PARENTING AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES:
THE RACIAL SOCIALIZATION AND RACIAL IDENTITY OF
PRE-SCHOOL TRINIDADIAN CHILDREN

by

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Abstract

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to Caribbean family dynamics. Researchers have examined family structure, parenting practices, and, to a lesser extent, child outcomes. Indeed, empirical studies have identified a range of child-rearing strategies adopted by Caribbean parents. However, while research has shown that issues of race and racism remain pertinent in the Caribbean context, there is scarce empirical literature on the race-related messages that parents and educators transmit to pre-school children about the meaning and social significance of race. Similarly, a paucity of research exists on Caribbean children’s racial identity. This study attends to the critical gap in the literature by examining children’s racial awareness, identification and attitudes, and the roles of parents, educators, and curricula in racial socialization in Trinidad. More specifically, it examines two dimensions of racial socialization: messages about racial identity and messages that promote anti-racism practices.

This qualitative study is based on interviews with 20 parents, 18 four-and-a-half-year-olds, and four teachers who self-identified as Indian, African Trinidadian, or Mixed, and observations of classroom materials and activities. The data revealed a low prevalence of explicit racial socialization. In fact, most of the parents and teachers did not communicate any direct messages to children about racial identity and anti-racism. Further, it appeared that the
nationalist ideology, in particular its emphasis on silence on matters of race, has fostered a conceptualization of race and racism in adult participants that contributes to their reticence to engage in explicit racial socialization.

Lastly, while the children were found to be basing their racial identification on hair and skin colour, an analysis of the children’s, parents’, and educators’ data indicated that children’s developing cognitions, along with environmental factors such as racial socialization by parents and teachers—as well as the context-specific race relations of Trinidadian society—influence how children understand racial terms, how they perceive and assign value to racial criteria, and how they identify with their respective racial group(s).
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Socialization: A Review

Over the years, scholars have paid ongoing attention to the topic of socialization, and have offered various conceptualizations to explain the direction and nature of interaction patterns among children, adolescents and caregivers. Maccoby (2007) defined such processes as the transmission of knowledge, beliefs, and norms to young children so as to prepare them to become productive citizens of their respective social milieu. Throughout the socialization process, however, children not only make sense of whatever is implicitly or explicitly taught, based on the cognitive processes at their disposal, but they also act upon them as well (Cosaro, 2005). Such interpretation reflects the constructivist view of socialization. In other words, this process is a collaborative interaction, involving the active participation of both children and adults (Denzin, 2009).

It has also been established that socialization is an ongoing dynamic (Denzin, 2009), with the family context exerting the most significant influence (Saracho & Spodek, 2007). Others have suggested that the socialization process also includes the input of teachers and peers (e.g., Berns, 2013; Kelly, 2009; Maccoby, 2007). In fact, the literature suggests that multiple actors contribute to children’s construction and interpretation of their social worlds. In a more specific vein, the beliefs and/or actions that parents and others transmit to young children are connected to outcomes ranging across “social, emotional, cognitive and personal domains” (Grusec & Hastings, 2007, p. 1); for instance, there has been research on socialization as it applies to children’s academic achievement, moral conduct, gender identification, and other
developmental processes (p. 7). Associations between parental socialization strategies and children’s development reflect the multidimensional nature of this socialization process, which is also mediated by parental, child characteristics and the child’s social context.

The process of socializing children to a particular set of values and beliefs varies according to the society and culture in which parents and children are situated, as well as the personal characteristics that each group brings to the process. According to Grusec and Hastings (2007), “age, sex, mood of the child, and the nature of the parent-child relationship” (p. 2) are some of the key factors that shape the socialization process. On the other hand, research has shown (e.g., Howard, Rose, & Barbarin, 2013; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990) that parental characteristics such as age and gender, along with socio-economic status, obtain a related line of inquiry referred to as racial socialization. It should be noted, however, that parental and child factors do not constitute a finite empirical discourse on socialization. The recognition of context and culture of that context, on parents’ socialization strategies also adds to the variegated scope of the literature. This particular line of inquiry further sharpens the literature focus by attending to how socio-cultural forces impinge upon familial socialization.

Research on African American family processes often highlights the interaction between parents’ social milieu and their child rearing practices. Such racial socialization literature centres on the race-related messages that African American parents convey to their children. It is important to note, however, the contextual and cultural factors that gave rise to the racial socialization scholarship. From a historical perspective, specifically before the 1970s, socialization studies “occurred primarily from a deficit-based perspective, which assessed
African American families as being inadequate compared to Caucasian American mainstream families” (Bracey, 2010, p. 8). In essence, African American parenting was presented as substandard to the dominant practice, and more socially-legitimized European-American parent-child relationships. Such misrepresentations, as Peters (1985) indicated, disregarded the prevalence of racism in the American social context and how it influenced the particular practices African American parents employ to raise their children “in a society which being Black has negative connotations” (p. 161). Since Peters (1985) and other studies on racial socialization in the 1980s (e.g., Bowman & Howard, 1985; Peters & Massey, 1983; Richardson, 1981), African Americans scholars examining the intersections of race in family processes continue to centre the social realities experienced through race as precursors for exploring the distinctive child rearing strategies of African American parents.

Still, the impact of race and racism in parenting has only recently been explored outside of the United States and Canada (in places such as the Caribbean with substantial Black populations). While I support Mintz’s (1974) assertion that American and Caribbean race relations are distinct, the fact remains—as shown by the growing number of research studies devoted to the topic—that issues of race and racism are prevalent in Caribbean societies. Recognition of such issues, particularly as these relate to the study of Caribbean child rearing strategies, should be given more attention that they presently receive in the extant literature.

