



How Do Parents Of Multiracial Children Describe Multiracial Socialization?

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Abstract

Despite the unique experience of interracial families, research on parents of Multiracial children and their racial socialization experiences is scarce. Thus, the current study investigates the socialization practices of parents with Multiracial children. In addition, we examine the links between Multiracial-specific socialization, parent's own racial background, and their perceptions of their children's Multiracial social experiences. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, we coded parents' spontaneous descriptions of Multiracial-specific socialization and measured their quantitative self-reports of engagement in cultural socialization, Multiracial stigma awareness, perceived child's frequency of identity denial experiences, and perceived child's sense of racial belonging among peers. Qualitative analysis revealed additional themes of Multiracial-specific socialization (i.e., physical appearance, Multiracial pride, family ancestry, parents of different backgrounds, Multiracial network). Quantitative analyses revealed that parents' Multiracial stigma awareness and perceptions of their child's identity denial experiences were related to their engagement in Multiracial-specific socialization. Additionally, Multiracial parents reported greater Multiracial stigma awareness compared to monoracial minority parents. Parents of Multiracial children described additional themes as Multiracial-specific socialization, expanding the current literature. Additionally, greater awareness of Multiracial experiences related to greater engagement in racial socialization. Future work should further explore parents' experiences of Multiracial-specific socialization.

Keywords Multiracial socialization · Parental racial socialization · Multiracial children · Mixed methods · Stigma

From 1980 to 2015, the percentage of Multiracial¹ infants (i.e., infants who have parents of different races or who have a parent who is Multiracial) in the U.S. nearly tripled (Livingston, 2017). Given this population growth, research about Multiracial people has become increasingly relevant (Parker et al., 2015). Recently, researchers have also increasingly focused on Multiracial children, including examining experiences of familial racial socialization in interracial families (i.e., families where the parents belong to different racial groups; Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Csizmadia & Atkin, 2022; Seider & Huguley, 2023). While interracial marriages have increased over time, suggesting a shift in interracial attitudes (Qian & Litcher, 2011), research has demonstrated that bias

and discrimination against interracial and minority families still exists today (Lee et al., 2019; Pittman et al., 2024). Additionally, Multiracial people experience discrimination based on their minority monoracial group memberships and their Multiracial group membership (Sanchez et al., 2020). Given the stigma against interracial families and Multiracial people, it is critical to examine how parents of Multiracial youth discuss the topics of race and racial identity with their children. Such research provides guidance to parents of Multiracial youth on best racial socialization practices to promote positive well-being among the Multiracial population. Thus, the present study focuses on racial socialization by parents of Multiracial children and how this socialization relates to their perceptions of their Multiracial child's well-being. Critical Multiracial Theory, or MultiCrit, has become a guiding foundation to describe how race and racism uniquely impact Multiracial people in the U.S. (Harris,

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¹ We treat Multiracial and Biracial as proper nouns to validate these racial identities as specific racial groups, just as other specific racial groups are treated as proper nouns (e.g., Black, Asian; see Sanchez et al., 2020).

2016). Specifically, the *monoracial paradigm of race* tenet within MultiCrit emphasizes that the American culture treats racial categories as “mutually exclusive,” which stigmatizes Multiracial individuals for having multiple racial backgrounds. This theory has also been applied to parental racial socialization research to demonstrate that Multiracial socialization is its own construct with similar socialization strategies used by monoracial families, as well as unique socialization strategies (Atkin et al., 2022b). However, much of this research involved Multiracial people reflecting on their parents’ racial socialization behaviors (Atkin et al., 2022a; Atkin et al., 2022b; Britain et al., 2013; Chong & Kuo, 2015; Jackson et al., 2019; Synder 2012) or parents from specific Multiracial family populations reporting on their experiences, such as White mothers of Black-White Multiracial children (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Csizmadia et al., 2014; O’Donoghue, 2005; Rauktis et al., 2016; Stone & Dolbin-Macnab, 2017). In the current research, we explored how a diverse group of parents with Multiracial children describe their own racial socialization efforts, how these descriptions relate to their perceptions of Multiracial experiences, and test whether Multiracial parents engage in greater Multiracial-specific socialization than monoracial minority, and monoracial White parents.

Parental Racial Socialization for Multiracial Children

Parents who educate their children about their race/ethnicity have children who report more positive youth adjustment, such as self-esteem, psychological well-being, and ethnic-racial identification (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). Parents’ socialization efforts take many forms including cultural socialization (i.e., teaching children about their racial heritage and history), preparation for bias (i.e., preparing children for experiences with racial discrimination), and talking openly about race (Hughes et al., 2006; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Most research has focused on socialization themes among African American families including the cultivation of racial pride, discussion of racial barriers and counter stereotypes, and the promotion of interracial mistrust (Barr & Neville, 2008). Research finds that White parents, in comparison, tend to adopt colorblind socialization strategies about race, i.e., asserting that race is a “non-issue,” and no racial differences exist (Hagerman, 2014; Herman, 2019).

Research on Multiracial people’s reflections finds that Multiracial families use similar racial socialization strategies as previously described, although adapted to benefit Multiracial children specifically, and engage in specific Multiracial socialization strategies. For example, Multiracial adults who recalled their own racial socialization experiences described their parents preparing them for experiencing general racial

bias and monoracism (i.e., prejudice for not being monoracial or for having multiple racial backgrounds). Additionally, they described Multiracial identity socialization, in which their parents highlighted their Multiracial identity or multiple heritages (Atkin et al., 2022a).

