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Transracial Adoption: Racial Identity, Resilience, and Self-esteem of African American Adoptees

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Transracial Adoption: Racial Identity, Resilience,

and Self-esteem of African American Adoptees

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DISSERTATION

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DISSERTATION COMMITTEE PAGE

The undersigned have examined the dissertation entitled:

TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION: RACIAL IDENTITY, RESILIENCE, AND SELF-ESTEEM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOPTEES

presented on March 21, 2014

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to those who have supported and empowered me to reach this pinnacle in my academic career. To my parents, I know that I would not have reached this goal without you. Your constant and fervent support, encouragement, and love have kept me moving forward to this long-awaited finish line. For all the times you have told me how proud you are of me, I am that much thankful to have you as my parents. William, I thank you for giving me the greatest gift of my life, our daughter, Poet Willow. Poet, so many times along this journey I have wanted to quit, as "Mommy's homework" would take me out of the house, away from you, more often than I could sometimes bear. But looking at you, the beautiful, intelligent and determined little girl you are, kept Mommy motivated and driven to achieve this goal, for both of us. I hope you know, Poet Willow, I will always be your biggest cheerleader, too! To my closest friends, who have consistently cheered me on, offered support, and most of all—have understood why I have been unable to spend time with you due to the many hours, weekends, and vacations spent "dissertating," I want you to know how much I appreciate your friendship, your love, and your unwavering belief that I WOULD get this done! To my brother Rob, thank you for keeping Poet amused and happy so I could sneak in some "editing" at Mom and Dad's on the weekends. To my Aunt Fran, one of my biggest cheerleaders since the day I was born, I thank you for being the best Auntie a girl could ask for. Your achievements have always inspired me to reach higher and to believe that I could do anything a man could do (and sometimes better!). And to my Godson, Donte. This doctoral program, and especially this dissertation, has forced me to spend much less time with you than I used to. Thank you, Donte, for understanding why "Auntie Jenn" has been unavailable so often over the past few years. I hope you know that you were and are never far from my thoughts and always in my heart.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Abstract

This study compared self-reported racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem of three

independent sample groups consisting of African American adoptees ($N = 45$), aged 18–72.

One group ($n = 25$) had been adopted by two Caucasian parents, the second ($n = 10$) by two

African American parents, and the third ($n = 10$) by a single African American parent. The

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, Resilience Scale, and Rosenberg Self-esteem

Scale were used. Adoptees had higher levels of racial identity when they had been adopted by

two African American parents as opposed to two Caucasian parents. Racial identity for adoptees

with single African American parents did not differ significantly from either adoptees with two

African American parents or adoptees with two Caucasian parents. Resilience was significantly

higher for adoptees with two African American parents than for both transracial adoptees and

adoptees with a single African American parent. No significant differences regarding self-esteem

were found among the three sample groups. As predicted, resilience was positively correlated

with racial identity. Contrary to what was hypothesized, resilience and self-esteem had a

significant negative correlation. Two, 1-model, hierarchical multiple regression analyses

(HMRA) were performed. For the first HMRA, predictor variables accounted for 54% of the

variability in self-esteem, with resilience and racial identity negatively correlated with

self-esteem. For the second HMRA, predictor variables accounted for 68% of the variability in

resilience. Implications of the results, parenting styles of transracial adoptive parents, the

author's own White racial identity, and future directions for research are discussed.

Keywords: racial identity, resilience, self-esteem, transracial adoption

Effects of Transracial Adoption on the Racial Identity, Resilience,

and Self-esteem of African American Adoptees

Chapter 1

Rationale and Conceptual Framework

The United States Judicial System permitted the adoption of African American children

by Caucasian parents as early as 1948 (Ladner, as cited by Curtis, 1996). Since that time, various

institutions have publicly asserted either support or condemnation of the practice. One notable

argument by the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) is that the practice of

transracial adoption is *cultural genocide* against children of color (Curtis, 1996). Similar

allegations have been made in the past about the adoption of Native American children (Limba,

Chance, & Brown, 2004; Myers, Gardner, & Geary, 1994). Consequently, the NABSW has

sought legislation to protect Black children from transracial adoption. Small (1984) opined that it

is rare for Black children in White families to form a positive identity. Some research in the area

has contradicted such claims, positing that African American children are not harmed by

adoption into White homes (Johnson, Shireman, & Watson, 1987; Lee, 2003; McRoy, Zurcher,

Lauderdale, & Anderson, 1982; Steinberg & Hall, 2001). While opinions on its psychological

impact vary, the fact remains that transracial adoption is on the rise in the United States.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of transracial adoption on the

racial identity of African American adoptees. I used the Multidimensional Inventory of Black

Identity (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) to measure the two stable

dimensions of African American racial identity: centrality (e.g., the significance of one's race)

and regard. Regard refers to "the qualitative meaning that individuals ascribe to their

membership in the Black community" (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997, p.

806). The author utilized a survey method to engage participants in the study. The participants

were African American adoptees, currently over the age of 18, who were adopted either by

African American parents or Caucasian parents prior to the age of 10. In addition to measuring

the participants' racial identity, I also measured their level of resilience, as well as their level of

self-esteem, using the Resilience Scale (RS; Wagnild & Young, 1993) and the Rosenberg

Self-Esteem Scale (SE; Rosenberg, 1965; 1979).

The purpose of the study was to analyze the three aforementioned variables to determine

if the race of adoptive parents affects the racial identity of adoptees. In addition, the study sought

to identify what, if any, relationship exists between one's racial identity and level of resilience.

Moreover, the present study sought to identify what, if any, relationship exists between resilience

and self-esteem. The results of the study will be used by the author in the future development of

curriculum to better prepare prospective adoptive parents wishing to adopt transracially. The

relationships found between racial identity and resilience or between resilience and self-esteem,

will behoove prospective adoptive parents, planning to adopt transracially, to learn ways to

cultivate the racial identity and resilience of their children.

Disproportionality of Children of Color in the U.S. Foster Care System

While African American children represent 15% of all the children in the US, they

comprise 45% of children in the foster care system (U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services (DHHS), 2003). For Caucasian children, the numbers tell a different story; Caucasian

children constitute 60% of the children in the US, but account for 36% of the children in foster

care (Child Welfare League of America [CWLA], 2005). In recognition of these disparities

between African American and Caucasian children, the CWLA has actively supported the

aggressive recruitment of foster and adoptive parents of color to accommodate the

disproportionate numbers of children of color in the child welfare system (Curtis, 1996). This action suggests that the CWLA supports intraracial adoption. In the meantime, the disproportionality of children of color in the system and the enacting of federal legislation like the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) in 1994 and the Removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEP) in 1996 have contributed to the steady increase of transracial adoption in the United States (Brooks, Barth, Bussiere, & Patterson, 1999).

Prior to the 1994 passing of the Multiethnic Placement Act by the 104th Congress, and its subsequent signing into law by then President Clinton, a policy of same-race adoption and foster care existed and was supported by institutions and racial and ethnic societies. Former Senator Howard M. Metzenbaum denounced the policy as a violation of civil rights laws. He further contended that the policy was not in the best interests of children (Alexander & Curtis, 1996). The Senator was able to assemble a diverse, bipartisan base of support, including many prominent African Americans, resulting in hearings before Congress to identify the barriers to foster and adoptive placements for African American children.

Senator Metzenbaum's committee learned that of the nearly 500,000 children in the foster care system at that time, tens of thousands were waiting for adoption. The median length of time these children were waiting for adoption was 2 years 8 months. However, the wait for African American children was twice that of non-African American children (The Metzenbaum Amendment, as cited by Curtis & Alexander, 1996). Based on these and other findings, Metzenbaum's committee concluded that children were harmed when opportunities for permanent homes were thwarted by policies aimed at racially matching children with prospective parents. Based on these conclusions, Senator Metzenbaum's committee proposed MEPA (Curtis & Alexander, 1996).

The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994

MEPA had three main goals: (a) decreasing the length of time children wait to be adopted; (b) preventing discrimination in the placement of children on the basis of race, color, or national origin; and (c) facilitating the identification and recruitment of foster and adoptive families that can meet the needs of children needing placement (MEPA, 1994, as cited by Alexander & Curtis, 1996).

However, MEPA allowed placement agencies to continue to consider the cultural, ethnic, or racial background of the child and the capacity of the prospective foster or adoptive parents to meet the child's needs in these areas, but these factors were to be only *one* factor amid a number of factors used to determine the best interest of a child when making placement decisions. In 1996, an amendment to MEPA was passed—the Adoption Promotion and Stability Act of 1996. This amendment made *any* consideration of race, color, or national origin in placing a child for adoption a potential violation of the anti-discrimination provisions in the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Stein, 2000). Thus, no longer could race, ethnicity, or national origin of adoptive parents or children be considered as "one factor" among other factors.

Relevant Constructs

Racial identity development. The term racial identity is defined by the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). Sellers et al. (1998) defined racial identity development as

> that part of the person's self-concept that is related to her or his membership within a race. It is concerned with both the significance the individual places on race in defining himself or herself and the individual's interpretations of what it means to be Black. (p. 19)

The present study applied the most relevant and contemporary developmental theories of racial

identity to available research on the psychological functioning of transracially adopted children, with specific research areas including: (a) racial/ethnic identity studies (Vroegh, 1997), (b) cultural socialization outcome studies (DeBerry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1996), and (c) cultural socialization process research (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990; Lee, 2003). There is traditional theoretical literature, dating back to the 1960s, outlining the typical progression of African American children through developmental stages toward an achieved ethnic and racial identity (Cross, 1995; Erikson, 1968; Helms, 1995; Phinney, 1989, 1990). Cross's updated Nigrescence model and Helms's Black racial identity model, also updated in 1995, became extremely popular in the counseling literature and are often cited as the historical backdrop for ongoing theory development (Baden & Steward, 2000; Phinney, 1989, 1990; Sellers et al., 1998; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). These two models will be explored more fully in Chapter 2.

Resilience. Shifting the focus from personal weaknesses to personal strengths has recently emerged as a trend in psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). For those researchers moving from the study of pathology to that of mental health, resilience, subjective well-being, forgiveness, and hardiness are becoming mainstream personality constructs receiving much empirical attention (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2010). Resilience has been described as a multi-dimensional construct associated primarily with those human beings not only able to *survive* trauma, but to thrive following adversity (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Resilient people are typically described as having a strong internal locus of control, positive self-image, and optimism (Burns & Anstey, 2010), and these characteristics are thought to contribute to better mental health outcomes, as well as more positive adaptive behaviors to negative life events (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Resilience has also been related to external resources, such as social support (APA, 2008). This study adopts Campbell-Sills and Stein's (2007) assertion that

resilience is not only meaningful in relation to trauma experience, but is equally valuable to the management of more moderate levels of stress.

The Relationship Between Racial Identity and Self-esteem

McRoy et al. (1982) stated that transracial adoption does not negatively affect self-esteem, but it does affect racial identity. When compared to African American peers adopted intraracially, the transracial adoptees (TRAs) studied by McRoy et al. were not different in their reports of self-worth (i.e., self-esteem). However, differences were noted between the transracial and intraracial adoptees in their achievement of racial identity. Specifically, McRoy and colleagues found that racial identity development was more problematic for the Black children being raised by White parents. The authors' results suggested that self-esteem and racial identity may operate independently of each other in African American children adopted transracially.

In his book *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American Identity*, Cross (1991) examined 45 studies of African American racial identity conducted from 1937 to 1987. Results indicated that 36% of the studies reported a significant positive relationship between racial identity and self-esteem, while 64% of the studies reported no relationship. The majority of the studies (34 of 45) reviewed by Cross consisted of children and adolescents as participants. Of the 11 remaining studies with adults as participants, three studies suggested a positive relationship between racial identity and self-esteem (Cross, as cited in Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998).

For those who believe that self-esteem and racial identity are inexorably linked, the results of studies on transracial adoption have been both contradictory and confusing, "with some studies claiming no overall ill effects for Black children raised by White parents and other studies suggesting possible damage and pathology" (Cross, 1991, p. 110). In one of the most

extensive longitudinal studies of the effects of transracial adoption on self-esteem, Feigelman

and Silverman (1981 & 1984, as cited in Cross, 1991) studied 153 White households, 56 of

which adopted Black children and 97 of which adopted White children. In their (1981) report on

these children Feigelman and Silverman found that, after controlling for the age at which a child

was adopted, there was no difference in the reported incidence of maladjustment between the

two groups of children. In a follow-up study conducted when these children were adolescents,

the same results were found (Feigelman & Silverman 1984, as cited in Cross, 1991).

The results of Feigelman and Silverman's studies do not exist in isolation. Cross (1991)

references a sampling of other transracial adoption studies that employ a clear-cut measure of

one or more personal identity dimensions (e.g., self-esteem, behavior adjustment, level of

psychopathology), whose results indicate an overall trend showing "no difference in the personal

identity profile for Black children involved in transracial compared to intraracial adoptions"

(Cross, 1991, p. 111). Conversely, more current research by Mandara, Gaylord-Harden,

Richards, and Ragsdale, (2009) found racial identity and self-esteem to be strongly, positively

correlated for males, but not for females, when 259 African American adolescents were studied.

Thus, while some researchers of African American identity development find a positive

relationship between self-esteem and racial identity, other theorists purport a two-factor model of

identity suggesting that African American youth are able to separate their feelings toward their

race from their feelings about themselves as individuals (Mandara et al., 2009). In Sellers's

(1993) critique of the article "On the Desirability of Own-Group Preferences" by Penn, Gaines,

and Phillips (1993), Sellers asserted that lack of identification with one's racial group does not

necessarily result in personal self-hatred. Similarly, in their research on racial identity and

personal self-esteem (PSE) of African American college students, Rowley et al. (1998) did not

find a direct relationship between strong identification with one's racial group and personal self-esteem.

The Relationship between Self-esteem and Resilience

Despite the inconclusive findings on the relationship between racial identity and self-esteem, self-esteem has been shown to have a positive correlation with overall mental health (Mandara et al., 2009). Specifically, studies of African American adolescents (Compas, Hinden, & Garhardt, 1995; DuBois et al., 2002b) have found that those with higher self-esteem show more resilience in the face of adversity than those with low self-esteem. High self-esteem is generally considered to be one of the most important factors of adolescent mental health (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, & deVries, as cited in Mandara et al., 2009). Possessing positive self-esteem may be an important protective factor for resiliency in African Americans who are more likely to be exposed to environments that include trauma, life challenges, and daily life stressors (APA, 2008; Mandara et al., 2009).

Purpose of the Study

There were both practical and theoretical reasons for conducting this study. From a practical perspective, understanding the effects, if any, that transracial adoption has on African American children's achievement of racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem is useful and relevant for those professionals working on behalf of adopted children. Some of those who will benefit from the results of this study include: (a) child welfare workers, (b) social workers, (c) adoption specialists, (d) psychologists working as individual or family therapists, (e) marriage and family therapists working in the foster care system, and (f) prospective adoptive parents seeking to adopt transracially. If transracial adoption was found to have a significant impact on a child's achievement of racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem, it would behoove the

professionals in adoption agencies and prospective adoptive parents to gain an understanding of

what can be done to either mitigate or maximize such impact. If no relationship was found

between the race of an adoptive parent and the adoptee's achievement of racial identity,

self-esteem, and resilience, one may conclude the need for additional research to determine the

specific variables that do impact the achievement of racial identity for a child raised in a racially

diverse family.

Secondly, the present study sought to determine whether resilience operated

independently from racial identity achievement in contributing to an adoptee's self-esteem, or

whether resilience was positively correlated with racial identity and together contributed to

positive self-esteem. Given what is known about the positive relationship between self-esteem

and resilience, the present study sought to determine if a similar relationship existed between

racial identity achievement and resilience for African American adoptees. Mandara et al. (2009)

stated, "virtually no studies have examined the effect of changes in racial identity and

self-esteem on changes in mental health" (p. 1661). While this study did not look at

psychological changes, understanding the relationship that a person's racial identity has with

their resilience, and the relationship that a person's level of resilience has with their self-esteem,

has strong implications for future research and practice for the many professionals who work

with foster and adopted children and their families.

Children in the foster care system, who are disproportionately represented by children of

color, often suffer negative psychological sequelae into adulthood. Such sequelae include (a)

attachment problems, (b) depression, and (c) complex post-traumatic stress disorder due to the

abuse and neglect experienced throughout their childhoods (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption

Institute, 2008). Educating adoption workers and prospective adoptive parents on how to

increase a child's resilience and level of racial identity can be an intervention toward improving the mental health of this vulnerable population.

