this population. The myriad influences of socialization may vary a great deal based on context and individual factors, and a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm will necessitate a thick description of the client's social context and perspective. In addition, this paradigm allowed the researcher to be reflective of and to acknowledge the primacy of her own subjectivity. In this paradigm, the researcher is actively engaged in facilitating the inclusion of multiple voices, including her own, in the distillation of co-constructed realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The allowance for the discussion of the researcher's subjectivity allowed space for the researcher to name and factor in her own beliefs, experiences, and constructions, which cannot be separated

from the present study.

Qualitative Description and Content Analysis

Qualitative descriptive studies comprehensively summarize an event in the everyday terms of those events, and the data are organized and presented in a way that best contains the data and is relevant to the research audience (Sandelowski, 2000). In qualitative description, researchers stay close to the data, providing a detailed description of an event or experience, without veering far into interpretation. As there is a sparse amount of research in the area of race, gender, and body socialization among Black/White Multiracial emerging adults, the most illuminative research in this area will simply reflect the experiences of the people in this population. Indeed, qualitative description was the most appropriate method for the present study, as it allowed the researcher to present her findings as they are described by the study participants.

Qualitative content analysis was the most appropriate method of investigation for the present study's research question because it allowed the researcher to present the data in the participant's terms, in contrast with another method such as grounded theory which involves a high degree of data interpretation by the researcher (Cresswell, 2007). The aim of grounded theory is to generate an explanation of a process shaped by the views of a large number of participants (Fassinger, 2005; Cresswell, 2007). As such, the aim is to generate a theory about a process or interaction (Cresswell 2007; Fassinger, 2005). This method is particularly beneficial when there is ample information about the population under study. However, the present study did not aim to generate a theory, but rather to expand understandings of perceptions of self and relationships among Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women through in-depth descriptions of their experiences. Further, as there is limited research on socialization

experiences of Black/White Multiracial emerging adults, a more exploratory methodology was appropriate. With content analysis, the researcher stays close to the data, letting the participants speak of their experiences with little interpretation. This is crucial so that the study may contribute to this body of research, before prematurely applying a theory of a process.

Qualitative content analysis is the favored analysis method in qualitative descriptive research (Sandelowski, 2000). Unlike other qualitative methods, qualitative content analysis does not utilize pre-existing codes while analyzing data. Indeed, qualitative content analysis is data-derived such that codes are generated from the data themselves in the course of the study. The analysis process is iterative and reflexive, such that researchers accommodate for new codes and insights while simultaneously collecting and analyzing data (Sandelowski, 2000). In conventional qualitative content analysis, researchers allow categories and themes to emerge from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) outline three distinct approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative. Of the three approaches, conventional content analysis was the most appropriate for the present study, in contrast with directed content analysis or summative content analysis. The goal of directed content analysis is to validate or extend a theory or theoretical framework, whereas the summative approach is best suited for studies with an explicit focus on the use of words (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis was the best method for the present study because it is well-suited for a research question on which there is minimal research, as it allows for exploration and description rather than the application or generation of a theory.

Sample

Participants. Participants in the present study included Black/White Multiracial women-identified college students, except for one participant who identified as non-binary, and

who specified that they were socialized as a woman (see Table 1 for a summary of participants' demographic information). All participants were raised in the U.S. and resided in the U.S. at the time of the study. All participants were fluent in English. Participants' ages ranged from 18-22, with a mean age of 20-years-old. 3 participants were from a lower socioeconomic status (SES) background, 2 middle SES, and 4 upper-middle SES. With regard to religion, 3 participants identified as Christian, 1 Christian and Jewish, 2 Catholic, 1 Unitarian Universalist, 1 Atheist, 1 Spiritual/Witch, and 1 not religious. Geographic contexts of participant's upbringings were 4 Northeastern U.S., 2 Southwestern U.S., 3 Midwestern U.S., and 1 Mid-Atlantic U.S.. With regard to sexual orientation, 6 participants identified as Straight, 3 Bisexual, and one Lesbian.

With regard to racial identity labels, 6 participants identified as Biracial, 1 Mixed, 1 Black and White, 1 Black Biracial, and 1 Mixed White-passing LatinX. 7 participants had White mothers and Black fathers, and 3 participants had Black mothers and White fathers. Nine participants' described their college contexts as predominantly White, and 1 racially diverse. 3 participants indicated that their high school context was racially diverse, and 6 participants' high schools were predominantly White. 6 participants stated that they perceive themselves to look Biracial, 1 unsure, 1 in-between, 1 ambiguous, and one White-passing Mixed. 3 participants stated that they are socially perceived as light-skin Black, 2 Latina, 1 White-passing racially ambiguous Latina, 1 Black, 1 Mixed, and 2 ambiguous.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender/Pronouns	Racial Identity	Socially Perceived Racial Identity
Luna	21	she/her cis woman	Mixed	Light-skin Black
Phoebe	20	she/her cis woman	Biracial	Ambiguous
Issa	22	she/her cis woman	Biracial	Light-skin Black
Adriane	19	they/them nonbinary	White-passing	White-passing racially

		(socialized as female)	Mixed Latinx	ambiguous Latina
Sabrina	19	she/her cis woman	Mixed	Ambiguous
River	20	she/her cis woman	Biracial	Biracial
Gia	22	she/her cis woman	Biracial	Biracial
Leyla	20	she/her cis woman	Black Biracial	Latina
Willow	18	she/her cis woman	Black/White	Black
Remi	21	she/her cis woman	Biracial	Latina

Recruitment. Participants for the present study were recruited from locations in the United States in two different ways. First, this writer created fliers with study information, and shared it with Black and Multiracial university affinity groups on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Second, this writer emailed listservs for Black and Multiracial affinity groups across the U.S.. Once participants responded to the researcher, she conducted an initial 10-minute phone screen in which she determined eligibility, explained the rationale for the study, described the informed consent information including risks and benefits, and developed rapport with the participant. If the participant was eligible, this writer sent the informed consent via email for the participant to review. This writer scheduled an interview date with the participant. For more information on the informed consent practices, please see that information in the section "Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Human Subjects," below.

Saturation. With origins in grounded theory qualitative research methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the concepts of theoretical saturation and data saturation address how the researcher knows when data collection is complete (Bowen, 2008). In qualitative methodology, theoretical saturation occurs when no new insights are obtained, no new themes are identified, and no issues arise regarding a category of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Data saturation,

which is more relevant to the present study, entails continually collecting data from participants until saturation occurs, which is determined by data replication or redundancy such that no new information or categories emerge from participant data (Bowen, 2008). For example, if codes from new data fit neatly into pre-established codes and themes, it is likely that the study has reached data saturation. However, it is critical to note that standards of saturation are flexible and dependent upon the aims of the specific study (Bowen, 2008).

The vagueness of the concept of data saturation must be addressed with close attention to repetition and redundancy in the data collection, and the use of multiple methods to determine when saturation is reached. In the present study, this author took personal notes after each interview to keep track of themes and concepts emerging from the data. Once this writer found that interviews are no longer yielding new information, this writer consulted with her dissertation chair. This writer reviewed data after transcribing and analyzing 10 interviews, assessing to determine whether new codes emerge after the 8th and 9th interviews. As no new codes emerged in the 8th and 9th interviews, this writer consulted with her dissertation chair. The researcher was aware that she achieved saturation once no new knowledge was emerging from the data (Fassinger, 2005).

Data Collection

Protection of the Rights and Welfare of Human Subjects. This writer obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to recruiting participants for the present study. Additionally, this writer completed ethics training protocols through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program and obtained a CITI Human Subjects Training certificate prior to beginning study recruitment.

All participants were provided with a copy of the Informed Consent Form (see appendix)

at least three days before their scheduled interview so that they have ample time to read through it. Prior to beginning each interview, this writer systematically reviewed the contents of Informed Consent Form with participants. In this consent review, this writer highlighted methods to ensure confidentiality, audio-taping, risks, and benefits associated with participating in the study. This writer explained she will use an encrypted transcription service to transcribe all of the interviews. This writer informed participants that any names of people or places that emerge during the interview would be redacted from transcription. Participants were told that the only identifying information that will be used in the present study is the information that they provide on the Background Information Form (see Procedure section below).

As part of the informed consent process, participants were notified that the interviews would be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. Participants were informed that the audio-recordings, consent forms and Background Information Forms would be stored separately and would only be accessible to the researcher. Participants were notified that, upon transcription, this writer would send them a copy of the transcript in order for them to review it and see if they feel that it accurately reflects the interview. This provided an opportunity for the participant to add any information that the original interview did not cover, and remove any information that they are uncomfortable with being included in analysis. Participants were notified that only the researcher would have access to the transcripts, which were stored as password protected electronic files in a remote encrypted server. Additionally, this writer emphasized that no participant would be individually identified in publications or any other documents related to this study.

The review of the contents of the consent form included a discussion of the potential risks and benefits associated with participating in the present study. Participants were notified that, as

participants reflect on their experiences, it is possible that they may experience thoughts and/or feelings that could be uncomfortable. It was anticipated that any psychological discomfort experienced as a result of participation would be of mild to moderate intensity, and of minimal short- or long-term risk to participants. In the unlikely event that a participant became distressed during the study, this writer would offer support, debriefing, and referrals for more long-term attention (or crisis intervention) as deemed necessary. This writer had a list of referral contacts for therapists should that become necessary. Participants were knowledgeable about the nature of the study (i.e., its research question and interview nature) prior to giving informed consent. Further, participants were reminded (as per informed consent procedures) that they are free to discontinue participation at any time, without penalty. Via the informed consent procedures, participants were informed that they may contact the primary researcher, or the Office of Research Protection at Boston College should they have pertinent questions about the study or their rights as participants. Given the option to discontinue participation and the measures that will be taken to manage untoward reactions that may arise, these procedures are believed to greatly minimize risk to participants while maximizing their potential to benefit.

In addition to discussing the risks associated with participating in the study, this writer also addressed the minimal potential benefits to the participant through participation. Through participating in this study, participants had an opportunity to provide their perspectives on mental health among Multiracial emerging adults. This study provided an opportunity for Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women to share their voices concerning an issue that is typically not discussed on campus or in college courses. The findings from this study will provide much needed information about attitudes and experiences around racial, gender, and body socialization among Multiracial people. This will also help expand on the current literature in this area, which

will eventually help clinicians and researchers find more effective ways to help Multiracial young adults. For example, the findings may help guide developments for interventions that target the conflicting messages that Multiracial emerging adults receive regarding their identities. Further, the present study closely attended to the participants' words, allowing for actual members of this community to describe their lived experiences, so that these treatments align with the experiences of those in this under-researched population. It is possible that the results will be used at future educational conferences or publications to create a greater visibility of the issue of mental health for Multiracial people, and relatedly inform culturally competent interventions with this population.

Procedure. In the present study, this writer, who is a Black/White Multiracial woman with Afro-Caribbean, African-American, and Irish-American ancestry, conducted one-to-one interviews with participants in English, via the video conferencing service Zoom. Interviews ranged from 1 hours to 1.5 hours. The questions were designed to address what messages participants received from family, peers, and larger society about their race, gender and bodies, and how these messages influence their self-perceptions and relationships. Prior to the scheduled interview, participants were provided with a copy of the Informed Consent form and asked to electronically sign the form. Before beginning the interview, participants were given a verbal explanation of the form and were provided with the opportunity to ask questions about its contents. In addition to the informed consent, participants were provided with a document with a few preview questions so participants could gain a sense of what the interview would entail.

Interviews were scheduled via email, and were conducted via Zoom. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher for purposes of data analysis. Next, participants completed a written Background Information Form verbally with this writer typing

out their responses, asking clarifying questions if needed (see Appendix). This form was designed to collect demographic and social context information, and participants were asked to report their age, gender, racial identity, ethnic identity, the racial and ethnic identities of their parents, religion, education level, the geographic location (s) of their upbringings, the racial makeup of their high school and college, their socially-perceived racial appearance (i.e., other people think I look: Multiracial, Black, or White), and their self-perceived racial appearance (i.e., I think I look: Multiracial, Black, or White).

Interviews. In-depth interview studies are intended to understand individual perspectives about a phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Given the exploratory goal of the present study, and the aim to describe the experiences of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women, an interview was the most apt method. Hill and colleagues (2005) suggest that interview protocols contain 8-10 questions per hour, rather than more questions, in order to avoid having "thin" questionnaire-like data. Indeed, scholars agree that interviews with more space for probing allow for a richer understanding of a participant's experience (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Hill et a., 2005). Semi-structured interviews allow space for questions that may emerge through the interactive process of interviewing, and may add to or replace pre-existing questions (Glesne, 1991). When developing an interview protocol, scholars recommend employing extensive probing questions (i.e. tell me more about that) in order to deepen a participant's response and to promote rich, detailed data (Hill et al., 2005). Given the present study's constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, a semi-structured interview was the appropriate method to generate data on a participant's constructions.

The interview questions were developed based on a review of the extant literature concerning race, gender, and body socialization of Black/White Multiracial women (Nadal et al.,

2013; Buckley & Carter, 2008; Root, 1998; Miville et al., 2005; Tran et al., 2015). When developing an interview protocol, Hill and colleagues (1997) recommend that researchers review the literature in order to determine what has been done before so that they can build on previous research. In particular, this writer aimed to examine the following question: How does socialization regarding race, gender, and body influence self-perceptions and relationships among Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women?

An example of an interview prompt addressing family socialization is, “Thinking back to your childhood and adolescence in your family, did people talk about race? If not, how did you understand that? If yes, can you tell me about the way race was discussed, or any messages you received around race in your family from your parents, siblings, or extended family?” This prompt draws from research on racial socialization among Multiracial emerging adults, which has found that formative racial socialization occurs within families, and Multiracial children may receive different messages around race from different family members (Root, 1998; Nadal et al., 2013). The interview questions filled a gap in research by explicitly asking participants to describe socialization within different contexts, allowing space for participants to describe how that socialization impacts how they perceive themselves and relate with others. See Appendix A for the full semi-structured interview.

In addition to previous literature on the topic, the interview questions were also influenced by the theoretical underpinnings of the present study. Relational-cultural Theory emphasizes the importance of relationships and connection to psychological wellbeing, and refers to the self-blame, isolation, and immobilization that can occur when one acts inauthentically in relationships out of an anticipation that they will not be understood or seen (Jordan, 2001). This theory undergirds the central aim of the interview, which was to highlight

how racial, gender, and body socialization occurs within relationships, and how such socialization then impacts participants' connections with themselves and with others. Each section of the interview focused not only on intrapersonal race, gender, and body socialization, but also how it impacts each participant interpersonally. Additionally, as it is a feminist theory, RCT emphasizes the larger social context, and specifically how oppression can lead to chronic disconnection at the societal level. The questions in the interview are attuned to context, and designed to elicit each participant's descriptions of how their social context becomes internalized. Further, each interview section contains questions regarding the participants' strengths and resources to cope with stress, which reflects the feminist psychological approach of RCT. Instead of pathologizing the participants, the goal is to describe the ways that they cope with and approach stressful socialization messages.

Data Analysis

The present study used conventional content analysis to analyze the race, gender, and body socialization experiences of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women. The goal of content analysis is "to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314). Content analysis aims to interpret meaning from the content of text data, with attention to the contextual meaning of the data, through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis is regarded as a flexible approach to analyzing data, as it allows for information to emerge from the data itself, rather than pre-imposing a theory or categories onto data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) delineate three distinct approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative. Conventional content analysis is the most appropriate for

the present study, because extant research on race, gender, and body socialization among Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women is limited. This method is most appropriate when there is limited research on a phenomenon, because researchers allow information to flow from the data, avoiding the influence of pre-conceived categories or theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In conventional content analysis, researchers often use open-ended interview questions as a means to encourage participants to describe their lived experiences, in their own everyday language. This allows researchers to elicit direct information from participants, rather than imposing a preconceived categorization or theory onto their perspectives. In contrast, the goal of directed content analysis is to validate or extend a theory or theoretical framework. Whereas the summative approach is best suited for studies with an explicit focus on the use of words (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The present study employed the conventional content analysis method as described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). As outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the conventional content process of analysis entails immersion in the data, and grouping the data into categories and subcategories derived directly from the text. The researcher then presents and describes these categories, providing exemplars directly from the data for each (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This way, the researcher is able to describe the unique phenomenon as it is conveyed from the participants' unique perspectives.

Once the interviews were completed by this writer, they were transcribed using an encrypted transcription service. The researcher immersed herself in each transcript, reading it through multiple times, while also listening to the interview recording to ensure accuracy of the transcripts, and to get a holistic sense of the data. Once immersion was achieved, the researcher read through the interview, carefully attending to each word in order to derive codes. In this

process, the researcher highlighted exact words that appeared to reflect key concepts in the interview, and then separately wrote down first thoughts and an initial analysis. As this process continued, the researcher began to develop distinct codes that reflected key concepts to the data. Once this stage was complete, the researcher and the dissertation chair met to discuss their findings.

During this meeting with the researcher and dissertation chair, the researcher presented her impressions and codes, citing examples from the data. The goal of this meeting was to combine and condense the researcher's codes. When there was a disagreement regarding a code, the researcher would present her reasoning for the application of that code, and would discuss this with her dissertation chair until a consensus was reached. The standard for the most appropriate code was the code that most accurately reflects the data with as little interpretation as possible (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Throughout the coding process, as needed, the researcher consulted with her dissertation chair and members of her committee to resolve any concerns about coding.