The aforementioned qualitative study greatly contributed to the literature on Multiracial socialization, especially given that a 2019 review of the literature on ethnic-racial socialization of Multiracial Americans found that only 21 articles had examined the topic (Atkin & Yoo, 2019). This review also revealed that of the 21 articles, only seven featured parents of Multiracial children sharing their behaviors and experiences (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Csizmadia et al., 2014; Harris et al., 2013; O’Donoghue, 2005; Rauktis et al., 2016; Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Stone & Dolbin-Macnab, 2017). The majority of the articles featured Multiracial adults reflecting on their youth racial socialization experiences, which was Atkin and colleagues’ (2022a) approach as well. Further, only three of the seven articles with parents of Multiracial children assessed parents’ descriptions of their race-related conversations with their children or their racial socialization strategies. Thus, one aim of the current research was to learn how parents *themselves* spontaneously describe Multiracial-specific socialization.

Parents’ Perceptions of Multiracial Experiences Relate to Racial Socialization Use

In addition to learning about parents’ Multiracial-specific socialization strategies, the current research also aimed to explore how parents’ perceptions of their child’s Multiracial experiences relate to their use of Multiracial-specific socialization (i.e., their written descriptions of how they socialize their children) and cultural socialization (i.e., utilizing a scale from previous work so we may explore parents’ engagement in racial socialization as it is commonly assessed). In related work, Atkin and Jackson (2021) proposed a conceptual model suggesting that intervening conditions or situational factors, such as parent characteristics (e.g., parent race/ethnicity) and family dynamics (e.g., parent racial awareness), influence parents’ engagement in familial support of Multiracial experiences (e.g., validating Multiracial children’s racial discrimination experiences or supporting the expression of a child’s Multiracial identity). Similarly, the current research explored how parent’s perceptions of their child’s Multiracial experiences relate to their socialization use. Guided by MultiCrit (Harris, 2016), we chose to focus on parent’ perceptions of Multiracial experiences that arise from the *monoracial paradigm of race*. Specifically, this exclusive culture fosters an environment fraught with stigma against Multiracial people and norms

of challenging Multiracial identification and excluding Multiracial peers (Atkin et al., 2022b; Harris, 2016). Thus, the current research proposed that parents' perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences (e.g., greater awareness of Multiracial stigma, perceiving that one's child frequently experiences identity denial and lower racial belonging) were associated with greater use of Multiracial-specific and cultural socialization.

Parents' perceptions play a vital role in socialization behaviors. For example, Veitch and colleagues (2006) showed that parents who perceive that their children have little independence tend to restrict where they allow their children to engage in active free-play. Research also showed that parents' perceptions of their child's health influence their motivation to change their child's nutritional practices (Duncanson et al., 2013). To our knowledge, no prior research has examined parents' perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences, such as their child's identity denial experiences and racial belonging. In the current research, we specifically examined how parents' Multiracial stigma awareness, perceptions of their child's identity denial experiences, and perceptions of their child's sense of racial belonging among peers related to parents' engagement in Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization.

Multiracial Stigma Awareness

Multiracial people experience Multiracial-specific stigma, i.e., encounter negative experiences and stereotypes that are specifically related to their Multiracial identity (Sanchez et al., 2020). In addition to encountering stereotypes based on their monoracial racial group memberships (e.g., Black stereotypes), Multiracial people also encounter stereotypes based on their Multiracial group membership (Sanchez et al., 2020). For example, researchers found that when participants spontaneously listed stereotypes of Biracial people (i.e., people with two racial backgrounds), unique stereotypes arose that differed from stereotypes of monoracial racial groups (e.g., stereotypes that Multiracial people are universally attractive and do not fit in or belong; Skinner et al., 2020). Other examples of Multiracial stereotypes include stereotypes that they are confused about their racial identity (Albuja et al., 2018) and that they are social outcasts (Remedios et al., 2012). Additionally, Multiracial people encounter harmful "positive" Multiracial stereotypes such as being portrayed as a sign of racial equality in the U.S. (Chang, 2016) or being fetishized for their Multiracial background (Jones & Rogers, 2022; Sims, 2012). Johnson (2024) demonstrated through semi-structured interviews that some parents of Multiracial children were aware of Multiracial beauty stereotypes, such as the belief that Multiracial people are inherently attractive because of their mixed heritage. Further, because of this

stereotype awareness, these parents socialized their children to reject these stereotypes (Johnson, 2024). Expanding prior research, we predicted that parents' Multiracial stigma awareness more broadly (e.g., knowledge of Multiracial stereotypes and experiences, such as pressure to choose one racial background identification) would be associated with greater engagement in Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization.

Perceived Child's Identity Denial Experiences

Multiracial people experience identity denial such as feeling pressure to choose a singular racial identity (Gaither, 2015; Sanchez et al., 2020) or being told that they cannot identify with a certain racial group (Albuja et al., 2019). Additionally, Multiracial people can experience identity denial and discrimination from multiple sources, including their own racial group(s), other racial groups, and even from family members (Franco & Carter, 2019; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Parents' perceptions of how frequently their child experiences identity denial may relate to their engagement in Multiracial socialization, as socialization may include providing strategies to cope with denial. For example, researchers found that Multiracial socialization messages included preparation for monoracist messages and for experiences of social exclusion based on their Multiracial identity (Atkin et al., 2022b). Thus, we predicted that perceiving one's child as frequently experiencing identity denial would be associated with greater engagement in Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization.