Research Questions

The present study posed four research questions. One question was aimed at determining the relationship between the transracial adoption of African American children by Caucasian parents and the adoptees' achievement of racial identity:

1. Do African American children, adopted by African American parents, achieve a significantly higher level of racial identity than African American children adopted by Caucasian parents?

The second question was aimed at determining if a relationship existed between racial identity and resilience in African American adoptees:

2. Does a relationship exist between racial identity and resilience of transracially adopted African Americans? What is the strength and directionality of the correlation?

The third question was aimed at determining if a relationship existed between resilience and self-esteem in African American adoptees:

3. Does a relationship exist between resilience and self-esteem in African American adoptees? What is the strength and directionality of the correlation?

The fourth question was aimed at determining whether resilience operated independently of racial identity achievement in contributing to an adoptee's self-esteem, or whether resilience was positively correlated with racial identity and together, racial identity and resilience, contributed to positive self-esteem:

4. What are the relationships between racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem? What

are the strength and directionality of the correlations?

Definition of Terms

African American. For the purposes of the present study, the term African American described those born in the United States and having at least one African American biological parent, who was also born in the United States and was a descendant of those African nationals who arrived to the United States involuntarily during the 1600s. Note, the allowance of participants with *at least one known* African American parent acknowledged the fact that many children who have been adopted out of the foster care system may not have known the identity of their fathers and/or may not have had the name (and race) of their biological fathers on their birth certificates, yet did know that their biological mothers were/are African American.

Transracial adoption. For the purposes of the present study, this term referred solely to the adoption of African American children by Caucasian parents. The study chose to focus on the specific dynamic of one single or two Caucasian parents adopting an African American child. Interracial adoptive parents were excluded from the study to control for the variability of oppression experiences that different races and ethnicities experience in the United States. That is, a clearly defined sample, one that was parented by *either* Caucasian parents or African American parents, ideally increased the sensitivity of the MIBI's results and subsequent analysis. Helms (1995) pointed out that "racial identity theories do not suppose that racial groups in the United States are biologically distinct, but rather suppose that they have endured different conditions of domination or oppression" (p. 181). In the case of African Americans, it is their history of enslavement and legal status as property, rather than human beings, which differs so drastically from the Caucasian descendants of White slave owners.

Racial identity. The term racial identity was defined by the MMRI as

that part of the person's self-concept that is related to her or his membership within a

race. It is concerned with both the significance the individual places on race in defining

himself or herself and the individual's interpretations of what it means to be Black.

(Sellers et al., 1998, p. 19)

The present study utilized this dynamic definition of racial identity when discussing the data

analysis and discussion of results.

Resilience. The term resilience, as it applied to the present study, was defined as "an

individual's ability to thrive despite adversity" (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007, p. 1019).

Specifically, resilience is "the ability to tolerate experiences such as change, personal problems,

illness, pressure, failure and painful feelings" (p. 1026).

Self-esteem. The term self-esteem, as it applied to the study, was defined as "the degree

to which one values oneself" (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 661). Fleming and Watts (as cited in

Beck, Steer, Epstein, & Brown, 1990, p. 191) asserted, "most psychologists would probably

agree on a general definition of self-esteem as a personal judgment of one's own worth."

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the practice and conundrums of transracial

adoption, the history of its support and condemnation in the United States, and the social,

cultural, and systemic factors that have contributed to the disproportionate number of children of

color in the foster care system eligible for adoption. This chapter also gave a brief description of

the constructs of racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem and their particular salience for

African Americans. These topics led into a discussion of both the practical and theoretical

purposes of the study. Research questions were stated for the study. Finally, Chapter 1 gave

definitions of terms and how they were understood in the study. Chapter 2 provides a literature

review of the four areas of research of the study: (a) the evolution of racial identity theory among

African Americans, (b) the practice of transracial adoption and its impact on African American

racial identity achievement, (c) the relationship between racial identity and resilience for African

Americans, and (d) the relationship between resilience and self-esteem for African Americans.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

The growing population of minority group members in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) has been evident in our media, schools, and most visibly in our most recent United States presidential election. Despite the passage of civil rights legislation and the individual achievements of numerous minority individuals in our society, many Americans would agree that minority groups in the United States continue to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and economically and politically marginalized.

African Americans' experiences in the United States have differed significantly from those experiences of other racial and ethnic groups. Although many ethnic and racial groups have experienced discrimination and oppression in the United States, no other group has been denied humanity or defined legally as property—such was the case for African Americans who were enslaved by the United States government for almost a century. As a result of their experiences with oppression in this society, the concept of race has historically played a significant role in the lives of African Americans.

Even after slavery had been abolished in this country, laws were enacted with the explicit purpose of making social contact between Whites and African Americans illegal. Yet, it was somewhat remarkable that in 2008, and again in 2012, we witnessed the rise of an African American man, a product of a union that was once illegal, to the highest elected office in our country. A myriad of African Americans, including the current President, have written poignant autobiographies which described their struggles as racial and ethnic minorities in an effort to develop and understand their own identities (e.g., Malcolm X, James McBride, and Barack Obama). Despite the well documented personal and professional successes of these authors—and the measurable public interest in their anecdotal histories—there remains a paucity in the empirical literature with regard to the specific variables that contribute to the healthy

development of racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem in African American adoptees.

While existing research has explored the racial identity development of African Americans fairly comprehensively (Cross, 1991, 1995; Helms, 1995; Sellers et al., 1998), as well as the experience of parents who have chosen to adopt transracially (Steinberg & Hall, 2001; Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003), there is a dearth of empirical literature where this valuable information is synthesized into improved, relevant preparation and training for prospective adoptive parents. Exhaustive, varied, empirical research on the experiences and identity development of TRAs would be invaluable in that it would address the notion that placing African American children into Caucasian families is detrimental to their psychological functioning and achievement of ethnic identity. Before a discussion of contemporary Racial Identity theory can occur, an understanding of the evolution of Black Racial Identity development should be reviewed.

Historical Models and Measures of African American Racial Identity

Racial identity defined by stigmatized status. Much of the early psychological research on African Americans in the United States posited the assumption that African Americans suffered collectively from low self-esteem or self-hatred (Allport, 1954, as cited in Sellers et al., 1998, p. 20). This widely held assumption is said to have originated in the concept of *reflective appraisal,* which Marks, Settles, Cooke, Morgan, & Sellers (2004) define as, "individuals develop[ing] a sense of themselves based in large part from the way that others view them" (p. 383). The concept of reflective appraisal was applied to African Americans during a time in American history (prior to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s) when they were overtly devalued in American society; it was assumed, then, in accordance with the prevailing theory of reflective appraisal, that African Americans of that time must also have devalued themselves and

must have suffered from low self-esteem (Marks et al., 2004).

When testing the hypothesis that African Americans were suffering from low self-esteem, researchers did not initially develop and utilize specific self-esteem measures. Instead, researchers in the 1930s and 1940s conducted elaborate studies that measured African American children's identification with and preference for Black and White stimuli—such as dolls or drawings (Clark & Clark, 1947; Horowitz & Murphy, 1938, as cited by Marks et al., 2004). The identifications and preferences of the African American children were then compared with the White children's identifications and preferences. Researchers then used the results of these studies to conclude how African American children felt about themselves (Marks et al., 2004). In Clark and Clark's 1947 study, the authors presented African American children with a Black doll and a White doll and asked the children to choose the doll with which they would prefer to play. When the results showed that African American children did not express the same preference for Black dolls that White children expressed for White dolls, researchers concluded that the African American children suffered from *Negro self-hatred*.

In retrospect, many errors can be identified in the interpretation of this early research. For example, although the studies were conducted with child subjects, the results were often generalized to African American adults; in this sense, there was little regard for the influence that psychosocial development has on how one views oneself in adulthood as opposed to childhood (Marks et al., 2004). A second equivocal assumption made by researchers was that they viewed the White children's responses as ideal against which the African American children's responses were compared (Marks et al., 2004). Instead, an argument could have been made that the African American children's responses did not demonstrate in-group bias and were, therefore, the ideal responses against which to measure the White children's responses. Perhaps the greatest error

occurred when researchers measured the constructs of preference for and identification with

one's own racial group and interpreted these as indicators of self-esteem and self-hatred in

African Americans (Marks et al., 2004). The doll and picture studies did not measure

self-esteem, but rather, they measured different aspects of the children's *racial identity,* which

Sellers et al. (1998) later defined as "the attitudes and beliefs regarding the significance and

meaning that people place on race in defining themselves" (p. 23).

Instruments were eventually developed in the 1960s that specifically measured the

construct of self-esteem (Marks et al., 2004; Rosenberg, 1965) and these were used in studies of

the self-esteem of African Americans. Once the construct of self-esteem was being measured

objectively with empirically validated measures, as opposed to inferred by the presence of other

variables (e.g., the devaluing of a person's race by the dominant culture), studies employing

these self-esteem measures yielded results of higher levels of self-esteem for African American

children than White children (Marks et al., 2004). These findings illuminated a key flaw in the

logic of reflective appraisal. African Americans, like everyone else, developed their sense of

self-esteem from messages they received from those closest to them, such as friends and family

(Marks et al., 2004), and not from a larger oppressive society**.**

Racial identity: From stigmatized status to strength and resilience. While racial

identity was originally conceptualized as the result of "a deficit in the African American psyche

resulting from their stigmatized status" (Marks et al., 2004, p. 384), African American scholars

and researchers of the 1970s reconceptualized racial identity as "an example of African

Americans' resilience and strength in the face of oppression" (Marks et al., 2004, p. 384).

William Cross's (1971) Nigrescence Model of Racial Identity is one of the best known of this

second generation of racial identity models. Cross (1991) defined *Nigrescence* as "the process of

becoming Black" (p. 157). Cross's model and others like it, such as Helms's Black Racial

Identity Model (1990), were and are two of the more dominant paradigms in the counseling

literature.

        Cross's Nigrescence model of racial identity. Cross's (1995) Nigrescence model of

racial identity, updated from its inception in 1971, viewed racial identity development as a

succession of achieved stages. Cross's model begins with Pre-encounter Assimilation, when a

Black person places more emphasis on being an American and an individual than on being part

of a racial group. Ideally, development ends with when one moves into the Internalization

Multiculturalist phase, in which one possesses an identity comprised of three or more social

reference groups.

        The Nigrescence model purported that African Americans travel through the various

developmental stages of racial identity before finally developing a Black identity (Cross, 1971).

In his original Nigrescence model, Cross (1971) conceptualized the process of developing a

Black identity as a Black person moving from a self-hating to a self-healing and culturally

affirming self-concept (e.g., self-esteem). However, subsequent research on African Americans

and self-esteem found that African Americans' self-esteem does not change as they move

through the stages of Nigrescence (Marks et al., 2004). What does undergo change for African

Americans as they traverse through the stages of Nigrescence is their "worldview, ideology, and

value system" (Marks et al., 2004, p. 385). As a response to findings on the absence of

self-esteem change, Cross (1995) reconceptualized the process of racial identity development as

a transformation from a pre-existing non-Afrocentric identity into one that is Afrocentric. The

revised Nigrescence model maintains the original five stages of the Nigrescence model, but it

"no longer explicitly links mental health outcomes (e.g., self-esteem) with the various stages"

(Cokley, 2002, p. 476).

Racial identity: From oppression-inspired to connection-inspired. One critique of

both the Cross and Helms Black identity models is their perception of the significant role that

oppression plays in the development of Black racial identity. Predating both Cross and Helms, in

his book *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, Erik Erikson (1968) similarly asserted the likelihood that

members of an "oppressed and exploited minority group" may internalize the negative views of

the dominant society and, in turn, develop a negative identity and self-hatred (p. 303). In

response to the past emphasis placed on racial oppression in the development of racial identity,

Yi and Shorter-Gooden (1999) questioned, "Are there not aspects of a person of color's ethnic

identity that are shaped by cultural/ethnic heritage, experiences, and affiliations rather than by

experiences of racism?" (p. 18). With this shift in framework, Yi and Shorter-Gooden, along

with others (e.g. Rowley & Sellers, 1998; Sellers et al., 1998), posited a new conceptualization

of racial identity, one that is relevant to the current study of TRAs. This new conceptualization of

identity development began the theoretical shift from the traditional stage model of individual

development premised on oppression as the primary motivator for identity development to a

systems approach that emphasizes interactions between one's family, friends, and community as

key in the development of racial identity (Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999). This theoretical shift to a

constructivist narrative approach to racial identity formation was praised as more effective as "it

captures the diversity of identity-shaping experiences that define the lives of people of color" (Yi

& Shorter-Gooden, 1999, p. 16).

Racial identity: A multidimensional conceptualization. Sellers and colleagues (1998)

introduced a new model of African American racial identity—the Multidimensional Model of

Racial Identity (MMRI). This model conceptualized racial identity as "understanding both the

significance of race in the self-concept of African Americans and the qualitative meanings they attribute to being members of that racial category" (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 19). Previously, the mainstream approach focused on the significance of race in the individual developing person (Cross, 1971, 1995; Helms, 1995; Phinney, 1992). The MMRI model incorporated group identity into the amalgamation of the various historical and cultural experiences that African Americans experience (Sellers et al., 1998). Scottham, Cooke, Sellers, and Ford (2010) later studied this shift and integrated the process of identity development (e.g., passage through pre-determined developmental stages) with contexts of one's experience (e.g., identification with and having more positive attitudes toward one's racial group).

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)

The MMRI synthesized two historically distinct approaches of African American racial identity: (a) *the mainstream approach*—which focused on universal developmental processes and structure and enabled African American racial identity to be viewed in the context of other identities and (b) *the underground approach*—which focused on the cultural and experiential influences that made up the qualitative meaning of being African American and emphasized the cultural and historical experiences of African Americans (Sellers et al., 1998). Shelton and Sellers (2000) further explicated that the mainstream approach had focused on racial identity as a personality trait, concerned mostly with how culture shaped the trait, while the underground approach "focused on racial identity as an example of a universal social process associated with group membership," with less concern for the uniqueness of the African American experience (p. 28).

Basic assumptions of the MMRI. There are four basic assumptions that underlie the MMRI: (a) Identities are stable properties of a person, but can be influenced by situations; (b)

Individuals have a number of different identities that have different levels of importance to them; (c) The most valid indicator of one's racial identity is an individual's perception of what it means to be Black; and (d) the MMRI is primarily focused on the status of an individual's racial identity at a given point in time, rather than seeking to place an individual within a particular stage along a pre-determined, developmental process (Sellers et al., 1998). That said, Sellers and colleagues did not seek to replace the previous models with the MMRI, but to illustrate their belief in the dynamic nature of African American racial identity, specifically that "the significance and the meaning that individuals place on race are likely to change across their life span" (p. 24).

The MMRI differed from previous racial identity models in that it did not seek to define what a psychologically "healthy" or "unhealthy" identity looked like. Instead, the MMRI focused on distinguishing between the significance and meaning one placed on one's racial group membership. For example, racial group membership may be equally significant (important) to two individuals' self-concepts, yet they may ascribe very different meaning to what it means to be Black.

The four dimensions of racial identity. The MMRI identifies four dimensions of racial identity: (a) Racial Centrality, (b) Racial Salience, (c) Racial Regard, and (d) Racial Ideology (Sellers et al., 1998). The MMRI refers to racial centrality as a measure of whether race is a core part of an individual's self-concept over time. Conversely, racial salience describes the extent to which a person's race is a relevant part of his or her self-concept at a *particular* moment in time. Salience can be influenced by the situation. The term racial regard refers to a person's affective and evaluative judgment of his or her race. Regard is further broken down into two subtypes: (a) private and (b) public. Private regard refers to the extent that individuals feel positively or

negatively toward African Americans and their membership in that group. Public regard refers to the extent that individuals feel that others view African Americans positively or negatively.

The MMRI's fourth dimension of racial identity, racial ideology, describes an individual's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes regarding the way that African Americans should live and act. Based on their reading of the research literature of the time and their personal exposure to African American culture, Sellers et al. (1998) identify four ideological philosophies within the dimension of racial ideology that seem to be the most prevalent: (a) a nationalist philosophy, (b) an oppressed minority philosophy, (c) an assimilation philosophy, and (d) a humanist philosophy. Again, the MMRI acknowledges the dynamic nature of racial identity, noting that while some individuals can be categorized as possessing one particular ideology, "most individuals hold a variety of philosophies that can vary across their different areas of functioning" (e.g., political/economic development, cultural/social activities; see Sellers et al., 1998, p. 27).