This research investigation is a preliminary foray into racial socialization by Trinidadian parents and teachers and the impact on children’s racial identity, including race awareness, identification and attitudes. Situated within historical colonial relations but with a focus on the impact on contemporary race relations in Trinidadian society, this section highlights the ways in
which race structured early colonial Trinidadian society. The dissertation’s chapter-length history of Trinidad also discusses the Independence era and the transformation of Trinidad race relations, with specific reference to the social interactions between the country’s main dominant groups, African and Indo-Trinidadians. Contemporary and historical perspectives of race and racism in Trinidad society are relevant to the present study as these allow for a contextual interpretation of parenting practices, teachers’ pedagogies, and children’s racial knowledge. Anti-colonial Caribbean theory, drawing on the work of Dei’s (2006) anti-colonial theory, frames this research.

In the Caribbean region, a long-standing history of anti-colonial thought and practice persists. In fact, Caribbean writers from a range of disciplines have exemplified related features of anti-colonial theory—namely, resistance and history—by speculating on how colonialism has shaped Caribbean societies, and by illustrating how contemporary ideological, social, cultural, economic and political effects correspond to the former colonial relationship (see Beckford, 1971; Braithwaite, 1953; Fanon, 1967; La Guerre, 1974; Lamming, 1953/1991; Lewis, 1983). From a feminist perspective, as Reddock (2007) has pointed out, Caribbean women have also contributed to the anti-colonial tradition.

Much of the practical framework of anti-colonial Caribbean theory draws upon the earlier work of Caribbean anti-colonial scholarship, particularly with respect to the socio-historical analysis of the region. However, the present study expands on these concepts by paying specific attention to how such historical underpinnings relate to issues of racism and colour, and the inclusion/exclusion of East Indian narratives, as well as childhood colonization. Incidentally, I initiated this theoretical advancement because, in my opinion, the Caribbean
presents a vastly different reality from former colonized countries by means of a less number of living Indigenous groups. More specifically, the Caribbean has been widely described as ‘a group of settler colonies,’ a ‘frontier colony,’ and, perhaps more accurately, ‘an experiment in mass human migration.’ Clearly, the Caribbean space is marked by periods of coerced and voluntary migration of diverse peoples who are not necessarily indigenous to the land but, who, as a result of colonization, have established societies built upon an amalgamation of varying cultures (for example, African and European, a process which has been termed creolization; see, for example, Braithwaite’s creolization theory [1971]). Such circumstances problematize the process of racial identity formation.

However, some key texts in Caribbean literature interrogate the impact of colonialism on identity and race. Works of Earl Lovelace (1996) and George Lamming (1953/1991) offer perceptive insights into the internal struggles of English-speaking Caribbean peoples as they grapple with the legacies of colonialism (namely, the perceived sense of loss or of ‘disconnection,’ which ultimately complicates the process of creating an identity removed from that of the colonizer). The study of such sociological tensions constitutes one of the many principles of anti-colonial Caribbean theory. Another precept of this developing conceptualization centres on narratives of childhood in discourses on colonialism. Children’s narratives of the colonial experience are especially prominent in Caribbean literature. As a literary tool, the child’s narrative voice, given the common normative belief in “child-like innocence,” vividly recounts the colonial experience through literary trope. Additionally, using a childlike character to convey an unsettling narrative—in some aspects, symbolizing the unequal power relationships between the colonizer and the colonized—privileges the child’s voice or
the child-like character position over respective fictional accounts within a broader socio-political critique of the effects of the colonial encounter.

Yet, a child’s narrative locus serves an additional purpose. In the present, literary discussion centering upon childhood approximates a preliminary period of decolonization. Firstly, the authors introduce the child character’s life and memories of colonialism (in some cases to draw contrast and symbolize a sense of rebirth, or catharsis; and secondly, to integrate transitions of childhood and adulthood so as to create a conceptual space illustrative of the challenges facing a colonized consciousness). In an upcoming chapter-length study of selected literary theory, I will explore sociocritical issues pertaining to childhood de/colonization and other principles germane to the nascent anti-colonial Caribbean theory.

Methodologically, I employ a qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For example, qualitative analysis includes interviews with parents, teachers, and children. Consistent with the overall interdisciplinary structure of this investigation, this study also accounts for arts-based activities, such as storytelling and drawing activities with child participants. Observations of children’s classrooms and learning materials round out the comprehensiveness of the data collected. For data analysis, I utilize Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) grounded theory approach.

These introductory remarks now turn to an exploration of the historical context of the primary research. It is noteworthy that this study concerns racial socialization as it pertains to racial identity and anti-colonial attitudes in Trinidad. While the country is officially known as the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, this study focuses exclusively upon Trinidad because of its multiracial demographic and its specific pattern of race relations. Indeed, race and racism issues
at this location are characterized by a trajectory that constitutes continuities as well as discontinuities, much of which are informed by socio-political factors associated with specific time periods. Thus, in order to explore how race currently informs the social order of Trinidad, the study begins with an overview of early colonial race relations. Such historical antecedents provide the conceptual foundation for discourses involving identity formation of African Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians in regard to willingness to claim ancestral ties, and knowledge of what these particular identities realistically entail. Please note, however, that this analysis is not an entirely exclusive one, as history and geography, among other factors, round out a commensurate consideration.

