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Afro-German Biracial Identity Development

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AFRO-GERMAN BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University

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Abstract

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An increase in the biracial population has heightened our awareness of unique issues that pervade the experience of these individuals. The importance of environmental influences on biracial identity development has been established, but investigations concerning racial socialization of biracial individuals are scarce. This study, utilizing a qualitative design, explores racial identity development of biracial Afro-Germans living in Germany. The purpose of the study is to understand the strategies that biracial individuals use to negotiate their racial identity, factors that influence their development, cultural influences, and racial socialization processes. Interviews with biracial Afro-Germans were conducted using phenomenological interviewing techniques. Twelve themes emerged from the data that are best conceptualized in an ecological model. Inter-rater reliability was established in two phases. Implications of the findings include a need for continued research with Black-White biracial populations.

Afro-German Biracial Identity Development

In our diversifying culture, there has been a significant increase in the multiracial population and an increased awareness of permitting multiracial people to identify as such. For the first time in the history of the United States, the 2000 Census allowed individuals to choose "two or more races" in the demographics section. Nearly seven million people identified as being "two or more races" (2.4 percent of overall population) (Herman, 2004). Census data also shows that interracial couples have drastically increased in numbers since these unions were legalized in 1967 from 65,000 in 1970 to 403,000 in 2006 (Kilson & Ladd, 2009). We are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of acknowledging these individuals as unique from monoracial individuals. The categories that multiracial people are often forced to choose or are placed in, do not adequately account for their unique experiences as multiracial individuals. It is important that we do not assume that their experiences are equal to those of monoracial minorities.

One area of research that has addressed issues related to distinguishing the multiracial experience from the monoracial experience is racial identity development. There are several models conceptualizing this issue that find their roots in Erikson's developmental model of identity development. Many of these models (Poston, 1990; Kerwin & Ponerotto, 1995) attempt to account for some of the unique and complex issues multiracial individuals face when they are developing the racial identity and their identity as a whole. Other models utilize a more ecological approach in explaining and exploring multiracial identity development (Root, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002) and attempt to account for the importance of contextual and environmental influences on the racial identity development of multiracial people. The models using an ecological framework tap into the process of racial

socialization, which is defined as "specific race-related communications" (Hughes &

Johnson, 2001m, pg. 981) from parents and other agents of socialization.

The experience of multiracial individuals varies by environmental context.

Experience can vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, from city to rural areas, from state

to state and from country to country. The importance of context and environment becomes

even more salient, when multiracial identity development is explored outside of the unique

historical context of the United States, particularly for Black-White biracial individuals.

Often, other members of the African Diaspora outside of the United States are not considered

when exploring the experiences of people of color. Germany is a country that is home to

many people of African descent; estimations range from 50 to 300 thousand people (Campt,

1993). However, research surrounding Afro-German identity development is lacking in

depth and in need of further investigations.

Biracial identity has been conceptualized using two central theoretical backgrounds in

psychology: psychosocial theories of identity development and ecological theories of

identity development.

Developmental Models

Erik Erikson laid the foundation for psychosocial stages of development. In his

theory (1950, 1968) he asserts that the primary motivation in development is social in nature

and is geared towards affiliating with other people. Erikson proposed a theory consisting of

eight stages, whereby each stage is characterized by a distinct developmental task or conflict

that the individual seeks to resolve (Santrock, 2004). The first four stages in Erikson's

model, namely (1) trust versus mistrust, (2) autonomy versus shame and doubt, (3) initiative

versus guilt, and (4) industry versus inferiority occur from infancy to puberty and can determine normative development.

The fifth stage of Erikson's model, identity versus identity confusion, is experienced during the adolescent years. Individuals seek to define who they are and are confronted with many new roles. A critical aspect of this stage, according to Erikson, is that the individual is not forced into a role or a definition of the self that they do not chose themselves. Based on norms, parents or society in general may attempt to place the individual into a role or an identity that they are not comfortable with, which may result in an unresolved conflict of this stage, namely identity confusion.

Developmental Models of Biracial Identity Development

It is during the critical stage of adolescence that the individual is also confronted with defining a variety of aspects that make up the self, including race. Researchers have used a psychosocial developmental model to explain and conceptualize multiracial identity development. Poston (1990) for example, proposes a five-stage model of multiracial identity development. In the first stage, personal identity, children are unaware of their mixed racial heritage. The second stage, choice of group categorization, is marked by increased societal pressure executed by peers and parents to choose one racial or ethnic group identity. In the third stage, enmeshment/denial, the individual may experience feelings of guilt about choosing one racial group. This stage can be particularly emotional and difficult for individuals. The feelings of guilt can in turn cause individuals to deny racial differences and identify with both groups. In stage four, appreciation, the person begins to acknowledge, accept and appreciate both components of his or her racial heritage. The racial affiliation may still be with one racial group, but the individual is open and interested in exploring the

racial heritage of the group he or she is not affiliated with. The last stage, integration, is marked by the individual fully appreciating and exploring both racial identities. At this stage the individual feels secure, balanced and proud of his or her multiracial identity.

Another model that conceptualizes multiracial identity development is Kerwin and Ponterotto's Model of Biracial Identity Development (1995). This six-stage age-based model acknowledges that there may be a difference in resolution styles of conflicts and that environmental influences such as parents, play an important role during each of the six stages. At the preschool stage, children begin to recognize similarities and differences in appearance. They begin to understand that they are somehow different from others. When they enter school, they are confronted with the dilemma of classifying themselves and essentially choosing one race over another. During preadolescence, individuals become more aware of the social meanings attached to different racial groups. Communications about race from parents, peers, and the media become increasingly important at this stage. The adolescent stage is marked by an intense pressure to choose one racial group. Stressors that increase these demands include peer pressure and dating. Adolescents may be confronted with prejudices by society, which may not approve of a monoracial and biracial person dating. This pressure to affiliate with only one racial group continues in the next stage, young adulthood. At the same time, individuals may become more aware of some of the advantages and disadvantages of their biracial heritage. The final stage of the model, adulthood, is characterized by a continuing fluid process to integrate the aspects that constitute an individual's racial identity. Individuals at this stage are balanced, are continuing to explore both components of their racial heritage and have successfully integrated them into their sense of self.

Both Kerwin and Ponterotto's model and Poston's model suggest that integration of the two races within an individual is the normative, desirable and healthy outcome of resolved developmental conflicts. Kerwin and Ponterotto's model accounts for environmental influences within their age-based developmental model. Even though the early attempts to conceptualize biracial identity in a developmental model have been helpful, researchers in more recent years have moved away from developmental approaches. More recent theoretical conceptualizations of biracial identity development focus on environmental and societal influences, rather than age-based progressive stages of identity development.

Ecological Models

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (1986) conceptualizes the individual experience in the context of the environment through five concurrently interacting systems. At the center of the ecological system is the individual, which entails individual characteristics such as genetic inheritance and traits. The microsystem is the system in which the individual lives, or the immediate environment, including family, school, and the neighborhood interactions. The mesosystem involves connections between contexts of the microsystem. For example, interactions in the home in context of the family can influence interactions of the individual in the school environment. The exosystem consists of influences with which the individual has no direct interaction such as federal laws on healthcare or job requirements of a family member. The macrosystem is the overarching culture in which the individual lives. The chronosystem are historical influences and sociohistorical circumstances of the time that influence the culture and the individual (Santrock, 2004). Bronfenbrenner (1986) asserts that all of the environmental systems play

an important role in individual development. Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1983) assert that these systems not only interact, but are dynamic and constantly changing.

Ecological Models of Biracial Identity Development

Researchers have used Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to gain an understanding of biracial identity development. Root (1999) proposes an ecological metamodel that is focused on the resolution processes as opposed to developmental stages. She investigates the dynamic interaction of inherited traits of the individual, such as phenotype with socialization agents (family, school, peers, community, and media) on the resolutions of racial identity. Root's model also includes personality characteristics of an individual that can influence identity development processes. The model is placed in the larger context or gender, class, and the regional history of race relations (see Figure 1). Biracial individuals may experience conflicts between their environments that cause feelings of alienation, discrimination, marginalization and ambiguity, and cause distress for the individual. Root (1996) suggests that these conflicts can be resolved in four ways and terms the strategies to resolve the conflicts "border crossing."

The first strategy is for an individual of biracial heritage to accept the identity that society has assigned them. The choice and individual makes can be adaptive and positive, if the individual is happy with this racial identification. One difficulty with this strategy is that it depends heavily on the attitudes towards race in the environment the individual is in, which can cause internal conflict as the individual moves between environments. The second strategy is to identify with the racial groups of both parents. A challenge of this strategy is that identifying with both parents can be difficult to maintain in environments that do not accept the choice of an individual to identify with more than one race. It can be difficult for

the individual to maintain their basic personality in different racial environments. The third choice is to identify with a single racial group. This is different from the first strategy because the person actively chooses the race he or she identifies with, rather than passively accepting the label of society. Identifying with a single racial group may be challenging if the environment of the individual does not perceive their racial identification the way they perceive themselves. The last resolution strategy is to identify with a biracial reference point outside of family and peers.