The nationalist ideology emphasizes the uniqueness of being African American, so an individual with a nationalist ideology views the African American experience as being notably different from any other group's experience. This philosophy posits that African Americans ought to be in control of their own destiny with minimal input from other groups. This ideology is associated with a preference for African American social environments, as well as a focus on support and patronage of primarily African American organizations (Sellers et al., 1998). In contrast to the nationalist ideology, the oppressed minority ideology emphasizes the similarities between the oppression that African Americans face and that of other groups. An individual possessing the oppressed minority ideology is more likely to view coalition building, as opposed to isolation, as the most effective strategy for social change (Sellers et al., 1998). From a cultural

perspective, these individuals are equally interested in the culture of other minority groups as they are in their own.

The assimilationist ideology is described as having an emphasis on the similarities between African Americans and the rest of American society. An individual who possesses an assimilationist ideology views their status as an American and attempts to enter, as much as possible, into the mainstream of American society. While emphasizing assimilation, Sellers et al. (1998) note that this ideology does not necessarily imply a lack of recognition of racism in America, nor does it denote a de-emphasis in the importance of being African American. A person with this ideology can be an activist for social change, but would likely believe that African Americans ought to work within the system to change it. The fourth ideology, the humanist ideology, emphasizes the similarities among all humans. Individuals who espouse this ideology do not think in terms of race, gender, class or other distinguishing characteristics. Instead, they are likely to view all people as belonging to the same race, the human race (Sellers et al., 1998). Individuals with a humanist ideology view race as being of minor importance with respect to the way they lead their lives (e.g., low centrality). These individuals are more likely to emphasize the characteristics of the individual person, regardless of race (Sellers et al., 1998).

Situational Stability and Variability within African American Racial Identity

Of the four dimensions of racial identity, the MMRI considers racial centrality, regard, and ideology to be stable constructs across situations. This suggests that these constructs should remain relatively the same over time and across different situations (Sellers et al., 1998). While this does not mean that these three dimensions are impervious to change, it suggests that they are likely to remain stable or experience gradual change over time, which most likely is the result of a particularly intense or important developmental or racial event (Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

Conversely, the MMRI views the dimension of racial salience as variable across situations and greatly influenced by context. The MMRI further posits that racial salience and racial centrality are interrelated. Racial salience refers to how relevant race is to one's self-concept temporarily, while racial centrality is "a stable manifestation of how significant race is in the individual's definition of self across numerous situations" (Shelton & Sellers, 2000, p. 34).

Shelton and Sellers (2000) investigated the stable and situational properties of African American racial identity in two separate studies. One study found that in ambiguous situations for people whose race is a central component of their identity, race is more likely to be salient than for people whose race is not a central identity component. As a result, they found that high race central individuals were more likely to interpret ambiguous situations as being race relevant (Shelton & Sellers, 2000). Race then moved temporarily to the forefront of the individual's self-concept and the person temporarily perceived race to be more important to his or her core identity than it would be under normal circumstances (Shelton & Sellers, 2000). Shelton and Sellers's second study showed that racial identity has both stable and contextually dynamic properties. Specifically, being placed in a race-salient study condition did not change one's racial ideology or beliefs about racial regard in reference to participants' beliefs using a race-ambiguous situation. Racial Ideology and racial regard remained stable regardless of context, which made them reliable predictors of an individual's future behavior as well as identify stable racial identity constructs "that allow for the differentiation of the individual from others" (Markus & Kunda, 1986, as cited in Shelton & Sellers, 2000, p. 40). The instrument used in both studies was the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI), which was also used in the present study. The MIBI's psychometric properties are described in Chapter 3.

African American Children and Adolescents: Risks, Protective Factors, and Resilience

      Shifting the research focus from pathology to resilience. Historically, the psychology research on African American children and adolescents has focused primarily on disparate economic conditions, single-parent households, academic underachievement, and involvement with the criminal justice system (APA, 2008). Sellers, Morgan, and Brown (2001) noted the existence of a growing body of empirical evidence linking racial discrimination to adverse mental health among African Americans. The American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents sought to examine this issue by investigating processes that previous researchers had failed to explore with regard to the psychology of African Americans, namely the strength and protective components of resilience among African American youth (APA, 2008). The Task Force issued a report that summarized their research, which intended to "provide a more balanced perspective on African American children and adolescents by highlighting strengths and protective competencies that have largely been ignored to date" (APA, 2008, p. 1). Similar to the present study, the Task Force's report focused on U.S. born, African American children and adolescents only, as the legacy of colonialism has impacted this group of African Americans differently than those who voluntarily emigrated and became U.S. immigrants.

      The APA Task Force defined resilience as "a dynamic, multidimensional construct that incorporates the bidirectional interaction between individuals and their environments within contexts (family, peer, school and community, and society; APA, 2008). The use of an ecological framework to understand resilience, analogous to Sellers and colleagues' (1998) use of a multidimensional framework to understand racial identity, reflected a generally accepted principle that the environment must be considered as fundamental to any comprehensive effort to

understand development and experience of youth (APA, 2008). The Task Force noted that an

ecological conceptualization of resilience rightly incorporates people's feelings and perceptions

of their experiences along with an understanding of the contribution of environmental factors.

Additionally, the Task Force emphasized that when studying resilience of African American

youth, other factors must be included, specifically "the racial, ethnic, and cultural experiences of

African American youth" (APA, 2008, p. 2).

Boykin (2000, as cited by APA, 2008) asserted that in order for African American

children and adolescents to develop into individuals engaged in optimal personal and collective

development, they must be placed "at promise," as opposed to the more often noted "at risk."

With this reframe in mind, the APA Task Force focused on five widely recognized domains of

child development and explored how certain domain-specific risk factors could be reconsidered

as adaptive or protective processes (APA, 2008). One of the five factors considered by the Task

Force was Identity Development.

Identity development and resilience. The APA Task Force (2008) concluded that

positive racial identities are "essential to the personal and collective well-being of African

American youth" (p. 3). For African American children and adolescents, the development of

their racial identity and sense of self occurs within a society that often devalues them through

negative stereotypes, assumptions, and expectations of others (APA, 2008; Cross, 1995). The

identity for African Americans is not based on an individual or autonomous sense of functioning,

but includes other identity factors, specifically race and gender (APA, 2008). Given this more

collective sense of identity development, *racial socialization* then serves as a contextual

protective factor for African American children and adolescents. As socialization serves to

influence children's racial identity and self-concept (Alejandro-Wright, as cited by APA, 2008,

p. 3), parents become instrumental in transmitting values, beliefs, and ideas to their children to equip them with coping strategies to deal with racism and discrimination and to encourage prosocial behavior (Lee, 2003). In addition to their parents' influence, the APA Task Force (2008) further concluded that when African American children and adolescents learn that others have negative perspectives of African Americans, "but have these messages mediated by parents, peers, and other important adults, they are less likely to have negative outcomes and are more likely to be resilient in adverse conditions" (APA, 2008, p. 3).

TRAs: Risk and Protective Factors, Resilience, Self-esteem, and Racial Identity

Adopted children, particularly those adopted transracially, are often hypothesized to be at risk of low self-esteem (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007; Lee, 2003; McRoy et al., 1982). Some hypotheses regarding adoptees' low self-esteem have included, but are not limited to: (a) possible exposure to neglect and abuse in institutions prior to adoption; (b) having to cope with their adoptive status, including their lack of resemblance to their adoptive parents; and (c) transracial and international adoptees feeling even less integrated than intraracial adoptees into their adoptive families (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). However, in their meta-analysis of 88 studies, Juffer and van IJzendoorn (2007) found no difference between participants based on adoption status on self-esteem. This conclusion was equally true for international, domestic, and transracial adoptees (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Specifically comparing transracial and same-race adoptees, Juffer and van IJzendoorn analyzed 18 studies in which no differences in self-esteem were found. In contrast, in a small set of three studies, they found that adoptees showed higher levels of self-esteem than non-adopted, institutionalized children. Juffer and van IJzendoorn (2007) hypothesized that these findings may have been explained by adoptees' resilience to overcome early adversity, as well as the formidable emotional investment made by

most adoptive families.

Risks plus protective factors may equal resilience. Adoption has long been researched and written about as a process replete with both risks and protective factors. While an accumulation of risk factors can lead to less optimal child development, many have agreed that protective factors may buffer the negative effects of the risks, resulting in resilience in children and adolescents (APA, 2008; Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Protective factors (e.g., having a secure attachment with a parent or caretaker) are then considered moderators of risk and adversity that enhance the chances for normal developmental outcomes in children. Resilience is the result of this buffering process that enables children and adolescents to deal effectively with stress and adversity (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Werner (2000, as cited in Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007) identified a positive self-concept in resilient individuals as one of the protective factors, replicated in at least two longitudinal studies of at-risk children. While some studies have shown equivocal outcomes regarding lower self-esteem in adoptees, Juffer and van IJzendoorn (2007) note that "empirical studies and meta-analyses, without exception, have concluded that the large majority of adoptees are well adjusted and that the problems are shown by a (relatively large) minority" (p. 1068). These authors further hypothesized that it was the protective factors inherent in the adoptive family context that may have fostered resilience in the adopted children they studied in their meta-analysis (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007).

Racial identity and self-esteem. Adolescents with higher self-esteem tend to have better mental health and are more resilient in the face of adversity, compared to those with lower self-esteem (DuBois et al., 2002b). For contemporary researchers of African American mental health, two important areas of research have emerged: The assessment of (a) the effects of self-reported self-esteem on African American mental health, without regard to racial identity,

and (b) the relationship of racial identity—independent of self-esteem—with African American

mental health (Mandara et al., 2009). One study by Mandara et al. (2009) concluded that racial

identity may be as important as self-esteem to the mental health of African American

adolescents.

Self-esteem and resilience. Self-esteem is generally thought to be one of the most salient

psychological constructs for adolescent mental health (APA, 2008; McRoy et al., 1982). The

prevailing theory suggests that self-esteem benefits adolescent mental health by acting as a

psychological buffer from negative environmental stressors (Compas et al., 1995; Mandara et al.,

2009). It is hypothesized that higher self-esteem facilitates emotional resilience in adolescents,

which leads them to feel that they are capable of overcoming obstacles. Therefore, having a

positive image of oneself as an individual may be a key resiliency factor for African American

adolescents, who are exposed to environments and a culture that often devalue their worth (APA,

2008).

Racial identity and resilience. Similar to self-esteem, racial identity is considered by

most theorists to be of great importance during the process of adolescent identity development

(Helms, 1995; Mandara et al., 2009). Many modern theorists further suggest that a positive racial

identity helps adolescents cope with the stresses of discrimination (Lee, 2003; Sellers et al.,

2001) and helps protect them from the difficult social circumstances they often have to navigate

(APA, 2008; Mandara et al., 2009).

Unlike studies of self-esteem, empirical research on the relation between African

American child and adolescent racial identity and resilience has been much less consistent

(Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). It is precisely the equivocal nature of the

published research on racial identity that makes the current study so important. Understanding

the extent to which self-esteem and racial identity contribute individually and together to the variance in the resilience of African American adoptees is key to informing the practice of educators, researchers, practitioners, and adoptive parents of African American youth.

     Age at placement. Some researchers have found that one's age at placement may contribute to the variability in racial identity among TRAs. Wickes and Slate (1996) found that transracial Korean adoptees placed at a later age identified more strongly with their ethnicities and races than did adoptees placed at a younger age. The sample's average age at adoption was 3 years [from 2 months old to 14 years old], with age at adoption significantly correlated with acculturation ($r = -.47$). When generalized to African American adoptees, one could predict higher levels of acculturation (i.e., lower levels of racial identity) for TRAs when compared to their intraracially adopted counterparts given that Padilla, Vargas, and Chavez (2010) have found that African American TRAs have the lowest mean age among transracially adopted children. Over 90% of TRAs are adopted prior to the age of 12, the age when "children will most likely become racially and ethnically aware, realizing that people are routinely evaluating them according to their apparent racial or ethnic group" (Dubois et al., 2002, as cited in Padilla, Vargas, & Chavez, 2010) Further, Padilla et al. noted that the literature reviewed for their article identified a marked gap between the general racial identity literature and the literature examining racial identity among TRAs, and concluded that more studies are needed to directly examine the psychological processes involved with racial identity among TRAs (Padilla et al., 2010). Education on such research findings would inform parenting training for prospective adoptive parents and would be critical to facilitating the racial identity of TRAs.

     Socioeconomic status and racially homogeneous environments. DeBerry et al. (1996) found that racial identity appeared to be weaker among TRAs living in racially homogenous (i.e.,

predominantly White) communities. Similarly, in her study of identity development in African Americans adopted transracially, Butler-Sweet (2011) found that "socio-economic status (SES), or class, is likely key to shaping Black identity" (p. 26). She noted that class was a common thread in the described experiences of the young, Black adult adoptees in her study. Butler-Sweet referred to the absence of class as a construct in the vast majority of the racial identity literature, suggesting that the combination of class and race can create additional conflicts for TRAs seeking to identify with Black peers whose families may differ from the adoptees' families on factors beyond race. More specifically, in her racial identity research Butler-Sweet (2011) found that the status of having two White parents was not the only variable that contributed to identity confusion.

Research on Transracial Adoption

Butler-Sweet (2011) suggested that only a handful of significant studies have been conducted on transracial adoption, most of which have sought to determine whether or not transracial adoptions have been successful. With regard to racial identity research, Grow and Shapiro (1974, as cited in Butler, 2007) published the first systematic study of transracial adoption. They concluded that the TRAs in their study had made about as effective an adjustment in their adoptive homes as other non-White children had in previous studies. They indicated that 77% of the children in their study had adjusted successfully (Grow & Shapiro, 1974, as cited in Butler-Sweet, 2011). Moving ahead almost 25 years, Vroegh (1997) reported the fifth phase of her longitudinal study of transracial adoption outcomes, and concluded that 90% of her participants were "doing well in life" (p. 573). Further, 88% of the TRAs had developed identities and self-identified as either African American or mixed race (Vroegh, 1997).

Summary

Chapter 2 provided a literature review on the four areas of research of the study: (a) the evolution of racial identity theory for African Americans, (b) the practice of transracial adoption and its impact on African American racial identity achievement, (c) the relationship of racial identity and resilience for African Americans, and (d) the relationship of resilience and self-esteem for African Americans. Further, Chapter 2 reviewed literature on the effects of age at placement, socioeconomic status of the adoptive family, and homogeneity of the living environment on the racial identity of TRAs. Chapter 3 describes the present study's research method, including the measures, researcher's hypotheses, and data analyses.

Chapter 3: Method

The present study examined the effect of intraracial versus transracial adoption on the racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem of African American adoptees. The relationships among adoptees' racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem were studied. The study intended to determine (a) whether resilience and racial identity are predictors of self-esteem, (b) whether resilience and racial identity jointly are predictors of self-esteem, or (c) whether there is a difference in self-esteem between TRAs and adoptees who were parented by African American parent(s). Select demographics were of interest, such as adoptive parents' level of education, participants' age at the time of placement with their adoptive families, and the number of placements experienced prior to placement with one's adoptive family.

Participants

The participants were 45 African American adoptees, aged 25–72, who were adopted as children and placed with their adoptive African American parents or Caucasian parents prior to the age of 10. Because African American adoptees are typically young in transracial adoptions (Padilla et al., 2010), the present study used age 10 as the cut-off age (when *placed* with adoptive family) for inclusion in the study.

The participants were required to meet the following inclusion criteria: Participants had to (a) be male or female and at least 18 years of age at the time of participation in the study; (b) be of African American race and/or had at least one biological parent identified as African American, as noted in their adoption record; and (c) have adoptive parents who are/were same race couples, either both Caucasian or both African American, at the time of the participants' adoptions. Participants raised by a single adoptive parent, whether African American or European American, were also eligible for the study. Participants whose adoptive parents were

interracial couples (e.g., African American adoptive father, Caucasian adoptive mother, or vice versa) were excluded from the study as the race of the adoptive parents was the independent variable used as a statistical control in some analyses.

Ten participants reported having been raised by two African American adoptive parents; 25 reported having been raised by two Caucasian parents; and 10 reported having been adopted by a single, African American parent. No participants were adopted by a single Caucasian parent. The mean age of the participants was 37.6 years. Among the participants, 29.6% had completed high school or obtained a GED while 39% had completed some college, 17.1% were college graduates, 4.9% had graduate degrees, and 9.8% had post-graduate education or degrees. With regard to marital status, 60% of the participants reported being divorced, 20% being single/never married, 17.5% being currently married, and 2.5% reported being widowed. Thus, the sample had varied marital status though 80% were either divorced or single.

A total of 41 of the 45 participants provided data on their age of placement; the mean age at placement was 17.13 months. The number of other children who had resided with them in their adoptive homes was approximately three. Of those siblings, 40 participants reported that there were approximately 2 other children in their home who had also been adopted. A majority of the participants (77.5%) reported growing up in a predominantly African American neighborhood, 12.5% reported growing up in a neighborhood that was predominantly Caucasian, while 7.5% reported having grown up in a multicultural neighborhood.