**Race Relations: Colonial Period**

An ideology of European superiority was a key feature of race relations in nineteenth century Trinidadian society. According to Brereton (1979), despite the fact that such beliefs originated from Britain, it is quite possible that Trinidadian Whites accepted them as well. Members of the White elite group consisted of French creoles (“of European descent, usually French, but also Spanish, Irish, English”, p. 3) and English creoles, defined as “a person born in Trinidad of English descent, with no acknowledged non-White ancestors” (p. 3). Persons belonging to these groups, given the prevalence of colonial race ideology, were generally represented as “superior” in terms of both “race and culture” (Yelvington, 1999, p. 192). Yet such a belief would not have gained any conceptual cogency, nor ideological traction, had it not been constructed vis-à-vis fallacies of African inferiority. As Yelvington (1999) noted, “those deemed of African descent ... were seen as possessing no ancestral culture, a void to be filled with European teachings” (p. 192). Further, in order for the myth to produce the intended,
wide-spread social affect, the colonial apparatus exerted an hegemonic influence over
economic, political, and cultural spheres. Therefore, it is important to shed light on the multiple
axes of colonial oppression, for these illustrate the nuanced patterns and interrelated
relationships that formed the racist social order of Trinidad (pre- and post-emancipation). Due
to the central role of colonial race ideology as it converges with culture, I begin by exploring this
component.

First, it is useful to define the term European culture given that Trinidad’s nineteenth
century society consisted of French creoles, English creoles, and non-Trinidadian born British
residents mostly represented middle-class, urban, mid-Victorian culture” (p. 4). Much of these
revolved around “…the virtue of industry and thrift, the sanctity of class and property... the
importance of legal and Christian marriage” (p. 5). On the other hand, the culture of French
Creoles, as Brereton (1979) noted were “aristocratic” (p. 5), but they did not completely depart
from the values endorsed by their English Creoles counterparts. Additionally, other features of
European culture that pervaded the Trinidadian landscape included language, religion, and
education. Despite the varied contexts, European culture, underpinned by a racial ideology that
purported African inferiority, was a central component of the larger colonial apparatus that
engendered what Fanon (1967) referred to as “lactification,” a term characterized by the desire
to acquire Whiteness through inculcation of European cultural forms.

Perhaps the most illustrative example of Fanon’s term derives from the ways in which it
influenced notions of race-consciousness and racial pride of African Trinidadians and those of
mixed African-European descent. Indeed, some members of the middle class black and
coloured groups also adhered to the European cultural ethos. So firmly entrenched were their indoctrination and cleavage, that pride was felt when “a member of this group was recognized in Britain for his scholarly or literary attainments” (Brereton, 1979, p. 5). However, it would be a gross generalization to affirm that during the colonial period all middle class African Trinidadians and those of mixed African-European descent dissociated themselves from their African ancestry (Brereton, 1981). Nonetheless, for those who sought to sever association with their African identity, such practices were supported by the notion of “respectability.”

In line with this view, Segal (1993) posited that “respectability was thus not whiteness, but the vulnerable, substitute ‘whiteness’ of non-whites, and, at the same time, a measure of approximation to whiteness” (p. 92). Respectability, in essence, was a localized-specific perception and lived experience, emanating from the colonial ideological apparatus and its corresponding social hierarchy. The privileged social position of the White elite, and the colonial belief that supported it, fostered the view that to be “White,” through “education, speech, and way of life” (Braithwaite, 1953; Segal, 1993, pp. 91-92) was, in fact, to achieve “respectability.” Yet it is important to recognize how “respectability” illustrates significant hegemonic imbalances. Put simply, the superior status is an exclusive one, manifested in exactly who “mirrors” whom; in which ancestry is highlighted, and in which is negated; and in the measures that are used to perceive and receive respectability. While certain psychological and social processes are indeed significant to this iterative relationship, it is also important to note the temporality of this symbolically “achieved” status. Indeed, Williams (1991) has maintained that for persons who adopt Eurocentric cultural values, there is a “risk of sliding back down the socioeconomic and moral ladders should they fail to hold in check their innate
tendencies or should they return to their own cultural practices” (p. 176). Further, although one may be able to acquire the symbols and trappings of European culture, that fact alone does not negate the conspicuous nature of race as a problematic issue, particularly in colonial societies shaped by deeply-rooted racial hierarchies.

Working in tandem with culture, power relations exemplified in the foregoing example were also evident in the colour-class relationship. Indeed, race, colour and class were mutual constituents of Trinidad’s stratification system, in which Whites occupied the apex of the nineteenth century social hierarchy (Brereton, 1993). However, in the years following emancipation, Africans and persons of mixed African-European descent acquired middle class status; for both groups, such mobility occurred primarily through their educational accomplishments (Brereton, 1981; 1993). Braithwaite’s (1953) study on social stratification in Trinidad further revealed that in the twentieth century, African Trinidadians were overwhelmingly positioned in the lower-class strata, which also reflected the class-colour correlation in nineteenth century Trinidadian society. It is important to point out, however, that East Indians were not included in this three-tier model.

**Change in Demographics**

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, because of wide scale immigration, diverse racial and ethnic groups changed the social landscape of Trinidad. For instance, East Indians’ entry into Trinidad social milieu came as a result of the Indentureship program which commenced in 1845 and ended in 1917. After emancipation and apprenticeship of 1838, colonial authorities sought workers from West Africa, North America, Portugal and China before settling on India as a viable source of labour (Yelvington, 1993, p. 6). The Indentureship
program was thus a means to address the labour problem. As part of the contractual agreement, indentured workers were to receive a paid return trip to India once the five-year contract was completed (Roopnarine, 2007). However, Ramesar (1994) indicated that after 1854, a ten year resident requirement was instituted for new immigrants. In addition to East Indians, Chinese, Lebanese, Syrian, and Venezuelan immigrants and persons of mixed European-Amerindian-African descent immigrated to Trinidad in the nineteenth century (Brereton, 1993).