Gender

Regional History of Race Relations

Class

Generation

Inherited Influences

Languages in Home

Parent's Identity

Nativity

Extended Family

Names

Home Values

Sexual Orientation

Phenotype

Family Identity

Traits

Temperament

Social Skills

Talents

Coping Skills

Social Interactions with Community

Home

School/Work

Community

Friends
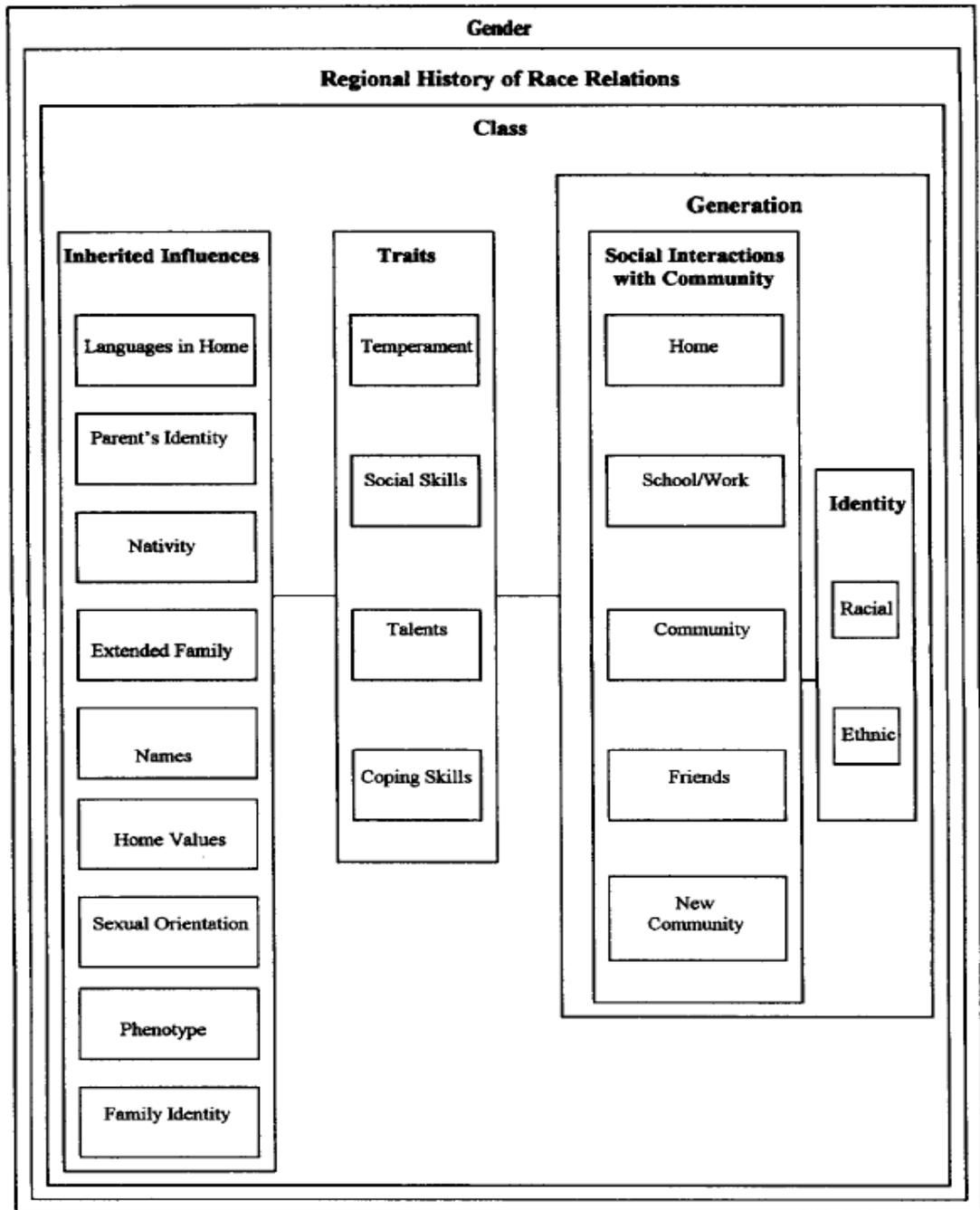
New Community

Identity

Racial

Ethnic

Figure 1: Root's Ecological Model of Biracial Identity adapted from "Experiences and processes affecting racial identity development: Preliminary results from the biracial sibling project," by M.P.P Root, 1998, *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health, 4*, pg. 239. Copyright 1998 by the Educational Publishing Foundation.

Root bases her model on several studies (1990, 1998, 1999), including interviews and surveys of biracial sibling pairs. The participants were asked to recall childhood memories of race-related situations and provided responses that can be classified into four separate themes: hazing, family dysfunction, other salient identities, and the impact of integration. Hazing occurred on a variety of levels and from various sources, such as peers and family members. Participants reported having to "prove their insider status" (pg. 242), and also experienced racial discrimination from the majority group. Hence, the hazing was reported from representatives of both races, which puts additional strains on the biracial individuals, as opposed to the strains placed on monoracial individuals. Further, many participants in this study reported experiencing different forms of abuse from one of their parents. This aspect of this study severely compromises its generalizability. Physical, emotional and sexual abuse is not a normative experience for biracial individuals. Another theme that emerged from the data was other salient identities. Some individuals did not focus their identity on race, but on another aspect of themselves that they value more, like military affiliation or religious affiliation. The impact of integration theme that emerged captures the effect of the Civil Rights movement. Schools and neighborhoods are more integrated, leading some biracial individuals to live in predominantly White neighborhoods, and identifying as White. The study revealed that biracial individuals can identify in multiple ways and that each strategy can be adaptive depending in the context.

Miville, Constantine, Baysden, and So-Lloyd (2005) collected qualitative data from ten self-identified biracial individuals. The analysis produced four themes: encounters with racism, reference group orientation, the "chameleon" experience, and the importance of social context in identity development. Overall, the results supported Root's model (1999).

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The "chameleon" experience that the authors refer to are what Root (1990) identifies as situational identities. A biracial or multiracial individual may learn to adapt to his or her racial environment and use this to their advantage, especially in environments that permit flexible social boundaries.

As opposed to the age-based developmental models, Root asserts that there are other adaptive strategies for biracial individuals other than integrating all of the aspects of their racial heritage. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) used Root's model to explore the influence of environmental factors on identity development of biracial individuals. The authors identified the same identity options as Root (1999): single race identity (exclusively Black or exclusively White), border identity (exclusively biracial), protean (situation bound and flexible racial identity), and transcendent identity (no definable racial identity). The authors decided to explore the social networks of Black-White biracial individuals. One hundred and seventy-seven college students completed surveys aimed at measuring biracial identity, racial composition of social networks, negative experiences, group evaluation or closeness, and appearance. The findings suggest that "the relationship between racial identification and social network composition is strongest for those who choose the singular black and border identities" (pg. 346). Negative experience with either of the two racial groups and closeness to a racial group were also significantly associated with type of biracial or monoracial identification.

Other research has provided evidence for the importance of environment on racial identification. Hermann (2004) asked 1,496 adolescents to choose a race from monoracial categories, report their parents' race and other demographic information. Herman found that racial composition of the neighborhood, peer group, family members, and school, all showed

a significant relationship with racial identification. Also, biracial individuals chose the racial category of the minority group more often than the racial category of the majority group.

Racial Socialization

The models that emphasize the importance of environmental influence tap into parenting procedures used to communicate race-related attitudes and information. This process of racial socialization has been examined mainly for monoracial minorities. Many researchers have emphasized the importance of verbal, nonverbal, intentional and inadvertent parental messages to their children about cultural pride and awareness of racism or preparation for bias for the overall well-being of African American children and adolescents (Thornton et al., 1990; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, 1995; Coard, Wallace, Stevenson & Brotman, 2004).

Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley (2007) define racial socialization as the "implicit, explicit, purposeful and unintended ways that parents' beliefs and behaviors convey views about race to their children" (pg. 670). The authors identified racial socialization as a protective factor against the negative effects racial discrimination can have on individuals. In their study, 128 African-American eighth-grade students completed surveys of perceived discrimination, self esteem, and their perceptions of their racial socialization. For children who received very few messages about racial pride and high preparation for bias, there was a negative relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem. However, for children who received a lot of messages about racial pride and moderate messages preparing them for bias, the negative relationship was mitigated, suggesting that racial socialization may be an important aspect for the emotional well-being

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of minority adolescents and an effective protective factor against some of the negative consequences of racism.

Hughes and Johnson (2001) examined racial socialization practices of 94 African American parents. The authors administered surveys as part of a larger study, including questions about experiences with racial discrimination, and specific communications about race to their children. Children were also asked about their experiences with discrimination and items assessing their identity exploration. Parent's perception that their children had been discriminated against based on race was significantly correlated with communications preparing their children for bias. Another important finding was that children's identity exploration and perceptions of unfair treatment did not show a relationship to parents' messages surrounding racial pride. The study highlights the notion that identity development is connected to the environmental influences of racism and the racial culture of the immediate environment.

Racial Socialization of Biracial Individuals

The research on racial socialization messages towards biracial individuals is scarce. Much of our knowledge of these socialization processes has emerged from research with interracial couples. Race is constructed in society and the family through messages sent by parents, teachers, the media, and peers (Root, 2001). Root has identified four possible approaches parents have towards race when raising a biracial child. The first is the color blind approach, where the message is conveyed that race is not important. The second approach is that race is everything. Particularly parents who have had traumatic experiences because of their race may assume this approach. Third, some parents may not feel equipped to deal with the issue of race and are uncomfortable talking about it, leading them to avoid

the subject. Lastly, Root found that particularly immigrant parents may emphasize the conflicts of race as an American issue that they do not understand. They avoid talking about the issue, not because they are necessarily uncomfortable with it, but because they do not understand its complexity in American culture (Root, 2001).

Rosenblatt, Karis & Powell (1995) interviewed interracial couples and also explored some of their experiences with parenting biracial children. They found that often, there are differences between the partners' knowledge of race issues and dealing with bias. They also found that particularly the White parent may hope to find resources directed to raising biracial children, but is unsuccessful in doing so. As a consequence, they settle for materials for raising African American children (Rosenblatt, Karis & Powell, 1995). Parents in this study explained that there is no "mixed community" and that racially socializing their children as African American seems most appropriate given the societal structures of the United States. Even though traditional African American racial socialization may prepare the child to deal with a racist society, having a White parent, puts biracial in a position to negotiate the two. Even if this process is largely internal, and the child or young adult shows no outward signs of this struggle, acknowledging the difference is important. The interviews Rosenblatt et. al (1995) conducted highlight that parents are lacking resources to deal with the complexity of raising biracial children in a racist society.

In their book *Raising Biracial Children,* Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) educate their readers on special issues of race revolving around biracial children, and community and societal influences on a child's identity development. The authors also identify three factors that shape how parents racially socialize their children. The first is individual parental factors, which includes the racial socialization the parents received when they were growing

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up, the nature of the parents' racial experience, and how parents define and relate to their own racial identity. Other important factors are the relationship between parents, and how the parents respond to the physical characteristics of their children. The authors also offer strategies for parents to racially socialize their children. Examples of these strategies are providing positive representations and preparing children for encounters with racism. Largely, Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) describe many of the strategies that African-American parents use to racially socialize their children and do not tailor the strategies to the unique situation of interracial families.   Wright (2000) also attempts to provide parents of biracial children with support and strategies. *I'm chocolate, you're vanilla: Raising healthy black and biracial children in a race-conscious world*, is another example of advice that is not tailored to biracial individuals, but communicates traditional African American racial socialization strategies. Though this advice is undoubtedly valuable to parents, it lacks the sensitivity to the unique struggles and challenges biracial individuals face. It is difficult for monoracial parents of biracial individuals to relate to the situations their children may find themselves in.

