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Racially Humble Parenting: Exploring the Link Between Parental Racial Humility and Parent–Child Closeness in Multiracial Black-White Families

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Abstract
In Multiracial families, monoracial parents have a unique responsibility of raising children who have multiple racial heritages that they share, partly, with each of their parents in addition to their own Biracial experiences. This interracial dynamic complicates parent–child relationships and can leave Biracial youth feeling less close to and supported by their parents than monoracial youth (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2013; Schlabach, 2013). Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles in: ITL Int J Appl Linguist 35(1):27–42, 1977) and a growing body of qualitative research suggests that parent–child relationships in Multiracial families can be strengthened through parental racial humility (i.e., parenting approach that demonstrates a respect for the unique racial identity and experiences of a Biracial child). The current study advances this scholarship by quantitatively exploring how parental racial humility relates to parent–child closeness among 713 Biracial Black-White adolescents and emerging adults (61% male; $M = 18.40$, SD = 3.71). The moderating role of demographic characteristics (e.g., child gender, parent gender/race) were also explored. The findings revealed that racially humble parenting was significantly and positively associated with parent–child closeness. More specifically, racial humility appeared to be most important for adolescents and their relationships with White parents and Black fathers. The implications for research and practice are discussed.

Keywords Biracial · Multiracial families · Parent–child closeness · Racial humility

On June 12th in 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the infamous cause of *Loving vs. Virginia* that state laws prohibiting interracial marriages were unconstitutional. Those laws were particularly set in place to prevent interracial unions between White and Black enslaved people who could produce "abominable mixtures", which is how the Virginia General Assembly historically defined Biracial[1] Black-White children. However, in the roughly 50 years since the ruling, interracial unions and non-marital relationships between Black and White Americans have rapidly and consistently increased (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Consequently, the proportion of children with White and Black racial ancestry in the U.S. has skyrocketed but Black–White interracial couples and their children remain nearly invisible in empirical parenting and family research. This literary gap is concerning as Biracial youth report being less satisfied in their relationships with their parents and feel less supported by them than monoracial children (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2013; Schlabach, 2013).

A burgeoning body of scholarship suggests that parent–child relationships in Multiracial families can be supported through parental behaviors that convey respect and support for a Biracial child's unique racial experiences (Soliz et al., 2009). For instance, Atkin and Jackson (2021) used grounded theory to analyze qualitative data obtained from interviews with 20 Bi/Multiracial emerging adults and found that participants often felt closer to their parents if they exposed them to information and traditions from both of their racial backgrounds while giving them the freedom to identify with whatever racial group or label they wanted.

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[1] In this text, the term "Biracial" refers to individuals with parents from two different monoracial groups. The term "Multiracial" refers to individuals with who have one or even two Biracial parents. Please see Atkin et al. (2022) for a detailed explanation of terminology pertaining to Multiracial populations in research.

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These parenting behaviors reflect an important practice of *parental racial humility* (Franco & McElroy-Heltzel, 2019; Green et al., 2021).

Parental Racial Humility

Parental racial humility is grounded in the clinical construct of cultural humility, which is an other-oriented interpersonal stance that demonstrates a person's ability to respect and display a lack of supremacy over a client's cultural background and experiences (Hook et al., 2013). The concept of cultural humility was originally introduced into the fields of social work and nursing to improve cross-cultural patient and provider relationships and enhance treatment effectiveness (Yeager and Bauer-Wu, 2013). Cultural humility in its earliest definition was characterized as a lifelong devotion to learning, self-reflection and self-critique, appraisal of power inequalities, and promotion of mutually respectful relationships (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Mosher et al. (2017) build upon this definition to suggest that cultural humility is a process that requires one to reflect on how their own cultures, values, privileges, and biases influence interpersonal interactions with others. In this context, cultural humility presents an opportunity to develop empathy for others and see human interconnectedness (Gallardo, 2022). Finally, it is described as a "way of being" and not as a "way of doing" (Owen et al., 2011). Ultimately, this humble way of being can lead to stronger cross-cultural relationships (Chang et al., 2012; Chen & Graham, 2017; Hook et al., 2013).

In the current study, cultural humility is redefined as *parental racial humility* to emphasize the role of parents taking an other-oriented interpersonal stance to respect and display a lack of supremacy over their child's racial background and experiences. Specifically relating to Multiracial families, Franco and McElroy-Heltzel (2019) consider racial humility as a racialized parenting practice that provides Biracial children a safe space to explore their mixed racial identity. This freedom to explore and take agency over their racial identity is beneficial for Bi/Multiracial youth as they frequently face societal pressures to "choose" a race and potentially only one race, which is rooted in the historic hypodescent rule (e.g., the "one drop rule") that legally categorized Biracial individuals with any Black racial ancestry as Black. Experiencing social pressure to identify with a certain racial label or group can be psychologically stressful for Bi/Multiracial young people and it often leads to feelings of confusion and isolation (Albuja et al., 2019; Brown, 1990; Coleman & Carter, 2007). Accordingly, parents who are racially humble will socialize their children around race but forgo positioning their own opinions as superior. For instance, a mother in McKinney's (2016) qualitative study suggested that parents should "just let them [Biracial children] be their own person and if they have questions regarding the races, explain it to them but don't try to make them into one race or the other. Let them go their own way." (p. 151). In a meta-ethnographic review of 17 qualitative studies on racialized parenting behaviors in Multiracial Black-White families, Green et al. (2021) further found that racially humble parents recognized that their child's racial experiences will, to varying degrees, differ from their own racial experiences. To this point, McClurg (2004) wrote a brief report on clinical considerations for Multiracial families based on extant literature and suggested that parents can create a sense of racial pride in their children by acknowledging and celebrating their *unique* heritage, which has promising implications for their individual development.

