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Microaggressions Within Families: Experiences of Multiracial People

This study illustrates the types of multiracial microaggressions, or subtle forms of discrimination toward multiracial people, that transpire in family settings. Utilizing a Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) Method and a Qualitative Secondary Analysis (QSA), multiracial participants (N = 9) were interviewed in three focus groups to describe the types of microaggressions they encounter in their families. Five domains emerged including (a) isolation within the family, (b) favoritism within the family, (c) questioning of authenticity, (d) denial of multiracial identity and experiences by monoracial family members, and (e) feelings about not learning about family heritage or culture. We discuss how encouraging discussions of race and ethnicity in multiracial families is conducive to promoting healthier identities and well-being for multiracial people.

Some authors have argued that overt racism has decreased in U.S. society and that covert forms of racial discrimination are more prevalent; so although blatant racism (e.g., hate crimes and racial slurs) still exists, such experiences may be less pervasive on an everyday basis (see Sue, 2010, for a review). In recent years, there has been an increase in literature involving racial microaggressions, or ''brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color'' (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). Microaggressions can manifest in many types of situations and between many different parties; they can also range in their subtlety as well as the intentionality of the enactor. For example, when conversing with an Asian American, a White individual may state, ''You speak English very well.'' Although the statement may have been meant to be taken as a compliment, the Asian American who hears such a statement may feel insulted or hurt, particularly if she or he interprets that the White individual stereotyped that she or he would be a foreigner, that English would not be her or his native language, or that she or he was expected to speak improperly or informally. The statement is also subtle in that the enactor did not mention race in her or his ''compliment'' and because the statement was short and nondirect. The statement may, however, potentially cause the recipient psychological distress, thus classifying it as a microaggression.

Some microaggressions may be more conscious or subconscious in nature. For example, when a Latino man is followed around by a White store clerk or when a White woman clutches onto her purse as an African American walks onto an elevator with her, the enactor may be aware or unaware of her or his actions, and she or he may be aware or unaware of the impact

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such behavior would have on the recipients. Some perpetrators may potentially be aware of their behavior but might justify that their behavior is warranted because of past experiences or stereotypes that they have learned about certain groups. Others may be aware of their behavior but rationalize that they act similarly around people of all races (e.g., the aforementioned White woman may claim she clutches her purse when anyone walks onto an elevator with her).

Whether intentional or unintentional, microaggressions are associated with harmful effects on the recipients. Whereas previous literature has supported that perceived racial discrimination negatively affects one's mental and physical health (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Harrell, Hall, & Taliaferro, 2003; Santana, Almeida-Filho, Roberts, & Cooper, 2007; Steffen & Bowden, 2006), more recent studies focusing specifically on racial microaggressions have supported that people of color experience a great amount of psychological distress in reaction to the accumulation of microaggressions in their lives (see Nadal, 2011, for a review). For example, studies involving African Americans (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino, & Rivera, 2008), Asian Americans (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009), Latino or Latina Americans (Rivera, Forquer, & Rangel, 2010), students of color (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009), and people of color in general (Nadal, 2011) report the types of racial microaggressions that individuals experience as well as the negative influences these incidents have on their mental health and well-being.

One critique of the literature involving racial microaggressions is that it fails to recognize the experiences of multiracial people (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). According to Root (1995), ''multiracial'' is a descriptor for an individual whose heritage consists of two or more distinct racial groups (e.g., an individual who is Black and White; an individual who is Asian and Latino; or an individual who is Black, White, and Native American). ''Multiracial'' is also often used as an umbrella term for individuals who identify specifically as biracial or those with two distinctive racial groups. It is also used to include individuals who are biethnic, in that they identify with two different ethnic groups

(e.g., Filipino and Italian), or multiethnic, in that they identify with more than two distinct ethnic groups (e.g., Chinese, Jamaican, and Puerto Rican). Throughout this article, ''multiracial'' is used to describe individuals within the umbrella group; other terms will be utilized when we are specifically referring to one of the aforementioned subgroups.