A full sample of $N = 130$ would have been needed to detect a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992). That is, if a difference existed between the racial identity means of the two sample groups (i.e., intraracial and transracial), a minimum of 64 participants would have been needed in each group for this difference to be detected at a significance level of .05 (Cohen,

1992). While a medium sized effect would have been considered meaningful for the present

study, practical meaning could still be gleaned from the results of a smaller sample ($N = 45$ for

the present study) with a small effect size (Abelson, 1995).

Measures

        Demographic questionnaire. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire (e.g.,

the race of their adoptive parent(s), their current age, age when placed with their [eventual]

adoptive families, race, gender, etc.; see Appendix C for the Demographic Questionnaire).

        Racial identity measure. The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)

(Sellers et al., 1997) is a 56-item instrument designed to assess African Americans' racial

identity. Participants responded to each item using a 7-point Likert type response scale (1 =

strongly disagree and 7 = *strongly agree*; see Appendix D for the MIBI). Specifically, the MIBI

measures three stable constructs: (a) Centrality, (b) Ideology, and (c) Regard (Sellers et al.,

1997). In the present study only two of the subscales were used: Centrality and Regard. Sellers et

al. (1997) hypothesized that Centrality scores (e.g., the extent to which a person normatively

defines herself or himself in terms of race) would be positively correlated with Private Regard

(e.g., the extent to which individuals feel positively about African Americans and their

membership in that racial group). Sellers et al. (1997) showed that individuals for whom race

was Central were significantly more likely to have positive Private Regard for African

Americans ($r = .37$) and to endorse Nationalist attitudes (a viewpoint that emphasizes the

importance and uniqueness of being of African descent, $r = .57$). The authors found that High

Centrality scorers were less likely to endorse Assimilationist (a viewpoint that emphasizes the

commonalities between African Americans and the rest of American society, $r = -.19$) or

Humanistic attitudes (a viewpoint that emphasizes the commonalities of all humans, $r = -.29$).

Racial identity measurement appears to be contextual, assessing the outcome of a person's interactions with racial minority and dominant European American social environments.

These psychometric properties of the MIBI subscales, as well as their underlying factor structure, provided support for the MIBI's construct validity. The predictive validity of the MIBI was also supported. Participants with an African American best friend had higher scores on Centrality and Nationalist subscales, but lower scores on the Assimilationist, Humanist, and Oppressed Minority subscales than did those without an African American best friend (Sellers et al., 1997).

The relationship between MIBI subscales and enrollment in Black Studies courses was investigated (Sellers et al., 1997). A one-way MANOVA, $F(6,467) = 3.44$, $p < .01$, showed overall significant difference on the MIBI subscales between individuals who had taken Black studies courses and those who had not. In addition, students who had taken at least one Black studies course had higher levels of Centrality, $F(1,472) = 7.98$, $p < .01$, and Nationalism, $F(1,472) = 18.32$, $p < .01$.

Factor analysis of the MIBI supported the three-dimensional conceptual model of the MIBI (i.e., Centrality, Regard, and Ideology; see Sellers et al., 1997). Factor analysis indicated that the MIBI measures three interrelated factors, as opposed to a measure with three distinct uncorrelated/independent factors. Specifically, the authors have stated that the MIBI empirically reflects the basic premise of the MMRI, that racial identity in African Americans is a "multidimensional construct in which the various dimensions are both independent and interrelated" (Sellers et al., 1997, p. 811).

What follows is a sample set of items from the Centrality Scale: "Being Black is an important reflection of who I am" and "My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people."

The Regard Scale has two subscales: (a) Private Regard and (b) Public Regard. An item from Private Regard is, "I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society," while an item from Public Regard is, "In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner."

The third scale, the Ideology Scale, has four subscales: (a) Assimilationist, (b) Humanist, (c) Oppressed Minority, and (d) Nationalist. The Ideology scale was not used because this scale measures one's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes regarding how African Americans as a group ought to live and act, which represents a worldview orientation or belief system. As the present study focused on participants' perception of their *own* Racial Identity or sense of affiliation with the African American sociocultural group, items measuring one's beliefs about their race as a whole were deemed outside the scope of the present study. Because the Ideology scale was not utilized in the present study, their descriptions are not provided here, and readers are requested to read the MIBI instrument development study for more information (see Sellers et al., 1997). Similarly, the Salience scale was also not used in the present study as this scale is designed to measure one's Racial Identity at a *particular* moment in time, making this subscale easily influenced by one's current situation. The present study intended to focus on stable, trait-like aspects of racial identity.

For the present study, the 56-item MIBI instrument was shortened to 20 items that measured Centrality (8 items), Public Regard (6 items) and Private Regard (6 items). In the present study, internal consistency reliability or Cronbach's alpha for Centrality was $\alpha = .84$, higher than the reliability ($\alpha = .77$) reported by Sellers et al. (1997). The Cronbach's alpha for Private Regard was $\alpha = .91$, higher than that ($\alpha = .60$) reported by Sellers et al. (1997). For Public Regard, the Cronbach's alpha for the present study was $\alpha = .70$. The internal consistency

reliabilities of Centrality, Private Regard, and Public Regard were acceptable to strong.

Resilience measure. The Resilience Scale (RS; Wagnild & Young, 1993) was the second measure administered to the participants. The RS is a 25-item instrument that measures "the capacity to withstand life stressors, and to thrive and make meaning from challenges" (Abiola & Udofia, 2011, p. 2). This definition indicates that the RS measures the personality trait of resilience, which strength is also recognized in positive psychology.

The development of the RS combined qualitative and quantitative analyses. Wagnild and Young (1993) conducted interviews with 24 women who persevered after a stressful live event. The researchers did qualitative analyses of the interviews to find five themes: (a) equanimity, (b) perseverance, (c) self-reliance, (d) meaningfulness, and (e) existential aloneness (Wagnild & Young, 1993). Items were created to reflect each of the five themes and consisted of the verbatim statements made by participants during the interviews. For example, the theme of perseverance is reflected in the item, "keeping interested in things is important to me" (Wagnild & Young, 1993, p. 168).

Items are scored on a Likert scale from 1 (*disagree*) to 7 (*agree*). A 25-item pilot instrument was administered to college nursing students to examine its internal consistency, readability, and content validity. The instrument showed high internal consistency reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .89 (Wagnild & Young, 1993). The instrument was then administered to a random sample of 810 older adults in the Northwest. Participants also completed the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Life Satisfaction Index A (LSI-A), Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale (PGCMS), and a self-report questionnaire on physical health. Wagnild and Young hypothesized that the RS would negatively correlate with the BDI and positively correlate with the LSI-A, physical health, and PGCMS. In the present study, the RS had a Cronbach's alpha of

α = .91, as would be expected from a large sample of respondents. The research hypotheses were supported. The RS negatively correlated with the BDI ($r = -.37$, $p < .001$), and positively correlated with the LSI-A ($r = .30$, $p < .001$), PGCMS ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), and Health ($r = .26$, $p < .001$); these correlations, while significant, were, however, low to moderate. A large sample ($N = 810$) should have theoretically shown higher correlations

Exploratory factor analyses revealed a two-factor solution. The two factors were Personal Competence and Acceptance of Self and Life. Personal Competence included themes of "self-reliance, independence, determination, invincibility, mastery, resourcefulness, and perseverance" (Wagnild & Young, 1993, p. 174). Personal Competence items included: "I follow through with plans;" "I keep interested in things;" and "In an emergency, people can rely on me." Acceptance of self and life was defined as "adaptability, balance, flexibility, and a balanced perspective on life" (Wagnild & Young, 1993, p. 175). Items included: "I usually take things in stride;" "I am friends with myself;" and "I do not dwell on things." Although the RS has two subscales (Personal Competence and Acceptance of Self and Life) developed from various samples, there are no norms based on a normative sample. The total RS score was used by the authors to analyze data because personal competence and acceptance of self are person-centered Scores ranged between 25 and 175 with higher scores indicating higher levels of trait resilience.

Wagnild and Young (1993) stated that the RS is applicable to participants of all ages and demographics. The RS has been used with Alzheimer's caregivers (Wagnild & Young, 1988, as cited in Wagnild & Young, 1993), sheltered battered women (Humphreys, 2003), graduate students (Cooley, 1990; Klaas, 1989, as cited in Wagnild & Young, 1993), and post-partum mothers returning to work for the first-time (Killien & Jarrett, 1993, as cited in Wagnild & Young, 1993).

For the present study, the full scale was used for a statistical reason. Because of the limited size of the study's sample, caution was used with regard to over-analyses of data. The Cronbach's alpha for the Resilience Scale was $\alpha = .97$, higher than the internal consistency reliability reported by Wagnild and Young (1993) in their instrument development study ($\alpha = .87$; see Appendix C for the Resilience Scale.).

Self-esteem measure. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem (SE) Scale is a 10-item self-report measure that asks respondents to evaluate themselves in relation to other people they know. According to Rosenberg (1979), a person who is characterized as having high self-esteem has "self-respect and considers himself [or herself] a person of worth. Appreciating his [or her] own merits, he [or she] nonetheless recognizes his [or her] faults" (p. 54). Gray-Little, Williams, and Hancock (1997) point out that the popularity of the Rosenberg scale originates from the instrument's conceptualization of self-esteem being consistent with both psychological theory of self-esteem as a personality trait, and the layperson's understanding of self-esteem.

Of the 10 SE Scale items, five are negatively worded and five are positively worded. Four Likert scale responses are used (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Agree*, 4 = *Strongly Agree*) for the five positively worded items (items 1, 3, 4, 7, & 10). The scale's five negatively worded items (items 2, 5, 6, 8, & 9) are reverse scored (1 = *Strongly Agree*, 2 = *Agree*, 3 = *Disagree*, 4 = *Strongly Disagree*). The SE Scale's raw scores are converted (1 = 10, 2 = 20, 3 = 30, 4 = 40) using a metric ranging from 10 (Poor) to 40 (Excellent), with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem.

The SE Scale is the most widely used self-esteem measure and has received more psychometric analysis and empirical validation than any other self-esteem measure (Byrne, 1996, as cited in Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). Some have criticized the SE Scale for lack of

diversity in its norming samples (Schmitt & Allik, 2005, as cited in Sinclair et al., 2010) and for

the absence of an underlying theoretical framework for the instrument. Therefore, there were no

criteria or rationale for the selection of items. The SE Scale has minimal face validity (Butler &

Gasson, 2006, as cited in Sinclair et al., 2010). Despite these criticisms, research on the SE Scale

spanning four decades has concluded that it possesses internal reliability ($\alpha = .75$; Robins et al.,

2001), as well as internal consistency across cultural contexts (average $\alpha = .81$; Sinclair et. al,

2010) and test-retest reliability ($r_{xy} = .82$; Byrne, as cited in Gray-Little, Williams, and Hancock,

1997).

A meta-analysis of four studies of two global self-esteem measures (the Single Item

Self-Esteem Scale [SISE] and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale [SE]) found that the SE Scale

showed strong convergent validity for men and women, for different ethnic groups, and for both

college students and community members (Robins et al., 2001). Robins and colleagues also

concluded that each of the four studies in the meta-analysis showed that global self-esteem has

important and wide-ranging implications for interpersonal and intrapsychic functioning.

An item response theory (IRT) analysis of the SE Scale concluded that it is a reliable and

valid measure of global self-worth and "deserves its widespread use and continued popularity"

(Gray-Little et al., 1997, p. 450). The IRT analyses showed that although the 10 items of the SE

Scale were not equally discriminating, all 10 items defined a unidimensional trait (self-esteem)

and could "provide information across the self-esteem continuum" (Gray-Little et al., 1997, p.

450).

In their study of the impact of culture on self-esteem, using the SE Scale, Schmitt and

Allik (2005) utilized participant groups from across 53 nations. They used the factor analytic

method of principal components analysis and showed that the SE component structure was

generally invariant across cultures. Cronbach's alpha was "substantial" overall (average $\alpha = .81$)

across 53 nations, indicating very good internal consistency reliability across cultures (Schmitt &

Allik, 2005, as cited in Sinclair et al., 2010, p. 59). The Cronbach's alpha for the Rosenberg

Self-esteem Scale in the present study was α = .93, higher than that found in the aforementioned

study (See C for the SE Scale).

Procedures

Participants were recruited through several websites directed toward adoptees and/or

adoptive parents and families, including but not limited to:

- Black Adoption Placement and Research Center, family@baprc.org

- National Council for Adoption, www.adoptioncouncil.org

- National Foster Parent Association

  www.nationalfosterparentassociation.blogspot.com

- Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents, www.cafap.com

- CT Parenting (a website/service sponsored by the CT Department of Children and

  Families), www.ctparenting.com

- Adoptive Families Magazine (website and Facebook page),

  www.adoptivefamiliescircle.com

- Families for Children, www.families4children.com

- The Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) (Facebook page)

- The Adoption Network (Facebook page)

- Adoption.com (and Facebook page)

- www.transracialeyes.com, (a blog site visited primarily by transracial adoptees)

- www.bridgecommunications.org, (website of an agency that provides educational

seminars about various topics of diversity to communities, businesses, etc.)

- www.representmag.org, (Represent magazine: a national magazine written by and for youth in foster care)

- AFAAD- A Birth Project (Facebook page, linked to a blog created by and for transracially adopted African Americans

- Various other internet blog sites that indicated transracial and/or same race adoption as their focus.

Trochim (2006) notes that when sampling, proportionality is not the primary concern of the researcher; purposive sampling can be a useful and efficient way to obtain the opinions of one's target population. The survey was accessible on the Psychdata.com website for six weeks and announcements about the study were posted on adoption interest websites.

A link to the online survey site (PsychData.com) was posted on each website, along with a brief description of the study (including inclusion criteria). Upon following the link to the survey, participants read an invitation to participate (see Appendix A for the Study Invitation) which included details on: (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the inclusion criteria, (c) the estimated time required (20–30 minutes) to answer the survey, (d) the type of personal inquiry of the surveys, and (e) the researcher's contact information. Participants also read an Informed Consent Statement (see Appendix B for the Informed Consent Statement), which informed participants that electronic submission of their completed surveys would serve as implied informed consent.

Before beginning the survey, participants answered demographic questions (See Appendix C for the Demographic Questionnaire). The completed surveys were assigned to one of three groups: (a) African Americans adopted by Caucasian parents, (b) African Americans

adopted by two African American parents, or (c) African Americans adopted by a single African American or Caucasian parent. Subsequently, they completed the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI), the Resilience Scale (RS), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SE Scale; see Appendix C for these measures).

Ethics and Informed Consent

Recruitment began upon receiving approval from Antioch University New England's Institutional Review Board (IRB) on March 30, 2013. PsychData.com hosted the study's internet survey. This website has the capacity to securely store data and exclude IP addresses of participants. Most importantly, the website has the ability to have participants taken to a separate and unlinked webpage at the end of the survey, where email addresses were entered by participants who wished to enter the drawing for a gift card. PsychData.com automatically downloaded the email addresses separately, which ensured anonymity of the responses. Because of this, there was no way to link a participant's email address to their responses. Those participants who won a gift card were sent the card electronically, via email. In total, four gift cards valued at $50 each were awarded. Survey responses were available only to the present researcher. PsychData.com provided end-to-end encryption of all account data and web presence was kept confidential, even from those surfing from public Wi-Fi hot spots. Likewise, Psychdata.com encrypted all participant survey data. Once submitted, the data were password protected and could only be downloaded by the account owner (this researcher). Member surveys and data were deleted by PsychData.com at the termination of our service contract on 6/8/2013.

All research was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set forth by the American Psychological Association. A summary of the study's results will be made available to participants upon request.

Research Hypotheses

The following were the study's research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Racial Identity is higher in intraracial adoptees than in transracial adoptees (TRAs).

Hypothesis 2: Resilience is higher in intraracial adoptees than in TRAs.

Hypothesis 3: Resilience is positively correlated with racial identity.

Hypothesis 4: Resilience is positively correlated with self-esteem.

Hypothesis 5: The magnitude of the positive correlation between resilience and self-esteem is greater in intraracially adopted African Americans than in transracially adopted African Americans.

Hypothesis 6: Resilience does not operate independently from racial identity in contributing to self-esteem, rather resilience is positively correlated with racial identity, and they together contribute to self-esteem.

Hypothesis 7: Select demographics will contribute significantly to self-esteem, such as, parental educational level, parents' race, participants' number of placements prior to placement with adoptive family, and participants' age when placed with adoptive family.