Is That Your Child? is another example of anecdotal evidence for the difficulties parents of biracial children face, and our lack of understanding of the subject. Kilson and Ladd (2009) interviewed mothers of biracial children and asked them to share challenges they faced and suggestions they may have for other parents. Once again, the central theme of all the interviews is to communicate both sides of the racial and cultural heritage to the child. Biracial socialization messages are neither addressed nor acknowledged. Children of these mothers were able to talk about how to incorporate Black racial socialization messages into parenting without neglecting the culture of the White side of the family. None of the highly

educated mothers that were interviewed for this book discussed how the child may be neither Black nor White, or how those negotiations take place. This is not to say that the parenting strategies that were used by these mothers were negligent or harmful. However, there are concerns and negotiations biracial individuals make on a daily basis that have not been discussed thoroughly in the literature.

Very few studies have attempted to tackle the issue of racial socialization from the perspective of biracial individuals themselves. In one study (Marbury, 2007) the participants were eight European American mothers of biracial adolescents ranging in age from 10 to 17 years old. The author collected qualitative data using individual and focus group interviews and developed the Biracial Socialization Spectrum. The Biracial Socialization Spectrum is a tetrahedron with the dynamic process as the base, side one representing the Black/African American parent spectrum, side two representing the White/European American parent spectrum, and side three representing the Biracial Socialization Spectrum (Marbury, 2007).

Clinton (2006) used a mixed methods design to explore biracial identity in teenagers. The interviews Clinton conducted to investigate factors of racial socialization revealed four clusters: Adamant Biracial Identity, Publicly Black Label, Dual Identity, and Race Not Important. Participants who fell into the Adamant Biracial Identity cluster reported varying racial socializations from parents. Some White mothers were very involved in racial socialization, while others were not. Some Black fathers engaged in clear Black socialization messages with their children while others did not. Participants, who fell into the Publicly Black Label cluster, appear to be implicitly influenced by their environment, received more messages concerning discrimination and the fewer biracial socialization messages than the participants in the Adamant Biracial Identity cluster. The Dual Identity cluster is

characterized by the participants' high biracial identity and Black centrality. These participants received the most biracial socialization messages of all of the clusters. The final cluster, Race Not Important, is characterized by participants reporting that they did not receive any racial socialization messages, and that race was simply not discussed in their home. Clinton's (2006) findings suggest that parental messages are not the only factors that influence the way biracial individuals identify and how they experience their biracial identity.

Unfortunately, the four items in the quantitative measure Clinton (2006) used to capture "biracial socialization" are sparse and circumscribed. They merely ask, if participants were encouraged to have biracial friends, were involved in "activities that focus on things important to biracial people," if parents bought them biracial "toys or games," or if they went to "organizational meetings that dealt with biracial issues." These questions are vague and not very descriptive or detail oriented. What would "things important to biracial people be?' It is difficult to hypothesize how participants interpreted these questions, and what they were thinking of when they answered them. Further, biracial socialization can potentially include many more aspects than the ones touched on the four items used for this study.

Korgen (1998) provides a detailed overview of the history of biracialism in America, explores issues surrounding biracialism and discrimination, dating, and implications for public policy. One example of a public policy implication Korgen (1998) makes is creating biracial categories on documents. The author relies on data from interviews to help conceptualize the social complexity of the biracial experience. The author's contribution is valuable because of the extensive historical and cultural background that is provided.

Nevertheless, there is a need for more empirical work to support this area of research, particularly in biracial populations outside of the United States.

Even though the research based on Root's model (1999) is making large steps in understanding the messages that biracial individuals are using to negotiate their identity, much more research is needed in this area. Our knowledge can still be considered to be in its beginnings. Consequently, exploratory research is of the essence.

Value of Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Research has shown that environmental factors are extremely important in the process of identity development. Environments vary across the Unites States in racial make-up and regional attitudes. Naturally, environments outside of the United States provide an additional variation in the myriad of possible environmental constellations. Cross-cultural research can help us understand how different environmental factors influence biracial identity development.

A particular group of biracial individuals that has been neglected in the research are people of African descent in other countries. Once again, it is inaccurate to assume that Blacks experience the world the same way, regardless of what country they live in. "It becomes increasingly apparent that the Diaspora does not constitute a historically given or universally applicable analytic model for explaining the cultural and historical trajectories of all Black populations" (Campt, 2004). Therefore, each context should be acknowledged for the unique aspects it contributes to the Black experience. Understanding Black people's experiences outside of the U.S. context will aid in understanding environmental similarities and differences.

Historical Context of People of African Descent in Germany

Many are unaware of the people of African descent living in Germany. Race is not an officially registered category in Germany, but estimates suggest that there are over 300,000 people of African descent living in Germany (Campt, 1993). These individuals are referred to as Afro-Germans, a term coined by a leader of the Afro-German movement, May Ayim, in 1984 (Michaels, 2006).

During the height of colonialism, Germany owned colonies in what is now Namibia, Tanzania, Kenya, Togo, and Cameroon (Lusane, 2002). Though enslaved Africans were never imported, there was exchange and immigration. It is during this time that the first impressions of Black people began to enter German culture. Similar to other Europeans, Germans assumed a sense of superiority based on their race and conceptualized African people as "barbarians," "man-eating cannibals," and primitive (Opitz, 1991). An important question now is how these images and attitudes continue to prevail in German language and culture.

In many ways, the picture that colonial Germany painted of Africans still influences German culture. Many child games and songs, and books include derogatory descriptions and depictions of Africans. Examples include the children's song "Zehn Kleine Negerlein" (Ten little Negroes), the "Sarotti Mohr" (Moor), which is the trademark of a chocolate company (see Figure 2), and the popular "Negerkuss" (Negro kiss), which is a chocolate treat with a marshmallow filling. Even though all of these terms are being questioned for their political correctness in modern German sociological literature, the overall German population still accepts them (Mohammed, 2001).

Figure 2: "Sarotti Mohr" Trademark of the German chocolate company, Sarotti. Retrieved February 12, 2009 from http://img.allposters.com/6/LRG/20/2070/BO92D00Z.jpg

Throughout the history of people of African descent in Germany, children of Black-White racial heritage typically have one of three possible black ancestries: African immigrants, European soldiers of African descent (i.e. French), or African American GIs. After World War I, French troops occupied the Rhineland in Germany. Several German women and African members of the French troops engaged in relationships. The birth of their biracial "Black" children in these territories was first ignored, but soon became an outrage in the eyes of the public. The fathers of these children were portrayed as brutal rapists, and the children came to be known as the "Rheinland Bastards." The government explored a variety of equally cruel "solutions," which included involuntary sterilization, "sending them home" (to Africa or the United States), and murder (Lusane, 2002). As this example illustrates, people of mixed racial heritage were always viewed as inferior and not worthy of participating in society. During the 1950s Black Germans were "defined as unnatural, a product of extraordinary circumstances" (El-Tayeb, 2003, pg 469). This outsider status fostered discrimination and oppression. Only recently have Black people in Germany

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become recognized as victims of the Holocaust and the Eugenics Movement in Germany (Mazon & Steingrover, 2005).

Even though there was never a system of slavery or segregation like in the United States, Afro-Germans experience racism to this day. Violence against "foreigners" ("Ausländer"), as they are termed in German, still occurs. More recently, children of biracial heritage in post World War II Germany are known as "occupation babies" (Opitz, 1991). These children were typically children of German mothers and African American fathers. Though the culture in post World War II did not pose an immediate threat to the life of these children, societal pressures remained (Opitz, 1991). Much of the social literature of this time reflects a sense of pity for the biracial children. Titles of articles include "Responsibility for our mixed-race children" (Franke, 1959), and "The little mulattoes: A serious question for us all" (Baumeister, 1952).

Two large research studies conducted by Walter Kirchner (1952) and Rudolf Sieg (1956) involving the Black-White biracial populations at the time were conducted in the spirit of the Eugenics Movement. While the authors appear to make an effort to disguise their racist ideology, they insist that mixed-race children were in need of special educational attention and suffered severe "consequences" because of their mixed-race existence including behavioral and discipline problems, and psychic and somatic illnesses (Opitz, 1991).

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the Afro-German movement finally allowed Afro-Germans to tell their story in their own words. In *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out,* a collection of interviews, life-stories, and essays written by three Afro-German women: Katharina Oguntoye, Dagmar Schultz, and May Ayim, many stories of biracial Afro-Germans speak to the complexity of their identity. One witness of the societal

pressures is Helga Emde, who describes her life growing up trying to be "as white as she could be" (pg.103), and finding herself constantly negotiating her racial identity. She describes a time in her life when she attempted to "ban everything Black form her life" (pg. 105), and was confronted with images of the "Sarotti Mohr" as a depiction of who others thought she was. Helga's story is only one of many biracial Afro-Germans who struggle with defining their identity in a racist society. In 1997, May Opitz, who had now changed her name to May Ayim, published her autobiography, and discussed her experiences with racism in the context of German culture. She urges her readers to be more vocal and active in sharing their own experiences and not falling into silence (Ayim, 1997).

Germany's history has established a unique context for biracial individuals. For one, foreigners that look different have a hard time being accepted as German citizens. While the most prominent political activists of the Afro-German movement were women, Afro-German men chose the venue of music to express their struggle for identity and acceptance. Their contribution to the Afro-German movement of the early 1990s emphasized German citizenship and a demand to be recognized as Germans (El-Tayeb, 2003). Afro-Germans do not enjoy the advantages of "uncontested national belonging that come with being white" (El-Tayeb, 2003, pg. 479). The Hip-Hop group Brother's Keepers addressed this issue with their song "Fremd im Eigenen Land" (Stranger in your own country) (El-Tayeb, 2003). African Americans living in the United States do not typically struggle with this issue. Nationality of Americans is not defined by racial make up, but in national allegiance (Asante, 2005). As a consequence, Afro-Germans have a problem with "cultural location": The dilemma they face because they are "born in Germany, are educated in Germany, and view

themselves as German yet in the minds of their fellow citizens they are not truly German because they do not have pure German ancestry" (Asante, 2005).

Another unique contextual consideration is the relatively small number of Afro-Germans in the population. While Afro-Germans make up merely one percent of the German population (Campt 1993), African Americans make up about 13% of the American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The fact that there are less people of similar racial make up in Germany enhances a sense of social isolation (Campt, 1993). There is a larger population of Afro-Germans in large cities such as Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, and Berlin. This can in part be explained by the fact that U.S. and French military bases were also found in and surrounding large cities.