Perceived Child's Sense of Racial Belonging Among Peers

Multiracial individuals often report feeling less belonging than monoracial individuals. For example, Multiracial people report feeling rejected by others, confused about where they belong, and pressured to choose one of their racial groups rather than identifying as Multiracial (Gaither, 2015; Sanchez, 2010; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Parents' perceptions of their child's sense of racial belonging among peers may relate to their engagement in Multiracial socialization. For example, parents may take action to intervene if they perceive that their child has a lower sense of racial belonging, such as actively setting up time for their child to play with other peers or actively exposing their child to more people who are also Multiracial. Thus, we predicted that perceiving one's child as having a lower sense of racial belonging among peers would relate to greater engagement in Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization.

Differences in Multiracial Socialization Based on Parent's Racial Background

The last aim of the current research was to explore differences in engagement in Multiracial socialization based on the parent's racial background. Specifically, we compared Multiracial parents, monoracial minority parents, and monoracial White parents. Research on parental support of Multiracial youth guided our predictions. Atkin and colleagues (2023) surveyed Multiracial adults of diverse racial backgrounds and found that they reported their White parents as providing less support of Multiracial experiences compared to monoracial minority parents and Multiracial parents. Given suggestions that familial support of Multiracial experiences and Multiracial socialization are theoretically complementary (Csizmadia & Atkin, 2022), we predicted that Multiracial and monoracial minority parents would engage in greater Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization compared to monoracial White parents. We also examined whether Multiracial parents also reported the highest awareness of Multiracial-specific concerns (i.e., Multiracial stigma awareness, perceived child's identity denial experiences, and perceived child's sense of racial belonging among peers).

Current Research

Three research questions guided the data analyses for the current project: RQ1) How do parents of Multiracial children spontaneously describe their Multiracial-specific socialization practices?, RQ2) How do parents' perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences relate to engagement in Multiracial socialization (as indicated from the coding of their descriptions) and cultural socialization (as indicated by standard measures of ethnic-racial socialization)?, and RQ3) Do Multiracial, monoracial minority, and monoracial White parents differ in their engagement in Multiracial socialization? We employed a mixed methods research design to examine these questions. This research project is a secondary data analysis of a larger data collection project on socialization practices among interracial and intraracial families, and though we had predictions about some patterns of results, we examined two-tailed significance tests for the quantitative analyses to be conservative in conclusions and to reflect the exploratory nature of the study.

Following previous research on Multiracial socialization, we collected open-ended survey response data to answer RQ1 so that we could explore content themes within participants' responses. While we did not make exact predictions of themes that would appear in this open-ended data, we expected that some themes from Atkin and colleagues (2022a) Multiracial socialization research with Multiracial adults may be replicated in the current research. For RQ2 and RQ3, we utilized quantitative survey data analysis

including correlations (RQ2) and two-tailed t-tests (RQ3). Specifically, for RQ2, we predicted that parents' Multiracial stigma awareness would correlate with greater engagement in Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization. Additionally, we predicted that parents' perceptions of their Multiracial child's identity denial experiences would correlate with higher engagement in Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization. We also predicted that parents' perceptions of their Multiracial child's racial belonging among peers would correlate with their engagement in Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization. For RQ3, we predicted that Multiracial and monoracial minority parents would report engaging in greater Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization compared to monoracial White parents.

Method

Researcher Statement of Positionality

The first author identifies as a Black/White biracial woman. Her research focuses on the experiences of Multiracial people and parents of Multiracial children. The second author identifies as a White woman. Her research primarily focuses on the experiences of stigmatized identity group members. The third author identifies as a Latinx/White biracial women and mother of two biracial children. She has studied Multiracial topics for nearly 20 years but has broad expertise in close relationships, identity, and stigma. All authors grew up and currently live in the U.S. Biracial researchers have personal experience with Multiracial socialization, which has guided their selection and revision of study measures to be applicable to parents of Multiracial children. All authors were involved in the development of study objectives and design as well as the review and editing of the manuscript. The first author was involved in designing the codebook for thematic analysis of open-ended response data, training the research assistants to code the open-ended response data, data analysis and writing the original draft. The first author's experience as a Biracial person provided her with familiarity in the topics participants wrote about, which assisted in her design of the thematic codebook. At the time of the coding, one research assistant identified as a White woman and the second research assistant identified as a Black man. The research assistants were encouraged to describe additional themes for the codebook, but did not identify any themes not already included in the codebook.

Participants and Procedure

The current research analyzed data collected from a larger IRB-approved study. The goals of the larger study were to

explore the questions in the present research, as well as explore a separate research question investigating differences among parents of Multiracial children, parents of monoracial minority children, and parents of monoracial White children. Thus, the data includes a larger sample of parents of non-Multiracial children and additional measures to explore separate research questions on interracial and intraracial families. In the present research, we only reported on parents of Multiracial children and on measures administered that pertain to the current analysis. A full description of all measures presented to participants and data files are publicly available at the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/kwt39/?view_only=bd9d00bf9fa5479892cc3bcaba64a73f). This study was not pre-registered.

We recruited participants in 2020 through online crowdsourcing recruitment platforms, Prolific (paid \$2.70) and Amazon Mechanical Turk Toolkit (paid \$2.25). We also used social media to recruit a community sample given the difficulty of recruiting parents of Multiracial children solely using online crowdsourcing recruitment platforms. We sent advertisements to various Facebook groups (e.g., Unapologetically Biracial, Parent 2 Parent). These participants had the option to enter a raffle for a chance to win one of five \$100 Amazon gift cards, but no other compensation was given.