Although there have been some studies that have reported multiracial people's experiences with blatant racism (Root, 1990, 1998; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsicker, 2009) as well as multiracial people's feelings of exclusion and isolation from their peers and communities (Brown, 1995; Gaskins, 1999; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995), there has been a dearth of literature focusing on multiracial persons' experiences with racial microaggressions. Perhaps one reason for this is because multiracial people possess a spectrum of phenotypic appearances (e.g., different skin colors, facial features, and hair textures), which may result in an array of perceptions, experiences, or stereotypes by others. For example, a multiracial individual who is Asian and White may encounter different types of racial discrimination than an individual who is Asian and Black. Thus, multiracial people may be victims of microaggressions based on their perceived racial heritage, their actual multiracial heritage, or both.

Johnston and Nadal (2010) proposed a theoretical taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions, which is defined as ''microaggressions based on multiracial status, which send hostile, derogatory, or negative messages toward multiracial persons'' (p. 132). Furthermore, they argued that multiracial microaggressions ''involve individuals' mixed-heritage status and are experienced by multiracial persons of any racial makeup or phenotype'' (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 126). Derived from both empirical studies and nonfiction literature involving multiracial people, the taxonomy described five major categories of microaggressions that multiracial people experience. These include:

1. Exclusion or isolation: microaggressions that occur when a multiracial or multiethnic person is made to feel excluded or isolated based on their mixed race.
2. Exoticization and objectification: microaggressions that occur when a multiracial or multiethnic person is made to feel dehumanized or treated like an object.

3. Assumption of monoracial or mistaken identity: microaggressions that occur when a multiracial or multiethnic person is assumed or mistaken to be monoracial or a different racial group.
4. Denial of multiracial reality: microaggressions that occur when a multiracial or multiethnic person's experiences are invalidated by monoracial people.
5. Pathologizing of identity and experiences: microaggressions that occur when a multiracial or multiethnic person's identity or experiences are viewed as psychologically abnormal.

The model was further extended by Nadal, Wong, Griffin, et al. (2011), who used a directed content analysis (DCA) focus group approach, which is often used to extend and validate an existing theory or model (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Five domains from Johnston and Nadal (2010) were extracted, and one new domain emerged. The first domain, *exclusion or isolation*, was exemplified by multiracial participants who shared that they have been told that they were not ''really Black'' or ''really Asian'' enough as well as participants who shared that they were often forced to ''choose'' one of their racial or ethnic heritages over the other. The second domain, *exoticization and objectification*, was demonstrated by participants who discussed that they were constantly being asked ''What mix are you?'' or ''What are you?'' Participants revealed that such experiences made them feel like their race was always put on display. Participants also discussed instances where individuals only wanted to date them because of their ''exotic'' looks. The third domain, *assumption of monoracial or mistaken identity*, emerged through participants who described how oftentimes people would speak to them in different languages (particularly languages that were not related to their heritage), whereas others shared how a monoracial individual would make racist or stereotypical jokes, not knowing that they were multiracial and identified with the targeted race or heritage. The fourth domain, *denial of multiracial reality*, was exemplified by participants who shared they were often told by others to ''get over it'' and to not think about race so much. The fifth domain, *pathologizing of identity and experiences*, was demonstrated by participants who shared that they are often ''told they are crazy'' when they describe their

racial heritage or that they felt judged when they told others about how their parents met or about their family backgrounds. Finally, a sixth domain that emerged, *microaggressions based on stereotypes*, described the types of microaggressions that both monoracial people of color and multiracial people experience based on people's prejudices and biases toward specific racial groups. For example, multiracial participants who were of African American heritage described being treated like a criminal or an intellectual inferior, and multiracial participants who were of Asian heritage shared how they were assumed to be foreigners or good at math and science. Through a quantitative method, Nadal, Wong, Griffin, et al. (2011) also found that multiracial people and monoracial people of color (i.e., monoracial African Americans, monoracial Latino Americans, and monoracial Asian Americans) both report significantly more experiences with microaggressions than monoracial White Americans. It was also found, however, that there was no significant difference between the amount of microaggressions reported between monoracial people of color and multiracial people, thus supporting that multiracial people experience a similar amount of racial microaggressions as monoracial people of color.