The relative scarcity of people of African descent in Germany makes the Afro-German movement, which began in the early 1980s even more remarkable and important to the people involved. One of the greatest influences on the Afro-German empowerment was feminist thought and activism of Black leaders of the United States such as Audre Lorde, who has also been credited with helping coin the term "Afro-German" (Michaels, 2006). The Afro-German movement of this time enabled Afro-Germans to develop a strong sense of identity. The most prominent and influential work of this movement is *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*. This work is still the single most important contribution to our understanding of Afro-German biracial identity development.

 Lastly, the general German population still struggles with the shame of the past. German citizens have struggled with developing a sense of national pride, in order to prevent being labeled "Nazis." Presumably, this struggle has made it increasingly hard for Germans to accept people that look different as people with German nationality.

Empirical Research With Afro-German Populations

A recent large scale study, the Black European Studies Project (BEST) attempts to validate several measures of Black racial identity in France, the Netherlands, Poland, Germany, and the UK (Wandert, Ochsmann, Brug, Chybicka, Lacassagne, Verkuyten, 2008). One of the measures that was sought to be validated is the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). The authors also collected data on additional variables, including cultural mistrust, acculturative stress, and perceived racism. Originally, 208 participants completed the survey. The authors excluded participants, who did not self-categorize as Black and/or African, were younger than 18 years, or had lived in Germany less than 10 years. It is conceivable that some participants did not self-categorize as Black and/or African American because they prefer a biracial label. Interestingly, 57% of the participants reported having a German mother and 10% reported a German father. These biracial individuals were treated the same as the monoracial individuals in the analyses. Though one of the scales administered was Rockquemore and Brunsma's Biracial Identity Scale, the results for this scale were not included in the study. The study was able to replicate the findings of the original study and validate the MIBI.

Several differences were found between the German sample and the African American samples. For one, the German sample had lower levels of private and public regard. Private regard concerns the way an individual feels towards African Americans and their membership in that group. Public regard refers to the belief an individual has about how others view African Americans positively and negatively. Wandert et al. (2008) explained this difference in the German sample with the differences in social context. They conclude that Afro-Germans do not have much opportunity to insulate themselves against the

negative beliefs about their race, and therefore do not build a protective shield for their self-esteem.

Even though the study conducted by Wandert et al. (2008) is undoubtedly important and valuable to our knowledgebase, the methodology of the study and the analyses were not sensitive to the unique experiences of biracial Afro-Germans. In addition, the explanations of the authors are in need of more support, but provide a good starting point for further investigation

Theoretical Conceptualization

Multiracial populations are steadily increasing (Herman, 2004). Important steps have been taken to acknowledge the distinctiveness of experiences of multiracial individuals from monoracial individuals. The importance of environmental influences of biracial identity development has been established (Root, 1990, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Herman, 2004). Recent research has moved away from developmental stage approaches to biracial identity development and toward ecological explanations for identity constructs.

The usefulness of ecological approaches and the influence of environment on biracial identity development rest on the foundation that race is a socially constructed concept. Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a useful foundation for thinking about how biracial individuals experience themselves in German society. CRT originated in an effort to bring to attention to the racial inequalities deeply embedded in the legal system of the United States (Lynn & Parker, 2002). This particular theoretical foundation seeks to challenge our preconceived notions of race by exploring the narratives of individuals. Traditionally, this approach has been used with African American populations. However, biracial individuals have not had an equal opportunity to voice their perceptions of race and their experiences in

society. Accepting race as a socially constructed concept also means that ideas of race evolve, change, and depend on social meanings, political pressures and societal trends. Even though CRT was developed in the unique sociopolitical and historical context of the United States, the goals of the theory and contribution to understanding individuals of color in a predominantly White society can be applied to Germany. In order to understand race and its meaning for biracial individuals in the social structure of Germany, we must turn to these individuals and their lived experiences.

CRT poses three goals for research of race and discrimination (Lynn & Parker, 2002). The first goal is to present stories of discrimination. Even though there have been many accounts of racial discrimination against monoracial minorities, Black-White biracial individuals have not received the same level of attention. The second goal of CRT is to eradicate racial suppression. By exploring the identity development of Black-White biracial people, this research study gives a voice to the participants, and thereby calls attention to how the social construct of race is fragile and complex. Race is more complicated than just Black and White. The third goal of CRT is to offer transformative solutions for the discrimination and marginalization experienced by participants.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the biracial identity development of Afro-Germans and examine racial socialization processes that are important for this population. Specifically, the following research questions are of interest:

1. What factors influence the racial identity development of Black-White biracial Afro-Germans?

    a) How has the German culture affected strategies of forming an identity?

b)   How do relationships with parents influence racial identity development?

c)   How do parental communications about race influence racial identity development?

2. What strategies do biracial Afro-Germans use to negotiate their racial identity?

Method

Purpose

The present study explored the biracial identity development of Afro-Germans within the sociocultural context of Germany. Empirical knowledge concerning biracial identity development is limited. Particularly, our knowledge concerning biracial populations outside of the United States is scarce. This study was conducted as an exploratory study to identify issues and factors that are important in the biracial development of Afro-Germans.

Design

The research questions were explored using a qualitative design.   A narrative analysis of individuals' lived experiences was chosen to help us understand racial identity processes that have not been researched thus far.   Phenomenological interviewing was selected to fit the exploratory nature of the research questions (Marshall & Rossmann, 1999).

The philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology as described by Creswell (2007) are fourfold. First, researchers are encouraged to escape the boundaries and limitations of empiricism and instead seek to find truth through interpretation. Second, a phenomenological approach is committed to suspending judgments or preconceptions about reality. In this way, phenomenology complements the goals of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which encourages the researcher to challenge the preconceived notions of race and look beyond the boundaries society constructed. Third, the phenomenological approach

recognizes that our realities are constructed in relation to our environment. The fourth philosophical underpinning of phenomenology follows logically: The reality of an object or the environment can only be understood through the experience of an individual.

A phenomenological approach emphasizes the interpretive understanding of human interaction. The purpose is to describe the experiences of a phenomenon. For this study, the phenomenon consists of forming a racial identity as a biracial individual in Germany. Therefore, the analysis performed by the researcher is an interpretation of the participants' experiences in this context.

Role of the Researcher

I am biracial Afro-German woman. My father was born and raised in Texas, and my mother is a native to Berlin, Germany. I spent my entire childhood and young adulthood growing up in Berlin, and moved to the United States for my undergraduate education. I am therefore familiar with German culture and language, and have experienced many of the things the participants shared in the interviews. I identify as biracial, and have struggled with being forced to choose between my Black and White heritages, particularly in American society. My background connects me with my participants because they recognize me as one of them. This level of comfort was evidenced in the interviews. Most of the participants used interviewer addressing comments, or asked me questions about my experiences in Germany and the United States. They would ask me, "Does that ever happen to you?", or "I'm sure you know what I mean." Even though I did not volunteer information on my own accord, questions like these prompted me to share personal experiences with my participants, or at least affirm that I understood their situation, before I asked them further questions. Even though I do not assume to understand my participants simply because I am a member of

the same population, my own experiences let me relate to them on a level that may not be achieved by a researcher outside of this population.

Gadamer (1987) suggests that the background and biases of the researcher actually facilitate the understanding of another's experiences. In this case, my understanding of the issues surrounding this subject can provide the grounds for the meaning derived from the research. As part of the phenomenological analysis, I will attempt to be conscious and aware of my own experiences as an Afro-German woman, and bracket them from the experiences of my participants. Through intense self-reflection I intend to set aside my own experiences and view the narratives of the participants with an awareness of my own opinions and experiences.

Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

The interviews were conducted over a four week time period in Berlin, Germany. The researcher approached participants in a German-American church. Subsequent recruitment took place via snowball techniques. Participants passed on the contact information of the researcher to others who they thought may be interested in participating. Thirteen biracial Afro-German participants were interviewed. Two participants were excluded from the analysis because they did not fit into the sample. One of the participants was the daughter of a German diplomat and had spent most of her life in several different countries. Hence, her experience deviated from that of Afro-Germans who were born and raised in Germany. The other participant was excluded because his mother was biracial and his father was Black. The racial make-up of his family was not consistent with other participants, who had one Black and one White parent.

The final sample of 11 participants consisted of five males and six females between the ages of 18 and 27, with a mean age of 23 (see Table 1). All of the participants had Black fathers and White mothers. This was not intended by the researcher, but appears to be representative of the typical familial constellation in this population. Of the Black fathers, six were from the United States, and five were from African countries. Of the White mothers, eight were German, while three were originally from a different European country, but had lived in Germany for the participant's lifetime (see Table 2).

Table 1

Mean Age and Parental Heritage by Gender

	Males	Females	Total
Mean Age	24.3	21.8	23.2
African father	3	2	5
African American father	3	3	6
White German mother	4	4	8
White European mother	2	1	3

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Father	Mother	Stepparent
01	Male	27	Black Nigeria	White Finland	
02	Female	18	Black Senegal	White England	
03	Female	25	Black Mozambique	White Germany	Stepmother: White, Germany
05	Male	27	Black Ghana	White Germany	Stepfather: Black, U.S.A. (Louisiana)
06	Female	19	Black U.S.A (Orlando, FL)	White Germany	
07	Male	22	Black U.S.A (Chicago, IL)	White Germany	
08	Female	24	Black U.S.A (Philadelphia, PA)	White Germany	
09	Male	24	Black U.S.A (New York, NY)	White Germany	
10	Male	26	Black Togo	White Germany	Stepfather: Black, Togo
12	Female	23	Black U.S.A (Detroit, MI)	White Germany	
13	Male	20	Black U.S.A (Philadelphia, PA)	White France	

Procedure

      Interviews. Interviews were conducted and audio taped in German to ensure the comfort and expressive power of the participants. The interviewer prepared several questions. However, the interviews were mainly be guided by the participants, and questions varied slightly according to the responses of the participants. After each interview, the researcher evaluated whether or not additional questions and topics were relevant for subsequent interviews. The prepared questions were,

1. Tell me a little bit about growing up. What are the things you remember?
2. What do you say when someone asks you what your racial/ethnic background is? Why? Has this changed over time?
3. Who have been important people in helping you identify as you do?
4. What have you liked about being of mixed racial heritage? What has been hard about it?
5. What advice do you have for parents of biracial children?
6. Do you identify as German? Why or why not?