The complete sample included 742 parents living in the United States with a child between the ages of five and 30 years old. We chose five as the minimum age because adults believe they should first talk to children about race at around that age (Sullivan et al., 2021). We chose 30 as the maximum age because more than half of adults ages 18 to 24 in the U.S. live with their parents (United States Census Bureau, 2020). For this project, we focus only on parents of Multiracial children between the ages of five and 18.²

After removing participants who completed less than 90% of the survey ($n=50$), who answered two attention checks incorrectly ($n=24$), who completed the survey in under 1/3 of the median completion time ($n=14$), whose children were younger than 4 years old or older than 18 years old ($n=42$), who were parents of a monoracial White child ($n=192$), who were parents of a monoracial racial minority child ($n=173$), and one participant who did not respond to a key variable for the analyses, the final sample included 246 participants (77.2% mothers, parents' $M_{\text{age}}=38.4$ years, $SD_{\text{age}}=10.1$ years, participants' child $M_{\text{age}}=10.1$ years, $SD_{\text{age}}=3.9$, 25.6% recruited via Prolific, 27.2% recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk Toolkit, 47.2% recruited via

community sampling). An a priori power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) for ANOVAs suggested a sample size of $N=207$ would achieve power of .90 (average medium effect size of $f=0.25$, $\alpha=.05$, number of groups=3). Most of the Multiracial children had a Minority/White background (60.2%), with the most common being a Black/White Biracial child (23.3%) (Table 1 for further demographic information). After consenting to the study, participants completed all measures in a randomized order through an online Qualtrics survey. The measures described below include four quantitative measures (each measure includes a range from three items to eight items) and one open-ended measure. The median time of study completion (including measures not described here) was approximately 19 min.

Quantitative Measures

Cultural Socialization

We used six items from prior research to measure participants' engagement in cultural socialization behaviors ($\alpha=.85$; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2001). We chose to focus on cultural socialization because prior work suggests cultural socialization is a common strategy used among multiple ethnic groups (e.g., African American, Asian American, Latinx, and Biracial) and represents the strategy of educating your child about their racial background (Simon, 2021). The scale included items such as, "I teach my child about the cultural values and beliefs of their multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds" and "I teach my child to participate in activities that are related to their multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds." We measured the items using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very much true*).

Multiracial Stigma Awareness

We created eight items to measure participants' awareness of Multiracial stigma and stereotypes ($\alpha=.79$). The scale included items such as, "Multiracial people might experience pressure when choosing their racial identity" and "Multiracial people encounter stereotypes specific to their Multiracial identity" (Table 2 for all scale items). We measured the items using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Perceived Child's Identity Denial Experiences

We used seven items from prior research to measure participants' perceptions of their child's experiences with identity denial ($\alpha=.88$; Albuja et al., 2019). The scale included items such as, "How often do you think your child is asked what race they are?" and "How often do you think your child is

² Among the sample of parents of Multiracial children, only 29 participants completed the survey thinking of a child above the age of 18. Given that the age range of 19–30 was the smallest group among our participants, we conducted analyses excluding these participants.

Table 1 Participant demographics

Demographic information	Final sample	
	<i>n</i>	%
Parent's race		
White	79	32.1
Multiracial	51	20.7
Asian	42	17.1
Hispanic/Latino/a/x	33	13.4
Black/African American	30	12.2
Native American/Indigenous	5	2.0
Not listed	4	1.6
Middle Eastern or North African	2	0.8
2nd parent's race		
White	84	34.1
Multiracial	52	21.1
Black/African American	49	19.9
Asian	26	10.6
Hispanic/Latino/a/x	23	9.3
Not listed	5	2.0
Native American/Indigenous	4	1.6
Middle Eastern or North African	2	0.8
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	0.4
Child's race		
White & Black	57	23.3
More than two races	56	22.8
White & Asian	42	17.0
White & Latinx	36	14.6
Selected one race	16	6.5
Black & Latinx	11	4.5
White & Native American	8	3.3
Black & Asian	6	2.4
White & middle Eastern	4	1.6
Asian & middle Eastern	2	0.8
Not listed	2	0.8
Black & native American	1	0.4
White & native Hawaiian	1	0.4
Latinx & Asian	1	0.4
Latinx & native American	1	0.4
Latinx & native Hawaiian	1	0.4
Asian & native American	1	0.4
Parent's age	$M = 38.4$, $SD = 10.1$	
Child's age	$M = 10.1$, $SD = 3.9$	
	Range:	
	Ages 5–10: 56.9%	
	Ages 11–18: 43.1%	
Parent's gender		
Woman	190	77.2
Man	53	21.5
Another identity (e.g., Transman)	2	0.8
Non-binary	1	0.4
Child's gender		

Table 1 (continued)

Demographic information	Final sample	
	<i>n</i>	%
Girl	132	53.7
Boy	110	44.7
Another identity not listed	4	1.6

Note. 5.8% of parents in the Multiracial children category only reported one race when describing their child's racial identity, however they indicated that their child had multiple racial backgrounds, and thus, were categorized as parents of Multiracial children

told they should racially identify differently?" We measured the items using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*very frequently*).