Nadal, Wong, Griffin, et al. (2011) cited that one of the unique qualities of racial microaggressions toward multiracial people was that many participants reported numerous microaggressions that manifested within their families. This finding is similar to reports in previous literature, which described the types of discrimination that multiracial people may feel in their families. Nishimura (1998) examined multiracial students' experiences of growing up with families that negated race as an issue (e.g., being told ''color doesn't matter'' or ignoring that racism existed); however, participants reported that their families' avoidance of racial topics was unrealistic and harmful, because ''race was an ever-present issue'' (p. 48). Similarly, Root (1998) found that multiracial people often report feeling isolated not only in their communities and by their peers but also by their family members. Such experiences may lead to feelings of disapproval and loneliness, which may also have an impact on their self-esteem and well-being. Johnston and Nadal (2010) also described how microaggressions that occur toward multiracial family members may be commonplace because of the idea

that hierarchies are created in families based on numerous factors, including whether one is monoracial or multiracial, one skin's color, and other race-related factors. Despite these few studies, there is a dearth in literature that explores the impact of microaggressions that occur within families, particularly within multiracial families. Thus, the purpose of this article was to examine the types of microaggressions that multiracial people may experience within their families, specifically from their monoracial family members.

METHOD

A qualitative study was employed to examine the experiences of microaggressions in multiethnic or multiracial families. Researchers conducted a qualitative secondary analysis (QSA) of the data set used in Nadal, Wong, Griffin, et al. (2011). The original study initially examined microaggressions experienced by multiracial people in all aspects of their lives. Because the investigators were interested in specifically examining microaggressions involving family members, however, the same data set was analyzed, but with a different set of research questions:

1. What types of microaggressions do multiracial individuals experience in their families?
2. How do multiracial individuals react to the microaggressions that they experience within their families?

For the purpose of this research project, we conceptualized ''family'' as including both nuclear or extended family.

Participants

There were three focus groups, with a total of nine participants. Focus groups were utilized instead of individual interviews so that participants would have the opportunities to collectively discuss their experiences and encourage each other to recall a spectrum of microaggression examples. All participants self-identified as ''multiracial'' or ''multiethnic.'' There were eight women and one man. Four participants identified their racial/ethnic heritage as Asian/White, three identified as Black/White, one identified as Black/Latina, and one identified as Black/Latina/White. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 34 years with a mean age of

25 ($SD = 6.04$). Four participants were undergraduate students, two were graduate students, and three were working professionals.

Researchers

The current team of data analysts was comprised of one full-time assistant professor of psychology and four graduate students. The research team included one Asian male, two Asian females, and two White females; all identified as monoracial, although one identified as multiethnic. Three of the analysts were part of the original study. The principal investigator (PI) of this study has been involved in qualitative research for more than 11 years. The research team was thoroughly trained by the PI on Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) and DCA methods before analyzing the transcripts. Prior to the analysis stage, the research team convened to discuss their assumptions, potential biases, expectation of outcomes, and how our monoracial identities would impact data analysis. One of these expectations was that we presumed that there would be many types of microaggressions based on our perceptions of multiracial people's experiences in our own families; a bias was that we believed that most multiracial people would be able to articulate their experiences with microaggressions based on our previous microaggression research with other groups. The purpose of this discussion was to comply with the standard of practice in qualitative research by minimizing researcher biases that can occur through all stages of the methodology and analysis (C. E. Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997).