Data Analyses

Hypothesis 1: Racial Identity is higher in intraracial than in transracial adoptees.

Hypothesis 2: Resilience is higher in intraracial than in transracial adoptees.

One multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to make between-group comparisons (Intraracial adoptees with two African American parents, Intraracial adoptees with a single African American parent, and TRAs with two Caucasian parents) for the three dependent variables: Racial Identity, Resilience, and Self-Esteem. The overall effect of the

independent variable of race of adoptive parent(s) on the three dependent variables taken together was first studied. A MANOVA, instead of an ANOVA, was used because previous studies have shown moderate correlations between racial identity and self-esteem (APA, 2008; Cross, 1991; Juffer & van Ijzendoorn, 2007; Mandara et al., 2009; Rowley et al., 1998) and between resilience and self-esteem (APA, 2008; Mandara et al., 2009). A significant MANOVA was followed with significant ANOVAs, which were followed with post hoc tests to test for differences among the three groups of adoptees.

Hypothesis 3: Resilience is positively correlated with racial identity.

Hypothesis 4: Resilience is positively correlated with self-esteem.

Hypothesis 5: The magnitude of the positive correlation between resilience and self-esteem is greater in same race adopted African Americans (SRAs) than in TRAs. Using Pearson r correlation (1-tailed) procedures, the relationships between racial identity and resilience and between resilience and self-esteem in the three sample groups (SRAs with two parents, SRAs with a single parent, and TRAs with two parents) were studied to determine whether these relationships differed among the three groups. The directionality and magnitude of the correlations were examined.

Hypothesis 6: Resilience does not operate independently from racial identity in contributing to self-esteem, rather resilience is positively correlated with racial identity, and they together contribute to self-esteem.

Hypothesis 7: Select demographics will contribute significantly to self-esteem, such as: (a) adoptive parent(s)' race, (b) one's age at placement with (eventual) adoptive family, (c) adoptive parents' educational level, and (d) one's number of placements experienced prior to placement into their adoptive home. After looking at the Pearson correlation matrix of the three

measures to detect directionality and magnitude of correlations, as well as multicolinearity, two

hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed for the two criterion variables:

Self-esteem and Resilience. For the first regression analysis, where Self-esteem was the criterion

variable, Resilience was entered at the first step. Racial Identity was entered at the second step;

for racial identity, Public Regard and Private Regard were entered but Centrality was excluded

because of its strong negative correlation with Self-esteem, as indicated by the Pearson r

correlation matrix. At the third step, the race of the adoptive parents was entered using dummy

coded variables (1 = African American, 2 = Caucasian). At the fourth step, specific demographic

data were entered: (a) adoptive parents' highest level of education, (b) the number of placements

experienced by the adoptee prior to being placed with their adoptive family, and (c) the age of

the adoptee when placed with their (eventual) adoptive family.

The overall variance contributed to Self-Esteem by the full model and the variance

contributed by each step, were studied. The questions answered using a hierarchical multiple

regression analysis were: (a) Does Resilience contribute significantly to Self-Esteem? (b) Does

Racial Identity contribute significantly to Self-Esteem? (c) Does the race of one's adoptive

parents contribute significantly to Self Esteem? and (d) Do specific demographic factors

contribute significantly to self-esteem? In the final step of this hierarchical multiple regression,

when comparing each predictor's variance with each other with regard to their respective

contributions to Self-esteem (by examining beta weights and t-tests for each predictor), the

following questions were asked: Are Resilience and Racial Identity so well correlated that only

one variable is a significant predictor of Self Esteem? Or do select demographics contribute

significant variance to Self-Esteem, taking away from the influence of both Resilience and

Racial Identity, or at least one of the two measures?

For the second hierarchical multiple regression analysis, Resilience was the criterion variable. At the first step, Self-esteem was entered. Racial Identity was entered at the second step; for racial identity, Centrality and Private Regard were entered, while Public Regard was excluded from the regression due to its strong negative correlation with Resilience, as indicated by the Pearson r correlation matrix. At the third step, the race of the adoptive parents was added (1 = African American, 2 = Caucasian). At the fourth step, specific demographic data were entered: (a) adoptive parents' highest level of education, (b) the number of placements experienced by the adoptee prior to being placed with their adoptive family, and (c) the age of the adoptee when placed into their (eventual) adoptive home. The overall variance contributed to Resilience by the full model and the variance contributed by each step were studied. In the final step of this hierarchical multiple regression, when comparing each predictor's variance with each other with regard to their respective contributions to Resilience (by examining beta weights and t-tests for each predictor), the following questions were asked: (a) Does Self-esteem contribute significantly to Resilience? (b) Does Racial Identity contribute significantly to Resilience? (c) Are Self-esteem and Racial Identity so well correlated that only one variable is a significant predictor of Resilience? and (d) Do select demographics contribute significant variance to Resilience, taking away from the influence of both Self-esteem and Racial Identity or at least one of the two measures?

Conclusion

Chapter 3 detailed the demographics of the study's participants. The chapter has also described the measures employed in this study, including their psychometric properties, sample items, and a rationale for their use in, or partial exclusion from, the data analyses. The study's research hypotheses were reviewed, and data analyses to accept or reject the hypotheses were

proposed. Statistical analyses were also addressed to answer each research question posed in

Chapter 1. Chapter 4 provides the results.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents findings from surveys completed by $N = 45$ African American adoptees, aged 18 and over. Data were obtained through an online host website, PsychData.com. The results are presented in four separate sections. First, internal consistency reliabilities for the measures are reported to evaluate acceptable levels of reliability. Second, interscale correlations are reported to evaluate the magnitude and directionality of relationships among the measures. Third, descriptive statistics accompany one MANOVA, four ANOVAs, and the corresponding post hoc tests regarding differences between groups on the variables of interest. Fourth, two multiple regression analyses provide models of prediction for self-esteem as well as for resilience.

Four research questions guided the data analyses: (a) Do African American children, adopted by African American parents, achieve a significantly higher level of racial identity than African American children adopted by Caucasian parents? (b) Does a relationship exist between racial identity and resilience of transracially adopted African Americans, and if so, what is the extent and directionality of the correlation? (c) Does a relationship exist between resilience and self-esteem in African American adoptees, and if so, what is the extent and directionality of the correlation? and (d) What are the relationships among racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem, and what are the extent and directionality of the correlations?

From the above research questions the following research hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Racial Identity is higher in intraracial adoptees than in transracial adoptees (TRAs).

Hypothesis 2: Resilience is higher in intraracial adoptees than in TRAs.

Hypothesis 3: Resilience is positively correlated with racial identity.

Hypothesis 4: Resilience is positively correlated with self-esteem.

Hypothesis 5: The magnitude of the positive correlation between resilience and self-esteem is greater in intraracially adopted African Americans than in transracially adopted African Americans.

Hypothesis 6: Resilience does not operate independently from racial identity in contributing to self-esteem, rather resilience is positively correlated with racial identity, and they together contribute to self-esteem.

Hypothesis 7: Select demographics will contribute significantly to self-esteem, such as, parental educational level, parents' race, participants' number of placements prior to placement with adoptive family, and one's age when placed with an adoptive family.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Resilience Scale (RS). Cronbach's alpha provides a measure of internal consistency reliability. Internal consistency reliability refers to how well the items in a measure or in a subscale of a measure correlate with one another, thus providing empirical evidence for the definition of a construct (Roysircar, 2004). Cronbach's alpha for RS was $\alpha = .97$. An analysis of item-to-total scale correlations found that the Cronbach's alpha for the present study would not have been improved had any of the items been removed.

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (SE Scale). The SE Scale's Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .93$. An analysis of item-to-total scale correlations found that the Cronbach's alpha for the present study would not have been improved had any of the items been removed.

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). Three separate Cronbach's alphas were calculated for the three MIBI subscales (Centrality, Private Regard, and Public Regard) that were utilized for the study. Internal consistency reliabilities were $\alpha = .84$ for Centrality, $\alpha = .70$ for Public Regard, and $\alpha = .91$ for Private Regard.

Interscale Correlations

Table 1 shows the Pearson r correlation matrix of all variables analyzed. Both Resilience and Private Regard had significant correlations with the other scales. Resilience had a negative significant correlation with Self-esteem, $p < .05$ and significant positive correlations with Centrality, $p < .01$, and Private Regard, $p < .01$. The negative correlation indicated that as one's resilience increased, their self-esteem decreased. Self-esteem had a significant positive correlation with Public Regard, $p < .05$. This positive correlation indicated that as one's self-esteem increased, their level of Public Regard (e.g., the extent to which individuals feel that others view African Americans positively) also increased. Self-esteem had a significant negative correlation with Private Regard, $p < .01$. The negative correlation indicated that as one's self-esteem increased, their level of Private Regard (e.g., the extent to which individuals feel positively about African Americans and their membership in that racial group) decreased. Centrality had a significant positive correlation with Private Regard, $p < .01$. Because Private Regard was strongly correlated to both Resilience and Centrality, causing a concern for multicolinearity, it was not used as a predictor variable for the multiple regression where Resilience was the criterion variable and Centrality was one of the predictor variables. However, Private Regard was included as a predictor variable in the multiple regression where Self-esteem was the criterion variable.

Table 1

Pearson Correlations Among the Resilience Scale, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, and the MIBI (Centrality, Public Regard and Private Regard subscales)

	RS	SE	Cent	PubR	PrivR
RS	1.00	-.34*	.39**	-.27	.78**
SE		1.00	-.21	.32*	-.46**
Cent			1.00	.03	.63**
PubR				1.00	-.20
PrivR					1.00

Note. N = 45. RS = Resilience Scale; SE = Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; Cent = MIBI Centrality subscale; PubR = MIBI Public Regard subscale; PrivR = MIBI Private Regard subscale.
*p < .05. **p < .01

Descriptive Statistics

Resilience Scale. The 25 RS items were scored on a 1 through 7 Likert-type format, with a minimum possible score of 25 and a maximum possible score of 175. Higher scores indicated a higher level of resilience. For the Transracial Adoptees (TRAs; *n* = 25) the mean was 121.28 (SD = 26.90). For the Same Race Adoptees (SRAs) raised in a two-parent home (2-PH; *n* = 10), the mean was 147.00 (SD = 28.82). For the SRAs raised in a single-parent (1-PH) African American household (*n* = 10), the mean was 112.50 (SD = 16.89). The demographic questionnaire did not ask for the gender of the single adoptive parents, therefore further interpretation of that demographic did not occur.

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. The SE 10 items were scored on a 1 through 4 Likert-type format, with five of the 10 items negatively worded and reverse scored. The maximum possible

score on the SE Scale was 40, while the minimum possible score was 10; higher scores indicated higher self-esteem. For the TRAs, the mean was 23.56 (SD = 5.20). The mean for the SRAs raised by two African American parents was 21.00 (SD = 7.67). For the SRAs raised by a single African American parent, the mean was 24.50 (SD = 1.76).

      The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). The 8 items of the Centrality subscale, three of which are reverse scored, were scored on a 1 through 7 Likert-type format with a minimum possible score of 8 and a maximum possible score of 56. The Centrality subscale mean for the TRAs was 31.80 (SD = 5.98). For the SRAs raised by two African American parents, the mean was 38.50 (SD = 6.25). The mean for the SRAs raised in a single-parent African American home was 33.12 (SD = 5.34).

      The 6 items of the Public Regard subscale, 2 of which are reverse scored, were scored on a 1 through 7 Likert-type format, with a minimum possible score of 6 and a maximum possible score of 42. For the TRAs, the mean was 21.40 (SD = 4.78). For the SRAs raised by two African American parents, the mean was 21.00 (SD = 5.60). For the SRAs raised by a single African American parent, the mean was 25.38 (SD = 2.00). See Table 2 for descriptive statistics for measures used with Transracial adoptees, Adoptees with same-race adoptive parents (2-PH), and Adoptees with same-race single adoptive parent (1-PH).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Transracial Adoptees and Same Race Adoptees Groups on Measures Used

		RS	SE	Cent	Public Regard
Group	n	*M*(SD)	*M* (SD)	*M* (SD)	*M (*SD)
TRA	25	121.28 (26.90)	23.56 (5.20)	31.80 (5.98)	21.40 (4.78)
SRA (2-PH)	10	147.0 (28.82)	21.00 (7.67)	38.50 (6.25)	21.00 (5.60)
SRA (1-PH)	10	112.50 (16.89)	24.50 (1.76)	33.12 (5.34)	25.38 (2.00)
Total Sample	45	125.04 (27.86)	23.20 (5.38)	33.58 (6.38)	22.19 (4.76)

Note. RS = Resilience Scale; SE = Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; Cent = MIBI Centrality Scale; Public Regard = MIBI Public Regard Scale; TRA = Transracial Adoptees; SRA (1-PH) = Adoptees adopted by Same Race parents, in a 1-parent home; SRA (2-PH) = Adoptees adopted by Same Race parents, in a 2-parent home)

Differences Between Transracial Adoptees (TRAs) and Same Race Adoptees (SRAs)

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). A MANOVA was performed with Resilience, Self-esteem, Centrality, and Public Regard as the dependent variables. The independent variables had three categories: (a) African American two-parent home, (b) Caucasian two-parent home, and (c) African American single-parent home. The MANOVA showed an overall significant effect on the dependent variables, $F (8, 80) = 2.40$, $p < .05$; $\omega^2 = .39$, a medium ES. The significant MANOVA was followed up with analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Table 3 shows the ANOVA results. There were significant differences for: Resilience, $p < .01$, Centrality, $p < .05$, and Public Regard, $p < .05$. No significant effect was found for Self-esteem. Subsequent to the significant ANOVAs for Resilience, Centrality, and Public Regard, post hoc Tukey HSD tests were performed.

Table 3

Follow-up ANOVAs with Race of One's Adoptive Parent(s) as the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2
Resilience	2	3374.19	5.17	.01**	.20
Self-esteem	2	34.27	1.19	.31	.07
Centrality	2	161.68	4.63	.02*	.24
Public Regard	2	65.63	3.18	.05*	.12

*Significant at the .05 level
**Significant at the .01 level

Resilience. Post hoc Tukey's HSD tests indicated the following. Adoptees with two African American parents ($M = 147.00$) were significantly different from adoptees with Caucasian parents ($M = 121.28$), $q(34) = 2.03$, $p < .05$. Adoptees with two African American parents were also significantly different from adoptees with a single African American parent ($M = 112.50$), $q(19) = 2.09$ $p < .05$. In both comparisons, adoptees with two African American parents had higher Resilience scores. Adoptees with Caucasian parents showed no difference from adoptees with a single African American parent, $q(34) = .632$, $p > .05$.

Centrality. Post hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated the following. Adoptees with two African American parents ($M = 38.50$) were significantly different from adoptees of Caucasian parents ($M = 31.80$), $q(34) = 2.03$, $p < .05$. Adoptees with Caucasian parents showed no difference from adoptees with single African American parents, ($M = 33.12$), $q(34) = 1.69$, $p > .05$. Adoptees with single African parents were not significantly different from either group.

Public Regard. Post hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated the following. The difference

between adoptees with Caucasian parents ($M = 21.40$) and adoptees with single African

American parents ($M = 25.38$) narrowly missed the significance level, $q(34) = 1.67$, $p = .06$.

Adoptees with two African American parents ($M = 21.00$) were not significantly different from

either group.

Multiple Regression Analyses

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis (HMRA) was performed with Self-esteem as

the criterion variable (see Table 4). The hierarchical regression is the most reasonable choice of

regression analysis when there is a theoretical or research-based rationale for entering variables

in a specific predetermined order (Roysircar, Carey, & Koroma, 2010). The reasons for this

selected order of entry are given below.