Racially Humble Parenting and Parent–Child Closeness

Racially humble parenting can ultimately strengthen the emotional connection and quality of parent–child relationships in Multiracial families (Green et al., 2021; Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017). For example, Soliz et al. (2009) used Multilevel Modeling to analyze self-report data from 139 Bi/Multiracial participants and found that respondents reported feeling closer to parents who recognized and affirmed their mixed-racial heritage, which is an important aspect of racially humble parenting (e.g., respect for others' different cultural heritage). Participants in that study also reported feeling closer to their parents when they were able to have open conversations about race and racial differences. Similarly, Waring and Bordoloi (2019) conducted 60 life-story semi-structured interviews with Biracial Black–White adults and found that participants felt closer to parents who were open and responsive during discussions about race. Further, in their qualitative investigation, Atkin and Jackson (2021) found that Bi/Multiracial emerging adults felt more supported by parents who gave them the freedom to choose how they'd like to identify racially while emphasizing that all aspects of their heritages were important. One Biracial–Black respondent, for instance, explained that her parents "encouraged [her] acknowledging both parts, but they also wanted [her] to make more of [her] own decision." (p. 9). In contrast, participants felt less connected to parents who did not acknowledge their Bi/Multiracial experiences or actively teach them about their heritages, which highlights how a lack of racial humility can impact parent–child relationships (Atkin & Jackson, 2021). Notably, not all parents who struggle to acknowledge their children's mixed racial heritage or have open discussions about race do so from a place of explicit racial superiority or intentional lack of humility. Failure to practice racial humility likely stems from

a lack of knowledge and competency, which is why the practice is conceptualized as a lifelong process of learning.

Nonetheless, the existing literature demonstrates that racially humble parenting has important implications for parent–child relationships in Multiracial families. However, most of this research has been qualitative or based on diverse samples of Bi/Multiracial adults. This has left gaps in our understanding of the magnitude, strength, and generalizability of the relationship between racial humility and parent–child closeness for distinct subgroups of Multiracial families (e.g., Black/White; Black/Asian, etc.) during critical periods of child development. We also have a limited understanding of how demographic factors (e.g., parent race/gender; child gender) shape racial humility practices. For instance, is racial humility from White moms as meaningful as racial humility from Black dads? Do Biracial-Black daughters value racial humility more than sons? The present study explores these questions through a quantitative examination of parental racial humility and parent–child closeness among Biracial Black-White adolescents and emerging adults.

Communication Accommodation Theory

The study is grounded in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT; Giles, 1977, 1980), which provides a strong framework for understanding the role of parental racial humility on parent–child relationship quality in Multiracial families (Mahadhir et al., 2014). At its origins, CAT was designed to explain the motivating factors that lead to shifts (e.g., accommodative behaviors) in interpersonal communication and the social implications of those shifts (Thakerar et al., 1982). The theory has since evolved over time to illuminate how interpersonal communication is further shaped by intergroup dynamics and macro-contextual factors (e.g., race, power, and sociohistorical events; see Palomares et al., 2016). Thus, in its current state, CAT is a framework for understanding interpersonal *and* intergroup communication with a particular focus on accommodative behaviors. The core accommodative behaviors outlined by CAT include (a) *convergence* (e.g., adjusting accent, vocabulary, tone, or topic to accentuate similarities shared with others to gain social approval) and *divergence/maintenance* (e.g., adjusting or maintaining accent, vocabulary, tone, or topic to accentuate differences with others).

CAT contends that convergence can decrease social distance between people, especially those from different groups, by helping individuals identify shared attributes including personality, values, and beliefs. The link between convergence and interpersonal connection can be understood through the *similarity-attraction paradigm* (Bryne, 1971), which suggests that the more similarities people share, the better their interpersonal bond will be (i.e., "birds of a feather flock together"). The theoretical link between similar attributes and social bonds is further supported by research demonstrating that most people find communication and relationships with in-group members (e.g., same race) more satisfying than with out-group members (e.g., different race). For instance, McDonald et al. (2013) used logistic regression to prove that adolescents are most likely to form friendships with peers who are of the same race as them. However, research has uncovered that similarity affects social connection through intermediary channels like *inferred attraction* (e.g., belief that the other person likes you) and *mutual respect* (Singh et al., 2014), which can be fostered in out-group relationships through convergence. In contrast, divergence is often associated with negative relational outcomes, especially between social groups where power is unequally distributed, as it amplifies differences amongst those individuals.