Perceived Child's Sense of Racial Belonging among Peers

We created a measure of participants' perception of their child's sense of racial belonging among their peers ($\alpha = 0.79$). The three scale items were, "My child feels racially accepted by their peers;" "My child feels racially understood by their peers" and "My child feels racially excluded by their peers." We measured the items using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Qualitative Measures

Multiracial Socialization: Open-ended Race Discussion Questions

We asked participants the following open-ended question: "What conversations have you had with your child about race?" We chose a vague question about race-related conversations based on prior racial socialization work with parents of Multiracial children (Byrd & Garwick, 2006). Additionally, we did not specify Multiracial identity in this question so that we could explore whether parents spontaneously described Multiracial-specific socialization. Thus, we focused on qualitative content coding analysis for the first question. We explored themes of Multiracial socialization among participants' description of their race discussions with their children and their racial socialization behaviors. Following prior research on qualitative content coding (O'Conner & Joffe, 2020; Woike, 2007), the authors reviewed the dataset and identified recurrent themes in response to the question. The first theme of focus was any broad description of Multiracial socialization, i.e., any acknowledgment of the child having multiple racial identities

Table 2 Multiracial stigma awareness scale

Multiracial stigma awareness scale items
1. Multiracial people encounter unique discrimination
2. Multiracial people might experience pressure when choosing their racial identity
3. Multiracial people encounter stereotypes specific to their multiracial identity
4. Multiracial people should learn strategies to navigate their multiracial identity
5. Multiracial people are stereotyped as being confused about their racial identity
6. Multiracial people may have trouble fitting in
7. Multiracial people sometimes struggle to find acceptance in monoracial communities
8. Multiracial people are stereotyped as being physically attractive

(Atkin & Yoo, 2019). Within the responses where this theme was present, the authors then developed subsequent themes within Multiracial socialization based on the frequency of the topic appearing in the data and how representative the topic was of multiple participants’ responses. The authors identified ten themes within Multiracial socialization present responses.

The first author developed a codebook of themes and described the themes to two undergraduate research assistants (RAs) with previous qualitative coding training and experience who functioned as independent coders. RAs coded all responses for the presence (coded as a 1) or absence (coded as a 0) of a theme in participants’ responses. Next, intercoder reliability between the RAs was determined for each theme, using Cohen’s kappa for two raters. If RAs did not meet sufficient reliability (below .7), authors met separately with RAs and considered any revisions to themes, and then RAs re-coded the responses. We repeated this process until all themes reached sufficient intercoder reliability. In the first round of coding for the presence of a Multiracial socialization theme, Cohen’s kappa reached .76 and thus reached sufficient intercoder reliability. In the first round of coding for the subsequent themes, Cohen’s kappa values ranged from .30 to .78 and seven of the ten themes were sent back for re-coding. After the second round of coding, RAs reached sufficient intercoder reliability for all themes (ranging from .72 to .96). Finally, RAs discussed and settled any remaining discrepancies (i.e., decided together whether the theme was present or not for each remaining response).

Results

RQ1: Parents of Multiracial Children’s Descriptions of Multiracial Socialization

To assess how parents describe Multiracial-specific socialization, we used qualitative content coding on their responses to the following open-ended question: “What conversations have you had with your child about race?”. 16 participants wrote “N/A” as their response to this question. Participants’

responses ranged from 1 sentence long to a maximum of 13 sentences long, with 2 sentences being the average length of responses (39.8% of participants wrote 1 sentence, 23.6% of participants wrote 2 sentences, 14.2% of participants wrote 3 sentences, 6.1% of participants wrote 4 sentences, 4.9% of participants wrote 5 sentences, and 4.8% of participants wrote 6 or more sentences). The average word count was approximately 36 words.

Findings revealed that 76 of the 246 participants spontaneously wrote about Multiracial-specific socialization. Examples of writing about Multiracial socialization include, “I have explained to her that she comes from a mix of two countries and even though some traditions are different it is important that she engages in both equally”, “I’ve had a conversation telling my child that in some places people will think that you’re too White to be Black and also too Black to be White”, and “I explained that even though she has light colored skin, she still has African American in her.” The majority of participants did not write about Multiracial socialization. The content of these responses included discussions about racial discrimination broadly (not Multiracial-specific discrimination; e.g., “What discrimination is and why it exists and how it’s wrong”), teaching colorblind ideology (e.g., “I’ve just told her that we’re all equal and race and skin color doesn’t matter”), and teaching egalitarian ideology (i.e., everyone should be treated equally; “I drum it into her ear that she should be friendly, tolerant and nice to everyone not withstanding their race”).

Within the responses that were identified as Multiracial socialization, the authors identified ten themes. Five of the themes replicated, or were similar, to themes from Atkin and colleagues (2022a) qualitative analysis of Multiracial adults’ recollections of their Multiracial socialization experiences growing up. In the current research, 53.9% of parents who described Multiracial socialization explicitly identified their child as Multiracial or as having multiple racial backgrounds, which falls under the theme of *Multiracial Identity* (i.e., messages that highlight youths’ Multiracial identity or multiple racial backgrounds). 40.8% of parents described *Preparation for Bias Against Monoracial Group*, which encompasses teaching children about discrimination

and racism specific to a monoracial group. 18.4% of parents described *Preparation for Monoracism*, which specifies teaching youth that they may experience discrimination for being Multiracial. 17.1% of parents described *Cultural Socialization of Multiple Backgrounds*, which includes teaching youth about their multiple cultural backgrounds, such as traditions and customs of their multiple backgrounds. The fifth theme identified was similar to Atkin and colleagues' (2022a) colorblind socialization: *Egalitarian Socialization*. In the current research, parents described teaching their child that everyone should be treated equally but did not indicate a colorblind approach by suggesting that structural racism did not exist or that racial categories did not have meaning. Thus, we categorize this theme as egalitarian socialization rather than colorblind socialization.