Self-esteem (criterion variable of the first multiple regression) is a predominant theme in

the Positive Psychology literature (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), where it is considered

one of the most salient psychological constructs for adolescent mental health (APA, 2008). The

prevailing theory suggests that self-esteem benefits mental health by acting as a psychological

buffer from negative environmental stressors, making those with higher self-esteem experience

more resilience and self-efficacy, and believe that they are capable of overcoming obstacles

(Mandara et al., 2009). Therefore, self-esteem was examined as the criterion variable, with

resilience entered as the first predictor to verify whether resilience would contribute significant

variance to self-esteem. Racial identity variables were entered at the second step because mixed

results have been found in the literature with regard to the relationship between racial identity

and self-esteem; in some studies the relationship was significant (for males: Mandara et al.,

2009) and in others non-significant (Rowley et al., 1998, Sellers, 1993). Since a positive

relationship has been found between resilience and racial identity (APA, 2008), racial identity

variables were entered at the second step to study their effect on self-esteem, after controlling for

the variance accounted for by resilience. At Step 3, the race of one's adoptive parent(s) was

entered as the predictor variable, to study its effect on self-esteem, after controlling for the

variance accounted for by resilience and racial identity. The race of adoptive parents was the

primary socio-demographic variable of interest to the study, which asked research questions and

made hypotheses about the effects of same race (African American) and transracial (European

American) adoptive parents. Socio-economic status (SES) and other demographic variables, and

their effect on self-esteem for transracial adoptees have also been studied (Butler-Sweet, 2011;

Lee, 2003). At Step 4, the demographic predictor variables entered were: (a) one's number of

placements prior to placement with their adoptive family, (b) one's age at the time of placement

with their adoptive family, and (c) one's adoptive parents' highest level of education. Some

empirical research (Wickes & Slate, 1996) has found that (Korean) transracial adoptees placed

with their adoptive families at a later age identified more strongly with their ethnicities and races

than did adoptees placed with their adoptive families at a younger age (average age at adoption

was 3 years old; range was 2 months old to 14 years old). In her study of Black identity,

Butler-Sweet (2011) found that "socio-economic status (SES), or class, is likely key to shaping

Black identity" (p. 26). As these demographic variables have been studied more in relation to

racial identity, and racial identity has been studied with regard to its relationship with

self-esteem, the demographic predictor variables were entered at the last step to study their effect

on self-esteem, after controlling for the variance accounted for by resilience, racial identity, and

the race of one's adoptive parents.

      Entering variables at these 4 steps in the stated order to predict Self-esteem yielded

significant results for the full model, $F(7, 517) = 5.09$, $p < .001$, R^2 of .54, a large ES. Entering

Resilience in Step 1, yielded an R^2 of .17, a medium ES, with $F(1, 161) = 7.42$, $p < .01$. Adding

Private Regard and Public Regard in Step 2, each racial identity variable predicted Self-esteem,

$F(3, 379) = 7.52$, $p < .001$, R^2 of .39, a large ES (a 50% increase in F from Step 1). At Step 3,

entering the race of one's adoptive parent(s) did not, individually, add significant variance to

Self-esteem, after controlling for Resilience, Private Regard, and Public Regard. However, at

Step 3, the overall model continued to be a significant predictor of Self-esteem, $F(4, 392.37) =$

5.80, $p < .001$, R^2 of .41, a large ES. At Step 4, entering age at placement with one's adoptive

family did not add significant variance to Self-esteem beyond that of Step 1, Step 2 and Step 3.

The same was true when the highest level of education of one's adoptive parent(s) was entered.

Entering the number of placements experienced prior to being placed in an adoptive home did

add significant variance to Self-esteem. The overall model with four steps continued to be a

significant predictor of self-esteem. When Resilience, Private Regard, and Number of

Placements were compared to other independent variables, they made significant negative

contributions to the variance of self-esteem; that is, the more the resilience, the more Private

Regard, and the more the Number of Placements, the lower was each variable's contribution to

self-esteem at a significant level. Table 4 shows this HMRA for the prediction of Self-esteem.

Table 4

Summary of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Self-esteem

	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F ratio	β	B	SEB	t
Self-esteem							
Step 1	.17	.14	7.42**				
Resilience				-.41	-.08	.03	-2.72**
Step 2	.39	.34	7.52***				
Private Regard				-.55	-.35	.13	-2.75**
Public Regard				.32	.34	.14	2.41*
Step 3	.41	.34	5.80***				
Parent(s) race				.13	1.32	1.49	.88
Step 4	.54	.43	5.09***				
Age at time of placement in adopt. Home				.26	.07	.05	1.46
# of placements prior to adopt. Home				-.45	-1.85	.67	-2.76**
Parents' highest Level of educ.				-.12	-.58	.63	-.92

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

A second HMRA was performed with Resilience as the criterion variable (see Table 5). The rationale for having entered these variables in the selected order is given below.

As noted above, a prevailing theory in the Positive Psychology literature (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) suggests that self-esteem benefits mental health by acting as a psychological buffer from negative environmental stressors, making those with higher self-esteem experience more resilience and self-efficacy, and believe that they are capable of overcoming obstacles (Mandara et al., 2009). This theme guided the ordering of the predictor variables, with self-esteem entered as the first predictor to verify whether it contributed significant variance to resilience. Racial identity variables were entered at the Step 2 because research has suggested that a positive racial identity helps African American adolescents develop resilience, which, in turn, helps them to cope with the stresses of discrimination (Lee, 2003) and other social adversities they often have to navigate (APA, 2008; Mandara et al., 2009). The race

of one's adoptive parents was entered at Step 3, as empirical research has explored the

relationship between transracial adoption and racial identity (Patel, 2007), as well as the

relationship between racial identity and resilience (APA, 2008). The race of one's adoptive

parents was entered at this step to verify whether it contributed significant variance to resilience,

after controlling for the variance accounted for by self-esteem and racial identity. The effects of

socio-economic status (SES), one's number of placements prior to placement with an adoptive

family, and one's age at placement with an adoptive family have been empirically studied with

regard to their effect on racial identity (DeBerry et al.,1996; Butler-Sweet, 2011), but appear

sparingly in the resilience literature (McLoyd, 1998). Therefore, the demographic predictor

variables were entered at the last step, to study their effect on resilience, after controlling for the

variance accounted for by self-esteem, racial identity, and the race of one's adoptive parents.

On the basis of the above-mentioned rationale, the predictor variable at Step 1 was

Self-esteem. At Step 2, the predictor variables were, first, Centrality and, second, Private Regard.

At Step 3, the predictor variable was the race of one's adoptive parents. At Step 4, the predictor

variables were: a) one's number of placements experienced prior to placement with adoptive

family, b) the highest educational level achieved by one's adoptive parent(s), and c) one's age at

the time placed with their adoptive family. Entering these 4 steps in the stated order to predict

Resilience yielded a significant model, $F(7, 19369) = 9.25$, $p < .001$, R^2 of .68, a large ES, with

each step making a significant contribution to the variance of resilience.

Entering Self-esteem in Step 1 yielded an R^2 of .17, a medium ES, with $F(1, 4783) =$

7.42, $p < .01$. In Step 2, adding Centrality and Private Regard made a significant contribution to

the variance in Resilience, $F(3, 16730) = 16.38$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .58, a large ES (a 40%

increase in F from Step 1). At Step 2, Centrality as an individual predictor did not contribute

significantly to the variance of Resilience, when the variance contributed by Self-esteem was controlled for. However, Private Regard as an individual predictor *did* contribute significantly to the variance of Resilience (see Table # 5). At Step 3, entering race of the adoptive parents added a significant variance to Resilience, yielding an R^2 of .59, a large ES, with $F(4, 16922) = 12.27$, $p < .001$. At Step 4, while the overall model continued to be significant, yielding an R^2 of .68, a large ES, with $F(7, 19369) = 9.25$, $p < .001$, entering the number of placements experienced prior to placement with the adoptive family, as an individual predictor, did not contribute significantly to the variance of Resilience beyond that of Step 1, Step 2 and Step 3. The same was true when the highest level of education for one's adoptive parent(s) was entered. However, entering age at placement with one's adoptive family *did* contribute significantly, as an individual predictor, to the variance of resilience. Two of the three significant effects by individual variables showed negative t values (self-esteem and age at the time of placement). When Self-esteem and Age at the Time of Placement were compared to other independent variables, they had significant negative relationships with resilience; that is, the more Self-esteem and the older the Age at Placement, the lower was each variable's contribution to resilience at a significant level. The negative relationship of Resilience with Self-esteem has been repeatedly indicated by various results of the present study. Table 5 shows the results of this HMRA for variables predicting Resilience.

Table 5

Summary of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Resilience

	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F ratio	β	*B*	*SEB*	*t*
Resilience							
Step 1	.17	.14	7.42**				
Self-esteem				-.41	-2.22	.82	-2.72**
Step 2	.58	.55	16.38***				
Centrality				-.19	-.80	.58	-1.40
Private Regard				.86	2.96	.52	5.65***
Step 3	.59	.54	12.27***				
Race of adopt. parents				.09	4.87	6.52	.75
Step 4	.68	.60	9.25***				
# of placemts. prior to adopt. home				.16	3.62	3.68	.98
Parent(s) highest level of educ.				-.15	-3.82	3.03	-1.26
Age at placemt. With adopt.fam				-.35	-.51	.21	-2.46*

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

Summary

    Differences between SRA and TRA African Americans. The results indicated several differences between those adopted by same race parents and those adopted by Caucasian parents. I hypothesized that resilience would be higher in adoptees adopted by same race parents than in those adopted transracially by Caucasian parents. This hypothesis was partly supported, as Resilience was significantly higher in SRAs with two African American parents than in TRAs *and* SRAs with single African American parents.

    With regard to self-esteem, there were no differences found between those adopted by same race parents and those adopted transracially (i.e., by Caucasian parents). However, there were differences with regard to one dimension of racial identity. Adoptees with two African American parents endorsed higher levels of Centrality (race is a core part of an individual's self-concept over time) than those adopted by Caucasian parents.

Interscale correlations among resilience, self-esteem, and racial identity. Resilience had a negative significant correlation with Self-esteem and significant positive correlations with both Centrality and Private Regard. Thus, the resilience of African American adoptees is related to their racial identity. Centrality also had a significant correlation with Private Regard, showing the related dimensionality of racial identity.

Predictors of self-esteem and resilience. Resilience, Centrality, and Private Regard (two dimensions of Racial Identity), each, independently made significant contributions to self-esteem in the negative direction, not only when operating together. Of the four demographic predictor variables selected, only the number of placements one experienced prior to their placement with their adoptive family made a significant contribution to self-esteem (in the negative direction). Overall, this regression analysis was found to be a significant predictive model of Self-esteem with a large effect size ($R^2 = .54$) for African American adoptees.

Self-esteem, Private Regard (Racial Identity), and One's age at Placement with Adoptive Parents all made significant contributions, independently, to Resilience, with resilience and age at placement making negative contributions. Overall, this regression analysis was a significant predictive model of Resilience with a large effect size ($R^2 = .68$).

Chapter 5 discusses the likely meanings of these results, integrates them into practical suggestions for future research, as well as notes the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The author conducted a study of transracially adopted and same race adopted African Americans, examining the racial identity, self-esteem, and resilience of three independent sample groups of adoptees. Three validated measures, as well as a demographic questionnaire, comprised the survey for data collection. The measures had strong internal consistency reliabilities. Two hierarchical multiple regressions, with self-esteem and resilience as criterion variables, were significant prediction models overall. Each model produced a large ES.

This chapter discusses significant findings and interprets them in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Findings are organized into three sections: Racial Identity, Resilience, and Self-esteem. Limitations of the study are noted, as are recommendations for future research and interventions. Finally, the author will add a personal reflection on the meaning of the study for her.

Racial Identity

The researcher predicted that Racial Identity would be significantly higher for same race adoptees than transracial adoptees (TRAs). This study's results partially supported Hypothesis 1. While adoptees with two African American parents showed significantly higher levels of racial identity (Centrality) than TRAs, TRAs showed no difference in racial identity from adoptees with single African American parents. These findings indicate that there are likely other variables, in addition to the race of one's adoptive parent(s), that contribute to one's racial identity. In her study of the effects of transracial adoption, socioeconomic status, and racial socialization on Black identity, Butler-Sweet (2011) found that social class is also a key component to shaping Black identity. Results of her study found that growing up with two Black parents offers some advantages, when compared to those participants who were raised in biracial

(only one parent of the same race as participant) and transracial (neither parent was the same race as the participant) families. Specifically, those with two Black parents were more often exposed to middle-class Black role models who disproved racial stereotypes (Butler-Sweet, 2011). One can infer that African American adoptees raised in a single-parent home, even with a parent of the same race, may not be afforded the opportunity of frequent contact with middle-class Black role models, given the need for many single parents to spend much time out of the home to support the family. Single-parent households are simply less likely to be exposed to middle-class Black organizations that emphasize Black achievement and, instead, are more likely to connect their children to the Black community through urban cultural experiences and activities that may unwittingly perpetuate a stereotyped version of "authentic Blackness," being more connected to urban poverty than upward mobility (Butler-Sweet, 2011). In today's economy, marital status (single-parent vs. two-parent) is often correlated with the social class of one's children, yet racial identity literature rarely explores the impact of class. Butler-Sweet aptly notes that "class status combined with race creates a unique dilemma for a wide range of middle-class young Black adults, not only those who have been adopted by White parents" (p. 33).

Similar to African American adoptees raised by single African American parents, Transracial adoptees may also have been exposed to parenting that de-emphasized contact with middle-class Black figures, making it more likely for TRAs to accept a more stereotyped perception of Black identity. Regardless of income, two-parent Caucasian households do not promote the Black racial identity of their African American adopted children. Rather, these parents may be providing these children with experiences of assimilation with European American society. One factor contributing to racial identity for African Americans includes, "an extended sense of self embedded within the African American collective" (Allen & Bagozzi, as

(cited in APA, 2008, p. 3). This collective sense of self, less evident in the development of racial

identity for White Americans (Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994), is not only a protective factor

related to identity development, but is also a factor in the development of resilience for African

Americans (APA, 2008).

Resilience

The Resilience Scale (RS). Since resilience was a significant outcome for African

American adoptees, it is important to understand its effects in other studies that used the same

resilience scale as did the present study. Wagnild and Young (1993) stated that the RS is

intended for use with a broad range of ages and demographics. The current study's results for the

RS yielded for the total sample $M = 125.04$; SD $= 27.86$). Wagnild (2009) reviewed twelve

studies that had also employed the RS, with participant samples that spanned a myriad of ages,

races, and socioeconomic statuses. Among the twelve studies reviewed, the internal consistencies

of the measure ranged from $\alpha = .85$ to .94. This is consistent with the Cronbach's alpha found for

the RS in the present study, $\alpha = .97$. What follows is a sampling of results regarding the RS from

Wagnild's (2009) review of studies.

In their study of 41 single, adolescent mothers, Black and Ford-Gilboe's (2004) RS

results yielded a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .85$, $M = 146.6$, and SD $= 14.1$. The authors found that

resilience not only helps individuals cope with adversity, but may also support an individual's

ability to manage day to day challenges. In another study using adolescent participants, Rew,

Taylor-Seehafer,Thomas, and Yockey (2001) used the RS with 59 homeless adolescents of

various races: 61% Caucasian, 12% African American, 19% Latino, 2% Native American, and

4% mixed race. Their use of the RS yielded an internal consistency level of $\alpha = .91$, $M = 111.9$,

and SD $= 17.6$. Broyles (2005) employed the RS in his study of forgiveness and resilience in

older adults (M = 65.4 years old) living in a planned community. The internal consistency of the

RS in Broyles's study was .91, (*M* = 143; SD = 16.3). Findings of that study suggested that

resilience does not appear to decline with age. Some studies had higher means and some lower

means depending on variations in standard deviations, but there were no dramatic differences,

suggesting normative trends in the Rs scale's descriptive statistics and variance.

Communalism and African American Resilience. Similar to the research findings that

aspects of African American racial identity appear embedded within the African American

collective, *communalism* has also emerged as one of four prominent themes in the APA's (2008)

proposed "portrait of resilience" for African Americans (p. 3). In their description of

communalism, the APA specifically acknowledges the social bonds within the community and a

sense of interdependence and collective well-being as protective factors that encourage the

development of resilience among African American children and adolescents. Again, the

adoptees raised by single African American parents (SRAs) may not have had as much

opportunity as those adoptees raised by two African American parents to engage with the larger

African American community due to the immense demands on single parents to provide for the

family, unaided by a co-parent. As many single parents spend much time out of the home in this

effort, SRAs being raised by single parents may find themselves less involved with their broader

community and, therefore, feel less socially connected and interdependent. Alejandro-Wright

(1999, as cited by APA, 2008) identified *racial socialization* as a contextual protective factor,

noting its influence on both the racial identity and self-concept of African American children and

adolescents.

With respect to this study's finding of a significant difference in resilience between

adoptees with two African American parents and TRAs (also with two parents), it would seem

beneficial for Caucasian parents who adopt transracially to make conscious efforts to create natural connections for their African American children within the African American community, acknowledging the value of social bonds and interconnectedness in the development.

Ideally, this could be achieved through the adoptive parents' own diversified social networks and chosen community, but could also be achieved through active membership in organizations and social clubs where African Americans are prominently represented. Vonk (2001) refers to this aspect of culturally competent transracial adoptive parenting as *multicultural planning.* Multicultural planning refers to the purposeful creation of opportunities for the TRA child to participate in his or her culture of birth. Settling for occasional participation through formal links to the child's birth culture (e.g., reading about customs or occasionally visiting festivals) is typically deemed inadequate as it does not provide the benefits of interconnectedness and consistent social interaction that multicultural planning does. Steinberg and Hall (1998), TR adoptive parents themselves, posit that TRA parents cannot themselves teach their children about a culture to which they do not belong; they must instead help their children find role models within their birth cultures.