These questions, except for question 6 were selected from interviews conducted by Miville et al. (2005).

      Proofreading. The researcher transcribed each interview and de-identified the transcripts, removing names, schools, and street names that the participant may have mentioned. For purposes of transcription accuracy, the researcher appointed a proofreader, fluent and proficient in German, to check the record by reading the typed responses while listening to the audio tape. The researcher then summarized the statements and experiences of the participant.

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Debriefing. Once the transcripts were checked for accuracy they were delivered to a debriefer, who was appointed by the researcher. The debriefer, who was fluent and proficient in German, reviewed the interview transcripts and researcher's interpretations, provided feedback to the researcher regarding her interpretations and made suggestions for follow-up questions.

Member Checks. Once the transcribed data were checked for accuracy, and the interpretations were legitimized, the researcher presented the summary and interpretations of the interview to the participants for purposes of member checks. The participants each reviewed the interpretation, and provided feedback on the accuracy or misunderstandings that may have occurred during the interview process. While most member checks took place in person, scheduling difficulties led to some member checks being conducted over the phone.

Data Analysis

The data were entered into the ATLAS.ti® software program to aid with organization of the interviews. Line-by-line open coding was used to identify recurring codes. The micro-analysis produced 123 codes. Categories were formed that conceptually grouped individual codes into themes. Twelve themes emerged that were internally consistent (internal convergence) and distinct from one another (externally divergent).

Verification

Audit Phase I (Microanalysis). Two auditors, appointed by the researcher, were chosen to review the codes, their definitions and the corresponding data. Five interviews were randomly selected to be audited. One auditor was a faculty member in the Department of Education of a moderately sized southern university in the United States with substantial experience in qualitative research. She reviewed two interviews and checked the codes for

appropriateness and clarity. The other auditor was a doctoral student in clinical psychology at a university in London, United Kingdom and reviewed three interviews. Both auditors were native speakers of the German language, lived in Germany for most of their lives, and were therefore familiar with German cultural and political issues.

Largely, the auditors agreed with the codes selected and defined by the researcher. However small changes were made. As a result of the feedback and comments, three codes were reworded, two codes were merged, and two codes were added. This process produced a final version of 126 codes.

Audit Phase II (Themes). Three auditors were appointed by the researcher to verify the themes. All three auditors of this phase were graduate students in psychology. No German language skills were necessary for this phase of audit, because the codes and themes were defined in English. The three auditors were presented with a matching task. They were given the codebook with the codes that were represented in the themes, a list of the themes identified by the researcher, detailed descriptions of the themes, and the number of codes in each theme. The auditors were then asked to match the codes with themes as they saw appropriate.

Overall, the auditors agreed with the themes the researcher found. As a result of their feedback, two individual codes were reworded, and two were found to be more appropriate for a different theme.

Limitations

The themes that emerged from the data are bound to the specific population of Afro-Germans who were interviewed. No generalizations were possible because of the cultural and situation-specific circumstances of the study. It is also acknowledged that these findings

were essentially the interpretation of the researcher. In addition, the quotes presented here were translated from German. Specific qualities of German language cannot be translated and may have been lost in the process. The primary role of the qualitative researcher is to provide description and the details of the participants' experiences that enrich the topic being studied (Creswell, 2007). Several procedures in the study were implemented to increase the trustworthiness of the results, such as peer proofreading, peer debriefing, member checks, and two phases of audits that provide evidence for inter rater reliability. Nevertheless the findings are limited by the possibility of interpretation bias and the factors inherent in translation from German into English.

Themes

Intersectional identity

Participants saw themselves as an intersection of two cultures and races. They chose labels for themselves that expressed a combination of Black and White, and saw particular benefits in identifying themselves in this way. They took pride in being able to combine both sides of their national and racial heritage. Labels they chose include "Afro-German," "Mixed," "Mulatto," and "Mischling." Even though many used these terms, participants often said words to describe themselves and resorted to simply explaining their parents' heritage when asked about their identity. Participant 6, for example, said, "I find it difficult to find a term sometimes. I don't feel like I'm just Black, and I'm not just White, I'm both." Participant 3 explained why she chose to label herself "Afro-German."

> I like [the term Afro-German]. I think it's okay because I am African American, but I'm also Afro-German, so I like it because I am Black and White. This way, both of my nationalities are in one word. That's why I think it's okay.

Participants talked about constantly negotiating both sides of their identity and said they were most content when they could achieve a balance of the two. Participant 7 shared that, "I have always tried to balance the two sides out, so I have some of both, and not be one-sided."

A central piece that contributes to the intersectional identity of the participants was their bilingualism. All participants interviewed were bilingual and include their language as one of the key reasons they identified with both sides of their heritage. To them, the language they embraced was a key aspect of who they are. They also thought that it was problematic when other Afro-German people do not speak the language of their culture. For example, Participant 8 talked about an Afro-German friend who did not speak English. She reported that she felt like he was missing an important piece of who he is.

Black Identity

Even though most participants used intersectional labels for their identity, they also developed a strong connection to their Black heritage. They felt connected to other Black people, and were aware of the fact that many people identify them as Black. Participant 7 expressed, that, "Of course, for the outside world, I'm Black."

Regardless of the cultural origin of their blackness (African or African American), participants felt connected to African Americans and saw similarities in the experience of living in a predominantly White society. Participants felt comfortable in the Black side of their family and attempted to explore it further by connecting with that side of their family and by travelling to the country their father was from. Many of them described how the Black side of their heritage was warmer and more welcoming than the White side. For example, Participant 10 said, "If I would meet up with people from my African heritage, everything would be a lot warmer from the start, and a lot more open. Definitely."

Participants had been taught and understood the "one-drop-rule," which is a common way of racial thinking in the U.S. The "one-drop-rule" holds that if a person has even one Black ancestor, he or she is Black (Omi and Winant, 1994). Parents of the participants identified their children as Black and racially socialized them as Black. As a result, the participants felt like their White heritage was "invisible" at times.

> When we were kids, my Mom always said to us that we were African. We were asking ourselves, "what am I?", and she always said, "You are African." So from childhood on, that idea was implanted in us (Participant 1).

Participant 13 discussed how he interpreted the way his father raised him, as a message that he is Black.

> Participant 13: We lean towards seeing ourselves as Black. I think that has a lot to do with the way my father raised us, because he's Black.
>
> Interviewer: Did he say anything like that?
>
> Participant 13: He always told us we were mixed, but indirectly, {pauses}. He didn't want to say that we're Black, but he made it known indirectly. He didn't want to be open about it, but that's what it felt like to me. Now, I simply feel Black.

German/White Identity

Participants identified as German. They felt comfortable in German society and culture, felt connected to their mothers' family, and had close German friends. Some have also developed a general pride in their European identity. They also identified positive characteristics with being German such as being organized, loving order and punctuality, being dependable, proud, and hard-working. Participant 3 explained her German identity, by saying,

> It was always important to me that I am German. I never felt like I was not German. […] I am really German in a lot of ways. I love things to be organized and in order, I'm bureaucratic, I love German food, I cook a lot of German food, I speak German. I'm a little parochial sometimes, which I'm working on (laughs).

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Participant 9 recognized his European identity when he spent some time the U.S. He said, "I never really fit in there, because I have this international feel, this European way of thinking, so that I really could get along with people all over the world."

Disconnect/Denial

Despite the deep connection most participants felt to both sides of their racial and national heritage, they also denied or chose not to identify with one of those sides at certain points in their life, or in certain situations or domains. They made a clear distinction between being Black and being biracial. At earlier stages of development, some participants reported that they denied their Black heritage, or did not accept their Black physical features. Participant 3 shared some memories from childhood.

> Participant 3: I didn't really latch on to [my African heritage]. The only thing I noticed was when my father would wear traditional African clothes, which was very embarrassing for me, it was awful.
>
> Interviewer: Are you still embarrassed by those things?
>
> Participant 3: No, not at all. It was part of my childhood. I couldn't identify with my African heritage as a child. I think that had a lot to do with my father. If he would have taught me more about it, and tried to understand me, it would have been easier for me.
>
> Interviewer: To accept your Mozambique heritage.
>
> Participant 3: Exactly. To see myself as African. To like my hair and my nose. I couldn't accept them back then.

The same dynamic was observed with the White side of the participants' identity. Participants disconnected themselves from their White German heritage, by explaining that they do not exhibit the coldness, rigidity, bureaucracy, selfishness, and unfriendliness that stereotypically define German people. The negativity of the aforementioned traits appeared

to contribute the participants' hesitation to identify as German. Participant 1 expressed his difficulty in fully committing to a German identity.

> Interviewer: Do you identify as German?
>
> Participant 1: Yes and no. I can say that I know I'm a Berliner. Berlin is definitely my hometown and I feel at home. I was born here and grew up here, but it is hard to feel German here in Germany. Wait, I can't really say that. I speak German, and that is my language. I was born here and raised here, but something is missing, so that I can say, "I am German." I can't really explain why.

Participant 10 talked about how he feels disconnected from both sides of his heritage at times.

> Naturally, I'm not viewed as White by the White people, and not as Black with Black people. I'm something in the middle. I don't know. Most of my friends are mixed... (laughs).

Positive Internal Coping

Participants displayed an array of positive coping strategies, including thinking patterns that result in high self-esteem and a positive outlook on their identity. Some of the positive aspects of their identity they focused on included flexibility and being unique. Participants were confident and communicated a high self-esteem and were proud of being biracial. Participant 9 was particularly proud about the benefits he perceived about being biracial. He said, "The different languages, the different cultures, the fact that I can maneuver in both cultures, and feel comfortable in both cultures to some degree. I like that." Participant 1 talked about his pride in his biracial heritage.

> It makes me unique. I like to hear people ask me where I'm from, and when I tell them, one parent is from Finland, one is from Nigeria, but I grew up in Germany, then I feel special. I'm comfortable with that and I'm proud of it.

In addition, participants felt that they had the resources to deal with stressors such as

racism-related events. They were animate about acts of racism not hurting their self-concept

or self-esteem. They have come to expect certain acts of racism to occur in their everyday

lives, but have made a decision not to let those encounters harm their self-esteem or disrupt

their life. Many were not sure if they have not been aware of racist encounters, or if they

have simply been fortunate to experience less racism than other people of color they know.