Given the interracial structure of Multiracial families, CAT is a useful theoretical frame for understanding communication patterns between parents and children and the relational implications of those patterns. For instance, in the Soliz et al., 2009 study described above, the authors used CAT to demonstrate that parental convergent behaviors (e.g., verbally recognizing, appreciating, and affirming a child's Biracial background) lead to more satisfaction in parent–child relationships. Soliz et al. (2009) also found that convergence reduced the salience of racial differences in interactions with monoracial parents, which in turn contributed to more relational satisfaction. Notably, reducing perceptions of racial difference in Multiracial families has less to do with ignoring the race and culture of another family member (e.g., color-blindness) and more to do with building a harmonious connection that transcends racial boundaries and denotes mutual respect. This type of connection is often built through convergent behaviors like supportive communication, affirmation of a Biracial child's experiences, and solidarity, which reflect racially humble parenting. A Biracial woman in Stone and Dolbin-MacNab's (2017) qualitative study, for example, explained that "Because we [her and her parents] had open discussions and we were just allowed to be ourselves, it felt supportive. I never felt like I wasn't supported. I knew …who I was and could just talk about it…I know that my parents had my back if there was a racial incident." (p. 106). Building on this work and CAT, we contend that parental racial humility is an accommodative behavior that can minimize perceptions of difference and out-group status between monoracial parents and their Biracial children, leading to stronger parent–child relationships.

The Current Study

The current study examines the relationship between parental racial humility and parent–child relationship quality in Multiracial Black-White families. Rooted in CAT, we pay particular attention to how social group membership (e.g., parent race, parent gender, and child gender) might shape the relationship between racial humility and parent–child closeness. Our investigation is specifically guided by the following research questions: (1) How does parental racial humility relate to parent–child closeness among Biracial Black-White young people? and (2) Does the association between parental racial humility and parent–child closeness differ based on (a) parent race, (b) parent gender, and/or (c) child gender? Based on prior research, we hypothesized that parental racial humility would be positively and significantly associated with parent–child closeness. We did not have any explicit hypotheses in regard to our second research question given the exploratory nature of the analyses.

Method

Participants

Data comes from the *Biracial Adolescents and Young Adults' Socialization Experiences Study* (Project BAASES; Stokes, 2021). The project consisted of a national cross-sectional survey that explored various topics, including racial socialization and racial identity, parental relationships, and psychological wellbeing. For the current paper, the participants included 713 self-identified Biracial Black-White adolescents ($n = 329$) and young adults ($n = 384$) between the ages of 12 and 25 ($M = 18.40$, SD = 3.71). Given the scope of this paper, we only included participants who were cisgender (61.3% male, 38.7% female). Over half of the participants (60.7%) had White mothers and Black fathers, which is consistent with interracial marriage statistics in the U.S. (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Most of the participants' parents were also married (90.5%) and 86.7% of participants lived in the same house as both of their biological parents. Thus, most of the sample appeared to live in heterosexual families but the gender identities and sexual orientation of participants' parents was not thoroughly assessed. Social class was assessed through participant reports of each of their parents' highest level of education, which ranged widely. Among mothers, 36.0% had some college experience, but only 28.9% earned a bachelors degree. A similar trend occurred among fathers, where 31.4% attended college but only 27.6% earned a bachelors degree. Finally, respondents resided in the western (46.3%), southeastern (18.5%), midwestern (11.1%), southwestern (9.4%), and northeastern (8.4%) regions of the U.S. Roughly 6% of respondents entered invalid zip code so the geographic data presented here is slightly limited.

Procedure

A purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit participants in Project BAASES, where social media advertisements were posted on Facebook and Twitter to attract Biracial young adults and parents of Biracial adolescents. Ultimately, adolescent participants assented to their involvement in the study and participated with parental consent. Upon assenting and consenting (for adult participants), all participants were asked to complete a short *Qualtrics* questionnaire to verify they met the eligibility criterion. Eligible participants included those who (1) were between the ages of 12 and 25, (2) had one biological monoracial Black and one biological monoracial White parent, and (3) lived with at least one of their biological parents in the U.S. currently (for adolescents) or during their adolescence (for adults). Participants who met this eligibility criterion were emailed an anonymous secure invitation to the official survey via *Qualtrics*. On average, that survey took about 35 minutes to complete, and all participants were compensated with a $10 electronic gift card. The study protocols were approved by the host institution's review board (protocol number 20960).

Measures

Gender and Covariates

Participant gender was determined with one item, "Which term most closely describes your gender?" The response options included cisgender man, cisgender woman, transgender man, transgender woman, transgender, and non-binary. While participants in the larger dataset was slightly more gender diverse, the participants for this paper were all cisgender due to the gendered nature of our questions and power concerns. Next, parent race and gender were assessed using two questions "Which one of your parents is Black?" and "Which one of your parents is White?" with the response options being mother or father. Notably, 37 participants reported not having a relationship with their Black parent and 21 did not have a relationship with their White parent. Dichotomizing demographic variables, such as gender and parent gender, is a common approach in psychological science and was helpful in the current study considering our primary research questions (Lindqvist et al., 2021; Salk et al., 2020). In addition, only a small percentage of participants in the current sample were transgender or nonbinary

so we didn't have the necessary statistical power to include this sub-group in the analyses. Participant age and each parents' educational attainment (ranging from less than high school diploma/GED to graduate/professional degree) were incorporated into the analyses as covariates.