Recruitment

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval from the researchers' home institution, participants were recruited through introductory psychology classes and through the general community to participate in focus groups. Students recruited through introductory psychology classes from a large public college in the northeastern United States were given research credit for their participation. Community recruitment involved sending, via e-mail, calls for participation to various multiracial organizations (e.g., multiracial college student groups and professional networks) as well as posting links on social network sites (e.g., facebook.com,

meetup.com). A snowball sampling method was employed by encouraging participants to advertise the study to organizations that matched the participant criteria.

Measures

In the previous study for which the data was originally collected, participants completed an open-ended demographic form asking them to identify their age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, occupation, the highest educational level completed, place of birth, and years spent in the United States. All focus groups followed a semistructured interview guide designed by the research team. The interview guide consisted of 12 open-ended questions and subsequent probing questions that were modified from previous studies on microaggressions (Capodilupo et al., 2010; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009). For example, one question asked the participants to ''describe a circumstance in which someone's behavior made you feel uncomfortable, hurt, or devalued because of your mixed race. Describe the scenario as best as you can.'' This question was followed with addition probing questions such as, ''How did you feel after the event?'' ''How did you react in this situation?'' and ''What do you perceive was the message that was being conveyed to you?'' There were no specific questions that focused on experiences within one's family.

Procedure

A team of three research team members, one facilitator and two observers (each of various monoracial backgrounds), participated in each of the three focus groups held in a private room at the researchers' home institution in the northeastern United States between January and June, 2010. Each participant completed a consent form and demographic form prior to the start of the focus group. In addition, participants were informed about audiorecording, confidentiality, and the option to cease participation at any time and that their responses might be analyzed for numerous studies involving microaggressions. They were also given a list of counseling resources in case they experienced any distress or discomfort as a result of their participation. Each focus group session lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and there were no time constraints

in answering questions. The facilitator led the focus group discussions while the observers took notes of the participants' verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., head nods, smiling) and group dynamics (e.g., disagreements, forming alliances). At the end of each session, the facilitator and observers convened to discuss their perceptions, reactions, and notes from the session, especially any nonverbal communication and group dynamics that were present. All recordings of focus groups were transcribed verbatim by the research team. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, only the first initial was used in the transcript. The original audio files were stored securely on the principal investigator's computer, and all other copies were destroyed.

The current study consisted of a QSA, which meant that the qualitative data had been previously analyzed in Nadal, Wong, Griffin, et al.'s (2011) original study focusing on multiracial microaggressions. Gladstone, Volpe, and Boydell (2007) described QSA as being an acceptable and productive practice because it permits researchers to ask new questions of previous data while expanding on existing phenomena. Heaton (2008) said that as long as researchers are cognizant of limitations of secondary analysis (e.g., avoidance of ''reusing'' previous data), the method can be effective in answering new research questions. For the current study, the research team analyzed three multiracial focus group transcripts using the guidelines of consensual qualitative research (C. E. Hill et al., 1997; D. B. Hill & Willoughby, 2005).

Using the CQR method, reliability is increased, because the method employs a ''checks and balances'' approach in which all analysts are expected to consensually agree on the data analysis. The three general steps to CQR are to (a) elicit responses to open-ended questions from questionnaires or interviews for each individual case, which are then divided into domains (i.e., topic areas); (b) identify core ideas (i.e., abstract or brief summaries) for all the material within each domain for each individual case; and (c) to utilize a cross analysis through the development of categories (or themes) to describe consistencies in the core ideas within domains across cases (C. E. Hill et al., 1997). This method was specifically chosen because (a) it did not extend a theory or model as the original study did (i.e., which would support the

use of a DCA) and (b) it allowed the researchers to independently conceptualize new domains and themes to understand the data with the new set of research questions.