Participant 5 talked about how he deals with racism.

> Of course, there will always be idiots, you know? Whether you're on the train in the
> former East of the city, or you get a bad cab driver or bus driver. But, honestly, I have
> to say that I don't let things like that get to me. I stand above those things […] If I get
> on the bus, and a woman looks at me and grabs her purse, I just completely ignore
> things like that.

Environmental Support

Participants stated that they felt supported by their immediate environment. The two

largest sources of emotional support are parents and other biracial Afro-German friends. Not

only did their parents support them in times of conflict or helped them understand racist

events, but many participants shared that parents were actively involved in preparing them

for racism and discrimination from White people. Many participants received some of the

same classic racial socialization messages Black children receive. These communications

included a sense that they would have to work harder than their White counterparts to

achieve recognition, and that they should expect others to treat them differently because of

the color of their skin. Participant 9 reported some of the things his mother told him when he

was growing up.

> It's not always going to be easy for you, because you are Black and White, and you
> live in a White society. It's going to be the same thing if you ever move to the U.S.A
> society that is controlled by White people, that's just how it is. The people that are in
> power are predominantly White. You just have to get used to that.

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Participants often found themselves forming their most meaningful friendships with other biracial Afro-Germans. They described a sense of connectedness and a comfort level that is only rarely achieved with other close friends. Participant 12 talked about her experiences in a German-American school, and the friendships she formed there.

> Participant 12: There were a lot of other kids there that looked like me. It was strange because I didn't have a clear understanding of skin color. I didn't really know what the difference was, and my parents never talked about it. But I still got along better with the mixed kids. There was a better sense of unity, than with the other kids.
>
> Interviewer: Immediately?
>
> Participant 12: There was an immediate connection. I'm not sure why. Because like I mentioned, I was not really aware of my race, but I still knew instantly. And those people turned out to be my best friends.
>
> Interviewer: And those friends you speak of are mixed kids, not Black kids?
>
> Participant 12: Yes. I think I felt that we all had the same "fate" and we understand each other. It's like that to this day.

Injured Family

Participants observed that interracial families are often broken. Most felt there was a social stigma against interracial families and said that they faced stereotypes associated with being in a member of such. They heard how interracial couples are criticized by others, and that interracial marriages are not always accepted by society. Participant 9 struggled with the stigmatization of interracial families. He explained that his father was there for a considerable time during his childhood, but that he still was victim of stereotypes surrounding his familial constellation.

> People are quick to place the stereotype on your family "One of those German women, who picked up one of those soldiers, and got left behind." That's the stereotype that was the most stressful for me; the question, "why don't you have a father?" or "where is your father?" During my childhood, that was my biggest problem. [...] The stereotype of mixed kids in Germany: Your father is a soldier, and

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when his term is over, he's going back, and the woman is left behind with the children. Dealing with that stereotype was difficult for me.

Participant 13 talked about the stigmatization he feels because he was in a relationship with a White girl, and found that other people were critical of interracial couples.

> When I would walk around the city with her, a lot of Black people, particularly the women, looked at me in this strange way. I'm not sure why. Well, I think, because my girlfriend is White, and I'm Black. And they think I should be with a Black woman. But it doesn't matter, what skin color you have. Well, at least to me.

Many participants talked about a lack of connection with their fathers. Even though most participants knew their father and spent some time during childhood with him in the household, their relationship with their fathers has largely disintegrated. Eight out of the 11 participants reported that their biological parents went through a divorce.

Person-Environment Discrepancy

Participants experienced a discrepancy between the way they identified and the way other people "categorized" them. Many participants said that their features are racially ambiguous. People have asked them if they are Latino or Latina, or some other ethnic group. Society uses terms to describe their racial background that the participants themselves did not agree with. People have resisted the terms participants use to identify themselves. This experience is also associated with the stress of "defending" the way they identify.

All participants met some sort of resistance, when they identified as German to other people. They received messages that Black people cannot be German. They described the process of repeatedly explaining why they identify as German and justifying it as stressful, annoying, irritating, and unpleasant. For example, Participant 2 said, that when she identifies as German, people say, "But you don't look like it." Participant 6 described a typical conversation she may have with someone regarding her German identification.

> Some people automatically think I can't be German because I'm not White. When I explain to them that I was born and raised here, then they say, "Yes, I know that you're German, because you're a German citizen, but what else are you?" Then they want to know where I get the color of my skin. [...] I think it's unfortunate that people don't see me as German because I'm not White or because my Dad is American.

Other participants, like Participant 13, agreed with the message society has sent, that Black people cannot be German.

> I don't identify as German because of my dark skin color. German history {hesitates}, I don't know. It is hard to explain. I've learned a lot about German history […]. For me, a German person is White and has blue eyes and blond hair. That's how I see Germans. I have nothing against them, but that's how I see them. Of course, there are a lot of people that are Black and have a German passport, but they're not German either. They were born and raised in Germany, and have some German traits, but I don't see them as German. I see them as people that have a German passport, but not as Germans.

Some participants have also experienced a discrepancy when they were in predominantly Black environments. In these situations, some participants felt like they had to prove that they belong to the Black community. Other Black people did not recognize them as Black, or excluded them because they did not look Black. Participant 8 described an experience at a Black hair salon.

> What was really embarrassing for me was when I finally found a hair dresser. Me, as the only "White" {gestures quotation marks} person in the whole salon; I was stared at. The children were staring at me and looking at me like, "what the hell is she doing here?" [...] I suffer from that a lot. It irritates me because I always have the feeling that I have to justify who I am to them.

Multi Kulti

"Multi Kulti" is a German expression that is short for multiculturalism and is used in casual language. This theme captures the notion that participants favored environments in which they can interact with a racial and cultural diversity of people. They reported feeling particularly comfortable when they are surrounded by people who represent a variety of

backgrounds. Participants' friends and close circle were multicultural (Turkish, Pakistani, Asian, African, etc.). They felt like citizens of the world and connected to other foreigners with a sense that "we're in this together." They have explored the similarities and differences between the experiences of other minorities and themselves. Participants explained that they think it is important for parents to choose multicultural environments when raising biracial children.

Appreciating multiculturalism was part of their identity and contributed to their comfort in Berlin, because of its multicultural flair. Being a Berliner was a separate identity from being German. Some characteristics participants ascribed to the Berlin identity included open-mindedness, liberalism, and a blunt, unapologetic way of expressing opinions, which is termed "Berliner Schnauze." As a consequence of these characteristics, for the participants, Berlin is an environment that welcomes what they represent as people: a variety of cultures. Participant 9 explained that after spending some time in the U.S., he was missing Berlin.

> At the end of the day, Berlin was calling me, you know what I mean? The "Multi-Kulti" thing. I'm a "Multi-Kulti" person. I get along with everyone, Black or White. A Berliner is every nationality you can imagine. Everything is added to the mix.

Participant 12 expressed a similar sentiment.

> I think Berlin is a very special city. I've been to a lot of German cities and there is no city that compares to Berlin. Here, everything is so diverse, so many cultures, so many different people, so many different styles.

American Familiarity

Regardless of the origin of their Black parent, participants have developed strong opinions about American society, the way it deals with race and feel influenced by African

American and American mainstream culture. Participant 5 explained how the history of the U.S. has influenced him.

> Some things that influence me [from America] are stories of people, for example, Malcolm X or Muhammad Ali. Some of the athletes from the USA are legends […] They remind me, how everything was not too long ago. My grandparents lived during a time where racism was dealt with differently, and those stories remind me of that.

The participants acknowledged the complexity of the race issue in the U.S., and have either experienced racism or witnessed racist events happen to others in the U.S. They discussed several layers of racism, and show an understanding of the underlying historical and systemic structures that perpetuate it. Participant 3 expressed "I think in America, racism on both sides is much deeper and more tangible, very obvious, but always with friendly undertones."

Some participants who were able to visit the U.S. talked about how informal segregation was unfamiliar and often uncomfortable for them. They named examples such as segregated seating in the cafeteria, or criticism of either race for socializing with the other. Participants also described their discomfort with being "forced to choose" their race in American documents. Many participants associated negative characteristics with American mainstream culture, such as ignorance and lack of education, extreme patriotism, and superficiality.

Racism, Marginalization, Conflict

Participants experienced racism towards themselves or others to varying degrees. They experienced subtle racism in the form of subtle gestures and overt racism in the form of name-calling or racial profiling. They were discriminated against for their race or the nationality associated with their race, especially anti-American attitudes. Participants

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described these experiences as causing stress, anger, interpersonal conflicts, and fear. Some

also felt marginalized because they felt alone in their situation or anxiety associated with

being the only person of color in their environment. Participants were eager and willing to

share their encounters with racism and marginalization.

> Participant 3: I can remember how I was walking with my little brother, he was one year old, and he was truly the most beautiful child you can imagine. We were walking and a man passed us and looked at me, and then looked at my brother and in a loud "Hitler-type" voice, he said, "Yuck." I was shocked.

> Participant 6: My teacher would say, "The Americans are stupid because they all voted for Bush. How stupid can you be?" And I sat there as an American. Everybody in the class just looked at me, and all I could do was shrug my shoulders.

> Participant 8: Our neighbor said, „Go back to Africa, where you came from!" My other sister went up to him, to the Turkish family, and talked to them. She told them, "You better watch it. If your daughter doesn't shut her mouth, and stops talking to my little sister that way, I can't guarantee for anything."

> Participant 9: At night clubs, when you stand in line with more than 3 Black people, you're definitely not getting in.

Part of the marginalization was a lack of representation many participants observed.

Even though they witnessed Black and biracial populations increasing, they still felt like they

are not represented, and they do not have an older generation to look to.

> I think it's great that there are more and more biracial kids. Another thing I wanted to say is that I've never seen an older person, who was biracial. I just talked about that with a friend of mine, who is also Afro-German. We were talking about it on my 19th birthday, because I said, "I'm 19 now. I can't even imagine what I will look like when I'm a grandma." And then my friend and I thought about it. We've never seen an elderly person, who was half-Black and half-White, and that's why I can't even imagine how my skin will age or how my hair will look. (Participant 6)

Participant 12 discussed this lack of representation of people like herself in the acting and

music profession in Germany.

A lot of times I think about why are there no Black soul artists in Germany that are as successful as Sarah Conner? That sticks out to me. In the acting arena, there are also no actors I can think of that are really successful. That sort of stops me a little bit. You think, 'does this profession even have a future for me here?'