Parental Racial Humility

Parental racial humility was assessed with four items from a Parental Racial Humility Scale that was created as part of *Project BAASES* (Stokes, 2021). This scale builds upon Hooks et al. (2013) Cultural Humility Scale, which captures a respondent's perception of their therapist's cultural humility (e.g., "*Regarding my cultural background, my counselor is open to seeing things from my perspective*") using a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The Parental Racial Humility scale adopted 4 items from this scale and added 2 additional items based on qualitative research on racialized parenting in Multiracial families (see Green et al., 2021). In addition, the prompt for most items was changed to "*When it comes to my race, my [mother/father] is…*" Participants responded to each item twice (once to capture maternal racial humility and once to capture paternal racial humility). The scale was initially developed and validated with Biracial Black–White adolescents and demonstrated good internal reliability (a = 0.80; Stokes, 2021). The scale was also correlated with a measure of Biracial pride (Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). However, the scale is still in its infancy so additional research is needed to further address construct validity.

The Racial Humility Scale was later distributed to young adult participants who were asked to retrospectively report on racial humility parents expressed during their adolescence. Ultimately, the Cronbach alpha for the original 6-item scale was lower than expected, but this was the first time the scale was used with the full adolescent and young adult sample. The inter-item correlation matrix indicated that 2 reverse-coded items which measured negative forms of racial humility (e.g., *[Mother/father] acts superior"]* were not strongly correlated with the remaining items that assessed more positive aspects of racial humility. Accordingly, we dropped the 2 items from the scale before creating composite scores. The final items included (1) *When it comes to my race, my [mother/father] is respectful*, (2) *When it comes to my race, my [mother/father] is open to seeing things from my perspective*, (3) *My [mother/father] talks openly about race with me,* and (4) *My [mother/father] recognizes that their racial experiences are different than mine*. The final Cronbach's alpha was 0.70 for mothers and 0.70 for fathers. Given the scope of this study, the items from each subscale were averaged to create separate composite scores for Black parents and White parents.

Parent–Child Closeness

Parent–child closeness was captured through the Lum Emotional Availability of Parents Scale (LEAP; Lum & Phares, 2005). Parental-emotional availability refers to the interdependent quality of relationship between a parent and child, which is characterized by parental responsiveness, sensitivity, and emotional involvement. Assessing this construct offers a nuanced picture of the emotional closeness between parents and their children. The LEAP consists of a unidimensional mother and father form, which includes 15 identical items that assess a respondent's perception of their parents' emotional availability (e.g., "my mother/father is willing to talk about my troubles", "my mother/father shows that they care about me", and "my mother/father makes me feel wanted") based on a 6-point scale (1 = never to 6 = always). The measure was initially developed and validated with a racially diverse sample of older adolescents and emerging adults and demonstrated strong reliability in clinical ($a = 0.92$ for mothers and $a = 0.93$ for fathers) and non-clinical samples ($a = 0.96$ for mothers and $a = 0.97$ for fathers). The LEAP was significantly correlated with the Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker et al., 1979) demonstrating adequate convergent validity. The measure was also unrelated to a measure of social desirability, which confirmed the divergent validity of the LEAP. The LEAP demonstrated strong reliability in our sample, where the Cronbach's alpha for the maternal and paternal forms were 0.92 and 0.94, respectively. The items were averaged to create separate composite scores for Black parents and White parents.

Data Analysis

All analyses were conducted in *SPSS Version 27*. First, we performed descriptive analyses and examined the bivariate correlations between main study variables. Next, we conducted 2 moderated moderation regression models. The first model examined Black parental racial humility and parent–child closeness, and the second model examined White parental racial humility and parent–child closeness. The moderating roles of parent and child gender were also explored (see Fig. 1). Both regressions were run using Model 2 of Andrew Hayes' Process Macro (Hayes, 2018). Process is a modeling tool that estimates, tests, and probes interactions (which are computed automatically within the Macro) in an Ordinary Least Squares regression model. The tool is designed to constrain the focal predictor's (parental racial humility) linear effect on an outcome variable (parent–child closeness) to be linearly moderated by one or more moderators (parent gender and child gender). The continuous variables within the model are also automatically mean centered prior to the development of interaction terms or

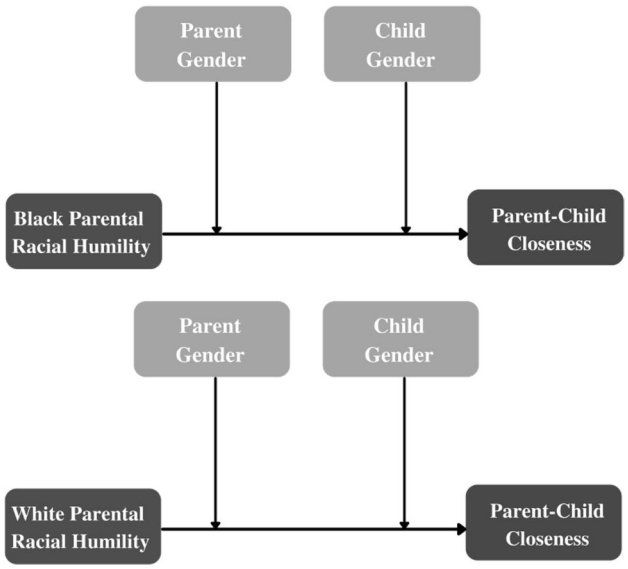

Fig. 1 Hypothesized relationship between parental racial humility and parent-child closeness

further analyses. The two-way interaction terms automatically computed by Process and tested in the respective models included: (1) Black parent racial humility X Black parent gender, (2) Black parent racial humility X child gender, (3) White parent racial humility X White parent gender, and (4) White parent racial humility X child gender. Significant interactions were plotted and probed using a simple slope analysis (Aiken et al., 1991).