Although Trinidad became increasingly diverse during the nineteenth century, social interactions between the White elite and the rest of the population were indeed marked by the varied features of colonial racism. Brereton (1981) succinctly pointed out that, “French Creoles did not mix with non-white Trinidadians except in contexts where the element of inequality was present” (p. 118). In other words, class and race intersected to produce vastly disparate social realities for Whites and non-Whites in Trinidad at that time. The deliberate yet unofficial segregation illustrated how tightly the White elite clung to the myth of racial and cultural superiority, so much so that one can reasonably propose the view that their well-guarded White enclaves served as effective barriers against evidence and/or opinions that would have emerged to call into question the very foundation of their status and associated privileges. Closely related to such practices, and also emblematic of social control, was the restriction placed on marriage. Brereton (1993) also pointedly noted that French Creoles in the Trinidadian context did not support interracial marriages. Consistent with the notion of European superiority, marriage was another effective means to practice social distancing and reinforce colonial stereotypes.
In sum, Trinidad’s colonial history revealed an impervious presence of European domination. Of particular interest to consider are the far reaching consequences unequal power relationships produced on the ideological and social levels, as groups interacted with one another based on colonial stereotypes, with class as an obstinate mediating factor, illustrating the many layers of self-consciousness that the cultural apparatus had penetrated. For instance, during the Independence movement in Trinidad, there was a great division among the middle class politicians, African and Indo-Trinidadians. Surprisingly, despite this so-called racial cleavage being touted as a hindrance to the development of an independent state, race-based political group-affiliation and less explicit discriminatory practices belied the promulgated rhetoric of national unity. Coincidentally, this mirrors much of contemporary racism in Trinidad, an issue that I explore in subsequent chapters. At this point, however, I draw attention to the topic of this research study, racial socialization. It is important to note that the review examines African American literature since, to date, a single extant study has collected preliminary research on Trinidadian’s children racial socialization (see Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, Narine, Logie, & Lape, 2013). The literature review chapter, however, explores interpretive and creative studies of child socialization and child rearing in the Caribbean.

**Racial Socialization**

Hughes and Chen (1997) defined racial socialization as consisting of a diverse range of parental messages and practices that inform children about race, particularly with respect to the meaning and significance of their racial identity as well as interactions with out-group members. Socializing children regarding race and race issues occurs through “direct conversations ... and non-verbal messages ... including modeling cultural or ethnic behaviors
(e.g., cooking traditional foods, interacting in culturally appropriate ways), and structuring children’s environment…” (Lesane-Brown, 2006, p. 404). In addition, research has shown that the content of parent’s racial socialization messages generally fall within the categories of “cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust and egalitarianism” (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 749). Scholars have also investigated the associations between racial socialization and children’s (Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993; Spencer, 1983) and adolescents’ racial identity (Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, 2009; Joseph & Hunter, 2011), adolescents’ self-esteem (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007) and academic achievement (Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009; Neblett, Phillip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006).

Yet, there are limitations in the knowledge base of racial socialization research. Firstly, while the burgeoning literature has demonstrated African Americans parents’ attempts at educating children about their ancestry, and their socio-political context, scant research exists pertaining to the role of parents and teachers, in particular, the Caribbean context, and Trinidad specifically. The absence of research that examines racial socialization by Trinidadian parents and educators, given the racial plurality of the society, stands in marked contrast to the ample literature on closely related issues that revolve around ethnic identity, racism, nationalism and race, and colonial race relations. Further, at present, the body of research also overlooks how racial identities and anti-colonial values are constructed and or contested in a space such as Trinidad where nationalist rhetoric exists alongside racism, and how this converges with parents’ child rearing practices.
Secondly, Caughy, Nettles, O’Campo, and Lohrfink (2006) accurately pointed out that little is known about parents’ race-related interactions with young children. However, it has been frequently stated that preschoolers’ racial awareness is a precursor to racial identification, and parental influences at this incipient stage are crucial to the development of a positive racial identity. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the family processes and educational environments that contribute to young children’s racial identification and attitudes towards others. A third limitation is that current research has not yet put forth any novel components that depart from the existing categories of racial socialization messages. This is primarily due to a deeply rooted historical influence on racial socialization research, that is, racism in American society and its impact on African Americans parenting techniques.

Yet, only a broader conceptual focus on racial socialization will further advance scholarly inquiry on parenting practices in sites where racism and oppression are not solely situated within a black/white binary, but rather, enacted amongst racialized groups. Posed accordingly, how have racialized groups in Trinidad, reproduced the colonial “othering” process? How does this affect racial identity formation? With reference to parenting and teaching, what attempts are being made to expel colonial ideological domination? How can the parameters of racial socialization be expanded to include the resistance of colonial stereotypes through anti-colonial parenting and teaching?

**Children’s Racial Knowledge: Context and Cognition**

While the role of parents and educators accounts for children’s racial identity development in a significant way, other factors should be taken into consideration. For, as Black-Gutman and Hickson (1996) have stated, an ongoing controversy obtains to whether or
not children’s racial attitudes are the product of social learning or their age-related cognitive processes. The socio-cognitive perspectives emphasize that children’s age-related thinking abilities at different developmental stages also shape their understandings of race, including perceptions of others (e.g., Aboud, 1988; 2008). On the other hand, Katz (1987)—while acknowledging the cognitive factor—also recognizes the broader societal-structural influence that may bear on children’s racial attitudes. In a related vein, Quintana (1998) has noted that children’s evaluations of racial groups are shaped by the society in which they are located. Despite their oppositional perspectives, the contribution of developmental and social theoretical orientations enriches the research landscape by illustrating the complex processes involved in accounting for children’s racial attitudes.

