Racial Identity Development Among Biracial Adults

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Opportunity

• The multiracial population is quickly growing in the U.S. with some reports estimating a growth rate three times faster than that of the country’s population.
• Although the majority of biracial adults in the U.S. have one parent of African descent and one White parent, a variety of mixed-race identities exist.
• Research is needed to identify the array of racial socialization messages transmitted from parents to their children with multiple racial identities.
• This study explores the diversity of racial socialization messages transmitted to biracial children and seeks to understand how these messages impact biracial adults’ racial/ethnic identity development.

Data or Results

• 29 adults identifying as biracial
  • Female N = 25
  • Male N = 2
  • Gender Queer N = 2
• 44.8% between the ages of 21-23
• 46.4% report growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood
• 46.4% indicated growing up with a White mother and father of color

Biracial participants endorsed multiple racial/ethnic identities:
• 24.1% identify as Black
• 82.8% identify as White
• 44.8% identify as Asian
• 34.5% identify as Hispanic

“My mom never tried to sugar coat racial issues by saying she or anyone else is colorblind.”

“We did not really discuss race at all growing up.”

“My parents raised me believing in racial justice and equality.”

“They said that being half means never being ‘whole enough’ for some, but that doesn’t mean that you are not enough.”

“I never had any discussions about racism or inequality based on my race because I look predominantly white.”

Approach

• A mixed-method Internet-based survey and open-ended questions were administered via Qualtrics to Millennials (18-35 years of age) who identify as biracial/multiracial.

Impact

• Results from this initial pilot study suggest that there is variability in the messages that parents transmit to their children with multiple racial identities.
• Future research will investigate the role of parents’ diversity (e.g. race, class, and neighborhood constellation) on the type of racial socialization messages transmitted to their biracial children.
• Research will also seek to explore the thoughts among biracial Millennials concerning the transmission of similar messages about race/ethnicity to their own children.

References