Missing Data

Missing data was handled using listwise deletion, such that participants who did not have a relationship with their Black parents ($n = 37$) were dropped from the Black parent model and those who did not have relationship with their White parents were dropped from the White parent model ($n = 21$).

Results

Descriptive Findings

The means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 1. Ultimately, participants reported moderate levels of parental racial humility amongst their Black parents ($M = 3.67$, SD = 0.62) and White parents ($M = 3.78$, SD = 0.71). Reports of Black parent closeness ($M = 4.25$, SD = 0.85) and White parent closeness ($M = 4.33$, SD = 0.93) were high (on a scale from 1 to 5). The correlations suggested that racial humility was strongly and positively associated

Table 1 Correlations among study variables & descriptive statistics

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Black parental racial humility	1									
2. White parental racial humility	0.31**	1								
3. Black parental closeness	0.52**	0.24**	1							
4. White parent closeness	0.14**	0.68**	0.34**	1						
5. Black parent gender	− 0.26**	0.46**	− 0.21**	0.41**	1					
6. White parent gender	0.27**	− 0.45**	0.21**	− 0.41**	− 0.97**	1				
7. Youth gender	− 0.09*	− 0.12**	− 0.08*	− 0.14**	− 0.09*	0.07	1			
8. Maternal education	0.17**	0.29**	0.24**	0.32**	0.23**	− 0.22**	− 0.14**	1		
9. Paternal education	0.19**	0.32**	0.19**	0.27**	0.16**	− 0.15**	− 0.12**	0.57**	1	
10. Youth age	.043	− 0.08*	− 0.16**	− 0.20**	− 0.14**	0.14**	0.09*	− 0.32**	− 0.25**	1
Mean (*SD*)	3.67 (*.62*)	3.76 (*.71*)	4.25 (*.85*)	4.33 (*.93*)	*x*	*x*	*x*	3.83 (*1.09*)	3.89 (*1.21*)	18.40 (3.71)

Table 2 Moderated moderation regression model predicting closeness to Black parents

Variable	Coefficient	SE	95% CI
Constant	4.876**	.222	4.440, 5.312
Racial humility	.316*	.154	.013, .619
Parent gender	− .274**	.059	− .390, − .158
Child gender	− .034	.055	− .141, .074
Racial humility × parent gender	.186*	.089	.011, .360
Racial humility × child gender	.009	.086	− .160, .178
Covariates			
Maternal education	.125**	.031	.064, .185
Paternal education	.003	.027	− .051, .056
Child age	− .034**	.008	− .049, − .019
R^2	.342		
F	43.328		

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

Table 3 Moderated moderation regression model predicting closeness to White parents

Variable	Coefficient	SE	95% CI
Constant	4.814**	.209	4.440, 5.225
Racial humility	.780**	.120	.544, 1.017
Parent gender	− .174*	.059	− .290, − .058
Child gender	− .097	.057	− .197, .003
Racial humility × parent gender	− .038	.083	− .200, .124
Racial humility × child gender	.064	.071	− .075, .203
Covariates			
Maternal education	.086*	.023	.030, .143
Paternal education	.001	.024	− .049, .051
Child age	− .028**	.007	− .042, − .015
R^2	.505		
F	87.259		

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

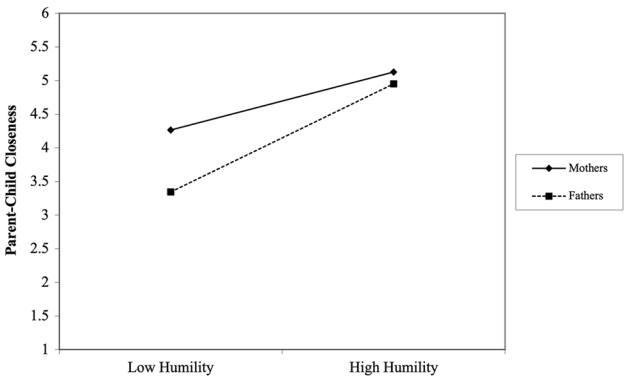

Fig. 2 Association between Black parental racial humility and parent-child closeness moderated by parent gender

with parent–child closeness for Black parents ($r = 0.52$) and White parents ($r = 0.68$), so we moved forward with the regression analyses.