Predictors of Resilience. Resilience was the criterion variable in one of the present study's hierarchical multiple regression analyses. It was found that the predictor variables of Self-esteem, Private Regard, and Age at Placement with adoptive family, each, individually made significant contributions to the variance of Resilience. The significance of individual predictor variables' contributions to the variance in resilience was not the subject of a research hypothesis; nonetheless, the findings are noteworthy and invite future research into the degree and directionality of impact that self-esteem (negative in the present study), racial identity

(positive in the present study), and age at time of placement (negative in the present study) with

an adoptive family have in the development of resilience for children in the foster care system.

The significant negative contribution of age at time of placement with an adoptive family also

provides evidence for the existing federal law and best practice goal of swifter achievement of

permanency for children in foster care (Adoption and Safe Families Act [ASFA], 1997).

In addition to the predictor variables found in the present study of self-esteem, racial

identity (Private Regard), and age at placement with an adoptive family, multicultural

competencies of caregivers have also been linked to resilience (Kumpfer, 1999, as cited in

Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Adoption agencies' training for prospective adoptive parents varies

widely and may or may not provide education on multicultural competence, cultural values,

ethnocentrism, and multicultural experiences prior to seeking to adopt transracially. Effective

and useful training ought to include experiential exercises that challenge prospective TRA

parents to become mindful of their own cultural values while familiarizing themselves with the

practices, customs, and traditions of an African American child they are seeking to adopt. Group

exercises in a training curriculum can be a valuable, albeit sometimes painful, experience for

prospective adoptive parents. Group leaders should promote an environment of safety and

security within group discussions. White adoptive parents may feel defensive or guilty during

experiential trainings in multicultural competence; this defensiveness is not uncommon for

White participants in multicultural, experiential exercises (Roysircar et al., 2003).

As the present study revealed a significant positive correlation between resilience and

racial identity, it would behoove those who educate prospective adoptive parents to emphasize

the benefits of cultivating both of these dispositions or characteristics through the use of

empirically validated parenting styles (Lee, 2003). In their Executive Summary, the APA Task

Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents (2008) noted the

importance of parenting style in the development of a child's resilience:

> African American children and adolescents who learn that others have negative
>
> perspectives on African Americans, but who have these messages mediated by parents,
>
> peers, and other important adults are less likely to have negative outcomes and more
>
> likely to be resilient in adverse conditions (p. 3).
>
> Similarly, in her study of the effects of colorism on the self-esteem and resilience of

African American women, Pearson-Trammell (2010) posited that a parenting style that prepares

children of color to both be aware of and cope successfully with racism "serves to externalize the

colorism (or racism) as a social phenomenon, no longer an internalized process, thereby

increasing their resilience" (p. 145).

The researcher predicted that resilience would be positively correlated with self-esteem

(Hypothesis #4) and that the magnitude of the positive correlation between resilience and self-

esteem would be greater in SRAs than in TRAs (Hypothesis #5). The results did not support

either of these hypotheses. Interestingly, a significant, negative correlation was shown between

resilience and self-esteem. Resilience appears to evolve through the parenting style of African

American parents and the mentoring by senior members of the community who mediate the

trauma of racism (APA, 2008) rather than being accounted for by self-esteem, which is

determined by positive evaluation by self and others. Several different variables contributed

positively to the development of resilience for Pearson-Trammell's (2010) African American

female participants, including: (a) community support, (b) supportive social interactions, and (c)

preparation given by one's parents with awareness and coping skills regarding colorism. While

resilience is related to the high end of communalism of African Americans, self-esteem may be

at the other end of the continuum, with the focus on an individual's selfhood, feeling good about oneself, or feeling vulnerability for trauma.

Similar findings of negative correlations between resilience and self-esteem have been discussed in research on the experience of *colorism* among African American women (Pearson-Trammell, 2010). Colorism—also referred to as internalized oppression—is experienced by many darker skinned African Americans when they are discriminated against, based on their (darker) skin tone, by other members of the African American community. In her study of colorism and its effect on self-esteem and resilience, Pearson-Trammell (2010) found that all of her female, African American participants who had encountered colorism were negatively impacted by their experiences. The participants who self-reported experiencing ongoing colorism in their daily lives were described by Pearson-Trammell as "embracing resiliency in the midst of ongoing traumatizing experiences, which were simultaneously having a negative impact on their self-esteem" (p. 143). Similar to APA (2008), Pearson-Trammell (2010) found that self-esteem among African Americans was community-based and Black women, in particular, "are more likely to validate themselves through appraisal from others" (p. 130). Because colorism differs from conventional racism in that the rejection is perpetrated by others in the African American community. This community based rejection often contributes to lower levels of self-esteem. Given the similar findings of the APA Task Force and Pearson-Trammell with regard to the community-based effects on the self-esteem of African Americans, the researcher of the present study hypothesizes that had a measure of collective self-esteem been employed with these African American adoptees, there may not have been a negative correlation between resilience and self-esteem. The testing of this hypothesis is very appropriate for future research.

Conversely, the results of Pearson-Trammell's study indicated that colorism did *not* impact participants' resilience in the same negative way. The presence of resilience despite the often traumatic experience of colorism is unique, in that the phenomenon of colorism is ongoing and inescapable, not a discrete traumatic event. Typically, when researchers discuss resilience, they are referring to the process occurring after a discrete, traumatic or adverse circumstance (Miller, 2005, as cited in Pearson-Trammell, 2010). Pearson-Trammell's study, however, examined the experiences of resilience for dark-skinned African American women, who managed to develop resilience while continuing to receive an ongoing barrage of negative messages from multiple settings, often within their own families of origin. Resilience counters low self-esteem resulting from racism.

Self-esteem

The researcher predicted that select demographics would contribute significantly to self-esteem, including: parents' educational level, parents' race, participants' number of placements prior to placement with adoptive family, and one's age when placed with an adoptive family (Hypothesis #7). The number of placements adoptees experienced prior to being placed in an adoptive home added significant variance to Self-esteem. The other predictor variables that, individually contributed to the variance in self-esteem were: resilience (in the negative direction), private regard (in the negative direction), and public regard. The model, as a whole, was a significant predictor of self-esteem. Much of the prevailing research on adolescent mental health suggests that self-esteem benefits adolescents by acting as a psychological buffer from negative environmental stressors (Compas, Hinden, & Gerhardt, 1995; Mandara et al., 2009). This is thought to occur because high self-esteem makes adolescents more emotionally secure. This postulate demonstrated itself uniquely in that resilience made a significant negative

contribution to the variance in self-esteem. This inverse relationship of resilience with self-esteem has been discussed in the previous section and is continued through this discussion chapter.

The researcher predicted that Resilience and Racial Identity do not operate independently in their contribution to the variance of Self-esteem, rather resilience is positively correlated with racial identity, and they together contribute to self-esteem (Hypothesis #6). The results partially supported this hypothesis. Resilience was positively correlated with two measured aspects of Racial Identity (Centrality and Private Regard). However, Resilience was negatively correlated with the aspect of Racial Identity that describes the extent to which African Americans feel positive about African Americans as a group (Public Regard); the negative correlation suggests that resilience may be less concerned about issues of worthiness.

Self-esteem, on the other hand, was found to have a significant positive correlation with Public Regard. This finding, as noted earlier, has empirical support in that African Americans (women, in particular) were "more likely to validate themselves through appraisal from others" (Pearson-Trammell, 2010, p. 130). With regard to the part of hypothesis (#6) stating that Resilience and Racial Identity do not operate independently in their contribution to the variance in Self-esteem, the results did not support the hypothesis. Instead, it was found that Resilience (negative t-score), Public Regard, and Private Regard (negative t-score) each, independently, made significant contributions to the variance of self-esteem, not only when operating together.

The researcher predicted that select demographics (e.g., parental educational level, parents' race, participant's number of placements prior to placement with adoptive family, and one's age when placed with adoptive family) would contribute significantly to self-esteem (Hypothesis #7). The results only partially supported this hypothesis. Of all the demographic

predictor variables only the number of placements experienced prior to placement with one's

adoptive family, individually, made a significant contribution to the variance of self-esteem.

Given this finding, it seems that a focus on reducing the number of placements experienced prior

to placement with a permanent family ought to be a primary focus when developing

interventions to improve the self-esteem of adoptees, whether transracial or same race. As

attachment theory and its accompanying research purports, positive self-esteem is suggested to

be the outcome of a secure attachment (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Placement disruptions

ought to be considered from the perspective of their often negative impact on a child's

achievement of an attachment bond with a primary caregiver. Bowlby (1968) and other

attachment theorists have found that attachment patterns established early in life can lead to a

number of outcomes; children who are securely attached as infants tend to develop stronger

self-esteem and better self-reliance (e.g., resilience) as they grow older. Thus, securely attached

children not only feel supported and protected by their parents, they also feel lovable and

worthwhile themselves, likely resulting in an adequate self-esteem.

Limitations of the Study

  Sample size. The major limitation of the study was the sample size ($N = 45$). Despite

strong efforts to recruit participants, using a large number of internet sites, email listservs, and

Facebook pages aimed specifically at adoptive parents, adoptees, and those involved in training,

recruiting, and supporting adoptees and adoptive parents, less than half of the desired number of

participants responded and completed the anonymous online survey. Because the adoption

process and adoptive families are (rightfully so) protected by confidentiality laws, there is low

access for recruitment for research studies. The researcher also relied on snowball sampling, as

many of her professional colleagues and some personal acquaintances knew people who had

either adopted African American children (now adults) or were themselves adult adoptees. This method also yielded far fewer participant respondents than the researcher had anticipated. Lee (2003) also identified the use of small, convenience samples, drawn primarily from adoption agencies and organizations, as a major limitation of transracial adoption research, as the use of such samples makes it difficult to generalize findings. Despite limitations in recruitment, this study has sufficient statistical power to detect the medium and large effect sizes. Some of the results were complex, as would be expected of a complex topic addressing issues of race and adoption.

Recommendations for Future Research

Shifting the focus of empirical research. While the present study looked solely at the experience of the adoptees, with a limited focus on their context (e.g., current SES, SES of their adoptive family, and age at placement), much more could be gleaned by examining the parenting practices, beliefs, and training of the adoptive parents of African American adoptees. Lee (2003) suggested that moving the research of transracial adoption in the direction of epidemiological studies encompassing a wide range of ages and multiple informants (e.g., parents, children, and siblings) would provide valuable baseline data on the adjustment of transracial adoptees in the United States (Lee, 2003). Such a shift could also provide valuable qualitative data needed to expand the study of the three constructs of this study: racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem of transracially adopted children. The literature (Massatti, Vonk, & Gregoire, 2004; Vonk, 2001) has further acknowledged the need to broaden the research focus when examining the impact of TRA on racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem from a singular focus on the race of the adoptive parents to other contextual variables such as SES (a variable of the present study), single vs. two parent parenting (a variable of the present study), and the cultural competence of

adoptive parents (an implication addressed earlier in this chapter).

Research has examined the racial socialization process that occurs within the adoptive

family and how this process becomes an integral part of the adoptee's development of both racial

identity and resilience (Lee, 2003). Specifically, the practice of cultural/racial socialization and

the level of cultural competence of adoptive parents have both been shown to have a positive

relationship with racial identity and resilience of minority children (Lee, 2003; Massatti et al.,

2004; Vonk, 2001). Additional research has identified racial socialization as "a contextual

protective factor" (APA, 2008, p. 3), as socialization influences children's racial identity and

self-concept (Alejandro-Wright, 1999).

African American parents are critical to the process of transmitting cultural knowledge in

the form of values, beliefs, and ideas to their children, all of which contribute to children's

ability to function in society and cope with and navigate racism (APA, 2008). As the results of

the present study denote, adoptees with two African American parents showed significantly

higher levels of racial identity than TRAs (with two Caucasian parents). Adoptees with two

African American parents also showed significantly higher levels of resilience than both TRAs

and same race adoptees with a single African American parent. These results not only imply the

importance of racial socialization, but may also allude to differences between two parent and

single parent parenting with regard to outcomes for African American children; while the

socialization messages of both mothers and fathers benefit the child, more optimal outcomes

occur when *both* parents engage in the racial socialization process (APA, 2008; Thornton,

Chatters, Taylor & Allen, 1990). While the traditional view of cultural socialization involves

families of same-race parents and children, as also suggested by the present study, current

research has modified this traditional application and investigated the unique way that cultural

socialization shows up within transracial adoptive families (Lee, 2003).

Self-esteem throughout the lifespan. As the current study did not find the race of adoptive parents to be a significant predictor of self-esteem for African American adoptees, future research ought to seek what are the significant predictors of self-esteem for this population, which can be provided through parenting and socialization. The current study found that one aspect of racial identity (public regard) and the number of placements experienced prior to placement in an adoptive home are both significant predictors of self-esteem. This information, while useful in the way of improving systems (societal , institutional), is not as useful for developing clinical interventions for individuals and families that could have an impact on the self-esteem of African American adoptees. As the literature suggests a decrease in African American self-esteem from adolescence to adulthood (Pearson-Trammell, 2010), future research on the changes, if any, experienced by Caucasians with regard to the significance and meaning of self-esteem for life satisfaction over time would benefit TRA's. If Caucasians experience a similar decline in the importance of self-esteem as they age, then perhaps developmental stage theory, not race, would offer some insight.

Clinical Implications

The results of the present study, as well as the current literature, note the significant role that effective parenting plays on the development of resilience, racial identity, and self-esteem of African American adoptees. Below are some ways that this understanding can be transmitted to prospective adoptive families and adoptees through a variety of interventions (pre-adoption training, pre and post-adoptive family therapy, post-adoption consultation, etc).

Parenting Strategies for Transracial Adoptive Parents

The following empirically validated parenting strategies ought to be explored with

prospective TRA parents prior to the adoption process.

Cultural socialization. Cultural socialization*,* as defined by Lee (2003), is "a lifelong developmental process that enables individuals and families to have greater adaptability and competence in a given cultural milieu" (p. 720). Lee examined the limited empirical research on four cultural socialization strategies often employed within families of transracial adoption. It is important to note that this collection of parenting strategies is not exhaustive, nor are the strategies mutually exclusive. The four noted strategies are: (a) cultural assimilation, (b) enculturation, (c) racial inculcation, and (d) child choice.

Cultural assimilation. Families who practice cultural assimilation, or acculturation, place very minimal focus on the child's race or ethnicity and appear to espouse a colorblind view of humanity that does not reference race or ethnicity (Lee, 2003). This practice involves constantly and immediately exposing transracially adopted children to the majority culture. In some cases, the child's race may be intentionally denied or ignored, which may not be helpful in preparing the child for future identity development (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983, as cited in Lee, 2003).

Racial enculturation. Current research suggests that, increasingly, White adoptive parents acknowledge racial and ethnic differences within their families and overtly promote the enculturation of their children by teaching them about their birth cultures and heritages (Carstens & Julia, 2000; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; & Vonk & Angaran, 2001, all cited in Lee, 2003). Adoptive parents who practice enculturation consistently engage their children and themselves in educational, social and cultural opportunities to inform and celebrate their child's differences, thereby consistently promoting a positive ethnic (racial) identity for their children (Lee, 2003).

Racial inculcation. Racial inculcation is "the teaching of coping skills to help children to

deal effectively with racism and discrimination" (Lee, 2003, p. 722). While some transracial

adoptive parents may choose to downplay incidents of racism by using a less direct approach,

others like Steinberg and Hall (2000), as discussed in their memoir of transracial adoptive

parenting, employ this strategy *because* of its direct approach to preparing children to effectively

cope with racism and discrimination. In addition to positively impacting one's resilience, feeling

self-confident about one's ability to cope with and appropriately respond to discrimination also

enhances one's positive self-image and racial identity (Crumbley, 1999).

Child choice. Parents who practice child choice as a parenting strategy with their

transracially adopted children provide their children with cultural opportunities, but are largely

guided by their child's wishes for and interest in such opportunities. In their longitudinal study of

African American transracial adoptees, DeBerry, Scarr and Weinberg (1996) found that many

White parents who employed child choice parenting had become more ambivalent about

employing more direct approaches of cultural socialization with their children as they entered

adolescence, either because the children became less interested or the parents became more

uncomfortable (DeBerry, Scarr & Weinberg). Lee (2003) notes that this parenting strategy shifts

the parenting responsibility from the parent to the child and, in some cases, may encourage a

child to suppress their interest in their racial or ethnic culture to placate a perceived ambivalence

or discomfort on the part of their parent, thereby maintaining positive family relations.