The remaining five themes were additional themes that parents described as Multiracial socialization (i.e., content themes that were not described in the qualitative study by Atkin et al., 2022a). 25.0% of parents' descriptions fell under a *Physical Appearance* theme, which involved referencing their child's or their own physical appearance in some way to teach the child about their Multiracial identity or explain how they differ from others. 18.4% of parents' responses fell under a *Multiracial Pride* theme, in which parents encouraged the child to be proud of their Multiracial identity or multiple racial backgrounds. 18.4% of parents' responses fell under the theme of *Family Ancestry*, wherein parents describe the family's racial ancestry or the family members' differing racial backgrounds to teach the child about their Multiracial identity. Similarly, 15.8% of parents' responses fell under the theme of *Parents of Different Backgrounds*, in which parents highlight their different racial background from their child's other parent as a way to explain the child's Multiracial identity or why different parents teach the child different racial topics. Lastly, 10.5% of parents described a *Multiracial Network*, which included describing peers, relatives, acquaintances, and more members of a social network who are Multiracial themselves and who interact with their child. Thus, asking parents about their experiences socializing their children revealed five similar themes as what Multiracial adults recalled from their own socialization experiences and revealed five additional themes that parents describe as Multiracial socialization (Table 3 for prevalence of themes).

RQ2: Parents' Perceptions of Child's Multiracial Experiences Relate to Racial Socialization Use

To assess how parents' perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences relate to engagement in Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization, we conducted point biserial correlations examining the relationships between the variables of interest, including the dichotomous qualitative coded

variable of Multiracial socialization (Table 4 for the full correlation table). The correlations revealed that having greater Multiracial stigma awareness was associated with engaging in more cultural socialization ($r = .24, p < .001$) and describing Multiracial socialization ($r = .16, p = .01$). Additionally, perceiving that one's child experiences greater identity denial was associated with specifying Multiracial socialization in the open-ended response ($r = .13, p = .04$) and engaging in more cultural socialization ($r = .30, p < .001$). Perceptions of their child's racial belonging among peers were not correlated with Multiracial socialization ($r = .04, p = .54$) nor cultural socialization ($r = .04, p = .57$).

RQ3: Comparisons of Parents of Multiracial Children by Race

To assess whether Multiracial, monoracial minority, and monoracial White parents differ in their likelihood of spontaneously writing about Multiracial socialization (dichotomous variable), we used Pearson's chi-square analyses. To assess any differences based on parent's racial background for the remaining variables, we conducted one-way between subject ANOVAs and Tukey post hoc tests on their engagement in cultural socialization, Multiracial stigma awareness, and perceptions of their child's identity denial experiences and racial belonging among peers (Table 5 for descriptive statistics). All results remain the same when controlling for the child's age in the analysis.

Multiracial Socialization

The likelihood of spontaneously writing about Multiracial socialization did not differ by the parent's racial background, $\chi^2(2, 246) = 1.14, p = .57$.

Cultural Socialization

There were no significant differences in parents' engagement in cultural socialization based on parent's racial background, $F(2, 243) = 0.53, p = .59, \eta^2 = .004, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.00, 0.03]$.

Multiracial Stigma Awareness

Parents of Multiracial children significantly differed in their awareness of Multiracial stigma, $F(2, 243) = 7.82, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.01, 0.12]$. Multiracial parents ($M = 5.6, SD = 0.8$) reported greater Multiracial stigma awareness compared to monoracial minority parents ($M = 5.1, SD = 0.9, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.21, 0.86]$). Monoracial White parents ($M = 5.3, SD = 0.8$) did not significantly differ in Multiracial stigma awareness compared to Multiracial parents, $p = .07, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.67, 0.02]$, and monoracial minority parents, $p = .17, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.06, 0.49]$.

Table 3 Description and prevalence of content themes within multiracial socialization present responses

Content theme	Description	Example	n (%) of code present
Content themes replicated (or Similar) from Atkin et al., 2022a			
Multiracial identity	Explicitly identifying the child as Multiracial or as having multiple racial backgrounds	"Since my child is so young, I have really only ever talked to her about being "mixed" with two different races."	41 (53.9%)
Preparation for bias against monoracial group	Teaching about discrimination and racism broadly (not Multiracial specific)	"...events happening in the world (i.e., Black Lives Matter protests), lessons from school they've learned about MLK Jr. And the Civil Rights movement."	31 (40.8%)
Preparation for monoracism	Teaching that the child may experience discrimination for being Multiracial	"There are some White kids who do not like him because he is mixed I talk to him about to handle that and as well some of the Black kids who do not like him because he has some White in him."	14 (18.4%)
Cultural socialization of multiple backgrounds	Teaching the child about their multiple cultural backgrounds (e.g., traditions, customs)	"I have explained to her that she comes from a mix of two countries and even though some traditions are different it is important that she engages in both equally."	13 (17.1%)
Egalitarian socialization	Teaching that everyone should be treated equally	"That all people are equal and should be treated the same."	10 (13.2%)
New content themes			
Physical appearance	Describing physical appearance	"I explained that even though she has light colored skin, she still has African American in her."	19 (25.0%)
Multiracial pride	Encouraging the child to be proud of their Multiracial identity	"We talked about how all people are unique and special and because he has two different races that it makes him very special."	14 (18.4%)
Family ancestry	Describing the family's ancestry/racial backgrounds	"...his grandmother came from a different country and that she's Korean so that makes him part Korean and that's why she speaks a different language."	14 (18.4%)
Parents of different backgrounds	Highlighting that parents are of different races	"Because of my son being a Black male, my husband ensured that I teach him how White people in authority may perceive him, and how he has to behave differently than Mommy (me) does."	12 (15.8%)
Multiracial network	Describing the child's multiracial network	"She has heard all of the stories from myself, her father, and grandmother who are all multiracial so she knows she is not alone."	8 (10.5%)