Once the initial coding scheme was developed, the researcher continued to code all of the transcripts with that initial scheme. During this process, the coder continued to identify her thoughts on the data. Once all of the transcripts were coded using the initial coding scheme, the researcher met with her dissertation chair to discuss the appropriateness of the coding scheme and discuss new codes that emerged in the coding process. During this meeting, the researcher documented the changes to the initial coding scheme and revised the initial scheme to incorporate this new information. As this process of coding was iterative, it was repeated until the coding scheme accurately represented the data and no new codes emerged (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

The researcher then grouped small sections of text into categories based on content, in order to develop meaningful clusters (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). These codes were grouped together into larger categories and subcategories as a product of the discussions between the researcher and her chair, the categories were reviewed between the researcher and chair until consensus was reached (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Disagreements regarding categories were handled in the same way as disagreements regarding codes. Next, the researcher and chair collaboratively defined each category, subcategory, and code. Once we reached this stage, in order to prepare for presenting the data, exemplars for each code and category were identified from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Standards of Quality

Scholars have presented various metrics to ascertain the quality of research, as well as strategies for researchers in order to monitor and encourage the promotion of high-caliber research (Seale, 1999; Morrow, 2005). In qualitative research, the terms *trustworthiness* and *credibility* refer to the quality of a research study. Qualitative researchers, particularly those who follow a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, have called for subjectivity and reflexivity as strategies to promote acknowledgement and illumination of the researcher's biases and assumptions that will likely impact the implementation and findings of research (Morrow, 2005). The present study will follow the guidelines for trustworthiness and credibility as outlined by Morrow (2005) and Yeh and Inman (2007). These areas of focus with regard to trustworthiness and credibility of data include subjectivity and self-reflexivity, adequacy of the data, and interpretation of the data (Yeh & Inman, 2007; Morrow, 2005).

Subjectivity. A lack of acknowledgement of and attention to researcher's subjective influence on the design and implementation of research have been identified as a threat to the quality of

research (Morrow, 2005; Yeh & Inman, 2007) and self-reflexivity is a strategy for mitigating this threat. This threat can appear in the form of researcher bias, or when the researcher is an insider to the culture of the participant (Yeh & Inman, 2007).

Methods for addressing the researcher's subjectivity vary by paradigm. Within a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, the researcher's subjectivity is acknowledged as integral to the design and implementation of research. The "self" of the researcher is inextricable from the research process (Yeh & Inman, 2007). As they are an integral part of the qualitative research processes, the self-identities and self-constructions of the researcher must be made more apparent and acknowledged in order to produce trustworthy research (Morrow, 2005; Yeh & Inman, 2007). For example, the researcher's emotional involvement with the area of study, assumptions about the population, experiences in the literature in that area, must be named and addressed to the full extent that it is knowable for the researcher (Morrow, 2005).

In the present study, this writer engaged in self-reflexivity (which will be explained in more detail in the following section), member checking, and consulting with a research team. Member checking is the process by which researchers check with participants to learn whether participants think that the findings are an accurate reflection and interpretation of their meanings (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Morrow, 2005). For member checking, the researcher sent each participant a copy of their interview transcript in order to review it and discern whether it reflected their perspectives.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is an active process, defined as self-awareness and agency within that self-awareness (Rennie, 2004), and this self-reflection is one strategy to maintain the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Morrow, 2005; Yeh & Inman, 2007). The process of reflexivity involves the researcher explicitly naming that they enter this process with their own

social positioning lenses and personal history, and that this lens influences the research (Morrow, 2005). With a lack of self-awareness and reflexivity by the researcher, it can be unclear whose experience of reality (e.g., interpretation) is represented in the research findings (Morrow, 2005). This is particularly important when the researcher is a cultural insider with the population being studied, as shortcuts of understanding can contribute to research that solely confirms or represents the researcher's perspective (Morrow, 2005; Yeh & Inman, 2007).

One method for engaging in the self-reflexivity process is personal journaling throughout the research process. Journaling allows the researcher to elucidate the ways in which our assumptions, ideas, hunches, feelings and choices impact the research process (Fassinger, 2005). Throughout the design, data collection, and analysis process, this writer kept a personal journal with the goal to reflect on her thoughts, values, biases, and assumptions regarding Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women and body, race, and gender socialization. As different experiences and thoughts accumulate, this writer used these journals as a space in which to explore and clarify their thoughts and feelings on this research process. Journaling allows the researcher to become and remain aware of her personal influence on the research process. This awareness allows the researcher to make a conscious decision about how to address her impact on the study, and how to provide a rationale for those decisions (Morrow, 2005). This process also involved discussions with this writer's dissertation chair in order to clarify how to proceed with this writer's personal influence on the study.

Personal reflexivity. As this writer engaged in self-reflexivity, she explored how her identities, lived experiences, biases, and potential assumptions may influence the design and implementation of the present study. The researcher has shared identities with the population under study, as she identifies as a Black Multiracial woman, with a mother who is White and

Irish-American, and father who is Black and African-American and Caribbean-American. Other people perceive her as a light-skinned Black woman or Multiracial, and this, as well as other sociopolitical implications, impact her choice to identify as a Black Multiracial woman. Throughout her upbringing, she received messages from peers and family members around her racial identity, and her racialized and gendered physical characteristics. The accumulation of these experiences, and the realization that there is limited psychological research in the area, catalyzed her interest in the present study's research question. Further, the researcher experienced that socialization within a particular social context. In her case, she grew up in a predominantly White suburb, attended predominantly White schools, and a predominantly White college. The predominantly White racial makeup of her social context likely influenced the types of messages, particularly stemming from anti-Blackness that she received about her race, gender, and body. Her relationship to her Blackness and Whiteness from experiences in these contexts likely influences the lens through which she views the world, and may impact how she perceives the stories of other Black/White Multiracial women.

As the researcher's racial and cultural background had an impact on the present study's research design, it was critical that the researcher maintain a record of her personal reflections and experiences throughout the research process in order to remain aware of her intentional or unintentional personal influence on the data collection and data analysis processes. A more comprehensive description of the researcher's reflexivity throughout the processes of data collection and data analysis will be provided in the Reflexivity section of the Discussion.

Adequacy of the data. The concept of adequacy of the data refers to the accuracy and completeness of the data, which addresses the notion that data must be gathered until the point of saturation, in which no new data emerge from additional interviews (Yeh & Inman, 2007;

Morrow, 2005). Indeed, adequacy of data is about more than merely a prescribed number of interviews or data points, and researchers must explicate their standards for achieving data saturation, as must be gathered to the point of redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). Another way to promote accuracy and completeness of data is to include multiple points of evidence in data analysis (Morrow, 2005). These multiple data points outside of interview transcripts, can take the form of member checks, journaling and memo writing, and participant observations (Yeh & Inman, 2007). Additionally, the density of information in the interview transcripts is an important factor, and asking open ended questions, and paying attention to the participant's social context, allows for a thick description of the participant's experience (Morrow, 2005).

In the present study, this writer first interviewed eight participants, and when she realized that interviews are no longer yielding new information, this writer consulted with her dissertation chair. After this consultation, this writer conducted two more interviews in order to feel confident in data saturation. The researcher was aware that she has achieved saturation once no new knowledge is emerging from the data (Fassinger, 2005). In the present study, this writer aimed to elicit thick descriptions of participant's experiences through the use of semi-structured, open-ended interviewing and probes like "can you tell me more about that?" Further, this writer wrote memos after each interview, and journaled about her personal experiences, thoughts, feelings, and hunches after each interview. In addition, this writer conducted member checking, as outlined above, in order to have more data points to consider.

Interpretation of the data. Interpretation of data refers to the degree that the conclusions drawn from data analysis reflect the perspective of the participants, rather than that of the researcher. The researcher can unknowingly impose her own framework on a participant's words when her own subjectivity is not acknowledged, when she asks leading questions, or when the

researcher does not listen carefully to the participant's meanings. In the present study, the researcher mitigated this threat to credibility immersing herself in the by reading through the transcripts multiple times, listening to recordings, and then staying close to the data in the analysis process. As previously discussed, she wrote analytic memos as part of the interview process, which allowed her to see how her interpretations of the data stem from her own thoughts, experiences, and assumptions. Further, the presentation of findings has a balance of participant quotes and investigator interpretations, such that the participants' own words allow for their own depictions of their lived experiences.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview of the Data

Analyses of the interview data revealed three broad domains related to the race, gender, and body socialization messages that Black/White Multiracial college-aged women receive, and how those messages connect to how they see themselves and relate to others. These three domains include: intersectional race, gender, and body socialization, intrapsychic conflict around race, gender, and body, and ongoing integration of socialization and identity.

Domain I: Intersectional Race, Body, and Gender Socialization

This domain subsumed two themes. The first theme was comprised of responses regarding the messages that Black/White Multiracial women receive around their race, gender, and body within their families. The second theme included responses regarding messages around race, body, and gender that participants received from peers and strangers.

Theme 1: Family Messages around Race, Gender, and Body.

Avoidance of discussing race within family (n=9). Most participants described an avoidance or lack of discussion about race within their families.

> River, “I don't remember having many conversations at all with my parents [about race]. I have an older sister and she feels the same way. It wasn't something that was talked about. It wasn't necessarily ignored at all. I hear a lot of Black friends and Black people talk about how they had “the conversation” with their parents. We all know what that conversation is, and I guess we never had that. I don't know if it was that my mom didn't know how to have it, or didn't think we needed to have it, but it just wasn't something that was talked about.”

Luna, “We almost didn't talk about it [race] at all while I was in high school. It was

> only probed by listening to the news that we would even discuss race, and it was never brought home. For us, it was "The people in the United States, the people elsewhere. That's how they're feeling." It was never "You are a Black person. You are a Black boy or Black girl. You need to realize this is your reality." It was always very one-sided. And if it was coming from anyone in our family, it was either my older sister or my mom, and never my dad. With my dad, that's like–untouchable."

In addition to Luna, others also noticed that one parent talked about it more than the other, Remi, pointed out that her dad, who is Black, did not talk much about race.

> Remi "I don't think my dad talks about it much. I think it was mostly my mom. Mostly towards hair, that's about it. My dad was the one that was like, "We're Black" at least once. We didn't talk about it much. I think I remember him asking me how I identified at least once or twice and I would always be like "Black and White" as one. I don't know if he expected that reaction."

Adriane pointed out that their dad, who is White, talked more about their racial backgrounds than their mom, who is Black and Latina.

> "My dad talked about it more with me than my mom. Sometimes she sees things as not a big deal or not much to think about—I guess she's content with who she is. But I assumed a lot of things about myself. My dad was a history teacher. He would teach me a lot about US history before I got to certain parts of it in elementary school, so I learned a lot about civil rights with him. He created a project where they would make a kiosk that taught about things that happened in the civil rights era and the neighborhood that the high school is in...learning about

how all these people did so many amazing things."

Adriane described that they talked less about race with their mom, and more about culture.

> "My mom was more like, "I'm Latina, you're Latina too." She didn't talk so much about like, "I'm Black too." It was more about the Latinidad rather than what we look like…I guess they might have made me further assume things about my race—about my Whiteness and how tangible that was all the time. 'Cause it's not like my skin ever changed color."

Two participants named that the lack of discussion around race within their families changed when the political climate shifted in 2016 and in 2020 with the racial reckoning and uprising.

> Gia, "There was a blank in there honestly until 2016, we've never really spoken about race in my house. My parents intentionally—or maybe not specifically intentionally, but that's what they claim—-raised us colorblind because they thought it was better for us. They thought if we didn't know what we were, then people weren't going to treat us differently, but that's obviously not the case. Having conversations now with them, specifically this summer since we're all home, and everything that's happened with George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, all of these people—my brothers are dark-skinned Black men, and it's scary for me, it's scary for my mother knowing that they're going out every day. There's still this fear that it could happen to them. It's definitely something that we have talked about more now, but when I was growing up, no."
>
> River, "I don't think I spoke to him [her dad] about race really until this year when Black Lives Matter really picked up. Or maybe when Trayvon Martin died, or was killed rather. I think that was probably the first time that we ever spoke about race.

> Again, it wasn't in a way that involved us. It was like, “Black people are being killed.” It was very much removed from our apartment, I guess you can say. It's kind of weird to think about how much we talk about race in our everyday conversations now. It's totally different.”

Tone and content differences in how Black family and White family are discussed by parents (n=3). Participants identified a divergence in tone and content when they were learning from their families about their heritages on the Black and White sides of the family.

> Sabrina, “I remember asking my White grandmother, my mom's mom, all these stories about my family—where they came from and her parents, and all these things about Ireland. Then the next Friday I would go to my father's mother and I would be like, "So what were things like in the south? We're learning about Dr. King, so were you a part of that? Did you do that?" And she was like, "I just really don't wanna talk about that." I've talked to my dad about that now and he's like, “I mean, it was really painful for her and she doesn't really wanna talk about that. She's made a whole new life for herself.” But it was kind of hard for me to grapple with that. They did not want to share, they did not want to talk about 'cause it's so painful. So when I was little, it was hard for me to make sense of that in my mind.”
>
> Adriane, “One of the examples that's a real memory I have: I saw a picture of my grandpa—he was fully Black and he's very dark-skinned, and I asked a question about that. I was five or something. And my dad said—my White dad—said that my great-grandpa however far back was a slave. And that my other great-grandpa was a slave master. And I feel like I was one of the first introductions to what being mixed was like in my head. That I'm both things, but I know that I look like

the master more."

Warnings and protective messages from parents about race (n=6). Participants shared memories of receiving messages from parents around dangers related to their Blackness. River described the warnings that her mother, who is Black, gave her and her sister about traveling while Black.

> "Both my sister and I love traveling. She went to Belize, and I remember my mom telling my sister, "Make sure you become friends with a White girl. Make sure that you're attached at the hip, because if she goes missing, they have no excuse but to include you. Whereas if you go missing, I don't know if anybody is gonna care because of who you are." She had that talk with me later when I was older: "Make sure that whenever you go out that you're with at least one White girl, so that we will know if you go missing."

Adriane described how their family moved from a Black neighborhood to a White neighborhood, and how that communicated implicit messages about Blackness, Whiteness, safety, and resources to them.

> Adriane, "I grew up in the South Side from when I was 1 or 2 'til I was 10. Then when my parents finally moved to their own apartments, I moved to the North Side. I feel like that was almost an internalized racism. It taught me something like, "Oh, we moved away from the Black people, which was a good thing." It's really scary and awful to think about 'cause it was teaching you, "If you get away from this part, you get more stuff. There's so much cool stuff to do in the North Side. You're not around those people and there's a reason why it's segregated.""

Issa described her White mother telling her that she will be perceived as Black so she needs to be

careful after Issa had a disturbing encounter with campus police.

> Issa, “I had an issue with the university police a while ago. An issue where basically an officer threatened to arrest me, and it was a lot. I was telling my mom about this and she was upset. She was like, "You're Black. They will perceive you as Black.” Like, know how you're viewed, basically. She's like, "You're not viewed the same as me." That for me was like—I guess I didn't really realize. I'm so used to having my mom there who's White, and she'll just help me out. So we've been having more conversations like that which have been helpful for me ‘cause I think I was just oblivious.”

Luna described receiving messages from her father, who is Black, that she should avoid any situations in which someone is being racist.

> Luna, “In response to the girl saying something about my hair, they [her parents] would be like, "You should tell her she can't say that. Avoid that girl, don't talk to her anymore." It wasn't like, "So okay, this is how you should feel within yourself. This is who you are." It wasn't any of that, it was always just, "Get rid of it. Get it out of the way. Let's keep going." Then with my mom it was more like, “Let me see how I can protect you.” My dad always taught us to walk into a room and never assume that someone is looking at you for your race or have any problem with you for your race, only if it was blatant. Which was helpful for a lot of things, but not helpful when I had to wake up with those experiences at 14. Even to this day, I'm honestly very upset that my dad never talks about race and still won't. Or even have his own culture, almost in a fear sense.``

Sabrina’s father, who is Black, told her about what Black people have been told they can and

cannot do.

> “My dad would bring forth these things about being Black, and it was kind of a joking thing. But in the same respect, it was kind of a serious thing too. Like, "Black people don't go camping. Black people don't eat chocolate. Black people don't do this." But to a certain degree, it kind of got serious like, "Yeah, my parents said we can't eat watermelon in public. We can't eat fried chicken in public. We can’t do these things."”

Messages about body (n=9). Nine participants described receiving messages about their bodies within their families.

River, “We do have conversations where my mom will be like, "Your ass is a Black ass. Your lips are Black because they're full. They're big. Yeah, you have Black features."

> Adriene, “I realized that my mom has told me that I've had a big ass since I was a child, and I have always been sexualized. It's not a thing that I had to realize. People were always like, "Oh my God! You have a big ass.” That’s so weird, like I’m a child. I was just used to it. And I love my body. It's just interesting that that has a spotlight for a very long time, and you're always aware of that.”
>
> Remi, “I remember going to the pool when I was younger and my mom would always comment like, "Oh my gosh, you're lighter than me!" And she's White [chuckles] like, "Oh, you're finally getting a tan." There was always a comment about skin tone.”

Sabrina described receiving implicit messages about beauty as the women in her family are White with European characteristics.

> Sabrina, “My entire life I've visited with my mom's family and been around my

> cousins. They've all been White, every single one of them. When I was growing up, I looked at my aunts and I was like, "Oh, that's what being beautiful looks like." They're all tall, blonde, White women. And I was like, "I don't look like that, so there must be something wrong. So I need to straighten my hair and I need to lighten my skin and wear lighter makeup." And they would say to me how much they loved my hair or how pretty my skin was, but I was like, "But I wanna look like you. But I don't look like you so it doesn't matter how much you tell me how pretty I am. I wanna look like you."

Sabrina went on to describe a painful feeling of separateness after hearing repeated comments about the similarities of her White cousins' appearances.