Parental Cultural Competence

Another aspect of transracial adoption with clinical implications is parental cultural

competence. While some empirical research exists in social work journals regarding the

development of valid and reliable measurement tools to assess the cultural competence of TRA

parents, little empirical research on such can be found in the psychology literature. One

measurement tool that can be employed to assist clinicians with assessing the cultural

competence of prospective TRA parents is The Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale (TAPS), a

multidimensional, 36-item Likert-type scale that measures cultural competence among

transracial adoptive parents (Massatti et al., 2004). This measure can be employed pre and post-

training of prospective adoptive parents. The TAPS addresses three main components of cultural

competence: (a) racial awareness, (b) multicultural planning, and (c) survival skills. Factor

analysis of the TAPS has found it to have excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.91$), and concurrent and

discriminant validity were supported as well.

While measuring the overall cultural competence of adoptive parents is a step toward

improving outcomes for transracial adoptees, Massatti et al. (2004) rightly acknowledge the need

for further research to determine what specific aspects of a parent's cultural competence have the

greatest impact on their child's racial identity and resilience. Further, research into whether the

importance of parents' cultural competence varies according to the child's developmental stage

is also needed to better understand the relationship between parents' cultural competence and

children's racial identity (Massatti et al., 2004). While the groundwork has been laid to study the

impact of parenting and racial socialization on transracially adopted African Americans (Baden

& Steward, 2000; Quiroz, 2010), more work ought to be done to develop appropriate

interventions with adoptive children, valid and objective measurement tools, more effective pre-

and post-adoptive parent trainings, and more meaningful support services.

Significant factors to address in clinical work. As the literature in African American

psychology illuminates, the experiences of within group colorism, racism, microaggression,

implicit racism, and stereotype threat can have an impact on TRAs and are something that many

Caucasian parents likely know very little about. The reality of being Black, as experienced by

African Americans, is something that ought to be explored with any potential TRA parent. This

can be done in the pre-adoptive training, as part of cultural competence education, and should

continue to be assessed post-adoption, as part of the parent training that clinicians will

implement pre and post adoption. Individual therapy with African American adoptees ought to

address various issues of modern racism, as well, because some adoptees who have been adopted

at a young age may not have the experiences of a person of color until they are older and spend

more time outside of the home and socialize with peers.

The race of the therapist working with TRAs and their families is also a salient clinical

issue. Therapists who work with this population ought to be keenly aware of their own cultural

competence, values, and beliefs before attempting to educate or treat this population. Specialized

training, ongoing professional development, and appropriate use of supervision can help

therapists and adoption workers to provide the most effective interventions to TRAs and their

families.

The Author's Personal Reflections

The motivation for the study came from a combination of the author's professional and

personal life. Having worked with foster children and foster families in the child protective

services (CPS) system for over a decade, part of my time was spent working as a member of a

multidisciplinary team charged with matching children, legally freed for adoption, with

prospective adoptive families. Due to an overrepresentation of children of color waiting to be

adopted, and the then-recent enactment of MEPA (1994) forbidding race to be a factor in

choosing adoptive homes for children, many transracial adoptions were completed. With

achieving permanency for children as the ultimate goal (e.g., a permanent adoptive family, as

opposed to remaining in long-term foster care), I personally observed many well-meaning,

Caucasian adoptive parents succeed in unintentionally distancing their adopted children from their birth cultures. These parents, many of whom vociferously espoused a color-blind (e.g. cultural assimilation) philosophy to raising children, often failed to recognize their children's need for appropriate racial socialization, open discussions about race, and the provision of adequate coping skills to deal with the reality of racism in their daily lives. My personal and professional frustration with these observations, along with my personal and professional passion for cultural understanding and competence, came together to begin the informal development of my study's hypotheses, a full 10 years prior to beginning my doctoral studies in clinical psychology.

Examining My Own Racial Identity

While professional experiences have played a significant role in developing my interest in this area of research, my past and present personal life experiences have also driven my passion for cultural exploration, awareness, and a deeper understanding of myself and others. As I began to interpret the results of this study, I realized that I needed to re-examine my own White racial identity development (WRID) before attempting to discuss the study's results, primarily to protect against researcher bias. While Janet Helms (1990) is the first name that comes to many minds when considering formal theory on WRID, I have never been able to fully relate to her theory, nor apply it to my own racial identity development. Similar to the criticisms of Helms's model noted in the literature (Rowe et al., 1994), I find her White Racial Identity Model to focus more on how Whites develop sensitivity to and appreciation of other racial/ethnic groups, and focus very little on attitudes toward self or one's own racial identity. Further, I concur with the rejection by Sellers and colleagues (2001) of a linear progression of successive (developmental) racial identity stages (e.g. "least mentally healthy" to most mentally healthy") and identify more

easily with Rowe and colleagues'(1994) conceptualization of White Racial Consciousness, defined as "one's awareness of being White and what that implies in relation to those who do not share White group membership" (p. 133). Rowe et al. theorize that one's *type* of racial consciousness can be inferred by observing one's attitudes, behaviors and related affect, with primary focus on attitudes as they are more stable and more available for assessment. The authors find no evidence that the process of changing attitudes is developmental in nature, further distancing themselves from the former stage theory models of identity development (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990).

Similar to the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) developed by Sellers et al., (2001), the identity types described by Rowe and colleagues (1994) are not defined as fixed personality attributes, but can be modified through experience (e.g., environmental influences) over time. The key element in the process of the White Racial Consciousness model of WRID is the experience of cognitive dissonance between previously held attitudes and new attitudes and feelings, resulting from some recent, intense, and/or significant life event (Rowe et al., 1994).

Having grown up in a predominantly White suburb, my first opportunity to socialize with peers outside my racial group did not occur until college. Having been occasionally exposed to the racially intolerant attitudes of some family members while growing up, I became curious about cultures different from my own at a very young age, trying to understand the origin of the intolerant attitudes around me, and becoming more and more curious about my own, seemingly innate discomfort with said intolerance. It is possible that this curiosity encouraged me to seek out opportunities to meet and socialize with peers of all backgrounds, some similar to mine, some different. In my early 20s, I became engaged in a long term, romantic relationship with a

West Indian young man and subsequently experienced a myriad of attitudes and behaviors from my family, peers and community that further shaped my White racial identity.

When that relationship ended, I found myself involved in another interracial relationship a few years later and am currently married to an African American man. We are the parents of a 4-year-old daughter, who is only just beginning to ask about her own racial identity, as she observes the obvious physical differences between her father and me. While I perceive my daughter as biracial, I am careful to not apply a label to her and instead encourage her to answer her own questions as to who she sees when she looks in the mirror. As my daughter grows and matures, I am keenly aware of the role that her father and I will play in her racial socialization. Throughout my work on the present study, I have often reflected on my daughter's life experiences thus far, her interactions with both sides of her family, as well as her social activities which include a variety of children and friends of her father's and mine. I know that as her racial identity develops, my own will likely go through its own changes, affected by the interactions with our environment as we continue to experience life as a multiracial family.

Summary

Throughout the development and completion of this study, I have discovered that transracial adoption and its effect on racial identity, self-esteem, and resilience have been and continue to be of interest to many others in various professional fields. The results of the study, specifically with regard to the impact of the race of adoptive parents on the above constructs, echoes what the current research shows: while the race of adoptive parents does have a significant impact on the racial identity and resilience of African American adoptees, it is not the sole factor impacting these constructs. Current empirical research cites social class, racial socialization, and the cultural competence of adoptive parents as also having a significant impact

on TRAs racial identity and resilience (Butler-Sweet, 2011; Lee, 2003; Donaldson, 2008). It is

this author's hope that the field of psychology will move in the direction of a deeper

understanding of what we already know to be effective transracial adoptive parenting practices

(e.g., developing resilience by teaching coping skills, encouraging racial identity development

through socialization, and seeking to provide permanency for children at a younger age through

fewer disruptions in attachment). Further study of the relationships that these variables have with

the racial identity, resilience, and self-esteem of transracial adoptees will ideally lead to

significantly better training, interventions, and psychological services for transracial adoptees

and their families.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Hello. My name is Jennifer Bumpus. I am a doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Antioch University New England. I would like to **<u>thank you very much</u>** for visiting this site. I am seeking participants for a research study about the experience of adoption for African American adoptees. I have worked for many years with foster and adoptive children. One of my research goals is to gain a better understanding of adoption for African American children. This study can help to inform the professionals who work with adoptive families. Your participation is valuable to my study. Answering this survey will automatically enter you into a drawing to win a $50 Amazon.com gift card. A total of four gift cards will be awarded. Odds of winning are 1 in 33, or better. PsychData.com will randomly select the winner. PsychData.com will notify the winners by email. I will not know the identities of any of the participants.

Participation in this study includes taking an online survey. We estimate that the survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. To participate, you must meet the following requirements:

1. You are 18 years old or older.

2. You are African American. (For this study, African American means that you have at least one African American biological parent.)

3. You began living in your adoptive home before the age of 10 (even if your adoption was finalized *after* your 10th birthday).

4. Your adoptive parents are a same race couple (e.g., both Caucasian or both African American). If adopted by a single parent, your adoptive parent is Caucasian *or* African American.

Your participation in this study will be anonymous. The survey will not ask for your name or contact information. Please share this link with other African American adoptees you may know. Again, thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Please click on the link below to get started!
(Insert Link Here)

Jennifer A. Bumpus, M.S., PsyD Candidate

jbumpus@antioch.edu

Appendix B

Informed Consent Statement

Project Title:

Effects of Transracial Adoption on Racial Identity: A Study of African American Adoptees

Principal Investigator:

Jennifer A. Bumpus, M.S.W., M.S., PsyD Candidate

Address:

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Email:

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Faculty Advisor:

Gargi Roysircar, EdD.

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A Survey for Adult African American Adoptees

My name is Jennifer Bumpus. I am a doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Antioch University New England. I have worked for many years with foster and adoptive children. One of my research goals is to gain a better understanding of the effects of adoption on African American children.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the effects of adoption on African American adoptees. The results of this study may help to improve training for parents who want to adopt African American children.

What I am asking you to do:

I am asking you to respond to an online survey. The survey questions will ask about your identity as an African American. It will also ask about how you view yourself and how you cope with stress. The survey will ask some questions about your age, race, education, etc. The survey is expected to take about 20 minutes to complete.

Benefits of participation in this study:

You may find these survey questions of interest. You will also have a chance to win a $50 Amazon gift card. Four gift cards will be awarded. Your odds of winning are about 1 in 33. The survey website will randomly select the gift card winners. They will notify the winners by e-mail.

Your participation in this study has possible benefits for others. Your survey responses may help professionals to improve training for adoptive parents. Some of those professionals include: social workers, therapists, psychologists, and adoption workers.

Risks of participation in this study:

We do not foresee any risks to you from participating in this study. If you feel uncomfortable taking the survey, you may stop at any time.

We have taken steps to protect your privacy. No identifying information will be attached to your answers. The survey website will use your e-mail for the gift card drawing, but I will never see your e-mail address.

For more information

If you have questions about this study, you may contact me, Jennifer Bumpus, at jbumpus@antioch.edu. If you have concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Katherine Clarke, Chair of the Antioch University New England Institutional Review

Board, at 603-283-2162. You may also contact Dr. Stephen Nuen, Vice President of Academic Affairs, at 603-283-2150.

Thank you again for your participation.

Jennifer A. Bumpus, M.S., PsyD. Candidate

If you agree to participate in this study, click on the link below.

Appendix C

Complete Survey

A Survey for Adult African American Adoptees

Participants who complete this survey will have the option of entering themselves in a drawing to win one of four $50 Amazon.com gift cards. As noted, your identity and all survey responses will be kept anonymous, as winners in the drawing will be randomly selected electronically by PsychData.com from email addresses submitted to a separate webpage by participants. You will be informed via email by PsychData if you win, and the gift card will be sent via email by PsychData as well.

Please note: If you answer the following survey, it means that you have read (or have had read to you) the information contained in the above informed consent document, and you would like to be a volunteer in the study.

Please begin the survey below.

Please answer the following questions:

Are you an African American adult (at least 18 years old) who was adopted by *either* African American *or* Caucasian parents, whom you began living with prior to your 10th birthday?

If so, please continue with this survey. If not, you are not eligible to take this survey.

1. What is your gender?
    Male_____   Female_____   Other_____

2. Your age today: _____

3. Your age at time of placement into your (eventual) adoptive home: _____

4. Number of placements you experienced prior to being placed with your (eventual) adoptive family: _____

5. Number of children, not including you, that resided with you in your adoptive home:_____. Of those children, how many were also adopted (e.g., not biological children of your adoptive parents; this may include foster children)_____

6. Your race: _____

7. Race of your adoptive parent(s):

-Both parents are/were African American _____
-Both parents are/were Caucasian _____
-Single adoptive parent is/was African American _____
-Single adoptive parent is/was Caucasian _____

8. Your adoptive parents' approximate income when you were growing up:

Unemployed_____
10K-40K_____
41K-70K_____
71K- 100K_____
101K- 200K _____
200K+_____

9. Your parents' highest level of education completed: (please specify mother/ father on appropriate line):

Elementary School: (please specify highest grade completed)_____
Graduated High School/ G.E.D. _____
Some college (specify how many years completed)_____
Graduated from college _____
Graduate degree _____
Post-graduate study or degree _____

10. Which best describes your adoptive home when you were growing up?

Single parent (female)_____
Single parent (male)_____
Two-parent (male/female)_____
Other: (please specify)_____

11. Which best describes your neighborhood when you were growing up? (If you moved more than once, which describes the neighborhood where you lived the longest?)

Multicultural_____
Primarily African American_____
Primarily Caucasian _____

12. Your highest level of education completed:

Elementary School: (please specify highest grade completed)_____
Graduated High School/ G.E.D. _____
Some college (specify how many years completed)_____
Graduated from college _____
Graduate degree _____
Post-graduate study or degree _____

13. Your marital status:

Single/Never been married _____
Divorced _____
Married _____
Widowed_____

14. Your Income:

-Unemployed _____
-20K-40K _____
-41K-70K _____
-71K-99K _____
-100K-200K _____
-200K+_____

15. Do you have children?: Yes_____ No_____ If yes, how many?_____

Below are some statements concerning your feelings about being Black, your perceptions about Black people as a group, and your beliefs about society's feelings toward Black people. Please carefully read each statement and indicate whether you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neutral, Somewhat Agree, Agree, or Strongly Agree with each one.

1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral

5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree

1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. I feel good about Black people.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. I am happy that I am Black.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral

5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree

8. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

9. In general, others respect Black people.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

10. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

11. I feel good about Black people.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

12. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

13. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

14. I am happy that I am Black.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

15. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral

5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree

16. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

17. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

18. In general, others respect Black people.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

19. Most people consider Blacks, on the average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

20. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

21. I often regret that I am Black.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

22. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral

5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree

23. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

24. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

25. Blacks are not respected by the broader society.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

26. In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

27. I am proud to be Black.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

28. I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

29. Society views Black people as an asset.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Below are some statements that talk about different strategies you use to handle a variety of situations. Please read each statement below and decide whether you **Strongly Disagree, are Neutral, or Strongly Agree:**

1= Strongly Disagree   4= Neutral   7= Strongly Agree

30. When I make plans, I follow through with them.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

31. I usually manage one way or another.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

32. I am able to depend on myself, more than anyone else.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

33. Keeping interested in things is important to me.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

34. I can be on my own if I have to.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

35. I feel proud that I have accomplished things in life.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

36. I usually take things in stride.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

1= Strongly Disagree   4= Neutral   7= Strongly Agree

37. I am friends with myself.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

38. I feel that I can handle many things at a time.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

39. I am determined.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

40. I seldom wonder what the point of it all is.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

41. I take things one day at a time.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

42. I can get through difficult times because I've experienced difficulty before.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

43. I have self-discipline.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

44. I keep interested in things.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

45. I can usually find something to laugh about.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

1= Strongly Disagree   4= Neutral   7= Strongly Agree

46. My belief in myself gets me through hard times.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

47. In an emergency, I'm someone people can generally rely on.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

48. I can usually look at a situation in a number of ways.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

49. Sometimes I make myself do things, whether I want to or not.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

50. My life has meaning.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

51. I do not dwell on things that I can't do anything about.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

52. When I'm in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

53. I have enough energy to do what I have to do.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

1= Strongly Disagree   4= Neutral   7= Strongly Agree

54. It's okay if there are people who don't like me.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

55. I am resilient.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7