Note. n = 76 for multiracial socialization present responses

Table 4 Point biserial correlations for variables of interest

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Multiracial stigma awareness	–				
2. Perceived child's identity denial	.32***	–			
3. Multiracial socialization	.16**	.13*	–		
4. Cultural socialization	.24***	.30***	.06	–	
5. Perceived child's peer belonging	–.23***	–.40***	.04	.04	–

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Perceived Child's Identity Denial Experiences

There were no significant differences in parents' perceptions of their child's experiences with identity denial based on parent's racial background, $F(2, 243) = 0.60$, $p = .55$, $\eta^2 = .01$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.03].

Perceived Child's Sense of Racial Belonging among Peers

There were no significant differences in parents' perceptions of their child's peer racial belonging based on parent's racial background, $F(2, 243) = 0.60$, $p = 0.55$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.03].

Supplemental analyses also revealed significant mean differences based on recruitment source (i.e., paid vs. community sampling). All results hold when accounting for recruitment source in the analyses, except for changes to the significance of the Pearson's chi-square analysis for Multiracial socialization which we describe in greater detail in the supplemental material. Demographic analyses regarding child's age, child's gender, and parent's gender are also discussed in the supplement (see supplemental material).

Discussion

While research on racial socialization has expanded to explore Multiracial-specific racial socialization used by parents of Multiracial children (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Atkin et al., 2022a), little research has examined parents' own perceptions of Multiracial-specific socialization and how this relates to their perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences. Additionally, researchers have yet to examine any differences in use of Multiracial-specific socialization specifically based on parents' own racial backgrounds. Thus, the current research examined three research questions: RQ1) How do parents of Multiracial children spontaneously describe Multiracial-specific socialization, RQ2) How do parents' perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences relate to their use of Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization, and RQ3) Do Multiracial, monoracial minority, and monoracial White parents differ in their engagement in Multiracial socialization?

To address RQ1, qualitative analysis revealed that approximately 30% of the sample spontaneously wrote about Multiracial socialization when asked broadly about conversations they have with their child about race. Ten themes emerged within the Multiracial socialization responses, including five themes that replicated previous qualitative research in which Multiracial adults recalled their racial socialization experiences (i.e., Multiracial identity, preparation for bias against monoracial group, preparation for monoracism, cultural socialization of multiple backgrounds, and egalitarian socialization; Atkin et al., 2022a). Five additional themes emerged from parents in the present study (i.e., physical appearance, Multiracial pride, family ancestry, parents of different backgrounds, and Multiracial network).

These five additional themes aligned with prior research studies exploring this topic. For example, parents in the

Table 5 One-way analysis of variance based on parent's race

Variable	Parent's race	N	M	SD	$F(2,243)$	p	η^2	95% CI
Multiracial stigma awareness	Multiracial	51	5.6 _a	0.8	7.82	< .001	.06	[0.01,0.12]
	Minority	116	5.1 _b	0.9				
	White	79	5.3 _{ab}	0.8				
Perceived child's identity denial	Multiracial	51	2.8 _a	1.1	0.60	.55	.01	[0.00,0.03]
	Minority	116	2.7 _a	1.0				
	White	79	2.6 _a	0.9				
Perceived child's peer belonging	Multiracial	51	5.3 _a	1.3	0.60	.55	.01	[0.00,0.03]
	Minority	116	5.4 _a	1.1				
	White	79	5.2 _a	1.1				
Cultural socialization	Multiracial	51	3.8 _a	0.9	0.53	.59	.004	[0.00,0.03]
	Minority	116	3.9 _a	0.8				
	White	79	3.8 _a	0.8				

Note. Condition means that do not share a subscript (a, b, or ab) significantly differ, $p < .05$

current study described instilling their children with Multiracial pride and the importance of their child's Multiracial network, which is consistent with research by Stone and Dolbin-MacNab (2019) in which White mothers of Black-White Biracial children also described teaching their children to be proud of being Biracial and creating a Multiracial support network for their child. Similarly, Byrd and Garwick (2006) interviewed Black-White parents about their experiences raising Biracial children. These parents shared that they use the child's physical appearance (often skin tone) and the parents belonging to different racial backgrounds as ways to explain the child's Multiracial identity. Thus, the additional themes in the current research shared by a diverse sample of parents of Multiracial children are consistent with themes described in prior research and discussed in a literature review on this topic (Atkin & Yoo, 2019). Research should continue to explore perspectives of both caregivers and their children to better understand any discrepancies in parents' intentions of teaching their children about race and their racial identities and the outcomes of this socialization for the children. Given the positive outcomes associated with racial socialization (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020), it is imperative to gain a clearer understanding of what socialization strategies parents of Multiracial children are using.