However, the cultural and geographical contexts of Trinidad call for a relocation of socio-political factors as they allow for contextual-specific interpretations of parenting practices, teachers’ pedagogies, and children’s racial attitudes. On the other hand, for children’s racial identification, in addition to the parenting and teaching influences, a developmental perspective is instructive to consider, given the fact that pre-school children’s perceptions are characterized by specific abilities, qualitatively different from that of adults. Such distinctions contribute to a developmental interpretation of how children think about knowledge related to their racial identity, including how they perceive themselves as belonging to a particular racial group.

That said, it is also relevant to consider the fact that currently, only two published studies exist on Trinidadian children’s racial attitudes (Gopaul-McNicol, 1988; Gopaul-McNicol, 1992). Results yielded from these studies indicated that children displayed a pro-White bias.
The author attributed children’s White preference to several factors. For instance, positive evaluation of Whiteness, according to the author, can be traced to the class system that benefits White persons in the Caribbean context, along with the ideological viewpoint that represents Europeans as superior (Gopaul-McNicol, 1992). While such historical connections have been made, at present, applicable studies addressing racism in Trinidad from an intergenerational and empirical perspective that incorporates children, their parents, and even adolescents as research participants, remain scant in the scholarly literature. Perhaps partly due to the fact the reality of racism is not openly acknowledged in Caribbean societies (Thompson, 1997), denial has consequences: it reinforces the colonizing of the mind, for silence cannot disrupt racial ideologies. Rather, through silence, such beliefs are implicitly understood, practiced and normalized.

In the case of Trinidad, refusal to admit the racism problem may also stem from a nationalist discourse whose supporters, through political measures, make impassioned pleas for a unified “Triniboganian” identity. Yet this identity is far from being de-politicized or all encompassing, to be further explored in the subsequent chapter. Indeed, it should be noted that the pervasive rhetoric of Trinidad’s multiracial harmony/equality persona cannot withstand a closer examination of the subtle ways in which racism operates in this context. Thus, it is incumbent upon researchers to disentangle the multiple layers that engender and sustain such pervasive myths, and to address the need for an ongoing commitment to anti-colonial and anti-racist agendas.
Purpose of the Study

Although the abundant scholarly literature on Caribbean culture and race issues calls for renewed dialogue and attention to the pressing issue of race and identity in the region, focus on young children is still lacking. It is noteworthy that young children are incorporated into the scholarship to elucidate the intergenerational indoctrination of—or resistance to—ideologies of race that render certain physical characteristics more valuable than others. Similarly, reduction of the issue of race to merely its reality and or prevalence dichotomized from possible solutions also precludes agency. Arguably, the acknowledgment of the race issue in Trinidad is an essential precursor; however, we must also explore alternatives and strategies to create a social structure void of inherited colonial racism.

In essence, a transformative Trinidadian society within, and the wider Caribbean context entails a project of decolonization initiated during our most impressionable years (those of early childhood). At the micro level, such a prospective transformation also involves the collective energies of parents, educators, and other caregivers to support discussions of race, identity and history. Engaging parents and teachers with knowledge about the socio-historical setting of Trinidad and, by extension, the Caribbean, and the genesis of racial ideologies, establishes a starting point for concrete—and developmentally appropriate—teaching and child rearing practices intended to subvert colonial meanings and values attached to racialized groups.

The purpose of this study is to examine parenting practices, teachers’ pedagogies, curriculum, and the racial identifications and attitudes of Trinidadian pre-school children. What undergirds this investigation is the attention on a specific socio-political context that creates
the conditions for children’s racialized thinking. However, this study also accounts for developmental theoretical orientations (see Aboud, 2008; Goodman, 1952; Katz, 1976; Katz, 1982; Quintana, 2008), as these provide alternate perspectives vis-à-vis how young children acquire race awareness. The methodology that guided this assessment of young children’s identification and attitudes consisted of interviews, photographs, storytelling, and drawing exercises. As previously stated, a primary related objective was to ascertain how parents conceptualize (if at all), their role in teaching children about their racial identities, their strategies in doing so, and their approaches to challenging negative perceptions of persons from different racial groups. In addition, the pedagogies of pre-school teachers and their respective curricula clearly inform teachers’ approaches to discussing race in the classroom, and the way that they implement anti-colonial or anti-racist teaching strategies.

**Research Questions**

The following exploratory questions guide the present study:

1) How do pre-school Trinidadian children understand race? How does this understanding influence self-identification? Do they hold attitudes (positive and negative) towards out-group members?

2) Do parents’ of pre-school-aged Trinidadian children engage in racial socialization related to racial identity development and anti-colonial/anti-racist attitudes? If so, what are parental practices that address children’s racial awareness (i.e., recognition of skin colour and hair texture), racial identity, and attitudes?

3) a) How do teachers address race in the classroom?
   b) Does the pre-school curriculum support teachers in dealing with racial identities and anti-racism?

4) How are parents’ children rearing strategies, teachers’ practices, and curriculum connected to children’s racial knowledge?
Significance of the Study

This examination of racial socialization among Trinidadian parents and educators builds on and extends previous work on children and race in the Caribbean (e.g., Anderson-Ferguson & Cramer, 2007; Bagley & Young, 1988; Cramer & Anderson, 2003; Gopaul-McNicol, 1988; 1992). Indeed, much of the empirical work on children and race has been conducted in the United States and Canada. A less substantial amount of scholarship examines Caribbean children’s perceptions and evaluations of race, despite the growing body of literature indicating that racism is a critical issue facing the region (see Kempadoo, 2004; Lowenthal, 1972; Potter, Conway, & St. Bernard, 2010; Thompson, 1997). The literature review expounds upon scholarly and fictional literature that treat issues of race in the Caribbean in order to highlight parallels revealed with the present investigation. Secondly, this dissertation is the only study, to my knowledge, that simultaneously examines the attitudes and strategies of parents and educators with respect to inculcating racial pride and challenging negative attitudes of other racialized groups. Of course, the classroom context is of paramount importance (namely, the pedagogies of teachers, and their curriculum). While some critical attention has focused on colonial education (see Campbell, 1996; 1997; London, 2002), empirical work on teachers’ socialization strategies with specific reference to race is virtually absent.