Each member of the research team read all three transcripts individually and convened to create an initial list of five domains. These domains included (a) isolation within the family, (b) favoritism within the family, (c) questioning of authenticity, (d) denial of multiracial identity and experiences by monoracial family members, and (e) feelings about not learning about family heritage or culture. Each researcher then worked independently to group each microaggression statement under each domain. Upon completion, they reconvened to discuss and compare codes and notes as well as to identify specific themes that might fit under each domain. If a discrepancy arose, the team thoroughly discussed the item until they agreed it was or was not appropriate for the domain or theme. For a domain to be considered salient, it had to be endorsed with at least three different examples and it had to be pervasive across all three focus groups. The team also created an underdeveloped domain, which consisted of themes that were endorsed with less than three examples. The research team then compiled a master document with domains, themes, and examples for an external auditor. The external auditor is a professor of psychology and an expert on both microaggression and multiracial research. According to C. E. Hill et al. (1997), an auditor can be beneficial in minimizing bias in qualitative research because group conformity and researchers' individual biases can influence the data. Thus, having an individual who reviews the data independently from the team can be helpful in providing additional insight and expertise. After reviewing the team's notes, the auditor provided thorough feedback and suggestions for the research team via e-mail. One of the main pieces of feedback was to ensure that each domain consisted of examples that were not previously used in the original study. The research team agreed with the auditor's feedback and created a final document with original examples that best illustrated each domain, which was then approved by the auditor.

RESULTS

An investigation of three focus groups revealed five themes regarding microaggressions that may occur within multiracial families: (a) isolation within the family, (b) favoritism within the family, (c) questioning of authenticity, (d) denial of multiracial identity and experiences by monoracial family members, and (e) feelings about not learning about family heritage or culture. There was also one underdeveloped domain, which consisted of two underdeveloped themes. Changes to identifying information were made, when necessary, to protect the identities of the participants and their families.

Domain 1: Isolation Within the Family

The first theme was endorsed by all participants and comprised participants' difficulties with feeling isolated within their families or distant to particular family members because of their multiracial identities. Specifically, many participants spoke about how they felt like they ''didn't fit in'' with their extended family—particularly with their monoracial family members. One participant explained, ''It's constantly like moving from one place to the next and not ever really fitting in to any particular thing.'' Another participant shared a similar experience of how she feeling secluded within her nuclear family because of her multiracial identity:

> Growing up I definitely felt like there wasn't any place to kind of talk about this and question things, even within my family because, again, you know, my White mom from Scotland and, you know, my Black dad from Guyana, just they didn't quite grasp maybe what I was going through, and neither did I at the time. . . . I definitely think it impacted my experience growing up.

One Asian/White participant discussed how witnessing racist actions by her White family members made her question her own place in the family:

> I was like in shock. I had known all these people my entire life pretty much, but seeing the way they were treating my dad's [non-White] partner, it was just very bizarre to me. It's not that they were being overtly racist, but they would either not speak to her or speak to her condescendingly. I just really didn't know where I fit in because I didn't feel that I was being discriminated against but I could see how much [discomfort] they were causing her and it was just a very bizarre experience.

Participants shared sentiments from previous studies (e.g., Nishimura, 1998; Root, 1998), which stated that it was a common experience for multiracial people to feel isolated from

family members and to feel different from their monoracial family members.

Domain 2: Favoritism Within the Family

The second domain was endorsed by the majority of the participants across all three focus groups and involves participants' perceptions of favoritism within their family due to race. One participant described how her grandfather mistreated her and favored her less than her cousins who were light-skinned or monoracial. She shared:

> It actually really did bother me. . . . When I was sixteen, I was like [an] angry little girl . . . mostly because of my grandfather. . . . Like, as I got older, it was really starting to bother me. I guess if [I experienced discrimination from] someone on the street or like just a random person, it probably wouldn't bother me. But I was like for these years, this is my grandfather, it's like I can't [understand his behavior]. Knowing I love my family, love my friends, but like . . . how can you treat me like that? It's . . . I think it's bad. I think I was really mad, like really, really angry.

This participant even described how this experience of being less favored became a pervasive issue in her life, even leading her to seek counseling to deal with these feelings of inadequacy, anger, and hurt.