To address RQ2, quantitative analysis revealed that parents with greater Multiracial stigma awareness and who perceive that their child experiences more frequent identity denial also spontaneously described Multiracial socialization and engaged in greater cultural socialization. While perceptions of one's child's racial belonging among peers was not significantly correlated with Multiracial socialization or cultural socialization engagement, perceptions of child's belonging were significantly correlated with parents' Multiracial stigma awareness and perceptions of child's identity denial experiences (i.e., greater Multiracial stigma awareness and perceptions that one's child experiences greater identity denial were related to perceptions that one's child experiences lower racial belonging among peers). These findings partially supported the hypotheses and revealed that some of parents' perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences were related to their engagement in socialization strategies; thus, increasing parents' awareness of Multiracial experiences may be an avenue to increase parents' engagement in Multiracial socialization and other racial socialization strategies. Future research should experimentally examine these relationships, such as creating an intervention to increase parents' Multiracial stigma awareness and examining how that impacts their engagement in Multiracial socialization with their child. As researchers strive to explore ways to promote the positive well-being of Multiracial youth, examining pathways to increasing Multiracial socialization will be an important future direction.

To address RQ3, quantitative analysis revealed that Multiracial, monoracial minority, and monoracial White parents differed in their Multiracial stigma awareness, such that Multiracial parents reported greater awareness than monoracial minority parents. This difference may stem from Multiracial parents' own firsthand experiences with Multiracial stigma which may increase their awareness of such stigma. Yet, monoracial White parents did not differ in awareness compared to Multiracial nor monoracial minority parents. This may relate to monoracial parents' own experiences with racial socialization. For example, research has shown that White families tend to engage in less racial socialization than families of color (Lloyd & Gaither, 2018) and White parents of Multiracial children and transracially adopted children have reported struggling with knowing how to racially socialize their children (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). Thus, it is possible that monoracial White parents may compensate for having less racial socialization experience overall by educating themselves more about Multiracial-specific socialization and experiences compared to monoracial minority parents who may rely on their own personal socialization experiences.

Contrary to our hypothesis, parents did not differ on any of the other variables based on their racial background, including Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization. These findings suggest that parents of Multiracial children, regardless of racial background, hold similar perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences with identity denial and racial belonging, and engage in similar levels of Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization. However, this data reflects parents' self-reports of their engagement in Multiracial socialization so future research should also examine Multiracial children's reports of their parents' engagement in Multiracial socialization, especially given that in previous research Multiracial adults reported that their White parents provided less support of Multiracial experiences compared to monoracial minority parents and Multiracial parents (Atkin et al., 2023). Learning more about how individual differences among parents (e.g., parent's race) impact their Multiracial socialization use will help inform targeted interventions for increasing socialization engagement among parents of Multiracial children.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

The primary strengths of this research include the in-depth focus on parents of Multiracial children and the new exploration of how parents' perceptions of Multiracial experiences relate to racial socialization. For the first time, the current study examined parents of Multiracial children's own spontaneous descriptions of Multiracial socialization, the relationship between perceptions of Multiracial experiences and Multiracial socialization, and comparisons of

Multiracial socialization engagement based on parents' racial background. This research highlights possible predictors of engagement in Multiracial socialization (e.g., parents' Multiracial stigma awareness and perceptions of their child's identity denial experiences) and contributes to the literature examining ways to promote engagement in Multiracial socialization. Further, by comparing monoracial parents and Multiracial parents, this research provides greater insight into the experiences of parents of Multiracial children and how their parenting behaviors and perceptions of their child's experiences may differ based on their race.

At the same time, the current study was correlational, so bidirectional relationships cannot be entirely ruled out. For example, while we suspect that parents' perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences influence their engagement in Multiracial socialization, it is possible that through engaging in Multiracial socialization parents become more aware of Multiracial experiences, like increased Multiracial stigma awareness. Future work should explore possible directionality in these relationships. Also, the current study focused on Multiracial socialization and cultural socialization, but did not examine other socialization strategies like preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism (Hughes et al., 2006). Future studies should examine parents of Multiracial children's use of other racial socialization strategies as well.

This study was also limited by the consolidation of multiple monoracial minority parent groups into one category, which prevented us from examining differences based on individual monoracial groups. There are certainly nuances between, for example, Asian American, Latinx, and Black American parents that this study design was unable to explore. Future studies should continue to explore differences in Multiracial socialization by specific monoracial groups. This research also focused on the experiences of only one parent of a Multiracial child, which leaves unexplored how both parents of Multiracial children's experiences may differ depending on the parent's racial identity and their experiences with race. Future research may collect perspectives of both parents of a Multiracial child and examine differences based on the parent's race.

Conclusion

Although past research has begun to examine Multiracial socialization, most has focused on Multiracial adults' recollections of their experiences growing up rather than exploring parents of Multiracial children's reports of their own engagement in Multiracial socialization. The results of the current study revealed additional themes of Multiracial socialization described by parents themselves (i.e., physical appearance, Multiracial pride, family ancestry,

parents of different backgrounds, and Multiracial network), demonstrated that parents' perceptions of their child's Multiracial experiences and their engagement in Multiracial socialization were related, and found that Multiracial parents reported greater Multiracial stigma awareness compared to monoracial minority parents. Future work should continue to explore parents' experiences of Multiracial socialization, what predicts their engagement in Multiracial socialization, and individual differences, such as parents' racial background, in such engagement in Multiracial socialization.

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Data Availability All research materials, data, and analysis codes are available at the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/kwt39/?view_only=bd9d00bf9fa5479892cc3bcaba64a73f).

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This study was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board.

Consent to Participate All participants provided informed consent prior to beginning of the study.

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