> I think the nail in the coffin was my aunt would constantly tell my twin cousins, who are my same age, that they looked exactly like my younger cousins who are all 100% Irish, 100% White, blonde hair, blue eyes. So my aunt would constantly be like, "Oh you guys look exactly the same. They're your mini-me. They look exactly like you." And I get that it wasn't directly a condescending thing to my siblings and I, but we all took it very personally…You're very clearly drawing the line of—you're not explicitly being racist, but you're kind of making us feel like "the other" whenever we're at a family party...It makes us feel so bad that we're not included in that. And like, "You guys are the other. You don't look the same. You're not included in this unit.""

Messages about hair texture (n=5). Five participants described getting messages about their hair texture within their families, and some described receiving conflicting messages about their hair from family members.

Gia, “It was weird because I was getting mixed messages throughout growing up. My mom and her family made it seem like my hair was pretty when it was straight. Even now from other people, people at school were like, "Oh my God, your hair is so cool. Your curls are so cool. Can I touch?” So I was getting mixed messages from them. One of my aunts from my dad's side was like, "Oh, my God! I so love your curls!" and was kind of fetishizing it. So I was getting mixed messages all over the place.”

Issa, “I remember my mom would always be like, "Oh leave it out. It looks nice." And my dad would buy me relaxer and be like, "Oh you want straight hair, right?" And I'd be like, "Yeah, I want straight hair." And he's like, "Here, you can relax it." My mom's like, "No, it looks nice. There's too many chemicals." One time I remember I was going for a formal event and I got my hair braided, and my dad was like, "Oh, why didn't you straighten it?" And I was like “I don't know. I wanted it braided." It didn't really matter to me in the moment, but it's interesting how my dad was the one to be like, "You should make it more like straight hair." like White standards, and my mom was like, "No, leave it."”

Luna described an experience in which her father did her hair in a Black hairstyle, and she became upset and wanted to take it out.

Luna, “My dad's a guy. He's never done girls' hair. But there was this one time where I had a concert for my music school, and my dad tried to style my hair up. I remember thinking it looked like a wig or something [chuckles]. But he was so proud because he put all these oils in it and was trying to infuse it and make it into this happy, moisturized hair that was Black. And he was like, "You look so

> beautiful as a Black girl. What do you think?" He's trying to affirm me and I didn't want it. I rejected it and I took it out of my hair. I remember feeling so sad that I did that and how dejected he felt, but I could not see myself looking Black at that point. I didn't want it. It's so sad to think about that now. I felt like I was being graded against. It rose up and I was like, "No, I don't want it." Especially with my mom I was like, "I want my mom's hair to look like mine. I want to be like my mom. I don't want to look like you." It was so sad."

River described how her mother, who is Black, explained the privilege that River has because of her hair texture.

> River, "I remember my mom—when I was younger when Beyonce's 'Lemonade' album came out and she mentioned "Becky with good hair." My mom was like, "To a lot of Black women, you are Becky with the good hair." So I feel like around Black people, it makes me feel more comfortable because I'm less othered than around White people who are the "Beckys with the good hair." With Black people, I feel a lot more comfortable because I'm not necessarily the one that's standing out, just in terms of hair…Even with the nappiness in the front with the non-conforming patterns and textures in my hair. But in White spaces, that's not necessarily true. Honestly with curly hair, the White curly hair is what people want. So around them, they're the Beckys. Around Black people, I'm the Becky."

Comparing siblings bodies and identities (n=5). Participants described noticing differences in their siblings racial physical characteristics like hair and skin tone, and how their families interacted with them.

> Luna, "There's four sisters and my brother is the last one. So we'll joke that

> every-other-child has this or has that. My oldest sister has much looser hair than I do. So the oldest sister has the loose hair, and then I have the actual Afro and curls—but more Afro—then the sister after me has hair like my older sister, then the last sister has hair like I do…So the odd siblings, none of them had a heavy amount of like, "You should change your hair." That happened to the even siblings…The other ones never were told that there was anything wrong with their hair. "The evens" definitely were the problem kids, essentially."

Sabrina described how she and her sister's different appearances connected to their differing proximities to Whiteness.

> Sabrina, "My sister has very straight hair. She's got very, very straight hair. And I think that she presents as a little bit more ambiguous than I do, and I think that maybe she has lighter skin than me...So I think that maybe she's found more of an identity with being White. Whereas for me, I always felt like I needed to kind of "jump the extra mile" to be White. Now I'm like, "I don't want to do that."…I don't know how or why we're so different other than that one fact of the hair. I think it was easier for her to conceal, where I always needed to jump the extra mile."

Theme 2: Messages around Race, Body, and Gender from Peers and Strangers.

Intrusive external racial characterizations (n=6). Participants described intrusive racial characterizations from classmates, acquaintances, and strangers during everyday activities.

> Leyla, "I was about five and I had a friend—her name was [redacted] and it was MLK Day so we had a day off, and we had a playdate. [Friend] was sitting in the hammock, and I was on the ground…And she was like, "Leyla, you're Black."

> And I was like, "What?" [laughs] 'Cause I remember the thought that went through my head was a piece of Black construction paper. I remember being like, "Uhh, no. No, I'm not." And she was like, "Yeah, you're Black." And I was like, "What do you mean?" It didn't really crop up in my memory until I moved back here. I was in high school and it was the first day of class, and this girl was like, "Why is your hair so curly?" And I was like, "Because I'm Black, question mark?" And she put her hand on my shoulder and she said, "Please say African-American." And I was like, "Huh?" I was immediately reminded of the, "Leyla, you're Black." It seems that my experience of being a Black person is always defined by a White woman."
>
> Willow, "In sixth grade when I moved to Maryland this girl—in the middle of a band concert we were off to the side and she asked me, "Hey, are you mixed?" She was White (I should prefix this) and I'm like, "Yeah." And she's like, "So is it offensive if I call you the n-word?" and I'm like, "Half." But my brain didn't connect with—she shouldn't say it."
>
> River, "I think it was eighth grade, I was doing track with a private coach. I was at practice with my coach who's Jamaican, and for some reason the conversation of race came up. And he was telling me, "You need to choose 'cause you're just confusing people." I was like, "What are you talking about?" And he's like, "White or Black, you know, pick. Tiger Woods, for example, he's both and it just confuses people. Like, make it easy.""

Participants also noted that they seem to be perceived differently out in the world depending on which parent they are with.

Sabrina, “I think outwardly I present as kind of ambiguous, and I found that when I'm with my mom or when my siblings and I are just with my mom it's like, "Oh, those kids could be all these different things. It doesn't really matter." But when I'm with my dad it's very much like, "Oh, no. You're a Black kid and you have White in you."

Adriane, “When me and my dad and my sister were walking around, they're like, "Oh, your daughter is so beautiful.” And when I'm with my mom they're like, "Are those your children?" So usually I was assumed to be my dad's daughter even with the hair. But with my mom, it was different.”

Remi, “Sometimes if I'm going out to some place with my mom, people will think she's the nanny. I would always not understand that.”

Comments about hair (n=7). Participants described receiving messages about their hair at school and out doing daily activities.

Gia, “I always loved my curls. Mostly because at school, I think I internalized the fetishization as like, people wanted it, therefore it must be good. Right? In my mind I was like, "This is a good thing." I loved my curls. People want to have my curls. They're constantly saying, "Oh, I wish you could give me your hair." In my mind, I internalized everything I was experiencing at school and outside of my house and my family as “This is good. I should want this.”...But I cut my hair once specifically in a pixie cut—-similar to what you have—-purposely so that people would stop touching.”

Luna, “There was this lady in our church. She said that she was a hairdresser and she wanted to do my hair and that she was so excited to do it... And I distinctly

remember her mixing up this white stuff and putting it in my hair and being like, "What is this stuff? I guess I'm going to come out…different?" Then I got in the shower and I reached up. I was like, "My hair is so soft. Oh, it's so silky, whoa." …Then she was like, "This treatment, you have to keep doing it. You can't stop anymore. Once you do it once, you can't stop."…I was like, "I'm going to look like these other girls. I can show them my hair now, wow." The more that I got the praise, the more—it never occurred to me that I'm losing some part of me. As it progressed and I started losing hair I was like, "Why am I losing hair? What's wrong?" Then it was like, "My hair is nothing. I can't use it. I can't do this, I can't do that to it. What am I going to do?""

Issa, "I remember I switched schools and in fifth grade and I was excited to tie my hair up. And then one day I was like, "I'm done. I just want to leave it out." And someone was like, "Oh my gosh, your Afro is huge. Oh my, you're so frizzy" blah blah. And I was like, "Oh my God," and I just tied it back. Every day after that, if my hair wasn't straightened or braided, it was tied up."

Luna, "There's constantly comments here and there from people, what they thought of what I was doing with my hair. When I cut it all off, there's this one girl who came up to me like, "You cut your hair?" And I was like, "Yeah" and she was like, "Why did you do that? You look so ratchet. You look so ratchet." And I was like, "What?" [laughs] But at the time, I had nothing to respond."

Objectification, dating, and attractiveness (n=9). Almost all of the participants in the present study described receiving racialized messages about their attractiveness, often including objectifying messages, particularly in the context of dating.

Leyla, “I think I'm in a better place in my body than I used to be, but I think the fetishizing—especially the amount of messages I get that are like, "Ooh, I love a mixed queen.” Like, “I love a thick girl.” So many people all the time like, "Oh girl, you big." And I'm like, "Yeah, but you don't actually want a thick person. You see skinny people who have big boobs and a big butt and you're like, ‘She's thick.’" And I'm like, “That's not what that means.”

River, “It was a friend in ninth or tenth grade…And oh—it's gross thinking about it. I don't even know how this came up, but he mentioned that he would never be attracted to a Black girl. And I was like, "Really? Like you've actively thought about this if you're able to say it.” And then he went on to say something along the lines of, "Oh not you, River. You're different." So I kind of internalized that almost. It's like, "Oh, I'm White passing. I'm different."”

Sabrina, “I do feel that I have been objectified a lot, like so many other women have, just based on appearance. And I think that is a multilevel thing. 'Cause it's by White guys who are like, “Oh she's Black, so she'll be more down with doing this, or she's more hypersexual." And then from Black guys, I feel that it's like, "Oh she's light-skinned, so she could do this and she can do that. She's prettier.” And I've kind of felt as though my body doesn't belong to me in the ways that people discuss it.”

Gia, “As I mentioned with that one boyfriend, he definitely fetishized my light-skinnedness…I think sexually in those relationships, my body was definitely something that was part of the reason why they were attracted to me, if not the main one. They both were devoted to me in a way that felt sickening…And by the

> end it felt like, “You're honestly fetishizing me and this desirable image of me as this perfect woman and everything that I'm not. And if there's something that I do that you don't like, then it ruins this image and this mentality that you have of what I am.” I think it has to do with being light-skinned in one of the relationships. And the other, just being Black.”
>
> Leyla, “There's fetishization, a whole lot of that. Especially with going to college. I had to download Bumble to get into a party one time. I was like, “Alright, let's try this.” …even if I put “looking for a relationship” in my profile, people either exclusively want sex from me because they're like, “Oh you're Black. You're promiscuous.” There are pictures of my whole body in my profile and they're like, “I love your ass.” Like yeah it is great, however, this doesn't mean that I'm trying to have sex with you. It just means that I have a lot of fat on my butt.”

Some participants described a form of objectification in which people idealized a particular Multiracial phenotype.

> River, “Something that people don't talk about as much, which has been just as—if not more—detrimental to my self-esteem has been the way that mixed people are portrayed in the media. For some reason, an ideal mixed baby has surfaced. This fetishization of mixed children where they have the perfect curly hair, light eyes, just dark enough skin where you can tell that they're not White, but it's light enough that they're not dark-skinned. It's been difficult 'cause I don't look like that…I don't see the other mixed children who may not look like the ideal type being portrayed as beautiful. It makes it feel more like I'm a mutt rather than mixed, if that makes sense. I mean like dirty. I looked at that word and I was

like, “That's a dirty word.” Because when you first think of mutts, you think of shelter dogs. It's kind of a similar feeling of feeling dirty, unwanted, other."

Willow, “People are like, "Oh my gosh. Mixed kids are so cute." I'm like, "Okay well, you haven't seen me." I say that jokingly. But I guess I see myself as average. I think during quarantine I've been on social media a lot. 'Cause it's always all the mixed kids with 2B hair, tan skin, green eyes. It's like, that's not how biology works. You've got the randomization of chromosomes and everything else.”

Issa, “One of my friends, she sees a lot of them. She's Black and her boyfriend's White and she sees a lot of mixed kid pages. I don't know if you've seen them on Instagram? …It's cute little mixed kids and people saying like, "Oh I can't wait, my kid is gonna have green eyes and loose curls.” So that type of stuff is weird to me. I've definitely heard some of my friends be like, "Oh, we're gonna have a little light-skin green-eyed baby." And I'm like—I don't wanna dwell on it—I'm like, "Okay. I hope you don't." I just ignore and hopefully they're like, "Okay, maybe that wasn't the right thing to say." I don't want to waste my energy on it.”

Domain II: Intrapsychic Conflict Around Race, Body, and Gender

This broader domain subsumed three themes. These themes were comprised of responses regarding intrapsychic conflict about identity, intrapsychic conflict about family, and intrapsychic conflict about friendships.

Theme 1: Intrapsychic Identity Conflict.

Desirability and belonging (n=6). Participants expressed inner turmoil around how to understand messages about their desirability and belonging within their contexts.

River, “I'm incredibly insecure about my appearance. I'm not quite sure how much this is me versus other people, but in terms of dating and in hookup culture, I always am constantly thinking like, "Oh, there's no one like me because of the way I look" because I’m mixed…And then the other part of me is like, "No this is not—confidence is attractive. I'm not confident. I have these feelings, therefore people won't be attracted.” It's like a vicious cycle. I feel almost on-the-outs because all of my friends have boyfriends at this point or girlfriends and they're all White. Then there's me who might have a one-night-stand or something, but never something consistent. So it just feels like I'm not a part of it…Being in a relationship definitely, in part, represents belongingness. You're in on this little inside joke type of thing…I feel like it would give me a little bit of confidence to know that I am desired by at least somebody. Which is a very sad thing to say.” Leyla, “I feel like I'm really ugly. And I think that was me interpreting my feelings of—I take a lot of selfies. I'm always like, "Ooh cheek bones. Ooh my eyes. I think I look pretty good." But then seeing people—who I personally feel are objectively not as cute as I am—getting all these people to hook up with them. Seeing that, I sort of turned it on myself, but in reality it was anger that I am not appreciated in the environment that I'm in right now. [College name] is so exhausting. All the people are like, "Oh my God, this person is so beautiful." And I'm like, "Girl, they're just skinny and White. They're like a daisy. Yeah they're pretty, but there's nothing special there.” I'm beautiful. I have nice hair and nice skin and I like doing my makeup. And then having these messages from other people being like, "Actually, you're either only very sexy or you're super ugly."

It's only those two. And I'm like, "I just want to exist in my own space, please."

Sabrina, “When I first started dating my first boyfriend, who was White, in high school I was like, "Oh my God, a White guy likes me. This is so interesting. Oh my God." ‘Cause I feel like in my younger life I've strived to have these White characteristics 'cause I thought that I've never filled this role. And I'm like, "Oh my God, now somebody who looks like that likes me. This is amazing and this is great.” I could finally be considered like that. But then when I had that relationship with the guy in college which was very negative, I was like, well in every relationship that I'm in, I can't just sit here and be like, “Oh, I'm happy that you like me.” It's like, what are you looking at me as?”

Phoebe, “Stereotypes of Black people tend to have larger hips, and I have the complete opposite of that...But for some people, some of their racial identity comes from that part of their body for sure...Thinking about dating men of color, or women of color really, thinking about that and being like, [chuckles] “Well, I've seen who they date, and I've seen the things that seem to be their type in general.” This is like 10 people, so I can't go too much into it. But it's like, I know I don't look like them. I don't look like anyone's girlfriend, essentially.”

Privilege and oppression (n=6). Participants shared some inner conflicts they experience around the combination of privilege and oppression they experience as Black/White Multiracial people.

Adriane, “I was talking with them [their partner] about microaggressions that possibly could have happened to me, but I probably shrugged them off because I was White-passing. I always think nothing that happens to me that's trauma, matters [chuckles]. I realized during quarantine that I've been self-gaslighting for

> a long time. I think a lot of that might have to do with race, that I've been ignoring lots of things. But I don't wanna dwell on it because I think there's more important things to do, because I wanna make myself useful to Black people right now…I need to work on stuff more, but I would really like to try to do both at once, where I unpack these things that have happened to me while also helping."
>
> Sabrina, "I think in certain times I've struggled to find which identity matters more, and which becomes more relevant. I don't think that I could really say that—I would love to say that both of my identities matter wholeheartedly and fully, but I think at different points in time—I don't think that I would ever go into a store and have somebody challenge me on being Irish. I think that somebody would definitely challenge me on being Black first."

Luna, "As much as there's so many struggles with being Black, or as much as there's so much privilege of being White, I could just be that. And just own that. Instead of having to own all of these things, to hold all of these things all at one time, struggling."

> River, "Bringing up colorism, lighter skin is more privileged. So while I wish that I was more tan, I do appreciate the privilege that comes with that…But going to Oliver [a majority POC school program] and being so different from the get-go, even when I pulled my hair back like I usually do to fit in, it was kind of interesting and weird and made me super aware of things in a way that I had never been before. When I walk into a store with my friends from Oliver, they're not looking at me. I will go to one end of the store. My friends would be on the other end and all the eyes are on them. I have never felt watched in a store…So I think being at Oliver made me realize the privilege I had with my skin color in a way

that I didn't notice before."