Some participants shared how they were treated more favorably by family members and how it also caused distress. For instance, one Black/White female participant explained that she and her sister were treated differently by their grandmother:

> I know that my sister used to get a lot of shit from my White grandmother. Even though my skin was darker, I had straight hair, I had the White features and I behaved the way a White girl should behave, and so my grandmother always favored me and was much nicer to me and horrible to my sister. That's my whole hang up [about being a] biracial person. You know, it feels like you're getting special privileges; you know you should be nice, but like it just causes much more friction with everybody you know all around.

Through these two examples, it is evident that multiracial people can feel distress when they are less favored than other family members but even when they are favored over other family members too. These examples also demonstrate that the issue of colorism is evident in multiracial families, which has been discussed in previous literature about monoracial families of color (see Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010).

Domain 3: Questioning of Authenticity

The third theme was endorsed across all three focus groups and consists of multiracial participants' having their authenticity as being a family member actively questioned by monoracial family members. Whereas the first domain involves feelings of isolation, this domain includes instances where family members actively or consciously question and exclude them, specifically at family functions where their phenotype may differentiate them from the rest of the family. For example, one Asian/White participant shared how she is treated when she is with her White family members. She states:

> For instance, [at] my grandfather's funeral last year. It was like [everyone would say] ''Oh, how are you? Why are you here?'' Because everyone is White and . . . my mom and I were the only non-White people, . . . so we definitely stood out.

Another female participant cited similar encounters, sharing how she feels excluded from the rest of her family: ''I can definitely relate to sort of those incredibly awkward moments with family, where they're just like, 'What are you?' you know and I'm like, 'I'm your family.'''

A Filipino/White participant shared how she felt judged and excluded because she did not speak the same language as her monoracial family members in the Philippines.

> They questioned . . . ''Why can we go to your country and we can speak English and when you come here and you can't speak our language?'' I don't know if that had anything to do with me. Well I'm sure it had something to do with me being White and from America.

Participants across all focus groups shared that they felt that they were questioned, whereas their other monoracial family members were not, with some even sharing that they had to ''prove'' that they were part of the family.

Domain 4: Denial of Multiracial Identity and Experiences by Monoracial Family Members

The fourth theme emerged across all three groups and described participants' reports that monoracial family members denied their experiences of microaggressions or denied

that participants could claim a multiracial identity. For example, one Black/White female participant described how she felt discriminated against when vacationing with her White husband and his family. She shared that her husband and her in-laws did not even notice the rude and intrusive stares she received in a predominantly White location. She said:

> I ended up completely losing it. I was in the bathroom by myself, bawling. I come out of the bathroom and I had composed myself and I ended [up] telling my husband about it and I lost it again. His whole family was like, ''What's wrong with her?'' I couldn't even begin to explain it to them. I don't even know how it was understood. I think my husband maybe kind of scooted the issue.

The participant felt a lack of support by her husband and her in-laws, which left her to feel upset and alone. She identified this experience as a microaggression because no one, including her husband, validated her experiences or supported her in how she was feeling. This experience is similar to an Asian/White female participant who reported that her mother laughed at her when she described a microaggressive experience. Similarly, this participant reported feeling isolated and alone.

Domain 5: Feelings About Not Learning About Family Heritage or Culture

Although not a type of microaggression, an emerging domain that was pervasive among most participants across all three focus groups was a sense of regret and sadness about not learning more about their family cultures. This led some participants to feel insecure about identifying with the racial group whose experiences or cultures with which they were less familiar. One Caribbean/White participant shared:

> My Black family is from the Caribbean . . . and I didn't spend [a lot of time with them]. I always wished that I'd [had experiences] like [in] most other West Indian families that I know. A lot of times they go to nursing school in the Caribbean . . . but . . . I just didn't get sent back and I just wasn't exposed to the Grenadian culture.

Another Asian/White participant stated that she wished she knew more about her Chinese and Japanese heritage:

> I would feel sometimes like I was a disappointment. I wish that I kinda knew about each. I feel

like I really was screwed. It has to do with the fact that my great grandparents and uncles died when I was very young and my grandparents didn't know a lot about [cultural practices] so . . . you know less and less was passed down so I just don't feel like I have a strong root in that.