Some participants also described that they were discriminated against or marginalized by Black people. These situations seemed to cause anxiety, especially because the participants did not understand why they are being excluded from this group. Participant 2 showed frustration with a situation at a party.

It's strange because people always say White people are racist against Black people, but I think, sometimes Black people can be against White people, or even mixed people. We were all celebrating at a party, […] all the Black kids were dancing in the corner, and me and my friends were dancing together. [The Black kids] were acting very strange towards me. I think it's strange that they are always in their group. I think it's nice, because I know that there aren't many of us in Germany, and it's important that we stick together, but I think they take it too far. You don't always have to assemble according to your race. Or for example, I had another mixed friend, who was friends with a Black girl, and then she was friends with a White girl. Then the Black girl said to her, "Now that you have your White friend, you don't want to be my friend anymore?" I really can't stand stuff like that.

Progress and Change

Participants have seen progress made in Germany in regards to how Black, biracial, and other people of color are being treated and represented. Often, participants talked about how things were different 10 or 20 years ago, and have improved since then. They advocated for continued discussion of the subject of racism and stereotypes in public institutions such as schools, but have gotten a sense that Germany and its people are making an effort to promote equality and reduce racism and marginalization of foreigners. When asked whether or not Participant 5 identified as German, he explained how biracial people, Black people, and other minorities, may be more comfortable doing so in the future.

I think our generation isn't ready yet. We are German, and we can call this country our home, but I think the next generation could truly identify as German. You can see how things are changing. I think the last 20 years are worlds apart […]. And I

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think it's really important that the schools have started talking about these topics. When I was really young, we didn't talk about issues of [race and racism].

Participant 6 also talked about how the subject of racism was dealt with in her German school.

I think it's good that we talk about those things here, that people are not all the same, and every person is an individual, and that racism is not acceptable; and that you should do something if you happen to see something.

Participants felt that Germany's history, specifically the atrocities of World War II, has motivated Germans to be particularly cautious in regards to issues of social justice and racism. At the same time, many participants felt there is still a lot of progress to be made, but were hopeful for the future. Participant 3 was particularly optimistic, as she said, "I think when it comes to racism in Germany, we are such a liberal country, and we try not to repeat some of the mistakes we've made in our history."

Ecological Conceptualization of Themes

The twelve themes that emerged from the data are best understood in an ecological frame. Conceptualization of themes in this fashion produced Hubbard's Ecological Model of Afro-German Biracial Identity (HEMBAGI) (see Figure 3).
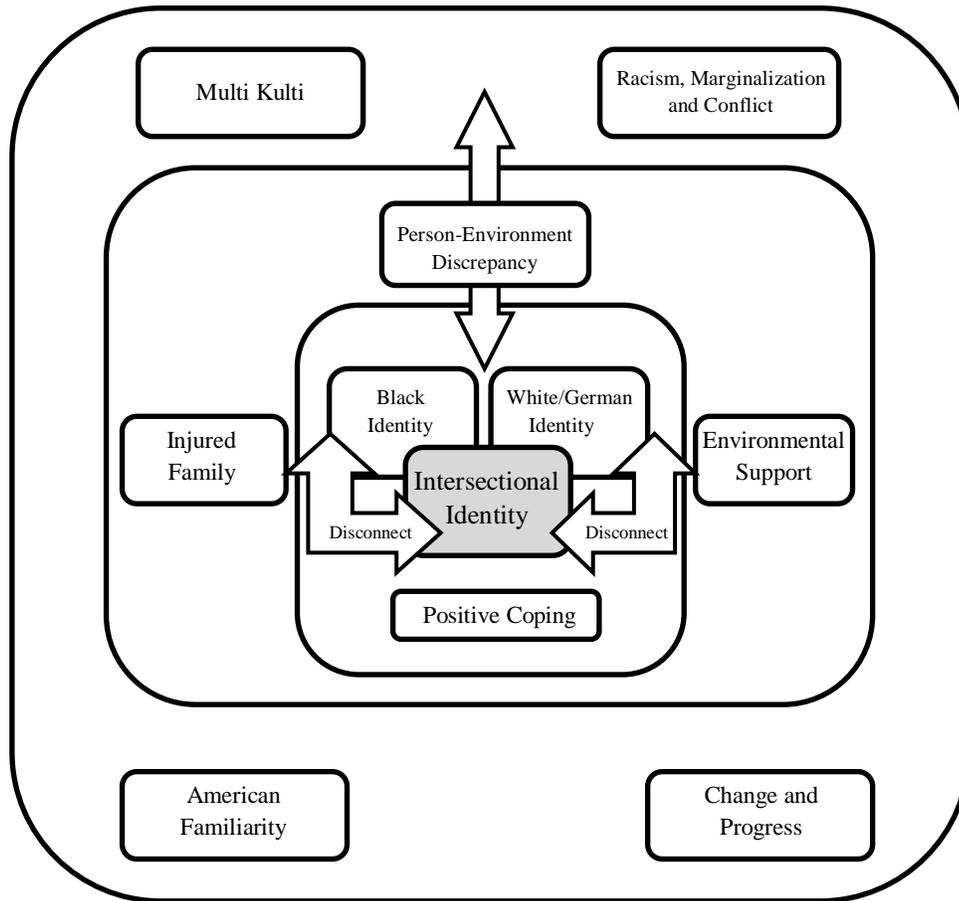
Figure 3 Hubbard's Ecological Model of Biracial Afro-German Identity (HEMBAGI)

At the individual level of the model themes include internal processes discussed by the participants. Participants talked about their sense of connection to the White/German heritage and the connection they feel to their Black identity, but also the disconnect they feel to both of those lines of heritage. The processes, which may be stressful at times, produced an intersectional identity that also influences the way they perceive and discuss all other themes of the model. The participants overcome the stress caused by the negotiation process and outside influences through internal positive coping strategies and positive core beliefs about themselves. In the microsystem of the individuals, they find supportive friends and family interactions, but also the strain of their parents' divorces. Participants tended to adopt supportive messages from parents and feel connected to other biracial friends as they integrate these aspects into their intersectional identity.

The mesosystem involves connections and interactions between contexts of the microsystem. The theme that captures such an interaction is Person-Environment Discrepancy. Participants discussed how the way they identify is perceived by other people in their environment that do not belong to their microsystem. The interactions the participants described were characterized by a discrepancy between the way the participants viewed themselves and the way they were viewed by others. In a sense, this represents an interaction between the way the individual perceives him or herself in the home environment and other environments the individuals find themselves in, like their neighborhood, their school, or the larger context of Berlin.

The macrosystem and chronosystem are intertwined in the HEMBAGI and consist of the overarching culture in which the individual lives including the current and past history of Germany and Berlin and sociocultural circumstances. This level of the model includes

experiences with racism, experiencing the larger environment of Berlin as multicultural and diverse, seeing progress and change in race relations and a familiarity and strong opinion about race-relations in the United States. Participants only adopt parts of the macro- and chronosystem as a part of their identity when it is congruent with intersectionality.   For example, they observe racism in their environment, but do not integrate it into their identity. On the contrary, they experience Berlin as a multicultural environment and integrate it into other aspects of their identity, like their German/White identity.

Discussion

The Essence of Biracial Afro-German Identity

Intersectionality was at the core of the experience of biracial Afro-German people who participated in this study. They felt like they represent an intersection in language, race, heritage, and culture. Their intersectionality related to all other components of their experience, how they perceived the world and how they perceived themselves. In this study, the intersectionality theme that emerged from the interviews was linked to all other themes, connects them, and provides the foundation for interpretation. Claiming an intersectional identity was the main strategy participants chose in negotiating and consolidating their racial and cultural heritages.

The idea and theoretical concept of intersectionality originated in women's studies and feminist thought. The term is typically used to capture the complexity of the intersection between two or more groups, roles, or identities in society. Women of color began to critique White feminists' use of women as "unitary and homogenous categories, reflecting the common essence of all women," when in fact, the intersection of race and gender create a new dimension and a different experience (McCall, 2005). Intersectionality further

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challenges the categories that are formed to capture reality, and the limitation of these categories, and thereby complements phenomenological philosophy and Critical Race Theory.

McCall (2005) outlines three possible ways to approach intersectionality. All three approaches challenge societal categories and attempt to account for the complexity of intersecting identities. Anticategorical complexity deconstructs analytical categories and finds them to be an oversimplification of reality. Intercategorical complexity provisionally adopts categories for the sake of analysis of social groups, conflicting dimensions of these groups, and aims at challenging the established categories. Lastly, intracategorical complexity acknowledges that categories and labels created by society are structurally stable but maintains a critical stance toward the use and meaning of socially constructed groups.

The way the participants described themselves in this study falls into intercatagorical complexity. They were aware of racial categories society has made for them, and could identify with these categories to some extent, which is evidenced by the fact they have developed a Black identity. However, participants also challenged these categories by presenting themselves to others with biracial labels and describing their experiences as biracial individuals. They experienced the world as a cultural and racial intersection. They saw themselves as more than the sum of the two lines of heritage that led to their existence.

The participants' intersectionality contributed to their choice and preference of diverse communities. They appreciated and felt most comfortable in situations where other cultures and races of people intersect. They were curious about cultures outside of their own and found pleasure in learning about them. This curiosity led them to not only appreciate

diversity, but long for it, and identify with those environments in a very special way (Multi Kulti).

The participants' opinions about society and culture as a whole were influenced by their intersectional identities. They discussed societal change and progress for Black people in Germany, but also for biracial people in Germany (Change and Progress). Often, participants did not make a distinction between progress for Black people and progress for biracial people. Application of the intercategorical approach to intersectionality leads to concluding that participants understood the categories made by society and feel that they belong to the category of "Black" (Black Identity), but also recognized that they belong to a sub group of this category that fights its own battle for acceptance and inclusion in mainstream German society.

Intersectionality also informed participants' views of American society and their experiences with it (American Familiarity). Many participants addressed the complexity of race issues and the deep historical background of race in America. While describing their experiences with U.S. culture, they also expressed their lack of understanding and tolerance for the categories that have been created and are enforced structurally (in documents) or informally (segregated seating in the cafeteria). Discomforts with these phenomena were essentially an expression of their intersectionality.