Willow, "I know I haven't experienced what many Black people have in the US. Other than those few ignorant racist things, I haven't gotten any discrimination. I don't think—from what I remember-–anything super bad. So I can't talk on what many Black people have gone through. And also with the Black Lives Matter movement, I'm only half. I can't speak for all Black people. So, I know I don't represent every—I represent both. So yeah, I can bring perspectives from both sides. But also I can't fully talk about the experience on both sides."

Issa, "Especially now with the Black Lives Matter movement becoming more—it was big already but now becoming bigger. I saw something recently about Angela Davis being as big as she is. Like, why is that? And someone said like, "Is it because you're lighter skin? How do you think colorism plays into that?" And I was like, "Oh my gosh! I caught Angela Davis being called out on her lighter skin." I was like, "That's true." So in terms of that, yes definitely supporting things to do with Black Lives Matter. This is uplifting Black voices. But myself, I wouldn't wanna be the front face of something if I had the opportunity."

Adjusting to others' expectations vs. internal experience (n=6). Participants expressed inner conflict around reconciling what others expect of them and their internal authentic experience.

Phoebe, "Something that really encompasses a lot of this is how much everything—for me at least—has been shaped by how others perceive me. And I think that that's been a part of a lot of my identities as well. Like how others perceive me as female, others perceive me as a person of color, others perceive me as physically different…My interactions with others are completely informed

by their interactions with me."

Remi, "I think I'm really aware of physical space because of how I've been perceived and how—what role I have. Perception is so weird, uncomfortable. Sometimes I'm like, I just don't want to be perceived. Which I think is a result of all the times I am misperceived."

River, "I still don't fully know what that means, to be my true self. Because a lot of my—not a lot, all of my life—I've been trying to fit into different places. So I don't really know if I have a sense of who I am independent of those spaces. It's possible that who I really am is the person in that space…But I just don't think I have a good sense of me. 'Cause also the way that people perceive me is so different from how I thought I perceived myself. I think the best example of how people constantly think of me is like this really happy, positive person—okay maybe not positive, but happy person—who is just kind of loving life and who's enjoying where she is. Then I'm like, "Oh, but I thought people thought that I was really negative, really sad all the time." So I think I still just don't really know who I am, I think."

Hair as a focus of internal conflict (n=4). Multiple participants noted that they experienced inner conflict and suffering with regard to the messages they received about their hair.

Luna, "Realizing that I had this problem with saying sorry, and being too much or taking up too much space. It was both a literal thing with my hair [laughs] and a time thing, like if I'm in the way of someone else's life. It was constantly saying sorry…We need to adjust to someone else, because if they were ever needing to adjust because of me, then I would be in trouble. If I ever got in a car and my hair

touched the ceiling, [laughs] I needed to shrink down. I need to get down so they can see if I'm in a classroom. It's a whole thing."

River, "It will always be my hair because I think that that is the Blackest feature of me, because I do have pretty big hair. It's really curly at the front. It's a little bit nappy at times. It's not the ideal mixed hair that people portray, like the 3A, typically 3A, 3B, and I definitely have so many textures…It goes out to here [gestures] at times. It's taking up a lot more physical space than I want. I'm drawing a lot more attention to the features I don't want to be focused on. So the moment I put my hair up in either a ponytail or a bun or something, it feels a lot more controlled. Then it feels like people aren't focusing on the mixed part of me. And that maybe presenting myself like this, I may look a little bit different. Honestly, maybe even look a little bit Whiter."

Willow, "My hair, it's I think 3C, 4A. I'm not really sure. When I started wearing it naturally, I was working at that grocery store and the comments from people are pretty cool. There was this White lady who was like, "Oh, my gosh, I love your hair. Honey, don't you love her hair?" …Whenever White people say that, I'm like, "thank you." That's a compliment. Whenever Black people say it, I feel like I wanna say validated, but like that's not the right word. It's like, I know I'm only half, so that's one way I can connect on Blackness, with the hair. It's like one way I can connect with other Black people."

Grappling with others' racial perceptions (n=6). Participants described feeling conflicted about messages they received from others about their racial identities.

Adriene, "Now I'm in this stage of mixed-ness. I'm like, blood amount doesn't matter to a lot of

people, but I'm still a person of color. Every time I think about it, I feel like I'm supposed to cringe at who I am, and that's so annoying."

Luna, "It makes me think of when I first landed in Haiti and when we first got off, I was with my dad, my dark-skinned dad walking out of the airport. There were people on both sides as we were walking out, and people were like, "Oh, blan, blan, blan." And my dad was right there and then there's me. And I had this almost out of body experience of wanting to be White or Black, nothing else. Like I don't want to be in between…That's part of why I have a problem when people ask me, like, "How do you perceive your skin color? You think you're darker than you really are."'

Issa, "This person was like, "Oh, are you afraid of—why don't you wanna claim your Blackness? Like, you wanna show that you're White?" I was already kind of in defense mode. Like, "Oh, I don't like you. Why are you saying this to me?" But then I thought a bit more, and if people say, "Oh, you're Black" and you wanna be like, "Oh no, I'm not Black I'm mixed actually. I'm half." How does that sound? That doesn't really sound good."

Sabrina, "I remember going to college and I was talking to this guy…And when we were actually hanging out and dating, I remember that he was telling me, "Oh, my best friend's name is Tayshawn."...And then he would tell me about all of these rap songs and expect me to know them, when I really didn't listen to rap music growing up. That's not what my parents showed me, and I didn't know it…I think I recognized that when I stopped talking to him. I'm like, "I feel that you are really dating me because I look like this and because you want to be seen with a

> Black person." …And I think that having that relationship, although it was bad, has made me think a lot more, unfortunately like, am I being a token for this person? What are the reasons why they really like me?"

Social media performance (n=3). Two participants described seeking out messages intended for Multiracial people with regard to race and activism.

> Phoebe, "It started out with the uprisings and everything, people post so much stuff on social media and they still are…What really got me thinking were these posts like "This is what you should do." "These are resources if you're White." "This is something if you're a non-Black POC." And I was like, "I am not either of those." And for so long, I haven't identified as Black but then, I kind of am. If I'm not A or B, I kind of am C, I guess."
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> Adriane, "It makes me laugh because I'm always looking at these posts—the White and Black people posts for what to do. And it's like, "White people talk to your White parents." [chuckles] And the parents that I live with now are a very dark-skinned Black stepfather and my Black mom. And I'm not talking to my White parent because he's not here. You have to have a different way of doing that. It's not written on Instagram or anything, It's annoying for me. I consider myself—I don't know anymore. I mean I was considering myself White and I'm gonna read that. When people say White people I'm like, I don't know if I should be doing that anymore [chuckles]."

One participant described a discrepancy between her external presentation on the internet with regard to racial identity and internal experience.

> River, "I just wouldn't feel right with myself if this movement were going on, and

> I wouldn't say nothing and do nothing…Outwardly, I speak very liberally and very anti-racist, and trying very hard to be part of the Black Lives Matter Movement. I started @BlackAt[university name], that sort of stuff. So that's been great, and that's been a great way for me to like—approach Blackness. But at the same time, I think there's still a bit of internal racism going on. So I'm presenting as this incredibly liberal person, but then on the inside I'm still trying to suppress—I guess—my Blackness."

Theme 2: Intrapsychic Conflict Around Family

Seeking to understand Black family members' relationship to race (n=6). Many participants sought out information to help them understand their parent's perspectives on race.

> Luna, "Actually in the last few months because of living with her, realizing I wasn't gonna get a lot of those answers from my dad because he's essentially told us that he's afraid of moving back to the States—he's currently in Puerto Rico still. He's afraid of it because of racial issues. How can I challenge it? So, I tried to talk to him about it, but also how can I figure out more information that he won't give? Seeing if there's something traumatic that happened. So I went to her [aunt] and just asked her about the family history."
>
> Sabrina, "I think with my dad, it's really easy to abstractly talk about race. When I start talking about his family and some of the decisions that they've made, it gets obviously very personal for him and he doesn't really want to talk about it. And I know that his family has a lot of resentment towards the Black community as a whole. I think that he internally does. And when I kind of challenged him on that, that's when our arguments get a little bit more intense…And I could talk to my

mom about it and she could tell me about how my dad had a complicated relationship with his Blackness, but she doesn't really get race like he does."

River, "I feel like 'cause my mom growing up, also didn't really have to think about race right? She was from Jamaica and she's light-skinned. Like I was saying before, in Jamaica colorism is a big deal, so she was at the top of the totem pole. So she didn't really feel oppressed until she came here. And then she was very much involved in White spaces just purely 'cause of where she went to school… So it just wasn't a thing that she grew up with. So she didn't think that she needed to bring it to our attention."

Gia, "When I came back from college, I really just saw her as someone who was trying to assimilate into this White space that we live in. You know, she straightens her hair, she tries to look a certain way so she can be respected as a doctor. And looking back on it now, she's doing exactly what she needs to do to be successful. And it's unfortunate but she has to do it. And that's the thing that I need to recognize…She knows there's definitely microaggressions she experiences and is like, "Yeah, this is not right." But she also doesn't stand up for herself, and that frustrates me at times. But I also don't have the same experiences that she has. I have the privilege of being light-skinned, and people are more likely to listen to me and to respect me. That's just the reality of what I've experienced personally more than her."

Adriane, "My mom almost saw it as more of a good thing because she doesn't really associate with African-Americans for the most part. But she associates with Cubans…I still don't really know how to talk about it with her because I guess

you don't wanna talk over your parent, and I don't wanna talk over a Black person…I just want her to understand that systematic racism is not like Black people's fault. I know Cuba is so different with their racism, they act very much like it doesn't exist there. And every race categorization is very different there…I just felt mostly powerless. I don't know how to contribute to these conversations because of how I looked. And you also are a kid. [chuckles] Like you're not gonna be taken seriously, and you just don't wanna talk to your mom like that."

Grappling with Whiteness within family (n=4). Participants described some inner conflict with regard to grappling with how to interact with Whiteness within their families.

Adriane, "I feel like I see this pattern in myself where I try to understand the oppressors sometimes…I feel like I try to give the benefit of the doubt to White people too much. I'm always like, "Oh, I guess it makes sense that they would be confused." But also like, "Shut up. White supremacy is telling you to be okay with that." I was just like, "Oh, I guess it makes sense why they wouldn't understand, but also it's kind of weird that they wouldn't." They're just my parents. I didn't always daydream, but sometimes I would fantasize about life with a White mom, and then I'd be like, "Oh, weird nightmare [chuckles]. Take me out. That's weird." My dad had a first wife, this White woman who was also blonde. Sometimes I'm like, "Oh, that'd be so weird." [laugh] But also that wouldn't be me, obviously."

Sabrina, "When we have conversations about race in my household I found that it gets to be a tumultuous conversation where my dad, my brother, and I can very easily be on the same vein—talk about race, talk about being Black. And my mom

> kind of doesn't really know how to enter in those, or where her voice matters and doesn't matter. She and I have a lot of fights about this 'cause I feel like I have to tell my mom, "Sometimes we don't always have to use the White opinion in this context ‘cause I feel like whenever you talk about race you’re like ‘Well, what am I doing here? Well, this happened to Irish people, we weren't treated well. My family was poor.’" So that's kind of a complicated area for me 'cause I'm like, "This is a part of my identity, my Whiteness is." But White people aren't really the thing to talk about right now, and we need to focus in a different area”
>
> Gia, “My aunt, she describes herself as someone who “doesn't see color.”…for the longest time, that made me very frustrated to talk to her now as a college-educated adult, because she means well and I know where she's coming from. She probably listens to Fox News and they tell her that Republicans stand for her. And they really don't. She's a poor woman who's worked really hard in her whole life…But recently I went over to their house and I actually sat down with her…She finally was receptive to it, and receptive to the concept of White privilege and systemic racism. And that was really heartwarming to see because, through that conversation, it made me realize okay, now I need to really change and modify how I have these conversations with other people based on their own experiences and where they're coming from.”

Theme 3: Intrapsychic Conflict Around Friendships

Comfort and discomfort with racial dynamics in friendships (n=5). Participants described their comfort levels with racial dynamics in their friendships change based on the identities of their friends. In particular, three participants described being comfortable as the only Black friend in

their friendships. Sabrina and Gia describe how they challenge and educate their White friends.

> Sabrina, “It's interesting 'cause I became comfortable being an anomaly in that group. I felt comfortable defending being Black and if they would ask a question I'd be like, "Well, this is why this is happening." I remember my friend asked about colorism because he had no idea what that was. And I was like, "Well, it's a really big issue and this is what it is." So I became comfortable taking that role with the White kids and telling them what things were and explaining everything to them. But then with Black kids I was like, “I'm not welcome in this space. This is not the space where I can belong.” That was a space that I never had to explain myself but I felt like I couldn't really be a part of it.”
>
> Gia, “My two best friends are both White. It's interesting because I thought going to school I was going to isolate myself and hang out with people who looked and felt like me, but I just felt like I didn't really resonate with those people. So by the end of my college career, the people who I had felt most comfortable with just were these people. And I don't wanna say that I didn't see their race. I absolutely did and they definitely saw mine. And it's something that we talked about constantly, but it was a matter of comfort for me at that point… I feel very comfortable. But despite that, I had obviously been the most vocal of the three of us about everything that's going on. I try to challenge my friends."

River describes how she noticed that she can avoid her own race in her friendships with White people in order to fit in.

> River, “I guess that's another reason why I can tend to feel comfortable around White people—is 'cause race was just never really talked about. It's like, were

> there weird dynamics? Sure. But did I have an excuse to avoid these uncomfortable conversations and confront insecurities? Absolutely. So that became a place of solace for me almost…I think that honestly, I kind of ignore my race a lot. I don't know if it's subconsciously on purpose or not, but I try to attribute everything to other reasons that are not racial or racially based. If that makes any sense. It's just something I don't really talk about with my friends much. Until recently when I was like, "Okay, this is probably not doing good things for me." I've kind of tried—I guess—to be more White here. Not because I don't like my Black family, but purely it's fitting in purposes. That's really important especially when you're on a team. You want to fit in. I think it's probably because it's something that I shouldn't ignore because it's only causing more problems internally. I've been trying to do the whole Irish method where I just push it down, bottle it up. But clearly that's not really working because it just causes me to feel a bit more alone, and it alienates half of me even more than usual…

River then goes on to describe how this dynamic shifted in the Summer of 2020, when her White friends checked on her after George Floyd's death, and how she felt conflicted about bringing race into her friendships.

> River, "I have friends who I thought didn't even recognize me as a woman of color—just 'cause it was never mentioned—until George Floyd when I had a couple of friends reach out to me and they're like, "Are you okay?" First of all, it meant a lot that they even reached out. But second of all, I was a little surprised. Like, "I didn't even realize that these people considered me Black." …It just made

> me need to reevaluate my friendships a little bit. Where I kept innocently thinking that our friendships existed beyond, outside of race. It wasn't in this racial vacuum type of thing. That simply doesn't exist in this world in society…It really felt good to know that there were people there that were looking out for me and that there are definitely people in my life that I don't need to reach out to in order to say that something is wrong."

This raised a lot of questions for River about her friendships with White people.

> River, "It was also just weird 'cause now it's like, can I talk to you about race? Is that something that I feel like can now enter our friendship? Or will that change our relationship in a way that I don't want it to change? Do I like the idea of having a relationship where I don't have to talk about race all the time? 'Cause like you were saying earlier, it's so exhausting. It's so taxing emotionally. It kind of brings in a new question in these relationships. Do I want them to change for the better? Or could it be for the worst? Or do I wanna keep them in this ideal world where I don't have to address any of this?"
>
> Luna, "When I don't want to—it almost makes me mad—but when I don't wanna think as deeply and I think it's hard and I think about the reality of life too heavily that's when I talk to my White friends. When things get really tough—ugh—that's when I go to my-my Black friends. At the same time, I've realized that I struggle in life and I've wondered if it's my fault because of not connecting as well with them, or wondering if I'm not hearing them enough…I think it was my older sister. She was like, "Why are most of your friends White? You need to have Black friends." …Something within me says that my culture is

too close to being White. And so I'm more often comfortable in that one."

Leyla described how she feels more accepted with Black people, but sometimes her Black friends can criticize Mixed people in a way that hurts her feelings.

> Leyla, "I'm often significantly more accepted with Black people and they're more open to what I have to say about racism…And then one of my friends, she's very often on Twitter and will be tweeting things that are anti-mixed people. She'll be like, "Oh my God, like Black men stop chasing White women. We don't need any more annoying-ass mixed people." And I'm like, to be fair, the light-skins—we can be irritating. However it's not all of us so, to have this generalization made about us. It's difficult to see these generalizations about mixed people and to be like, I don't fit into that, but I know that if I say anything it's going to come off as like, "not all men" like that sort of energy of a statement."

Domain III: Ongoing Integration, Seeking Wholeness and Connection

This broader domain subsumed three themes. The first theme was comprised of responses regarding how participants find relational safety. The second theme included responses regarding identity assertion and expression. The third theme included responses about participants' advice for Multiracial girls.

Theme 1: Relational Safety

Participants described the relationships and contexts in which they feel the most authentic and safe, and how they have come to understand their parents' perspectives on race.

Authentic friendships (n=10). Participants highlighted the qualities and components of friendship that make them feel the most authentic and whole.

> Sabrina, "In college it's like, "Oh, you just met these people this year." They're

seeing me as a person on a higher level than I was throughout my life. And right now I'm in college and I'm an activist and I am in this major and I'm really for Black rights and stuff, and they perceive me as such—which is great and I appreciate. But I think that the people that I feel wholly comfortable with and wholly understood by are the people that I grew up with. My best friend [name] who's a White girl from my high school and elementary school. She's seen me in every single phase of my life and the phases where I hated myself and I straightened my hair, where I felt kind of comfortable, where I was only Black, and knows my family so well and my experiences so well. And I think that's really important. Those are the people I can identify that know me the best."