Black Parent Racial Humility and Parent–Child Closeness

The first regression model accounted for 34% of the variance in parent–child closeness, $F(8, 667) = 43.33$, $p < 0.001$ (see Table 2). As expected, Black parental racial humility was significantly and positively associated with parent–child closeness ($b = 0.31$, $p = 0.04$). Black parent gender ($b = -0.27$, $p < 0.001$), mother education ($b = 0.12$, $p = 0.001$), and child age ($b = -0.03$, $p < 0.001$) were also significantly associated with parent–child closeness. The direction of these associations generally suggest that participants felt closest to Black mothers who had higher educational attainment. A significant interaction emerged between Black parental racial humility and parent gender ($b = 0.19$, $p = 0.04$). The simple slope analysis (see Fig. 2) indicated that the relationship between racial humility and parent–child closeness was significant for mothers and fathers, but the slope was much steeper for fathers ($b = 0.80$, $t = 14.41$, $p < 0.001$) than mothers ($b = 0.43$, $t = 8.10$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, participants who reported low racial humility (-1SD) from Black parents also reported feeling less close to Black parents, but racial humility appeared to be especially meaningful for Black father-child closeness. The interaction between racial humility and child gender was not significant, meaning the association between racial humility and parent–child closeness did not differ by the gender of the Biracial participant.

White Parent Racial Humility and Parent–Child Closeness

The second regression model accounted for 51% of the variance in parent–child closeness, $F(8, 683) = 87.26$, $p < 0.001$ (see Table 3). White parental racial humility was significantly and positively associated with parent–child closeness ($b = 0.78$, $p < 0.001$). Similar to the previous model, main effects emerged between White parent gender ($b = -0.17$, $p = 0.00$), mother education ($b = 0.08$, $p = 0.00$), and child age ($b = -0.02$, $p = 0.001$). These associations again suggest that participants, especially younger respondents, reported higher levels of closeness to White educated mothers. However, both interactions (e.g., racial humility × parent gender and racial humility × child gender) were not significant. Thus, racial humility

was meaningful to relationships with White mothers and fathers for Biracial daughters and sons.

Discussion

Families are becoming increasingly more racially and ethnically diverse in the U.S. This demographic shift requires social scientists to think more critically about the intersections of race and parent–child relationships in families than ever before. Scholars have begun to link racially humble parenting (e.g., the degree to which parents strive to understand, learn about, and respect their Biracial children's unique racialized experiences and identities) to parent–child relationship quality among Biracial adults (Franco & McElroy-Heltzel, 2019; Soliz et al., 2009). The current study extends this body of research through a novel examination of parental racial humility and parent–child closeness among Biracial Black–White young people. The analyses were intentionally designed to determine whether the established association between racial humility and parent–child relationships varies based on key demographic factors (e.g., parent race/gender, child gender, and developmental stage), which has not yet been explored. In doing so, the findings pushed the field forward by better contextualizing the practice of parental racial humility. In particular, we found that Biracial Black-White respondents reported higher levels of closeness to parents who exhibited higher levels of parental racial humility. This association was consistent across the sample but was strongest for adolescents and relationships with White parents and Black fathers. Below, we outline the results in more detail and offer directions for future research and practice.

Parental Racial Humility and Parent–Child Closeness

The findings indicated that participants who perceived their parents as racially humble also reported feeling closer to them, which is consistent with prior research. However, the extant literature has typically studied broad attributes of racial humility from *one* parent (e.g., parental openness to discussing race) among diverse samples of Bi/Multiracial adults (Franco & McElroy-Heltzel, 2019; Soliz et al., 2009). This work is also largely qualitative (Atkin & Jackson, 2021; Waring & Bordoloi, 2019). The current study offers a unique contribution to the literature by quantitatively examining parental racial humility from *both* parents among Biracial Black-White adolescents and emerging adults. By doing so, we were able to demonstrate that parental racial humility from Black and White parents has important implications for parent–child relationships in Multiracial–Black families. The model for White parents, however, accounted for a larger proportion of variance than the model for Black parents (34% vs. 51%) even though participants reported comparable levels of parental racial humility from Black and White parents. The beta coefficient of racial humility in the White parent model ($\beta = 0.78$) was also significantly higher than in the Black parent model ($\beta = 0.32$). Thus, while parental racial humility is valuable for relationship quality across race, the practice may be especially important for fostering strong relationships between White parents and Biracial adolescents and emerging adults. Rooted in the sociohistorical tenants of CAT, it is possible that Biracial participants in this study inherently felt more interpersonal closeness or in-group membership with their Black parents, which could make racial humility from these parents slightly less important in terms of relationship quality than for White parents.

Historically, the hypodescent rule legally categorized Biracial individuals with any Black racial ancestry as Black. While the rule is no longer legally "enforced", it is still socially accepted and endorsed by many people including Biracial-Black individuals and their parents. A Black mother of Biracial children in Boyd's (2012) qualitative study explained, "I told them [children] about the one-drop-rule. I explained to them that in this country, if you had one drop of Black blood in you, then you were Black. In society, they're considered Black." (p. 48). Accordingly, Biracial Black–White adolescents and emerging adults may naturally feel more in-group membership to their Black parents than their White parents. However, Biracial–Black adolescents still have unique racialized experiences because of their mixed racial heritage, which is likely why parental racial humility from Black parents was still a meaningful predictor of relationship quality.

In both models, the covariate of maternal education was significantly associated with parental closeness. There is a robust body of research linking educational attainment to parenting behaviors and relationships (Hoff & Laursen, 2019). More specifically, scholars have tied maternal education to higher levels of mother–child closeness and less maternal-child conflict (Zhang, 2012). Similar to our findings, Zhang (2012) found that paternal education didn't directly relate to father–child closeness, but it was significantly associated with cohesive familial relationships and positive outcomes such as engaging in more recreational activities together as a family. Thus, while paternal education was insignificant in the models, it could be indirectly affecting father-child and broader familial relationships in Multiracial-Black families. Future research should incorporate more diverse measures to grasp the role of paternal education on father–child relationships in Multiracial-Black families.