Uneasiness with these categories in American society translates to the participants' discomfort with categories in Germany. Despite their embrace of a Black identity, participants also felt disconnected from this monoracial community at times. In essence, "I'm Black, but not really" (Participant 8). Conversely, they identified with German culture, attribute "German characteristics" to themselves, and feel connected to the White heritage of

their family (White/German Identity), but many participants expressed strong hesitations to fully identify as German. During the interviews, uneasiness related to the question, "Do you identify as German?" was evidenced in questioning facial expressions and long pauses before giving a response that essentially meant, "yes and no" (Participant 1). This hesitation can be interpreted as the result of internalized discrimination. "Black people can't be German" is a message that was overtly or subtly communicated to the participants through innocent questions like "Where are you from?" (in a context where that question is not relevant), or comments like, "I know you have a German passport, but what else are you?." Internalizing the essence of these messages may be the source of hesitation to identify as German, despite feeling at home and clearly identifying with the culture.

Most participants felt comfortable identifying as a Berliner despite their lack of conviction in identifying as German. They saw Berlin as a multicultural city, a city that matched their intersectional identity. People from Berlin, regardless of race, have developed a unique identity. In some ways the Berlin identity is added on to the German character. Germans are typically characterized as orderly, punctual, hard-working, parsimonious, detail-oriented, bureaucratic, and strict. The Berlin identity adds a sense of open-mindedness, candidness, and an attitude that challenges the status quo. These components help Afro-German individuals express their Berlin identity with pride. The Berlin characteristics are more welcoming to who they are and other people that do not fit the "traditional" German mold.

Statements such as "Black people can't be German" were central to the racism and marginalization the participants experienced in Germany. The stories involving racism in Germany are cause for concern and should remain an issue requiring social action. Even

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though Germany has made efforts to address and eradicate racism institutionally (in schools for example), there is still a hesitation to address the topic openly. The word "race" in German has an uncomfortable ring to it because it was used forcefully by Nazi ideology before and during World War II, and continues to be emphasized by Neo-Nazi ideology to promote a "pure race society." Perhaps as a result of this discomfort with the word "race," German language has resorted to using "Ausländer" which is translated to foreigners. The softer and more careful language also undermines the seriousness of the racial tensions that exist in present-day German society. The stories such as those shared by participants in this study need to be brought into the consciousness of White Germans and policy makers, in order to prevent a false sense of progress regarding race-relations.

In addition to experiencing racism from White Germans, participants also described feeling discriminated against by monoracial Black people in Germany or during their experiences in the U.S. This form of marginalization may have been a key factor involved in the participants' comfort with biracial labels. Once again, the message that they do not belong to a group, has driven them to seek another way of identifying, without letting go of their cultural and racial affiliations.

Participants generally described feeling supported by their peers, parents, and the multicultural environment of Berlin (Environmental Support). Other Black-White biracial friends seemed to be an important source of support. The participants reported a deep sense of connection to other people who could relate directly to the way they identify, their experiences, and how they see their environment. Being with people of similar racial make-up seems to affirm their intersectionality and give them confidence. Parents were reported to be another strong source of support. In the case of the participants in this study most of the

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support came from the participants' mothers. This is most likely because the fathers were absent or limited in their presence. Participants felt that they could turn to their mothers in times of need, or in situations where they felt discriminated against. Parents made clear attempts to send messages to prepare their children for bias. They were also instrumental in communicating one of the central coping thought patterns: the notion that being biracial is special and unique in a desirable way.

Despite the general emotional support the participants experienced, most of them said that there was not enough dialog in their household about race. Parents prepared their children for bias, but did not go into detail about what race means for the child or what race meant to the parent. In response to the question, "Do you have any advice for parents of biracial children?" participants expressed that parents should address the topic more often, even if it may be uncomfortable, especially for White mothers.

In spite of the support participants felt at home, the majority of the parental relationships are no longer intact (Injured Family). As a consequence, many participants reported having limited contact with their fathers or reported strained relationships with them. Associated with this unfortunate family dynamic is an additional stigmatization the participants discussed. Many grew up being stereotyped as not having a father. This added to the environmental stressors they experienced, whether or not their father was present.

The participants' intersectionality was biologically expressed with racially ambiguous features. Often, this led to environmental reactions and questions that were stressful for them (Person-Environment Discrepancy). They were often not acknowledged as "real Germans," or not even acknowledged as Black because of their features. Some participants shared stories of interactions with other people where "They think I'm Latina" (Participants 2 and

8). Once again, intersectionality was the cornerstone of the way they experienced this situation and was closely tied to their coping strategies relevant to such (Positive Coping). As a reaction to these "attacks" on the way they identify, they internalized the idea that they are special and unique, and that those attributes are desirable and envied by others. Initiated with cautionary statements to not sound arrogant, many participants shared that their intersectionality makes them "more interesting" (Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, and 12) than monoracial people and that other people would benefit from their perspective. These internalized positive messages were one of the main strategies participants used to cope with feeling marginalized.

Culture and Nationality

During the analysis of the statements the participants made, it was often not possible to distinguish between culture and nationality, and nationality and race. As already described, some participants have internalized the idea that Black people cannot be German. In this case, German culture is linked to being White. In addition, participants named examples of American culture that seemed to focus mainly on components most relevant to Black American culture. Most participants did not make a distinction between mainstream American culture and Black American culture. At the same time, many participants explained that their Black heritage was either affiliated with American culture or African culture by others, which is rooted in the historical context of Black people in Germany. Participants are exposed to messages communicating that being Black also means being American; being Black also means being African, with the former being the most common assumption. Being Black never means being German.

Culture and nationality also play an interesting role when comparing groups of participants. In the absence of a Black father in the home or a relatively weak paternal connection, differences were observed between participants with African fathers and participants with African American fathers. For the participants with African American fathers, their Black identity included components of cultural identification with African American culture. They read African American literature, listened to music of African Americans, and generally chose aspects of this culture to identify with. The participants who had African fathers have developed a strong Black identity, mostly focused on their experiences of being Black in Germany. However, of the five participants with fathers from African countries, only Participant 1 expressed a strong connection to his Nigerian heritage and practicing Nigerian traditions. Participant 1's experience is also slightly different from most participants with African fathers, as his parents were divorced recently as opposed to earlier in his life.

A possible explanation of the phenomenon of lacking African cultural ties may be that African American culture is more readily accessible in Germany than African culture. Through media, African American culture has become very visible in German society compared to the culture of African countries. As a consequence, despite the fact that most participants report a lack of connection with their fathers, participants with African fathers focused their Black identity on the experience of being Black in Germany, while participants with African American fathers have created ties with African American culture, and have chosen certain aspects of the culture they identify with in addition to their Black German experiences.

Lack of Appropriate Language

Some participants discussed how the German language does not yet provide a term they can use to identify with. The lack of appropriate language in German for this intersectional state, forces participants to accept the antiquated terms such as "Mulatte" or "Mischling" which can roughly be translated as "mutt." The terms reflect a time when the existence of Black-White biracial people in Germany was studied like the existence of animals. Some participants express hesitation to use these terms. For example, Participant 6 says, "I don't like to say Mischling, but what else should I say?" Others say that the term may have been a type of insult in the past, but that they do not receive it that way when other people use the term. They recognize that there is no other word to express their biracialism adequately without using the historically charged term for "race" in German, or the antiquated terms typically used for animals.

Even though most participants do not offer "Afro-German" as the first label, when they are asked how they identify, most feel comfortable with it. Others find it relies too heavily on African American counterparts. In reality, the term was originally created as a label for Black-White biracial individuals. It was an empowering term because it was the first term chosen by an Afro-German, May Ayim. Today, the term is defined as a descriptor for Black-White biracial individuals, but this definition of the word is somewhat flawed. "Afro" was intended to capture the Black heritage of the person (African American or African), while "German" was intended to capture the "White" heritage (Massingue, 2005). In essence, this definition of the term affirms one of the sources of marginalization and stress the participants are experiencing: Black and biracial people can't be German.

There has been little social, political, and psychological work conducted in this area since the height of the Afro-German movement in the late 1990's. Terms that were chosen then, and were certainly a source of empowerment, should be revisited and reevaluated. Perhaps a new term is not necessary, but the definition of the term should not add to the stereotyped message that causes this population distress, even if it is subtle. It is possible that a redefinition of the term Afro-German could help raise awareness about the issue and further the movement of acceptance and inclusion for biracial Afro-Germans. A possible alternative definition of the term Afro-German could be "people of African descent living in Germany." If this is acceptable, Afro-German becomes a monoracial label, similar to African American. What can biracial Afro-Germans use to indicate their biracialism? Perhaps capturing culture is more essential in the Afro-German experience than race. Hence a term that is translated as bicultural Afro-German (bi-kulturelle Afrodeutsche/bi-kultureller Afrodeutscher) may be a new way for these individuals to see themselves. Certainly, this suggestion affords more intense exploration and more dialogue.

Future Directions

Some questions raised in this study could not be answered and deserve increased attention and exploration. As outlined in the literature review, the paucity of research concerning biracial socialization processes is alarming. Parents of biracial children are encouraged to facilitate dialogue around race, culture and the intersection of the two. Unfortunately, resources to help negotiate this process neglect important aspects. In American and German contexts, the issue of raising a biracial child should also be understood as raising a bicultural child. This involves teaching and communicating both sides of the child's heritage, but also supporting the child in the somewhat stressful process

of negotiation and consolidation of the two. The most effective tool parents of the participants in this study used, was to explain and emphasize the benefits of being biracial and not simply highlighting traditional Black racial socialization messages such as preparation for bias. However, participants also reported that race was not talked about enough in their homes. Their impressions affirm the need for more dialogue on family and community levels.

The interviews with the participants may also provide support for clinical implications. Issues of race and color may have complicated the process of identity development in a context where specific races are associated with corresponding culture. Clinicians that are supporting biracial individuals in their struggle to identify may offer help by focusing on cultural identity, while still acknowledging the socially constructed concept of race. For example, the Afro-German participants in this study may find relief in focusing on the areas of German culture they can identify with and areas of African American or African culture they can identify with. Issues of race become important because society has given race importance. For the individual's identity, cultural identification may be more important.

This study also found support that biracial individuals in Germany experience their environment through an intersectional lens. Even though this study made no direct comparisons between monoracial Black people and the participants of this study, there is some evidence that Black-White biracial individuals engage in different processes from their monoracial peers when identifying themselves, or evaluating and interacting with their environment. More research is needed to account for their experiences, particularly racial

socialization messages and processes. Assumptions that biracial individuals can be viewed as monoracial must continue to be challenged.

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Vita

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