River, "She's [River's sister] easily my best friend but also the person I look up to most in this world, admire most. She is someone who I feel like I can be as honest as possible. Do I feel like I'm being 100% honest all the time? No, because there's still things that I'm working on, like accepting myself. So saying it out loud is kind of hard, but I definitely feel like I can be my most vulnerable with her. I just trust her with my life really. Not just in terms of keeping what I'm saying to her secret or just between us, but also I trust her to not really judge me. I mean of course sometimes you need to be judged. You need somebody to tell you "No, you shouldn't do that." But if I'm just in a serious situation where I just need to tell you these things, I don't need a response. I just need to say them out loud. I know I can trust her to just take them and not judge me for them or anything. She will just genuinely listen, which is something I value so much."

Gia,"I think the need is listening but also understanding and having somebody

who thinks like me and who's had the same experiences as me would be the most receptive to my experiences. Because it's very different communicating with Black people versus Biracial people—because the experiences obviously are different. And because of that there's just a level of understanding…We had affinity groups and one of them was with Multiracial people. And it was awesome. That was fantastic. In those moments I felt awesome because I was sharing my experience with people. Like, "Yes, I have that. I know exactly what you're talking about." I wish we could have had more of those conversations. Because honestly communicating with people who look and think like you just validates my experience. It makes me feel not alone."

Phoebe, "They identify as Biracial but also identify as Black. I was introduced to more people like that. Then more people who were just Black…and I became part of those circles to some extent. But I didn't feel like I should be there, to some degree. I almost felt like, "Oh, I don't know if they want me here." But then realizing that was more in my head. They're totally fine with me being there. They've been doing this series on Instagram showcasing Black students at [college name], and I got invited to contribute. I was like, "Can I?" I literally emailed one of the people, I was like, "Can I? Is this okay?" And they're like, "Yes, of course." So, it's been a very recent thing of having messaging that people who I thought I couldn't be with do see me as part of them, and they don't reject me from that…Also with other people of color it's like this mutual otherness like, "Oh my gosh, we might not be in the same race, but boy, are we not White in this way." [chuckles] So yeah, there's a mutual otherness of it.``

> Leyla, "[High school name] wasn't a safe environment. At the beginning of that class I was like, "I'm here. What's up?" And then I just sort of shut down….I guess like one of those flowers that blooms at night. I'd get home from school and I'd just be like, "Mom and dad, you'll never guess what happened." Or like, [brother name] and [sister name] we'll be like, "Let's give our racist experience for the day." And then we'll unpack every day without fail. I think in the summer, it was a little safe haven for me. My best friend, the one who lives in the UK, she comes to visit me every summer…She's like my friend-soulmate, she just understands me. I don't have to be anyone else around her because I know she'll accept who I am. My best friend, like I said earlier, she's also mixed. I think very often when I'm with other mixed people I'm like, "You see me. You get it." I think if I'm looking across the board, who I am the most comfortable with, it really is mixed people."

Understanding parents' perspectives in context (n=5). Participants described their process of reconciling and understanding their parents' relationship to race.

Luna, "Needing to deal with a lot of the things that happened with my dad has made me–in some ways—disassociate. But in some ways be like, "Let me just look at this at a base level, my parents are human." There's me and I take pieces from both of them. I don't take it all."

> Sabrina, "[chuckles] A lot of people in my family just think that I can get very intense when I talk about issues like race and identity. And I know that as much of an activist as my grandmother is, the things that I'm talking about, she's never really had to think about…And I think I've caused my family to be sensitive with the stuff that they're talking about and to be more inclusive with the topics that

> they discuss…And I kind of hate sitting there and being like the only Black voice in the room, and the only Black opinion in the room."

Later, Sabrina described processing the lack of information about the Black side of her family. Sabrina, "I'm not upset about my White half telling me more, but I just wish that more was brought from my other half. But at no point in my life I wish you guys didn't tell me anything. Not knowing made me hate myself."

> Gia, "In retrospect, realizing the parallels that I had with my mom's experience just made me realize that unless I went to a school with a substantial portion of students who are like me or in my mom's case who were Afro-Latino—which there were not many when she was going to school—then I was going to have a similar experience because there were very few people who looked like me. Yet, we had very similar experiences. They are starting to form a Multiracial club on my campus now, which is good. But it was through conversations with my friends and that community, I was like, "Oh my God, yeah, we all are having very similar experiences." We don't feel like we really belong in either community. It was like, "Wow, Mom. You and I are not that different."

Theme 2: Identity Integration and Assertion

Hair as a focus of identity expression (n=6). Participants described how their chosen hairstyles became an assertion of and connection to their identities and Blackness.

> Luna, "We had this bathroom in our house…It was kind of like our salon. I remember this moment when we're in there together and my mom was like, "I don't know what to do with [sister's name] hair. Please go help her. Please do something." So I went down trying to help her with it, and having this moment

realizing our hair is similar. Our experience is similar. Why are we a problem? Why is this so hard to do? Why doesn't it seem like there's anybody around us that can help and makes it feel less painful? …And then a couple of years later as she started to develop from puberty, realizing we have almost the same hair type and she was like, "Luna, we're gonna be buddies. We're gonna be Afro buddies. We're gonna have big hair. We're gonna be unapologetic." And that was really powerful. Pretty much she mirrored me when she saw I was excited about something, she would suddenly realize she could be."

Adriane, "I had a whole experience where it was straightened for a lot of my childhood. I didn't really embrace my curls or what I looked like. I was just like, "Oh, I'm White. Let's burn this shit and make it look the same as everyone else." I guess for that I fit in. And over time as I got to embrace my hair, I just knew that hair is such a big part of me. And especially to people of color and Black people it's such a big deal, and I'm so proud of my hair."

Willow, "For most of my life my hair was in a braid…And then last year I was like, "I'm gonna wear my hair naturally." I think embracing it was like, "Yeah, embrace who you are." Because growing up I didn't—so my dad's from Togo in Africa and he left because the country was like, "Yo, dictatorship." So growing up he never talked about it that much. Other than get-togethers with other African families, we didn't have that much culture. We'd listen to music and he'd sometimes tell us about it, but I feel like embracing my hair is definitely helping me embrace my Black side more."

Issa, "In fifth grade one person was like, "Your Afro" and that set me for the rest

of the time. I was like, "I'm not letting it out 'cause people are just gonna be shocked." Then I really had to push myself in college. I'm like, “Hey, no one knows me here. I can leave it out. And they're not gonna be like ‘Oh, you looked better before’ or anything.” So I started leaving it out. And that was hard. But that helped me learn to love my hair more instead of being like, "Oh, I want a Brazilian Blowout” and have it straight. But that was the time and I used to watch so many curly hair YouTubers on how to do my hair until I finally found out what worked for me. I just think back and I'm like, "Why didn't I just do it and not care what anyone thought?" But it's hard in high school and middle school to do that.”

Phoebe, “The other thing with my self-concept has been my hair. That's been something that for the entire time I've thought about it, has been more of a racialized thing…I realized the shorter I went, the curlier it was, and eventually it got to this length. And then I finally came into these curls. And this really helps me feel less White, [chuckles] essentially. It's not even more Black. My hair is like, it's not Afro or anything. My mom would call these “banana curls.” My hair has been something like, “Okay people see my hair and they know I'm not White.” And this is something I can choose to present in a certain way. I can take pride in it and I can control more and I love having short hair because it gives me this curl.”

Expansiveness of identity in gender and sexuality (n=4). Participants described how their mixed race identities connect with their sexual and gender identities.

Luna, “Two of my siblings identify with potentially being bi or gay and I've wondered about—-just because we're constantly at least two things, then that

makes us—It almost does something with your mind that makes you feel like you can constantly be lots of things and it frees you a little bit internally."

Phoebe, "I think the whole binary thing is something that's very central to all of this 'cause I think a lot of my identities exist in that in-between space. It's not the either/or. I'm not Black, I'm not White. I'm both. Like, I'm not fully feminine. I'm not masculine because I'm both of them…I'm in this middle space. I'm really just in this middle space all the time."

Adriane, "I feel like the nonbinary-ness and the mixedness make more sense together like that for me. With my sexuality, I guess people see it more as like, "Oh, you're monosexual. You only like women." But it's really like the whole—I think most lesbians understand that it's just—That even though it may not sound like it contains multitudes, it does."

Remi, "Sexuality-wise I think I've always talked about how it's kind of funny that I'm a very indecisive person. All my identities are like bi-bisexual, bi-cultural. There's also that sense of enough-ness with bisexuality too because people are like, "Okay, fine you're just straight and you're curious." Or, "So you're gay but have internalized homophobia." There's also that being the mistook for something."

Exploration and assertion of identity (n=9). Participants described their processes of exploring, accepting, validating, and asserting their identities within themselves and to others.

River, "It's a process that I feel like I go through daily. I've never wanted to vocalize it because of the implications that come with it like, "Oh, am I racist?" "Do I hate myself?" All these things. So it's been a lot of starting to realize that it

might be okay to say some of these things. And in fact, it might be more beneficial for me to vocalize these things. So that I can work through it instead of keeping it bottled up and really internalizing it."

Luna, "I think of my identity, like a puzzle or a patchwork quilt. And some pieces are bigger than others. Some pieces for the patchwork are bigger and some pieces of puzzle are more colorful than others. In my feeling of myself, and that's okay. Then that's gonna be always added onto—for the patchwork quilt—it's always added onto. I'd almost say depending on the time of my life, like race right now is probably the bigger focus and the bigger patch. And then my gender, my sexuality is more like the middle patch."

Luna, "So the area that my school is in is very wealthy. And so we like to drive around the wealthy White areas [laughs]. And sometimes when we purposely blast Black people music and they might come out and be mad, but so what?"

Sabrina, "I have known and accepted that this is how I present in the public sphere, this is how I present to other people. I present as a person that is of color…but with myself it was kind of a hard, long process to identify myself as a Black woman, like or a Black girl. Honestly thinking back, I've never identified as such. I'm like, "Oh, I'm mixed" or "Irish" but I've never been like, "I'm Black." That is something that I need to consider."

Sabrina described how her identity has shifted in her relationships as she has changed from high school through college, how she is in the process of accepting her identity, and having compassion for herself.

So I think that in high school those relationships were kind of evading that

> because I was just like, "This is just so great, they finally like me." But then in college I was like, "So this is how you consider me? This is how you look at me." It doesn't matter what I think of you…Also with my mom, when I go into a public spot, nobody's looking at me as an Irish woman [giggles] like that. They're gonna be looking at me as a woman of color. And whether I like it or not—and I'm learning how to like it—that is how I will be perceived. I can't change what I look like, my skin color at all. It is just how I'm going to be in the world. I think I've been to the stage of acceptance. So now I'm going into the stage of like, "How do I love and accept this?" But it's been a very long thing. Right now, I'm just happy that I'm not in that stage of, "I hate this, I hate this, I hate this, I hate this." 'Cause as much as I can sit here and go, "Oh, I hated how I hated myself. I can't believe that I hated my hair and my skin and my everything." But looking back at myself at that point in time, it was because my grandma never talked to me about it and my dad didn't wanna talk about it. So it was hating, but it was also not knowing at all. So I can't really be mad at myself for hating it because that's just the space that I was in."

Gia also described how she has shifted to accept her Black identity.

> Gia, "It probably happened my junior year I realized that when I identify on forms and stuff, I actively choose to identify as Black, White, click the Multiracial Biracial/Multiracial box, and then, Hispanic/Latinx. And I finally accepted that it is okay to identify that way. Through these conversations, I feel like I finally have a foundation and a leg to stand on because I am self-accepting my own identity. And by accepting the fact that, "Yeah, I am Black. I can't take that away. Society

is going to see me that way and if I don't accept that and internalize that, then I'm going to be suffering consistently, right? I need to recognize why people are treating me differently." And finally having that foundation means that I feel like I can stand up for myself and the greater community in these conversations that I have with people."

Gia went on to describe a creative project she performed to express her journey.

"I wrote a piece for piano and a performer back in January about being Biracial. It was a piano piece inspired by a song by a jazz standard called Invitation, which is one of my brother's favorite jazz pieces. And I wrote it because I was writing it mostly about the experience of being Biracial, which I think he internalizes more than any of us. And so the performer was a White man. I was the pianist as someone to be taken, like I was a slave who was trying to be White, but he was making me very clear that I'm not, that I'm not that. So I started the piece by playing only on White keys. And then he's moving my hands to the Black keys, and forcing me to interact with this racial experience. And by the end of it, I'm playing on both. And some pseudo acceptance of my racial identity, but also in a visceral language. He literally just then grabs me off of the piano at some point in the piece. He's also appropriating me and my body. So I've been using art as a way to portray my own experience, and also using it as a way to visualize and see what other people are experiencing."

Leyla, "I've been seeing the same therapist for four years and she's really helped…I was really depressed…I already have so much like aggression through racism being taken out on me from the environment that I live in, and to further

that by taking it out on myself isn't fair to me and it's not fair to other people around me who were seeing me hurting...And I think I had tricked myself into thinking that not internalizing all the negative things that I was seeing in my environment was selfish. If I thought, "Oh, I am pretty" that would be too much. That would be too confident. I've upset too many people. But then I was like, "Well, fuck them, kids." If they're upset, they're upset. That's on them and it's not my fault. That is them dealing with their own problems…I have had a lot of invalidating experiences where someone immediately framed what I'm supposed to feel and it's very often not at all how I am feeling. And I think breaking out of that and realizing my experiences aren't invalid—they're so valid. They're the opposite of invalid. They're aggressively valid."

Issa, "I guess just knowing yourself enough and understanding yourself to call yourself how you are. Having these conversations as well, and hearing that you can relate and hearing the questions, it makes me feel even more like it's valid to be like "I'm mixed" and embrace both sides….I read a blog with a couple of articles on being mixed race. And something that she wrote that really stood out to me was you don't have to see yourself as being half and half. You can be fully both. 'Cause a lot of people are like, "But you're not really, you're not really." But you can embrace both cultures or both ethnicities fully. And, you don't have to keep thinking to yourself, "I'm half White, half Black." Just be like," I'm mixed race. I'm Biracial." Whatever you feel, just know that you're whole. And I was like, this was a good perspective to read because I used to have no problem being like "I'm half-half." But thinking about it in a different way really does make a

> difference, and then no one can really invalidate you and be like, "Oh, but you're not fully Black." or whatever. You can just be like, "I embrace both sides. And I'm lucky in that way that I get to embrace both sides.""

Theme 3: Advice for a Young Multiracial Girl

Participants shared advice they have for a young multiracial girl based on their own experiences so far.

> Adriane, "I just want them to love themselves no matter what. I don't want them to ignore any part of their being or their family and their loved ones. Those people that care about you are a part of you. And that's still part of you too, so don't ignore that."
>
> Luna, "I'm sitting at my desk and I have a board in front of me and literally the word unapologetic is on it [chuckles]. And then back when I'm in my dorm, I have this piece of artwork that says unafraid. And those are my two big words for me. So I would totally be unapologetically unafraid of just who you are. Just be. You don't need to have a definition. You don't need to have a back story. You don't need to have an explanation for everyone. When someone says, "What are you?" Just say, "I am. I'm me. I'm all of the experiences I've been and seen and that's okay."

Remi, "I would say don't worry about what others are saying. Just be. Those perceptions are—of course it's unfair. You'll feel like, "If I had known that first I would be a very different person." So just be and not listen to what others are saying or how others may perceive you."

> Sabrina, "I think it's to investigate all your resources and really see and ask the questions rather than just wondering why this happened. And I think at times

whether this is unfortunate or fortunate, you do need to do things for yourself, because ultimately your family did make the sacrifices and did things because that was where they were at that point in time. You can't really be critical of them, but it is amazing to reference them and listen to their stories and to just see where they were at that point in time…Because I just think it would be terrible and I would definitely be so much less developed than I was at this stage if I didn't know about my family, I didn't know about my history and nobody told me anything. So just be gentle and love yourself and not be as intense and to know that this is a process."

River, "Don't compare yourself to anybody 'cause that is the main thing that's destroyed me. Firstly trying to compare myself to White people, then try to compare myself to Black people. And now trying to compare myself to mixed people. It's just not a good idea.There's variations in all types of people but especially in mixed people. We are so diverse in looks, backgrounds, thoughts, interests, et cetera. It would be so detrimental to your mental health to compare yourself, so do your best to not do that."

Gia, "In high school I wrote like a diary of things that I would tell my own daughter if I were to have one..What I would tell a young Multiracial girl is, find your tribe, one. That doesn't need to be people who look like you or who think like you, but who respect you and who listen to you, and who empathize with what you're going through. That's one. Two is, if you don't love yourself, no one else is going to be able to love you. And, that is a really hard thing to do. Especially when society calls you in so many different directions and you literally

feel like you have the weight of the world on you. If you can find love in your differences—I honestly wouldn't want to be anything else.…I think the last thing I would say is don't let anybody change you. Don't lose your freedom. Don't let anybody take that away from you. Don't do things because other people tell you to do them, do them because you want to do them. And that's the hardest thing you'll ever learn. Being a woman in America and especially being a woman of color in America is: do you, be you, because otherwise you'll regret it. Know your freedom is the only thing that you have in this world that will get you anywhere and you gotta fight for it…That is probably what I would say to a young multicultural girl, and also good luck."

Phoebe, "You are valid. That is something I wish I had heard more. That is something that, to me, has a lot of power…I don't know what else encompasses that in the same way. I talked about race with someone at some point—talking about like we're kind of ahead of the curve almost. The US is supposed to be a majority mixed-race people by 2050 which is within our lifetime really. So we're just kinda ahead of everything. It's difficult to be the one ahead of everything. But eventually it's valid. And it'll work out, you know? You'll see more little Black/White Biracial beings everywhere. And honestly for me, I don't wanna put this on a young being, you know? I want to be someone who they can come to and I can help."