However, these observations should not be divorced from the larger socio-political and historical factors that have coalesced to shape the context-specific patterns of race relations. Indeed, much of the racial tensions in contemporary Trinidadian society emerged from the colonial and neo colonial experience, and, although great strides have been made to amputate the economic and political strongholds, racism still retains an insidious presence in Trinidadian
society. Thus, in addition to contextualizing the inclusion of Trinidadian children, parents, and teachers within the existing literature on race, this work demonstrates the prominence of racism in the Caribbean, with Trinidad as exemplar, and offers recommendations aligned with the anti-colonial paradigm (to confront its nascent stages of development). This dissertation also foregrounds parents and teachers as key social agents pertaining to the decolonization of early childhood. Moreover, it offers innovative perspectives on Caribbean childrearing and preschool education that will be of interest to scholars, educators, teacher-educators, parents and citizens interested in creating and sustaining a more just and caring society.

**Subject Location**

In keeping with a new critical approach, literature, and texts, such as fiction, bears the imprint of an author’s early life experiences. For some authors, the novel fictionalizes an autobiographical approach, often ordered by moments that capture and retain their permanence in characters that correspond to germane personal encounters. Beginning with a personal narrative of my childhood in the Caribbean, this prefatory section touches upon the experiences which, in retrospect, initially awakened my inclination towards researching race and racism in the Trinidadiian context. However, as an interdisciplinary Caribbeanist, my interest spans a range of academic disciplines, one of which includes Caribbean literature.

My awareness of race developed around the age of five. In using the term ‘race,’ this dissertation denotes the physical characteristics used to categorize individuals into different groups. The most prominent signifier, in my case, was that of hair. I recall that, one event, a formative incident occurred at my elementary school after I arrived early, eagerly awaiting the arrival of my teacher. I enthusiastically approached her car and sought to help her carry her
books. Surprised but appreciative, she smiled and made a complimentary comment that lingers in my mind to this day, “You and those gorgeous curls.” What gave the comment its impact was not only that it came from a teacher I admired but also, at that precise moment, an attribute as common as hair, a commonality which I had taken for granted, suddenly took on a superior, desirable quality because of its texture.

Throughout my childhood, the issue of hair and skin colour acquired increasing significance, primarily because of the discussions I overheard at home. Yet while I was exposed to this “process of othering,” my own identity was shrouded in ambivalence. To clarify, I was repeatedly informed that I was “mixed,” but these messages contained undertones of a hierarchal value which I understood and observed daily in Trinidad (although I did not understand via which authority I could claim this identity as my own; more importantly, how did this attribute acquire social significance?). The Trinidad context, throughout my childhood, was a paradox: The veneer of acceptance and intergroup harmony persistently took on the insidious undercurrent of desirability and preferential treatment in regard to skin tone and hair texture, in association with a miscellaneous barrage of negative stereotypes associated with African Trinidadians. Such developments were confusing, to say the least, especially as the product of a multiracial background, as I am (African, East Indian, European). Perhaps what was most confusing was the prevailing attitude of silence that precluded discussions on race and racism. Parents and teachers did not discuss it, leaving a spectral silence whose influence persisted, though rarely acknowledged. I wondered, “Why the silence about race?”

Another memory points to my childhood experience with race/colour preference. I vividly recall my father accompanying me to the mall to purchase a doll as a Christmas gift. As I
looked at the shelves of the dolls before me, I realized that all were white. None looked like me, yet I adored them nonetheless. As my father waited patiently, I made the decision to select the doll with the longest hair. Why? Because I had already internalized the colonized consciousness of self and extended it to create an ideology of beauty that was disparate from my own physical appearance.

In my adolescent years, namely, in high school, I observed a different set of racial dynamics. These conventions took effect much more subtly, in terms of the comingling of racial groups, preferences according to the shade continuum, and so on. However, as a young reader of Caribbean history and literature, I studied issues pertaining to colonialism and slavery. Yet, I was rarely exposed to a lesson that allowed for critical connections to be made in reference to colonial history of Trinidad and contemporary race relations. Perhaps this pedagogical omission was due to the content of the high school curriculum or to collective oversights on the part of educators and those in charge of curriculum development who maintained that race and race-related issues had no place in students’ education.

My later academic experiences revolve around my migration to Canada and my training as an early childhood educator and, later, elementary teacher. As I embarked on my career as a teacher, I maintained a passion for Caribbean studies and literature. I wanted to learn more about education in Trinidad and the Caribbean. Although I had studied Caribbean history at the secondary level, for the most part, I felt that I had only received a cursory education in this regard. I felt that I was “miseducated,” and that germane areas of information were missing. Thus, I continued reading Caribbean literature, for example, George Lamming’s “In the Castle of My Skin,” and V.S. Naipaul’s “Miguel Street,” among others. In their narratives, I was captivated...
by the lives of characters who struggled to create identity, purpose, and meaning as the effects of colonialism became increasingly pervasive in a sociocritical context. I empathized with these characters, and at the same time, was inspired to learn more. These authors’ stories limn the history of the colonial experience and its gross effects on Caribbean peoples. Although these narratives fictionalize an earlier time, they resonated with my early experiences in Trinidad as a young child and teen.