Our findings also indicate that child age and developmental stage may play an important role in the association between parental racial humility and parent–child closeness. In our sample, the association between racial humility and closeness with Black and White parents was strongest amongst younger (e.g., adolescent) participants. Additional research is needed to better understand this finding, but the developmental psychological literature offers some explanation for why racial humility may be especially important during adolescence. Adolescence is a unique period of growth for youth as they become more autonomous and begin to explore all aspects of their identity including their racial identity more independently than ever before (Crocetti, 2017, 2018; Erikson, 1968). These changes can heighten the importance of racialized parenting practices like parental racial socialization. Huguley et al. (2019), for instance, conducted a meta-analysis of 68 studies and found that racial socialization was more efficacious during high school than it was during elementary school, middle school, and college. Developmental changes during adolescence can also cause conflict in parent–child relationships as parents must learn how to relinquish control and support their adolescent's newfound independence (Koepke & Denissen, 2012). Ultimately, the failure to offer adolescents more agency and freedom for self-discovery can lead to decreased emotional attachment in parent–child relationships (Koepke & Denissen, 2012). These trends underscore why a practice like racial humility, which is other-oriented and displays a lack of supremacy over a child, could be valuable during adolescence. Parental racial humility offers adolescents freedom in the presence of warmth and support, which could in turn increase emotional attachment to a parent. In contrast, young adulthood is a period where individuals often develop a greater mutual understanding and respect for their parents and renegotiate their expectations of their parental relationships altogether (Tsai et al., 2013). This transition may help explain why retrospective reports of racial humility were less influential in the parent–child relationships of our young adult participants. Nonetheless, the findings were still significant meaning parental racial humility during adolescence had lasting implications on parent–child relationships among young adults. However, longitudinal research is needed to better examine the immediate and potential lasting implications of parental racial humility during critical periods of development.

The Moderating Role of Parent Gender

The intersection of parent race and gender can influence racialized parenting practices, like parental racial socialization (Dunbar et al., 2015; Lambert et al., 2015). However, research on parental racial humility has not explored gendered or racial differences (e.g., does experiencing humility from White/Black fathers differ from experiencing humility from White/Black mothers?). This was a gap that we sought to address in the current study. We found that parent gender did not impact the relationship between humility and parent–child closeness to White parents. Thus, Biracial respondents felt closer to their White mothers and fathers if they perceived them as racially humble.

Parent gender played a slightly more important role for Black parents. Upon analyzing the simple slopes, we discovered that while racial humility was important for relationships with Black mothers, it was arguably more influential in Black father-child relationships. More specifically, participants reported comparable rates of closeness (~4.5 out of 5) to Black mothers and fathers in the presence of high racial humility. However, when racial humility was low, participants reported significantly less father-child (~3 of 5) closeness than mother–child closeness (~4 of 5). Additional research is needed to fully understand these findings, but the family science literature suggests that mothers typically engage in more forms of supportive parenting like the expression of warmth and emotional socialization than fathers (Denham et al., 2010; Padilla-Walker et al., 2016). Thus, respondents who reported low racial humility from Black mothers may have still been experiencing other forms of supportive parenting that helped maintain or strengthen the mother–child bond. Comparatively, Black fathers who struggled to practice racial humility may have also struggled to practice other forms of supportive parenting. If this is true, it could help explain the heightened relationship between low racial humility and father-child closeness in the current study. However, this interpretation is solely speculative because we did not assess non-racialized forms of supportive parenting. Future research should interrogate how racial humility might intersect with other forms of parenting to better understand gender differences. Nonetheless, the current study highlights the value of racially humble parenting for Black father–child relationships in Multiracial families. The results also support the importance of examining how race *and* gender shape parenting practices and relationships in research with Multiracial families.

Limitations and Strengths

The results should be interpreted with respect to several limitations. In terms of the sample, Biracial Black–White cisgender males with White mothers and Black fathers were overrepresented. Most participants also reported that their parents were still married, which was unexpected considering divorce rates are higher among interracial couples than monoracial couples (Livingstone & Brown, 2017). We do not have any concrete hypotheses as to why this trend emerged or how our recruitment efforts may have played a role in the overrepresentation of participants with married

parents. Research with Multiracial families is still in its infancy, so little is known about the most optimal recruitment strategies and methodologies. However, as Biracial Black-White women ourselves, we suspect that the terminology (e.g., "Biracial Youth" and "Biracial Participants") used in our recruitment flyers could have influenced which individuals were led to participate. For instance, Green et al.'s, (2021) meta-ethnographic review of the literature indicated that married Black–White couples were more likely to describe their children as "Biracial" than single parents, who typically defined their children as either White or Black. Similarly, they found that Biracial young adults with married parents were more likely to identify as Biracial than their peers who were raised by single parents (Green et al., 2021). Thus, the use of the term "Biracial" in recruitment materials may have unintentionally led to overrepresentation of Biracial individuals with married parents in our sample.