Willow, "I think just be yourself. Just accept who you are. You do you. And then I would say in the media, you can see more representation of us. So, I like that. More representation of all of us, 'cause I got two immigrant parents. So you can

see that. Maybe not Black and White, but we'll get there. And know that everyone's experience is different, and that doesn't make you any less than anyone else."

Issa, "It's hard to say 'cause knowing you're older and you know yourself better, but when you're young it's not easy. Just to be grounded in how you identify and know that it's valid to identify how you identify. There's no right or wrong. And you know, when people have to fill out surveys or census or whatever, and it's those boxes, people get stressed out, but those are just human constructs. Race is a human construct, but you can identify how you want. And you don't have to let other people sway that. And just to be curious about these things and explore and understand why we talk about race. Just be curious, talk to people, get their opinion, but also know yourself and know that there's no right or wrong answers. It's your experience."

Leyla, "I think a big part of it is fetishization. People are gonna be like, "Ooh, you're so sexy because you're kind of European but not really, homegirl." I think "stay strong" is the wrong thing to say but just understand other people who are giving you these messages like, "You're not valid." They're wrong, objectively. And I know it feels like they're right, because they're in this environment of being in power. People who are in power are giving us these messages like, "You're wrong. Your experiences aren't true here." I'm here to tell you that's not at all the truth..Also don't let people tell you that you're just one thing because inherently you are not, especially if you're Black-White mixed. Even though race isn't real because it has material consequences, we have to treat it like that, right? So my

White mom and my Black dad are at opposite ends of the racial spectrum, by definition of racist structures, they are opposites. We are a contradiction in our existence and people like to treat us like that. But in reality, we're human beings and we are unique and our experiences are true and what we feel, it's not what other people are telling us to."

Chapter 5: Discussion

One of the fastest growing Multiracial subgroups is the population of Black/White Multiracial women, who navigate a complicated intersection of privilege and oppression, and may contend with anti-Black racism (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), colorism (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007), sexual objectification (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007), and identity invalidation (Franco & Franco, 2016), all occurring in the contexts of their families, interactions with peers, or within the larger social context. Additionally, remnants of racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women such as the Jezebel, a hypersexualized archetype of a light-skinned Black woman, still permeate U.S. culture and impact Black women (Watson et al., 2012). However, there is no research that explores how such interactions with family members, peers, and the larger social context impact Black/White women's perceptions of themselves and relationships with others.

The present study aimed to explore the socialization messages that Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women experience concerning race, gender, and body, and how those messages may influence their self-perceptions and relationships. Relational-cultural Theory (Miller, 1986) was used as a framework to elucidate how socialization messages impacted participants' self-perceptions and relationships with others. Using RCT as a guide, the following section will begin with a discussion of the Summer 2020 racial reckoning as context for the findings. Then, race, gender, and body socialization messages participants received within their families and peer groups will be summarized and integrated with extant literature. Next, the section will describe the intrapsychic conflict participants expressed as they attempted to make meaning of their identities and relationships. The discussion of findings will then conclude with a summary of how participants sought relational safety and integration and assertion of their identities, integrated with extant literature. Lastly, the limitations of the present study and the

implications for future clinical work, community level intervention and research will be outlined.

Summary of Results and Integration with Prior Research Literature

Context of the Study

The context of the present study's findings is significant and illuminates the perspectives of Black/White Multiracial women at a pivotal moment in history. Study recruitment and data collection occurred in July and August of 2020, at the height of the Summer 2020 racial reckoning and uprising period in the United States, which began when George Floyd was murdered by police in Minneapolis. His death was followed by the rapid succession of multiple deaths of Black people at the hands of police, all occurring in the context of the first few months of a global pandemic. Activists galvanized support for racial justice movements like Black Lives Matter, and calls for a reckoning with institutional racism in the form of widespread protests, encouraging people to "Say their names" regarding the victims of police murder. Messages about contending with institutional racism proliferated on social media posts as institutions, including universities, were called out for the racism embedded in their systems. During this time, many students at predominantly White universities created social media accounts called "@Black at [university name]" with the goal to uncover and spotlight students' experiences of racism at school. The researcher began to recruit participants in July 2020, sending recruitment fliers for this study to multiple university Instagram and Twitter accounts, including "@Black at [university name]" accounts, as well as various university affinity groups, including Black students, Students of Color, and Multiracial students. Four of the ten study participants came from "Black at" accounts. It appeared that the participants felt a particular need to reflect and process their experiences as Black/White Multiracial women, and it is possible that this is connected to the moment in history.

Relational-cultural Theory

The present study is grounded in Relational-cultural Theory (RCT), which conceptualizes how psychological development occurs through relationships. RCT recognizes the inevitable interdependence of human beings throughout the lifespan, holds that the primary source of suffering for most people is the experience of isolation and disconnection, and postulates that healing occurs in growth-fostering mutual connection (Miller, 1986; Jordan, 2001). The concept of chronic disconnection refers to the self-blame, isolation, and immobilization that occurs when one acts inauthentically in relationships due to the anticipation that they will not be accepted (Jordan, 2001). According to RCT, chronic disconnection occurs at the societal level in "power-over" cultures in which the dominant group protects its status and perpetuates its power through tactics including exclusion, erasure, and violence, thus creating an environment in which people can only bring certain parts of themselves into connection (Miller, 1986; Jordan, 2001; Walker, 2008). The "central relational paradox," described by relational-cultural theorists, refers to when one attempts to preserve connection in relationships by paradoxically keeping parts of oneself out of the relationship. Otherwise stated, people silence themselves aiming to maintain a sense of intimacy, harmony, and connectedness with others, when it actually creates disconnection and inauthenticity because parts of oneself are not known to the other (Miller, 1986).

In considering the findings of the present study, the RCT model is especially helpful for discussing racial, gender, and body socialization because it provides a framework for understanding how messages from others become internalized, and influence how individuals may hide or contort parts of themselves due to an anticipation that they will not be accepted by others (Walker, 2008).

Family Socialization Messages

During the interviews, participants recalled the messages they received about themselves within their families, which may have conveyed the inherent value or acceptability of facets of their identities.

Race avoidance and warnings. All but one participant shared that there was minimal discussion about race within their family growing up, and three participants shared that this changed in 2016 and 2020 when the racial climate in the US shifted. Two participants noted then when race was discussed, it felt external to their family, displaced and separate from their own racial identities. This aligns with previous literature, as Buckley and Carter (2004) found in a study of Black/White Multiracial emerging adults that participants reported that they received limited socialization around race from their parents, such that the parents evaded questions and discussion about race, or defaulted to the child to choose their racial identity; and that this avoidance of the subject and lack of preparation engendered a sense of identity confusion and distress in adolescence and early adulthood. It is notable that even with the 20 year gap of Buckley and Carter (2004) and the present study, these themes seem to remain.

Further, multiple participants in the present study highlighted specifically that their Black parent seemed to avoid talking race with them, while some participants shared that conversations around race centered around warnings and protective messages about participants' Black identities, such that participants needed to be careful when traveling, interacting with the police, or that they should never assume that they are being discriminated against for their race unless it is blatant. In the present study, some participants noted that their parents either implicitly or explicitly communicated that proximity to Whiteness would afford them increased physical safety and material resources. Kerwin and colleagues (1993) found differences in how White and

Black parents approached preparation for anticipated discrimination such that Black parents frequently sought opportunities to discuss racism, with the goal of helping their children survive within a racially oppressive context, and the White parents tended to less explicitly discuss racism. Buckley and Carter (2004) found that of the participants who reported that their parents talked to them about race, the Black parent's racial attitudes and beliefs more directly impacted participants racial attitudes and beliefs than those of the White parent's.

These findings illuminate potential connections between racial socialization messages and how Multiracial people come to understand their racial identities. With an RCT lens, these findings raise the question of what these implicit and explicit messages about race communicated about what parts of participants will be accepted if they are brought into authentic connection. Specifically, these findings raise questions about how families communicate ideas about Blackness and Whiteness, and where those messages situate internally in participants.

Family members conveyed messages about hair texture, skin tone, and butt size.

In contrast with the lack of messaging about race more broadly within their families, all participants in the present study recalled receiving racialized, gendered messages about their physical bodies including their hair texture, skin tone, and butt size. Relational-cultural theorist Maureen Walker (2008) discusses how the bodies that we bring into relationship with each other have been formed by multiple sociocultural agendas: we have been raced, engendered, sexualized, and situated along dimensions of class, physical ability, religion. Further, Walker states that with the culturally ascribed power of each identity, our experience in relationship is made more complex by the relational images, formed over time, that attempt to predict and explain the meanings of and possibilities for relationship (p. 90).

Evidence of anti-Black messaging around hair was present in the socialization messages

within participants' families. They described getting various messages about their hair textures and length, including conflicting messages from parents such that some White parents praised or fetishized their curl patterns, whereas some Black parents said that they should chemically straighten it. For one participant, hair was an arena to learn about racial privilege from her Black mother, who explained how she has hair texture privilege due to her looser curls compared with women with collier, kinkier textures, saying that she is like "Becky with the good hair" from a popular Beyonce song.

One participant described an emotional experience in which her Black father did her hair in a Black hairstyle, and she got upset and took it out, wanting to look like her mom. Three participants described painful feelings of separateness from their White mothers and a desire to look like them when they were younger. Further, one participant shared that she felt excluded from female family members when relatives would comment that her White family members looked alike, as they fit a standard of beauty that she felt othered from, which made her want to lighten her skin and straighten her hair. There was a similar finding in the Buckley and Carter (2004) study, in which participants expressed the complexities of being a Black/White Multiracial daughter of a White mother, with two of the participants recalling positive, emotional memories of combing their White mother's hair while idealizing its silky and straight texture. The present study's findings suggest that the idealization may also be connected to a sense of belonging within their nuclear and extended families, in combination with a White supremacist standard of beauty.

A few participants in the present study noticed differences in how their siblings were treated based on their differing phenotypical proximities to Whiteness. One participant described how her siblings with less coily/kinky hair were not told to chemically straighten it, whereas the

siblings with more Afrocentric texture's hair was treated "like a problem." These findings align with prior research, as Nadal and colleagues (2013) found that the majority of participants reported familial favoritism such that family members favored lighter-skinned Multiracial children or Multiracial children with more Eurocentric features.

Further, prior research on Multiracial populations suggests that physical appearance is a contributing factor to the challenges of Multiracial people within families, reporting evidence of familial hierarchies related to racialized physical appearance in families in the form of colorism (Nadal, et al., 2011; Nadal, et al., 2013). Relatedly, Nadal and colleagues' study (2013) found that some Multiracial people experienced objectification within their families, such that their family members expressed a preoccupation with their physical attributes because of their racially ambiguous phenotypes. The present study expanded on the findings of Nadal et al. (2013), as this study specifically highlighted the specific racial dynamics of body socialization within families of Black/White Multiracial people, which allowed for a more concentrated focus on the racial and gender dynamics of having a Black or White mother and a Black or White father, and the role of anti-Blackness in body socialization.

Intrusive external racial categorizations from peers and strangers.

In the RCT framework, if Black/White Multiracial women experience identity invalidation from peers, they may learn to silence parts of themselves in order to fit the expectations of those peers. Participants described how both peers and strangers would dictate their racial identities in unprovoked social encounters, as well as question their racial identities. This aligns with previous findings within the Multiracial population, including repeated experiences with peers including racial identification inquiries like "what are you?" (Root, 1998; Tran et al., 2015 Kerwin et al., 1993), identity denial (Franco & Franco, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011;

Kelch-Oliver & Leslie), racial hazing (Root, 1998; Franco & Franco, 2016), and navigating the racial composition of one's school context (Kerwin et al., 1993; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). In the present study, participants described how they often felt confused and isolated when these intrusive interactions occurred.

Objectification, Jezebel, and desirability messages.

RCT posits that sexual objectification at the societal level can teach women that their acceptance and approval are conditional upon the degree to which their bodies can be objectified. Almost all of the participants in the present study received objectifying racialized messages about their attractiveness, particularly in the context of dating. Many participants felt simultaneously both sexualized and undesirable at school. Objectifying stereotypes, created to maintain power over Black women during slavery, are still present in US culture (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

Black/White Multiracial women's closer proximity to Whiteness may give them greater privilege in White supremacist culture in contrast with Black women who have two Black parents (Awad et al., 2015). This privilege intersects with oppression as the system still centers Whiteness while depending on anti-Blackness, and the benefits related to proximity to Whiteness are often paired with othering, objectification, and fetishization (Nadal et al., 2011; Root, 1998). One of the most prominent gendered racist stereotypes of Black women is the archetype of the Jezebel, who is often depicted as a woman of Black and White heritage, with light skin and long hair, who is seductive, manipulative, and unable to control her sexual drives (Collins, 1990). Some participants' descriptions of peer messages about their bodies, race, and gender echoed similarities to the Jezebel archetype, such that they were viewed as promiscuous and sexually attractive, while at the same time inferior. One participant described feeling that she was made to

feel either very sexy, or very ugly by her peers. Another shared that a White boy in her school told her that she was an exception, "different from other Black girls" after he told her that he would not date any Black girl.

Falling short of the Multiracial ideal.

Additionally, some participants described hearing messages from peers at school and on social media in which people idealized a particular Eurocentric Multiracial phenotype; with loose curls, light eyes, and tanned skin but not "too dark," and most participants felt that they fell short of that ideal. Participants described hearing comments like "Mixed kids are so beautiful," however the speaker was often referring to this one particular phenotype. One participant stated that hearing people uphold that ideal made her feel like "a mutt" and "unwanted." Multiple participants described being teased about their hair when it was out in more natural Afrocentric styles, which led them to keep their hair straightened or held back.

Taken together, many of the socialization messages that participants received about themselves in their families and among peers were rooted in anti-Blackness, and could have the potential for silencing or devaluing the Black parts of their identities in order to be accepted within the U.S. racial hierarchy. Additionally, participants may have learned that they needed to fit neatly into a racial identity in order to avoid being questioned or criticized by peers about their identities.

Intrapsychic Conflict

Participants described the inner conflict, insecurity, shame, confusion, and anger connected to the internalization of socialization messages that suggested they needed to abandon or contort parts of themselves in order to be accepted. According to RCT, part of moving toward healing and growth-fostering connection is identifying the sociocultural wounds that then

become roadmaps for what individuals expect in relationship to others (Walker, 2008).

Desirability and belonging versus insecurity and separateness.

Participants grappled with how to make sense of messages that they received about themselves, expressing both an urge to be accepted and confident as they are authentically, as well as the persistence of alienating feelings of insecurity. Romantic relationships were a central focus with this topic, and some participants shared that they felt romantically ignored in comparison with their peers. Many participants described feeling insecure about their appearances, particularly in predominantly White contexts, while also feeling angry and ashamed that they feel that way, because it suggests that they have internalized racist messages about themselves and others. One participant stated that she used to feel flattered when White men liked her because it validated that she fit the ideal, until she realized that she cannot just be happy that someone likes a version of herself that is not fully her. Another participant stated, “I'm beautiful. I have nice hair and nice skin and I like doing my makeup. And then having these messages from other people being like, "Actually, you're either only very sexy or you're super ugly." It's only those two. And I'm like, "I just want to exist in my own space, please."

Research has demonstrated that internalized comments about body image from peers can influence the mental health and racial identities of Multiracial people (Root, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, (2006); Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007). Root (1998) found that gender was important to peer racial socialization around body image, such that girls experienced more ridicule and rejection around phenotype such as hair, hairstyles, body size, eye color, eye shape, hair color, and bust size. To date, there has been almost no research on body image dissatisfaction among Multiracial women specifically. Indeed, prior to the present study, one of the only findings about body image among Black/White Multiracial women comes from a study in which they were a

small sub-group of the sample, which found that Multiracial women had some of the highest levels of body image dissatisfaction compared with other racial groups (Ivezaj, et al., 2010).

White dominant culture has dictated what is considered beautiful, such that women who are White, thin, and able-bodied are viewed as the ideal. Research has found that Black women who internalize a thin standard of beauty have a higher level of body dissatisfaction (Rogers-Wood & Petrie, 2010), particularly among Black women in predominantly White contexts (Mulholland & Mintz, 2001). The present study's findings about participants' feelings of insecurity about their bodies seem well-aligned with the experiences of Black women in predominantly White contexts who internalize a thin ideal, which has damaging implications for anti-Black objectified body consciousness in which one's value is determined via proximity to Whiteness.

Privilege and oppression in the context of Summer 2020 racial reckoning.

The interviews for the present study were conducted during July and August of Summer 2020, when there was a heightened mainstream sense of urgency to address long-standing systemic racial injustice in the U.S. In interviews, participants described internal conflict around their combination of privilege and oppression as Black/White Multiracial women, with multiple participants stating that they consciously attempt to not to take up too much space in Black spaces, particularly around racial justice activism, given the privilege they hold. Another participant described a discrepancy between her external presentation on the social media with regard to racial justice activism and her internal experience, such that she portrays herself as anti-racist and fighting for Black people online, but is internally trying to supress her own Blackness in some ways. Additionally, one participant shared that they often doubted the validity of their experiences of racial microaggressions due to their light skin privilege.

Comfortable anomaly.

Some participants described feeling like a "comfortable anomaly" among their White friends, such that they were able to partially ignore race, and were familiar with sometimes educating their White friends about racism. However, multiple participants shared that during the Summer 2020 racial reckoning, they realized that they may need to confront racial dynamics in their friend groups in a different way, and felt conflicted about how that might change their relationships. One participant stated,

> "I've kind of tried—I guess—to be more White here. Not because I don't like my Black family, but purely it's fitting in purposes. That's really important especially when you're on a team. You want to fit in. I think it's probably because it's something that I shouldn't ignore because it's only causing more problems internally. I've been trying to do the whole Irish method where I just push it down, bottle it up. But clearly that's not really working because it just causes me to feel a bit more alone, and it alienates half of me even more than usual."