Domain 6: Underdeveloped Themes

Underdeveloped theme 1: ''Recruitment'' by monoracial family members. One theme that was reported by a few participants (but not across all focus groups) was that some monoracial family members would try to influence participants to favor or engage in the cultural practices of one race over the other. For example, one female participant, who is Asian and White, was discouraged from participating in White culture: ''When [I was] little in Hawaii, my grandpa told me not to grow up too *haole*- which means White in Hawaiian. So like, he enrolled me in hula lessons and all of that.'' Similarly, a participant who identifies as Black and Hispanic shared how her Black mother disapproved of her many Hispanic friendships:

> I just have friends of all ethnicities. It just seems that most of my friends are Hispanic and it just bothers me that people say something. My mom, she'll be like, ''How come you don't [hang out] with more Black people? You don't even speak Spanish!'' But what can I do? You know?

These participants resented that others would try to exert influence in this manner and would take away their right to choose their own identities and social circles.

Underdeveloped theme 2: Objectification. Some participants also felt that some monoracial relatives were preoccupied with their physical attributes because of their multiracial phenotypes. One Black/White female participant said, ''I also remember being with my cousins in Trinidad and them admiring my hair because my hair was so silky,'' while another Black/White female participant, said, ''My White aunt is always kinda commenting on physically what I look like a lot and I don't know if she would be doing that if I was White . . . but it's always like, 'Wow, look at you! Oh wow!''' Participants were made uncomfortable by having their multiracial appearance take precedence in conversations and be the focus of attention in their families.

DISCUSSION

The current study described the various ways that multiracial people experience microaggressions within their families. Whereas the original study by Nadal, Wong, Griffin, et al. (2011) described the microaggressions these participants experience in their everyday lives, participants were able to reveal an array of examples of microaggressions enacted by their monoracial family members. Many of the types of within-family microaggressions that they experienced were similar to those microaggressions they encountered in their everyday lives. For example, in the original study, participants were able to share how they felt isolated from their monoracial peers at school, at work, and in the community, often feeling forced to choose one of their racial or ethnic identities; in this current study, participants shared comparable examples in which family members made them feel isolated or questioned their identities. Many participants reported that they felt especially hurt when they experienced microaggressions from their own family members. For example, one aforementioned participant discussed how she felt less favored by her grandfather, which eventually had a negative impact on her mental health. Perhaps future research could examine if experiencing microaggressions from other family members may influence mental health and other variables in ways that are different from experiencing microaggressions from strangers, acquaintances, or friends.

The study is unique in that previous literature involving racial microaggressions with monoracial people of color (e.g., Nadal, 2011; Rivera et al., 2010; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2008; Sue, Lin, et al., 2009; Sue, Nadal, et al., 2008; Torres et al., 2010; Yosso et al., 2009) fails to describe an array of microaggressions that may occur within families. Although the previous literature on colorism (see Burton et al., 2010) supports that within-family discrimination is likely to occur within monoracial families, when asked about microaggressions, participants in these aforementioned studies primarily described incidents that occurred in the workplace, in school settings, and in public settings. On the other hand, when multiracial people were asked the same types of questions involving microaggressions, they were able to report a multitude of experiences that transpired within their families in addition to other settings in their lives. Thus,

it is possible that racial microaggressions that occur within families may either (a) be more pervasive in the lives of multiracial people or (b) have more of a salient or significant influence on multiracial people's mental health and identity.