In retrospect, the reading of those texts marked the beginning of my decolonization and a journey to become a “Caribbeanist.” Lewis (2010) brilliantly outlined how this term should be embodied. For instance, “... the practitioner in Caribbean studies ... has the right—and indeed the obligation—to speak ... on the various issues of public life...” (p. 109). To extend on Lewis’s (2010) point, certain branches of Caribbean scholarship do not separate pedagogical scholarship from the societal implications of race. Making knowledge accessible, particularly as it relates to societal injustices, is indeed part of the decolonizing agenda. As in the case of Dr. Eric Williams, Trinidad’s first Prime Minister, who gave public lectures in a park he dubbed “the University of Woodford Square,” so I am also motivated to conduct and disseminate accessible research and practical theory.

In a similar fashion, Lewis (2010) reminded us that Caribbean studies must embody a “humanistic” spirit. Such an approach involves a cognizance of one’s work as a contribution to the ongoing scholarship, beyond individual motives to incorporate a collective-oriented project to supersede mechanisms of domination (for example, ideological domination) that assail our rights and freedoms. It signifies a reproach of scholarship that supplants the individual from
their lived realities; rather, a humanistic paradigm requires that we conduct research in a way that legitimates individual voices and experiences.

As I read the precepts of a Caribbeanist expounded by Lewis (2010), I became invigorated by the author’s expressions of hope and valour, both of which seemed to have transcended time and space to illumine a trajectory that I had claimed as mine years before. Such culturally-specific topics reflected my subject location, how I conducted my research and the goals for this study. More importantly, they instilled a hunger for a scholarship in a Caribbean child that inspired the pursuit of family studies with a visceral conviction, especially in regard to the power of voice and resistance. Many voices have spoken, and many have chosen to resist; with this investigation I have undertaken my own path of resistance to illustrate the ongoing—albeit somewhat muted—effects of our colonial history. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, I acknowledge that my research is a continued effort commenced by Caribbeanists before me, who in their own way, resisted the colonial scourge that has plagued our region for far too long.

**Organization of the Study**

This thesis surveys a discrete assemblage of narratives on children and race in the Trinidadian context, parenting practices, teachers’ pedagogies and pre-school curriculum. The information is divided into several chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of introduction to the work and highlights Trinidad’s colonial race relations. In chapter two, I focus specifically on race in pre- and post-Independence Trinidad, namely, historical and contemporary accounts of African and Indo-Trinidadian intergroup relationships, scholarship on mixed identities, and the social significance attached to skin colour and hair texture. In chapter three, the literature
review, I explore Caribbean research on child rearing and child socialization, socialization in the classroom context, as well as the scant investigations on Caribbean children’s racial awareness. Chapter four discusses my development of anti-colonial Caribbean theory, its main tenets, and its suitability as a conceptual framework for the present research study. In chapter five, I discuss the methodology, and also provide biographical profiles of child and adult participants. The results, along with visual representations of children’s data, appear in chapter six. Chapter seven discusses the findings in relation to contradictions and consistencies with previous scholarship on the topics of racial socialization and children and race. Finally, chapter eight concludes with implications for parenting and teaching practices, and recommendations for future research in both areas.

Limitations of the Study

Time constraints. From the outset, I had decided to recruit participants from two schools to ensure a balanced representation of diverse racial groups. However, at one school, the majority of the student population was Indo-Trinidadian and the other, although more multiracial, was predominantly African Trinidadian (due to the demographic of the areas in which the schools were located). Nonetheless, given the time constraints of the program, I was unable to request participation from other schools which could have possibly provided a more equal distribution of Indo, African, and mixed Trinidadian students. As such, the number of Indo-Trinidadian participants appears relatively low (five children and five parents), in comparison to the African parents (eight) and mixed parents (seven). It is important to note that while four African Trinidadian parents phenotypically present as African Trinidadian, in the
interview, they self-identified as mixed. I have factored their self-identifications into the aforementioned calculations.

**Sites selection.** The time constraints also impinged upon the schools that were selected. Administrators were professional contacts who expressed enthusiasm for the research project and were willing to provide their support. Additionally, administrators were informed of the study after its approval by the university’s ethical review board. Furthermore, participants were provided with consent forms and only those who agreed took part in the study; administrators distributed these forms to students, parents, and teachers; and the interview protocol for teachers was not made available to administrators prior to the implementation of this investigation. Rather, interviews with teachers and parents were kept strictly confidential and were not shared with the administrators of both schools until the conclusion of the data collection process, whereupon a brief summary was provided. One administrator, however, given her extensive experience in early childhood education, supported this study with the development of the photograph stimuli but did not interview the participants.

**Generalizability**

In comparison to other research studies on racial socialization and children and race, the sample size of this study is relatively small. Thus, it should be considered a preliminary exploration of the aforementioned areas in the Trinidadian context. The sample size consisted of 20 parents, 18 four-and-a-half-year-olds, and four teachers. It is largely a qualitative study, a format often critiqued for its lack of generalizability. Likewise, despite centering upon the Caribbean perspective, this investigation consists of only Trinidadian parents, children and
teachers. Thus, the findings should be interpreted with certain reservations (particularly with respect to its relevance to other Caribbean countries).

**Terminologies**


2. *Racial awareness*: Children’s competence in discerning racial cues among members of different racial groups (Swanson, Cunningham, Youngblood, & Spencer, 2009).

3. *Racial socialization*: Parental messages and behaviours that impart race-related knowledge to children (Hughes et al., 2006).