One way to understand this conflict is through the lens of the paradox of connection. Participants deeply want to be accepted, connected, and feel harmonious in their friendships, and with that goal they may suppress part of their identity, like their Blackness, for fear that it would result in rejection. Additionally, if participants do not feel particularly identified with their Blackness, it may not feel salient for their friendships. The Summer 2020 racial reckoning may have unearthed a need to address parts of participants' identities that had been previously sidelined.

Relational Safety, Seeking Integration, and Asserting Identity

RCT scholar Maureen Walker (2008) describes conflict as inevitable wherever people allow themselves to be known, wherever people risk deeper and fuller representation of

themselves in relationship, and she states that as such, conflict can be a pathway to healing and transformation (p. 92). As participants grappled with the socialization messages and intrapsychic conflict discussed in previous sections, they also described the contexts in which they feel the most authentically themselves. Each participant expressed some movement toward integration, identifying the relationships in which they feel wholly accepted, and expressing and asserting their identities.

Authentic relationships.

Findings from the present study describe the conditions that allow for greater connection, relational safety, and healing for the Black/White Multiracial participants. Participants described the qualities of these authentic friendships as those in which they can be vulnerable without the risk of being shamed, and feel fully accepted, even with the parts of themselves that they do not yet understand or accept. One participant stated that though she is happy that her college friends know her at a time in which she is more connected with activism and her Black and White identity, she feels most safe and fully accepted by her childhood friend, who is White, who has known her through various stages of self-rejection and conformity up to her current ongoing self-acceptance. For multiple participants, these relationships existed within their families, with three participants naming their sisters, one naming her brothers and parents, and a few named friends. Notably, multiple participants emphasized the relief, validation, and relational safety they felt when they were with other Multiracial people, either in one-on-one friendships or Multiracial affinity groups.

In addition to friendships, participants shared how they sought to understand their parents' perspectives on race, and reasons for some of the socialization messages that they shared within their families. Some participants sought this information by talking to other family

members, their parents themselves, and through learning about family history. Participants shared that this helped them have compassion for both their parents and themselves, and to feel more freedom to explore how they might feel differently from or similarly to their parents.

Exploration and assertion of identity.

Participants shared the ways in which they are in the ongoing process of making meaning of and asserting their identities alongside the socialization messages they have received and the internal conflict they have experienced. One participant described a realization that it could be beneficial for her to reveal and vocalize the internalized racism she holds, rather than locking it away due to shame. One participant described affirming herself with compassion while examining some of her internalized anti-Blackness, realizing that she learned this because her family members did not want to talk about it, rather than a personal character flaw. One participant described how going to therapy helped her move from directing her experiences of oppression toward herself, to validating her experience and releasing shame. Another participant shared that she has learned to remind herself that she is valid, and that she can embrace both her Black and White sides, being both. This participant said, “I used to have no problem being like ‘I'm half-half.’ But thinking about it in a different way really does make a difference. Then no one can really invalidate you and be like, "Oh, but you're not fully Black” or whatever. You can just be like, “I embrace both sides.”

Other participants described how creative expression helps them integrate and make meaning of their identities. One participant directed a piano and dance performance as a representation of her and her brother’s racial identity journeys. Another participant, during the interview, shared that she imagines all of her identities as a patchwork quilt, some patches are more colorful or larger than other ones, and it is always a work in progress. Another area of

identity expression centered around participants' hair. Though it has been an arena for conflicting messages, self-silencing, and shame, participants also described how their hair can be an avenue for pride, assertion of identity, connection to their Blackness, and connection with their sisters. One participant shared that in the past she felt that she needed to apologize for her hair if it was "too big" and took up too much space, but now she also sees her hairstyle as a way to resist that societal message, though it is still an ongoing process. Additionally, four participants discussed how their Multiracial identities connect with expansiveness in their gender and sexual identities, such that they feel the familiar freedom to identify with multiple things at once, and that their identities have guided them to resist binaries. Notably, there was diversity in sexual orientation in the present study sample, as 3 participants identified as Bisexual, 1 identified as a Lesbian, and 6 identified as Straight. More research on sexual and gender identity among Multiracial people is needed.

Advice for Young Multiracial Girls

Participants shared their advice for young Multiracial girls based on their own experiences. Themes from their advice included: to claim and validate all parts of yourself, to try not to compare yourself to other people, to seek out knowledge from elders in your family, to maintain your freedom, and to love yourself. One participant said, "Be unapologetically unafraid of just who you are. Just be. You don't need to have a definition. You don't need to have a back story. You don't need to have an explanation for everyone. When someone says, "What are you?" Just say, "I am. I'm me. I'm all of the experiences I've been and seen and that's okay.""

Invisibility

The overarching concept of invisibility cuts across the domains of the present study. Many participants described a sense of invisibility in their contexts; in the messages they

received about themselves, the internal conflicts they experienced, and an undoing of invisibility occurs when they are able to express themselves and be authentic in relationships with others. The internal, unvocalized and unnoticed suffering described by participants in their families, school contexts, and in the media was connected to their Black/White Multiracial woman identities and seems partially fueled by archetypal, objectifying images such as the Jezebel or the ideal Multiracial phenotype. As the world around them interacted with them as a hypersexualized Jezebel, or viewed them solely as deviating from the golden-skinned, light-eyed, curly-haired ideal Multiracial person, participants' unique internal worlds were unseen and reduced by others. It seems that participants tended to feel the least invisible when connecting with other Multiracial people. At some point during the interview, many of the participants expressed that they do not feel that they have an arena for discussing these issues, and that they are glad that research on this topic could be published, suggesting that a sense of invisibility may be present.

The Central Relational Paradox, Multiracial Identity, and Racial Trauma

Relational-cultural Theory can help inform the present study's findings about the relationships and self-perceptions of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women in the context of the racial trauma in Summer 2020. According to RCT, the central relational paradox occurs when out of a desire for whole-hearted connection and a fear of rejection, people exile parts of themselves out of relationship with others, which ultimately creates more disconnection. In a culture that functions on binaries in order to categorize people within the racial hierarchy system, as well as the subjugation of Black people and women, Black/White Multiracial women may feel a need to contort their full selves in order to maintain connection. The parts of participants that have been excluded, such as participants' Blackness and Mixedness, have languished out of connection in their relationships.

As participants shared how they perceive themselves and relate to others, contradictions emerged in their narratives. For example, during the ongoing racial trauma in the Summer of 2020 participants shared that they felt simultaneously socially isolated and more authentically themselves in their relationships than they had before. The 'comfortable anomaly' experience in their friendships, particularly with White people, seemed not to fit anymore. Despite the pain and alienation participants felt as a response to the 2020 racial trauma, they also described feeling more agency and vitality, and motivation by necessity to bring more of their excluded selves into connection. The central relational paradox can help us understand why such a prospect would simultaneously be so frightening, but also agentic and invigorating. During the traumatic experience of racial violence, the areas of participants that are deficient are illuminated, and participants are able to take action to bring more of themselves into their relationships.

Reflexivity

The researcher's personal upbringing served as inspiration for this current study. This researcher was born to a White, Irish-American mother and a Black, West Indian-American and African-American father, and was raised in a predominantly White suburb in Massachusetts. Her parents chose her hometown for its well-funded public schools, and relatedly, the Whiteness of the town is due to long-term institutional segregation policies in the U.S.. She stood out in school pictures with her medium-light brown skin tone and coily hair texture, and experienced both subtle and obvious anti-Black racism during her school years. The researcher has been on an ongoing, continuously evolving journey with regard to her racial identity, and has been exposed to how the pain and grief of internalized racism, the fracturing experience of identity invalidation, and the relief of remembering one's power and capacity for expansiveness can ebb and flow in a non-linear process.

As a 31-year-old Black Multiracial Queer Bisexual cisgender woman of West Indian, African-American, and Irish-American Heritage, I am about 10-12 years older than the study participants, and I felt a connection to them due to some aspects of our shared identities, which contributed to the complexity of the researcher-interviewee dynamic. I often felt in awe of the ways participants seemed to know themselves so well at such a young age, and found it hard to imagine myself in my college years to be able to pinpoint these messages and dynamics so vulnerably. Additionally, at times I felt the grief and sadness upon hearing participants so candidly describe the ways in which their context communicated invalidating and dehumanizing messages about their Blackness, and I was reminded of my own experiences through my adolescence and emerging adulthood. I also related to the feeling of being misunderstood, pathologized, and invalidated based on one's Multiracial identity. I needed to be aware of these biases, as they have been central struggles of my own life, and I did not want to over-project my perspective onto the words of the participants. Additionally, many of the participants' experiences diverged significantly from the researcher's experiences with regard to racial makeup of schools and regions of upbringing, phenotype, gender and race of parents, and social class. The researcher kept an ongoing journal throughout study development, data collection, and data analysis to process her personal reactions to the process. She regularly met with her dissertation chair, Dr. Usha Tummala-Narra, with whom she processed her personal reactions to study design, data collection, and data analysis.

Limitations

While the findings of the present study provide a wealth of information on an under-studied topic in an under-researched population, the present study is not without limitations. These limitations are related to recruitment methodology, diversity of sample, and

the data collection process.

Social media was utilized in order to recruit participants for this study. While social media can be a useful recruitment tool for reaching the college-aged student population, it does potentially make the study sample susceptible to self-selection bias, as those individuals who heard about the study through following these social media accounts selected themselves to participate. This writer sent flyers for this study to multiple university Instagram and Twitter accounts, including "Black at [university name]" accounts, as well as various university affinity groups, including Black students, Students of Color, and Multiracial students. While the researcher was not personally acquainted with any of the participants prior to their involvement in this study, participants were referred to the researcher via social media and may have viewed the researcher's social media account, which may have influenced participants' responses during the study interview.

Another limitation to consider is the diversity of the study sample. While the researcher made every attempt to collect a representative sample, the sample has significantly more participants who attend predominantly White institutions (n=9) and grew up in predominantly White social contexts (n=6), despite originating from varied geographic locations. Additionally, when asked how they are racially perceived by others, the majority of participants (n=7) said that they are perceived as Biracial, Mixed, or ambiguous, whereas 3 participants stated that they are perceived as light-skinned Black rather than Multiracial.

Another area of similarity in the sample was with regard to the race and gender breakdown of participants' parents. All participants had one mother and one father, with the majority of participants' (n=7) having Black fathers and White mothers, and three participants having Black mothers and White fathers. This breakdown reflects population trends of interracial

marriage rates in the U.S. such that Black men are more likely to marry a woman of a different race than are Black women (Pew Research Center, 2015), a finding that reflects the complex intertwining of racism and sexism in this country. Though this reflects population trends, more perspectives from Black/White Multiracial people with Black mothers and White fathers are needed. Additionally, the population was highly educated such that each participant was enrolled in a four-year college, which likely was related to this writer's recruitment methodology.

Another potential limitation to consider involves the data collection process. This writer conducted all interviews via Zoom, and had never met any of the participants prior to the interview. Participants may not have felt comfortable expressing private and vulnerable information about themselves with the researcher due to lack of familiarity. Further, as this researcher is in a position of power in the interviewer/interviewee dynamic, with a higher education status, participants may have felt a need to portray themselves favorably to this researcher.

Implications for Practice, Intervention and Research

Implications for clinical practice.

The findings from the present study have important implications for clinical practice. The findings suggest that Black/White Multiracial women receive messages within their families and peer groups around their bodies, race, and gender, often rooted in anti-Blackness, that can communicate that parts of their identities are not acceptable, and may encourage them to silence parts of themselves in order to find relational connection. Further, the race, gender, and body socialization messages that Black/White Multiracial women receive within their families and peer groups can be complex, sometimes contradictory, and frequently focus on their physical

bodies, particularly gendered and racialized attributes (skin tone, hair texture, etc). Participants may feel rejected or invalidated by peers based on their racial identities and appearances.

With the Summer 2020 racial reckoning, it appears that Black/White Multiracial women were in need of a non-judgmental, exploratory space to process how these discussions of institutional racism and internalized racism, ripple and echo in their friendships and family dynamics. As racial dynamics in the U.S. continue to shift, clinicians should give consideration to how Black/White Multiracial people are processing this within themselves, their families, and friendships.

Findings for the present study also implicate the therapeutic relationship. The findings of the present study suggest that clinicians should not only consider client's presenting concerns, but also the context and implications of socialization messages that Black/White Multiracial women have received about their race, gender, and bodies. Further, clinicians must attend to racial dynamics in the therapeutic relationship, which can change based on the identities of the provider. It is imperative that clinicians remain aware of the likely recreation of racial enactments in the space. Further, clinicians must be aware that clients may have some fears or ideas about the clinicians perspective on them based on racial identity and appearance.

In discussing racial socialization with participants in the present study, few of them remembered having conversations about racial identity more broadly, but most participants recall impactful messages they received about their bodies. The findings of the present study suggest that clinicians should be attuned to the messages that Black/White Multiracial participants receive within their families about their bodies, and how some of these messages (e.g. lighter skin tone is better, looser curls are more attractive) might stem from anti-Blackness. These findings expand on previous research about Multiracial people, which suggests that physical

appearance is a contributing factor to the challenges of Multiracial people within families, reporting evidence of familial hierarchies related to racialized physical appearance in families in the form of colorism (Nadal, et al., 2011; Nadal, et al., 2013). If participants have siblings, it is possible that they have received messages of comparison between themselves and their siblings around their appearances. Further, the race and gender of their parents could be relevant, such that in heterosexual families if their mothers are White and fathers are Black, versus if their mothers are Black and fathers are White, participants may have had different models for a standard of beauty. It could be helpful for clinicians to ask about racialized appearances within their families and how, if at all this has impacted their experiences.

The present study's findings suggest that participants should encourage compassionate exploration of the messages that participants have received about racial identity more broadly within their families, following the client's lead. Asking open ended, non-judgmental questions about how participants make meaning of their discussion of race within their families, or lack thereof may elucidate how participants have internalized and made sense of these messages. In their search for relational safety and integration of their identities, multiple participants described seeking information about their Black parent's connection to their Blackness in order to understand why there was not much discussion about it. It seemed that, when participants were able to understand their family histories in the context of systemic oppression, they could have compassion for themselves and their parents as individuals existing within a larger system. Clients may then be able to have some space from their parents' racial lenses in order to form their own ideas about their racial identities. In the present study, many participants described being in the process of moving from a place of self-blame and shame regarding their internalized racism, to a place of compassion and curiosity about both sides of their families. One key

component to this is the vocalization of internalized messages, as participant River stated, “It's a process that I feel like I go through daily. I've never wanted to vocalize it because of the implications that come with it like, "Oh, am I racist?" "Do I hate myself?" …So it's been a lot of starting to realize that it might be okay to say some of these things. And in fact, it might be more beneficial for me to vocalize these things. So that I can work through it instead of keeping it bottled up and really internalizing it.”

Another implication involves attending to interpersonal dynamics in participants' relationships. The present study’s findings indicate that relationships in which participants feel the most authentic, non-shamed, and mutually accepted are crucial during the pivotal time of emerging adulthood. It appears that though the race of the participants’ friends contributed to their interpersonal dynamics, it is not necessary for the friends to identify with a particular race. Within these relationships, participants can integrate, challenge, explore, and expand on their identities. Additionally, these relationships may exist within participants’ families, as multiple participants shared that their siblings served in this role, and that they are some of the only people who can really understand what it is like to grow up with their identities within their family system. Further, one area of clinical importance may be sexualization, objectification, and bullying that participants have received around their race, gender, and bodies from peers. The present study suggests that the context of dating can be a particularly fraught arena in which such messages around race, gender, and body can take hold. Clinicians should familiarize with the experiences of Black/White Multiracial women, particularly around family and peer relational dynamics, without assuming that the experiences are monolithic.

The present study has implications for clinicians supporting Black/White Multiracial women in their identity development. Participants shared the importance of feeling that their

identities are valid, regardless of whether they change or stay the same. Having a clinician offer this validation for where clients are in their identity journeys could potentially be a corrective experience for Black/White Multiracial women. In contrast, participants described feeling shamed or pathologized for their racial identities as being particularly harmful. Clinicians should make sure to listen for, clarify, and use the client's language and frame for talking about their racial identities. It could also be helpful for clinicians to question either/or binaries collaboratively with curiosity. Additionally, bringing in consciousness-raising around internalized oppression when it is clinically appropriate could be beneficial.

Implications for community intervention.

The findings from this present study have important implications for community-based intervention. Community interventions are particularly salient for Black/White Multiracial women during the pivotal stage of emerging adulthood, as it is a period of self-focus, instability, identity exploration. Additionally, emerging adults are likely to experience mental health concerns, as feeling anxious or depressed is relatively common during emerging adulthood (Arnett & Schwab, 2014). As such, emerging adulthood can be a particularly impactful time for intervention with regard to facilitating belonging, community, and validation.

Multiple participants noted that they have felt the most comfortable, authentic, and validated in friendships and connections with other Multiracial people, both in one-on-one friendships, and within Multiracial affinity groups. As the present study took place in the context of the Summer 2020 racial reckoning, and as the ongoing struggle to address systemic racism in the US persists, it will be important for Black/White Multiracial women to have spaces in which they can process their internal reactions, family implications, and friendships as racial dynamics continue to be revealed. Many participants in the present study mentioned that they felt that they

did not have many people to talk to about their experiences, and that it would be helpful for them to have a venue to process them with people who share their experience.