The types of within-family microaggressions mentioned in the current study also match the types of within-family microaggressions described in microaggression studies involving women (Capodilupo et al., 2010) and lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) participants (Nadal, Wong, Issa, et al., 2011). Individuals' reactions to these within-family microaggressions appear to vary, however. For example, female participants may report within-family gender microaggressions to be subtle because of their male family members' lack of awareness of their sexist biases (Capodilupo et al., 2010); meanwhile LGB participants may report within-family sexual orientation microaggressions to often be more overt while also feeling more isolated because they are often the only LGB individual in their family (Nadal, Wong, Issa, et al., 2011). The results of this study indicate some similar experiences for multiracial and multiethnic people. Similar to gender microaggressions, multiracial microaggressions may be more covert because monoracial family members may not be aware of their monoracist biases. Meanwhile, similar to persons experiencing sexual orientation microaggressions, multiracial individuals may feel isolated, particularly if they do not have any siblings or other multiracial people in their families.

There are many implications that this study has for family relations and family dynamics. First, results indicate that it is necessary for parents of multiracial children to take the necessary precautions to promote healthy multiracial identities with their children. Perhaps having discussions about race and ethnicity, while preventing favoritism and isolation, may lead to a healthier sense of self as well as a more developed multiracial or multiethnic identity for these children. This finding is similar to that in a study by Edou (2010), who found that parents of multiracial children who focus on their child's relationship with their extended family and grandparents can help prepare them for interacting with the outside world. Providing such a proactive and supportive interaction can reaffirm the child's multiracial or multiethnic identity. Second, findings from this study support that it is important for

multiracial families to address issues of race and ethnicity instead of ignoring them or being avoidant of such topics. This idea aligns with Nishimura (1998), who revealed that multiracial participants reported race issues to be inevitable and expressed a need for racial differences to be addressed, while also supporting Adams (1997), who found that the level of family support of a child's multiraciality can be connected to the child's level of self-esteem. Finally, applying some of the previous literature involving coping with microaggressions can be helpful in family contexts. For example, Nadal, Hamit, and Issa (2010) described the ways that microaggressions can be prevented or dealt with, citing the importance of (a) talking about microaggressions openly when they occur, (b) educating others about the term ''microaggressions'' so that individuals are aware that discrimination exists in even subtle forms, and (c) being a support for victims of microaggressions, particularly by validating individuals' experiences. If parents and other family members are cognizant of the negative influences of microaggressions on the lives of their children, perhaps they can be support systems when their children experience them while also preventing other family members from being perpetrators of microaggressions themselves.

Limitations

As with any study, there are some limitations that need to be considered. One of the most pressing concerns is that the study consists of a QSA of data. Although QSA has been widely used as an acceptable form of qualitative research (Gladstone et al., 2007; Heaton, 2008), the method needs to be followed rigorously in order to avoid any bias or corruption of the data. Thus, the researchers took the most precaution in ensuring that each step of the CQR method was followed exactly while also making certain that there were no data in the original study that was repeated or restated in the current study. Another limitation was that the data were originally used to ask about microaggressions in general and not specifically about microaggressions within families; thus, perhaps a study that focused only on the within-family microaggressions would have yielded more favorable results. Another limitation was that the sample size was small ($N = 9$) and may not be generalizable to the broad population of multiracial people.

Further, although focus groups were utilized to allow participants to recall experiences that were similar to others' responses, participants' answers may have been influenced by group dynamics that would have been avoided with individual interviews. A final limitation was that many of the participants were involved in some sort of cultural or multiracial organization and perhaps would be more cognizant of microaggressions than those who were not.

Future Research Directions

Future researchers may utilize quantitative methods to examine the impact of within-family microaggressions on mental health and well-being. Such methods may also measure potential differences between microaggressions that are based on race versus those based on ethnicity. For example, many participants described being discriminated against in their family because of their skin color or hair texture (which would be considered a racial microaggression), whereas some described being discriminated against because of their lack of knowledge of language (which could be considered more an ethnic microaggression). Finally, the participants in this study all identified as biracial or multiracial, which means that their parents were both of different racial and ethnic groups. Perhaps further research can examine experiences of multiethnic people who are of the same race. For example, one may investigate the types of microaggressions that are experienced by individuals who are of Dominican and Puerto Rican heritage, individuals who are of Chinese and Filipino heritage, or individuals who are of Italian and Irish heritage.

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