Nearly, 50% of the sample also resided in the western region of the U.S. This geographical finding is less surprising as the U.S. census has repeatedly indicated that a large proportion of Bi/Multiracial people under the age of 18 live in the West (Charmaraman et al., 2014; Frey, 2018). Nonetheless, the demographic nuances of our sample make our findings generalizable to a unique group of biracial Black-White individuals. For instance, Biracial young people with married parents who live in the West may have drastically different racialized and familial experiences than Biracial young people with single parents who live in the south. Similarly, Biracial individuals who felt called to participate in this study may have more of an attachment or connection to being Biracial and navigating a Multiracial family context than Biracial individuals who opted not to participate in the study. Thus, future research should strive to replicate these findings with a more diverse sample of Biracial Black–White young people. Within this work, it will also be important to utilize more diverse terminology in recruitment materials and strategic sampling approaches, such as purposive sampling, to increase the possibility of obtaining a more diverse sample.

The use of cross-sectional data is another noteworthy limitation of the study as our analyses are unable to causally link racial humility to parental closeness. Moreover, the association we found could, to some degree, represent a spurious correlation such that racial humility and closeness are not as related as our findings depict or the association is better explained by a confounding factor that we did not examine. The use of two separate regression models (as opposed to a single model) also limits the rigor of the comparisons made between White and Black parents. In addition, we relied solely on child self-reports of parents' racial humility and parent–child relationship quality, which are potentially sub-dimensions of a larger positive parenting construct. Reliability issues also emerged with the measure of parental racial humility, which led us to drop two negative toned items resulting in a measure of racial humility that was solely positive. This approach likely reinforces an agreement for the presence of a positive direction response bias. Future longitudinal studies that triangulate child-reports with parent-reports and observational assessments of positive and negative aspects of racial humility and general parenting behaviors are needed to cultivate a richer understanding of parent–child relationships in Multiracial Black-White families. The scope of this scholarship should also be expanded to consider how racial humility impacts other types of caregiver and familial relationships (e.g., adoptive parents, stepparents, grandparents, extended family members).

While limited, this study offers a deeper understanding of parental racial humility and parent–child relationships in Multiracial Black-White families. The results align with prior research that positions racially humble parenting as an important facilitator of parent–child relationships. Using quantitative measures and a sample of adolescents and emerging adults, we were also able to uncover some novel complexities of racial humility. For instance, we found that racial humility was beneficial for all parent–child relationships, but differences emerged based on demographic characteristics. More specifically, racially humble parenting was the most important for adolescents and their relationships with White parents and Black fathers. As we described above, these findings offer insightful directions for future scholarship on parental racial humility and parent–child closeness.

Conclusion

As the U.S. becomes increasingly more diverse, it is important for researchers to better understand parenting processes in Multiracial families and how they shape parent–child relationships. This study contributes to this scholarship by demonstrating how racially humble parenting relates to parent–child closeness among Biracial Black-White adolescents and emerging adults. The results have promising implications for advancing this area of research and strengthening parent–child relationships in Multiracial Black-White families.

From a practical lens, the findings indicate that racial humility could be a promising point of intervention to strengthen parent–child relationships in Multiracial Black-White families. Rooted in research on cultural humility, we believe that parental racial humility could be fostered through psychoeducation (McElroy-Heltzel et al., 2018; Solchanyk et al., 2021) and reflective practices (e.g., journaling; Schuessler et al., 2012). The QIAN curriculum, for instance, outlines a pathway to humility in healthcare relationships through self-questioning and critique,

bi-directional cultural **I**mmersion, mutually **A**ctive-listening, and the flexibility of **N**egotiation (Chang et al., 2012). This curriculum could be adapted for parents of Biracial children by (a) eliciting self-questioning around racial ideologies (e.g., what assumptions do parents make about their child's race and where do these assumptions come from?), (b) encouraging parents to immerse themselves in their child's racialized world (e.g., what is it like to be Biracial? How would I like to be treated if I was Biracial?), (c) promoting active listening in parent–child conversations, and (d) helping parents negotiate and remain open to their child's beliefs.

The findings also have implications for improving the training experiences and practice expectations of clinicians. Killian (2013) proclaimed that "psychologists, therapists, social workers, and counselors have an ethical responsibility to learn all they can about interracial relationships [and their families] and strengths-based approaches to helping them." Thus, training programs for family practitioners and stakeholders should ensure that their curriculum is inclusive of constructs that uniquely impact the relational health of Multiracial families including racial humility. The results of this study further indicate psychoeducation and clinical services that facilitate racial humility should be careful to serve Black *and* White parents of Biracial children.

On a wider scale, this paper contributes to a growing body of research that highlights the importance of examining the nuanced racial experiences of Biracial youth and Multiracial families in social science research. In particular, Biracial youth and their families are exposed to unique racial experiences and contexts (e.g., racism rooted in anti-Blackness and essentialism) that can pose serious social problems (e.g., familial dissolution, relational discord, extreme psychological distress, poor physical health, etc.). However, Multiracial families also possess numerous strengths and resiliencies, including the ability to practice racial humility and form collective family bonds in spite of the racialized stressors they experience. In the coming years, it will be imperative for social scientists to continue examining these strengths and resiliencies in relation to race-based risk and ultimately to translate that research into practices and policies that promote the individual and relational health of Biracial youth and Multiracial families.

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Declarations

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

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