The present study's findings suggest that universities' creation and implementation of identity-based Multiracial therapy or support groups, with a group facilitator who has training in working with Multiracial populations, could significantly improve the well-being of Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women, as it would be a space in which students can feel authentic, reflected, and accepted. In addition to validation and relational safety, Multiracial therapy groups and support spaces could be a venue for Black/White Multiracial women to process their internalized oppression, including internalized anti-Black racism, and could vocalize and process their suffering in a non-shaming context. In addition to clinical support groups for Multiracial people, student-led affinity groups could be highly beneficial for Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women, as it could be another venue for relational authenticity and community building. Another option could be the creation of a Multiracial peer mentorship program, in which students are paired with an older student who shares their identity.

In addition to community intervention for Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women, the present study's findings suggest that community intervention for the parents of Black/White Multiracial children could be helpful to support parents around the socialization messages they may transmit to their children. Workshops or support groups, facilitated by a trained professional with awareness of Multiracial identity, could offer support and guidance around discussing race within Multracial families, issues around race, gender, and body socialization, and supporting identity development of Multiracial children.

Implications for research.

The present study was the first to specifically examine the socialization messages that Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women experience within their families and peer contexts, and how these messages influence their self-perceptions and relationships. As this is an under-researched topic within an under-researched population, the present study used exploratory methodology, aiming to present participants' experiences as they described them, with little interpretation. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, many implications and directions for future research about Black/White Multiracial emerged.

More research is needed on how the continuously shifting racial dynamics in the United States impact Black/White Multiracial women. Participants in the present study expressed a desire to process their complex internal experiences, the ripple effect in their family dynamics, and their internal conflicts about addressing race in their friendships. Findings suggested that participants, particularly in their friendships with White people, felt an intensifying need to share their experiences as Black/White Multiracial women, and to feel understood.

The present study raises questions about Black/White Multiracial women whose demographic contexts differ from study participants. All but one participant in the present study spent most of their childhoods and adolescence within predominantly White neighborhoods and school environments. This may be particularly relevant for anti-Black socialization messages that participants received. Future research could investigate the experiences of Black/White Multiracial women who were raised in more racially-diverse contexts, focusing on how their socialization messages may differ, and how these messages impact their self-perceptions and relationships. These findings could have implications for geographic factors in the well-being of Black/White Multiracial people.

The majority of participants' fathers were Black and mothers were White, and this may have implications for body socialization. Quantitative research on the gender of Black/White Multiracial participants' parents could illuminate patterns in racial, gender, and body socialization in this population. Future research could compare the experiences of Black/White Multiracial women within heterosexual partents who have Black mothers and White fathers, and White mothers and Black fathers. Additionally, all participants in the study had heterosexual parents, and more research is needed with participants whose parents are not one mother and one father.

Another direction of future research could be in the area of gender, sexuality, and Multiracial identity. Multiple participants in the present study expressed an expansiveness of ideas around sexuality and gender identity such that participants felt the familiar freedom to identify with multiple things at once, and that their identities have guided them to resist binaries in their sexualities and gender. This finding is reflected in the study sample demographics, as participants' sexual orientations were Bisexual (n=3), Lesbian (n=1), and Straight (n=6), and one participant identified their gender as non-binary, specifying that they were socialized as a woman. More research is needed on the experiences of gender and sexuality within Multiracial populations, exploring if there is a connection between identifying as multiple things at once, Multiracial identity, and LGBTQIA+ identity, and what the clinical implications are for Multiracial LGBTQIA+ people.

Conclusion

Since the 2000 Census, the first time people had the option to select multiple races to describe themselves, the Multiracial population grew from about 6.8 million to about 9 million (United States Census Bureau, 2001). Within this population, the 2010 census showed that the

Black/White Multiracial population increased by 134%, making it one of largest and fastest growing Multiracial identities in the U.S. (United States Census Bureau, 2011). One of the fastest growing Multiracial subgroups is the population of Black/White Multiracial women, who navigate a complicated intersection of privilege and oppression, and may contend with anti-Black racism (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), colorism (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007), sexual objectification (Kelch-Oliver & Leslie, 2007), and identity invalidation (Franco & Franco, 2016), all occurring in the contexts of their families, interactions with peers, or within the larger social context. The present study is the first to my knowledge to specifically explore the socialization messages that Black/White Multiracial women receive around their race, gender, and bodies, and how these messages influence their self-perceptions and relationships.

This study contributed to greater understanding of how Black/White Multiracial emerging adult women are socialized around race, gender, and body within their families and peer contexts, and how this socialization may influence their self-perceptions and relationships. Through conventional content analysis, the findings of the present study revealed themes including a lack of discussion about race within families, gendered, racialized messages, often rooted in anti-Blackness, about the bodies of Black/White Multiracial women within families and peer groups, intrapsychic conflict to make meaning of conflicting messages, authentic relationships, and the expression of identity.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Dear _____ (contact person from relevant organization),

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study about the messages that Black/White Multiracial women receive around their race, gender, and bodies. This study will contribute to knowledge about Black/White Multiracial women attending an undergraduate institution in the U.S., and help with developing culturally competent services for Multiracial college students.

I invite you to participate if you:
- Identify as a woman
- Are enrolled in an undergraduate program at a U.S. college or university
- Have one parent who is Black and the other parent is White.
- Are fluent in English

Your participation in this study will involve an interview over Zoom that will last for 1-2 hours in which the researcher will ask questions about messages you have received around your race, gender, and body.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in participating in this study, you can email me at joynere@bc.edu. If you know of any woman who is of Black/White backgrounds and attending college in the U.S. who may also be interested in participating in the study, please pass on this letter. Thank you for your consideration in participating in this study. If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact me at joynere@bc.edu or X. Whatever your decision about participating, thank you very much for considering this invitation.

Sincerely,
Emily Joyner, M.A.
Department of Counseling, Developmental and Educational Psychology Boston College

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Boston College
Department of Counseling, Developmental, and Educational Psychology

Informed Consent Form for Participation in "The Influence of Race, Gender, and Body Socialization on the Self-Perceptions and Relationships of Black/White Multiracial Emerging Adult Women"

Researcher: Emily Joyner

Introduction:

You are being asked to be in a research study on the messages that Black/White Multiracial women receive around their race, gender, and bodies. You were chosen to be in the study because you have one Black parent and one White parent, you are over the age of 18, and you are currently a college student. Before signing, please read this whole form. Please ask the researcher any questions you may have before you agree to participate in the study.

Purpose of Study:

This study is being completed by Emily Joyner, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling, Developmental, and Educational Psychology at Boston College. The goal of this study is to better understand the messages that Black/White Multiracial women receive around their race, gender, and bodies, and how these messages influence the way Black/White Multiracial women relate to others and think about themselves.

What will happen in the Study:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to complete an interview that lasts between one and two hours. During this interview, I will ask you questions about messages that you have received about your race, gender, and body from family members, classmates, friends, the media, and social media. Additionally, I will ask questions about how these messages influence your relationships and how you think about yourself. You do not have to answer questions that make you uncomfortable, and you can stop the interview at any time. Interviews will be audiotaped and will occur virtually via Zoom.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are minimal physical, social and economic risks associated with being in this study. There are some psychological risks associated with being in this study. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable when being asked or answering certain questions. If this is the case, you will be

provided with some brief support by the researcher and a list of referrals for counseling services, if necessary. Additionally, the study may include some risks that are unknown at this time.

By being in this study, you will help to provide information on the experiences, relationships, and mental health of Black/White Multiracial women. By being in this study, you may also come to better understand your own views on these topics. Your responses may also help to inform research and clinical work with Multiracial people in the United States.

Payments and Costs of Being in the Study:

There is no payment for being in this research study. There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Confidentiality:

All interviews will be conducted by the researcher via telephone or on Zoom in a private setting. All audio-recordings and interview transcripts will be kept private. If names, or other personally identifiable information, are used during the interview, they will be replaced with fake names in the interview transcript. This form will be kept separately from the information you provide during the interview. This form and audio-recordings will be kept in a password-protected file. The audio-recordings will be destroyed after the interviews are transcribed. Electronic copies of the interview transcripts will be coded and secured using a password-protected file.
In any sort of scholarly publication or other documents resulting from this research, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. If I quote you, or other participants from the study, I will replace your name with a fake name.
In the event that you disclose information about current physical or sexual abuse of anyone under the age of 18, as a mandated reporter, I am required to report the abuse to the local authorities in the state in which the abuse is occurring.

The data collected from this study will be kept for five years after the results of this study are published. At that time, the consent forms will be shredded and the interview transcripts will be destroyed. The Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. State or federal laws or court orders may also require that information from your research study records be released. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless we are legally required to do so.

Choosing to be in this Study and Choosing to Quit this Study:

Choosing to be in this study is voluntary. You are free to quit at any time, for any reason. There is no punishment for not taking part in or quitting this study. If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relationships with me, Dr. Usha Tummala-Narra or Boston College.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher leading this study is Emily Joyner. For questions, or more information about this study, you may contact her at X or joynere@bc.edu or her faculty advisor, Dr. Usha Tummala-Narra, at X or usha.tummala@bc.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a person in this study, you may contact Dr. Erin Sibley, Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778 or irb@bc.edu.

Statement of Consent:

I have read this whole consent form. I understand the purpose of the study and have had all of my questions answered. I understand that I do not have to answer all questions asked during the interview, and I am able to stop participation at any time, without punishment. I understand that my interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. I understand that my name and any other personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. I understand that there are no payments or costs to me for being in this study. I give my consent to be in this study and allow the researcher to use my responses in scholarly publications. I have received a copy of this form.

Study Participant (Print Name): _____
Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Background Information Form

Age:

Gender:

Sexual orientation:

Racial identity:

Ethnic identity:

Parent 1 racial/ethnic identity:

Parent 2 racial/ethnic identity:

Religion:

Socioeconomic status:

Year in college:

Parent 1 education level and occupation:

Parent 2 education level and occupation:

Current geographic location:

Geographic location of upbringing:

Racial makeup of high school:

Racial makeup of college:

Self-perceived racial appearance:

Socially-perceived racial appearance:

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Part 1, Racial Socialization, Self-Perceptions, and Relationships

1) Tell me a bit about where you grew up
    a. What was the racial makeup of your school?
    b. What was the dominant culture and racial group where you grew up? Did you feel that you were a part of that culture and racial group(s)?
2) Do you remember the first time you thought about your race? Tell me a story about that experience (it could be one of the first times, does not have to be the first if you don't remember). How old were you? What do you remember about that?
3) Thinking back to your childhood and adolescence in your family, did people talk about race? Can you think of any stories in which race came up in your family?
    a. If not, how did you understand that?
    b. If yes, can you tell me about the way race was discussed, or any messages you received around race in your family from your parents, siblings, or extended family?
    c. How did your parents talk about race? Were there any differences in the messages you received between your parents? Can you give me any examples/stories/memories about this?
    d. (If they have siblings) How did your siblings talk about race? How might their experiences around race be similar or different from yours?
    e. What about in your extended family, can you tell me about any stories or memories you have where you received messages about race from them?
4) Did you get any messages around race from your friends/classmates/peers? If yes, what

were they? How did your friends/classmates talk about race? Can you think of any stories in which race came up with friends or classmates?

   a. Are there any experiences in school with friends around race that stand out to you?
   b. Did these experiences with peers around race change when you were in elementary school, middle school, or high school?

5) How about in the media, like movies, TV, celebrities, did you get any messages around race that way? If yes, can you tell me about them? Are there any particular memories of anything you've watched/consumed/engaged with that made you think about your race?
   a. What about social media in particular? Can you think of any messages around race that you received from those platforms?
6) Thinking about these messages that you received around race (the interviewer can call back to those experiences and list them), did they impact how you see yourself?
   a. If yes, how did they impact how you see yourself? What did those messages mean for you, about you?
   b. If not, why do you think that is?
7) Going off of that, did they influence how you interacted with other people and how you related to other people like in friendships, romantic relationships, etc?
   a. If yes, how so?
8) Can you describe the most important relationships in your life (friends, romantic, family)? Does race influence those relationships? If yes, how so?
   a. What are the best parts of those relationships? The most challenging parts?
9) What about other past or present relationships that don't come to mind as easily (maybe

relationships where the memories aren't as intense), are there any other voices in your life that impact you? How does your race come up in those relationships?

10) Do you ever feel that you have to hide parts of yourself related to your race in those relationships? If yes, how so?
11) When you have gotten these different messages, have they been helpful, have they been stressful? If so, in what ways?
12) How did you cope with these messages? Do some of them contradict each other? What do you do to reconcile that?

I'm going to pause for a few moments now to check in and describe the next part of the interview. How was that first part of the interview for you? Do you need a break?

For this next section, it's now shifting gears and moving to a place that focuses on the physical body. It's meant to address themes around messages about your body that you've gotten from different people . I'll be asking about any stories or memories that come to mind in which people gave you messages about your body or physical appearance.

Part 2, Body Socialization, Self-Perceptions, and Relationships

Now the interview is going to switch gears a bit, and focus on messages you received around your body.

13) Thinking back, did you receive any particular messages about your body in your family? Can you think of any stories or memories related to this?
    a. If yes, what were those messages? What people in your family gave you those messages (parents, extended family, siblings)? Were they different based on which

family member?

b. Did any messages around the physical characteristics of your body? (hair color/texture, skin color, body type, etc) come up within your family? How so? (parents, siblings, extended family)

14) Did you get any messages around your body or physical features from your friends/classmates? If yes, what were they? Can you think of any stories or memories related to this?

15) Have you gotten any messages around your body from the media (television, movies, celebrities)? If yes, what were they? Are there particular memories of anything you've watched/consumed/engaged with that stand out to you?

a. How about on social media? Do you get any messages there about your body? What were they?

16) Thinking about these messages that you received around your body (the interviewer can call back to those experiences and list them), do you feel like they've influenced the way you see yourself? If yes, how so?

17) How have they influenced how you relate to other people like in romantic relationships, friendships, etc? Can you share an example?

18) Can you describe some of the most important relationships in your life (friends, romantic, family)? Do messages around body influence those relationships? If yes, how so?

a. What are the best parts of those relationships? The most challenging parts?

19) Do you ever feel that you have to hide parts of yourself related to your body in those relationships? If yes, how so?

20) What about other relationships that don't come to mind as easily (maybe relationships

where the memories aren't as intense), are there any other voices in your life that impact you? How does your body come up in those relationships?

21) When you have gotten these different messages, have they been helpful, have they been stressful? If so, in what ways?

22) How do you cope with these messages? Do some of them contradict each other? What do you do to reconcile that?

Probe examples:

"help me understand what that means to you"

"can you tell me more?"

"can you share an example so I can understand it better?"

I'm going to pause for a few moments again to check in and describe the next part of the interview as it's going to shift. First, how's it going? Do you need a break?

For this next section, I will focus on messages that you've gotten about being a girl or woman. This section is meant to address themes around messages about your gender that you've gotten from different people. I'll be asking about any stories or memories that come to mind in which people gave you messages about your gender.

Part 3, Gender Socialization, Self-Perceptions, and Relationships

Now the interview is going to switch gears a bit, and focus on messages you received around gender

23) Thinking back, can you think of any messages you received around being a girl or woman within your family? Are there any stories or memories that come to mind around this?

    a. (If they have siblings) How about with your sibling(s)?

b. What about with your extended family?

24) Can you tell me about any messages you received around your gender from your peers? Do any memories stand out to you?

25) Have you received any messages around your gender from the media (television, movies, celebrities)? Is there any media in particular that you've seen/read/heard that gave you messages around being a woman?

a. How about on social media? Do you get any messages there about your gender?

26) Thinking about these messages that you received around your gender (the interviewer can call back to those experiences and list them), how do you feel that they influenced the way you perceive yourself?

27) How have they influenced how you relate to other people?

28) Can you describe the most important relationships in your life (friends, romantic, family)? Does gender influence those relationships? If yes, how so?

a. What are the best parts of those relationships? The most challenging parts?

b. Do you ever feel that you have to hide parts of yourself related to gender in those relationships? If yes, how so?

29) What about other relationships that don't come to mind as easily (maybe relationships where the memories aren't as intense), are there any other voices in your life that impact you? How does your gender come up in those relationships?

30) When you have gotten these different messages, have they been helpful, have they been stressful? If so, in what ways?

31) How did you cope with these messages? Do some of them contradict each other? What do you do to reconcile that?

This last portion of the interview is meant to get at how these messages and experiences around your race, gender, and body come together. The previous questions have focused on parts of your experience and identities, and this next set of questions focus on how these different parts of your life come together for you. They are also getting at the situations and times when you feel most free to be all parts of yourself, and when you may have to either hide or even stifle parts of yourself.

Part 4, Integration of race, body, and gender messages

32) Are there any other identities that you feel influence how you see yourself and relate to other people that we didn't get to talk about today? If yes, what are they? What role do they have?

33) Now that we've talked about these messages around your race, body, and gender, how do each of these parts of you fit together? Do these parts fit together? If so, how?

34) Is there a context or space in which you feel most free to be your authentic self? What is that space like and how do you access it?

35) Have you had any relationships (or moments in a relationship) in which you felt like you could be all parts of yourself at once and still feel accepted? Can you think of a story about this?

    a. How did that person make you feel?

    b. What helped you feel that way?

36) Have you had any experiences or relationships that helped you cope with discrimination/racism/sexism/other stress, that felt healing to you? Can you remember a specific example of this?

    a. What made that person or experience positive or healing?

37) Are there any relationships in which you have to hide parts of yourself in order to connect? Can you describe those?

38) When do you feel most connected with others? Is there anyone with whom you feel that you can be your authentic self? Can you describe those relationships?

Wrapping Up

39) Is there anything else that you would like me to know that I didn't ask you or you didn't get to say? About your experience or about being Multiracial?

40) What advice do you have for other Multiracial girls or women based on what you've experienced?