CHAPTER TWO:

“Racing” Trinidadian Society: Contemporary Perspectives

Independence Movement

The nationalist movement (1954-1962) in Trinidad and Tobago under the stewardship of Prime Minister Williams, and his political party, the People’s National Movement, continues to exert a political influence on the contemporary African-East Indian relationship. While disciplinary constraints do not permit an exhaustive analysis of this important time period, this dissertation interrogates the racial, cultural, and class issues that defined the Independence movement, and how such issues continue, albeit in alternative manifestations, to superimpose certain presumptions and impressions upon the collective understandings of race in the Trinidadian context.

I will preface my anti-colonial analysis by expounding upon its admittedly paradoxical nature. On the one hand, according to Williams (1962) “division of the races was the policy of colonialism...integration of the races must be the policy of independence” (p. ix). Williams’ (1962) objective, as expressed in his speeches (for example, “Massa Day Done”) was to galvanize support from Trinidad’s diverse racial groups, including East Indians, in order to dismantle the bondages of colonial rule. Embedded in this approach was the process of creating a unified national identity which, it was hoped, would take precedence over racial schisms. In broad terms, due to pernicious oversight, the nationalist movement became associated with African Trinidadian culture (Brereton, 2007; Khan, 2004). Indeed, as Allahar (2003) has similarly pointed out, national identity in Trinidad, alongside the Independence movement, was
exclusionary in both scope and nature due to a neglect of the identity and culture of East-Indian Trinidadians.

On a more hopeful note, such modes of nationalism, while not entirely reflective of Trinidad’s demographic, were underscored by a narrative of resistance; such resistance was characterized by a desire to assert autonomy apart from the colonial power, to empower a people and a nation, and to remove the shackles of the colonial history. Conversely, the nationalist movement, if examined closely, symbolized the enduring colonial legacy of “divide and rule,” insofar as interracial solidarity, while promulgated as a nationalist objective, was hindered by varying factors. For example, after the 1958 election won by the East Indian Democratic Labour Party, Williams described East Indians as a “recalcitrant and hostile minority” (Rampersad, 2010). Moreover, Ryan (1972) pointed out that “from 1958 onward they (Hindus) were in open and systematic revolt against the PNM. The events leading to Independence showed to what extent the community had become dangerously polarized” (p. 374). Ryan (1972) further explained that in their quest for an independent nation state, middle-class nationalists misjudged the extant prejudices between the Africans and East Indians by privileging the anti-colonial agenda, and by believing that such a goal would bring forth more positive intergroup relations.

Equally problematic, the overarching discourse on national identity—like many political narratives—seeks to lump the groups fragmented by conflicting class and race ideologies into a heterogeneous unit without addressing divergent, lived realities. Furthermore, such an approach is akin, both in theory and in practice, to the notion of a colour-blind ideology, in which the issue of race is denied a measure of social relevance. Therefore, I agree with
Sudama’s (1983) statement that “even if race awareness and its consequences are regarded purely as manifestations at the ideological level, this is not a reason to ignore its real effects on sociopolitical interaction” (p. 77). Intriguingly, while the nationalist discourse eschews the potency of race in Trinidad due to misplaced political agendas, others have made noteworthy gains in demonstrating its significance in everyday social relations. Recent empirical scholarship in Trinidad, for example, interrogates normalized discourses on race by articulating a more critical rhetoric of its convergences with the colonial history, as well as by effectively integrating subjective accounts of racial perceptions.

**The Inclusion of East Indians and Early African and Indo-Trinidadian Race Tensions**

East Indians arrived in Trinidad as a result of the Indentured Labourship programme, which began in 1845 and ended in 1917. The conditions of their employment entailed a five-year contract, with housing included and free passage to return to India upon completion of their tenure. Such program is important to locate in the discussion as it provides a key entry point for exploring the genesis of race tensions between African and Indo-Trinidadians. For instance, Brereton (1974) has shown that the hostility towards East Indians arose because African Trinidadians perceived that the indentureship program was a pretext through which colonial authorities could lower the wages of former enslaved Africans, thus ensuring the bargaining power of the planter elite.

Moore (1995) refuted this argument, articulating that, “for the greater part of the indenture period, Indians were primarily employed in field work that Blacks refused to do” (pp. 9-10). Further, Moore critiqued much of the assumptions associated with the causes for African and Indian racial hostility, such as social distance, and the racism towards darker skin as derived
from the Hindu caste system, by suggesting a view, somewhat Marxist in orientation, that what constitutes the crux of this social interaction was the economic factor that gave rise or supported particular racial ideologies. In other words, African and Indo-Trinidadian racial hostility stems from the development within Trinidadian social structure of a racial ideology that denigrated both groups, and served to perpetuate class divisions along racial lines. However, as La Guerre (1974) stated, interpretations of the early African and Indian Trinidadian racial hostility are not attributable solely to economic factors (interestingly, one of the constituent elements of this racial ideology was the racist characteristics assigned to both African and Indo-Trinidadians).

Racial stereotypes between and among both groups proved plentiful. In the pre-Independence era, both groups underwent comparison by means of colonial stereotypes (La Guerre, 1974). These markers serve to further demonstrate the hegemonic apparatus of colonialism, in which subjugated groups are likewise perceived as the “other.” Consequently, a key focus in the scholarship centers upon the prejudices that affect the social relations between Africans and East Indians (see Figueira, 2000; Premdas, 2007; Samaroo, 1974). For example, Brereton (1974) examined the proliferation of East Indian stereotypes during the nineteenth century. Similar in theory to Brereton’s treatise (1974), La Guerre historicized the stereotypes of East Indians as being “frugal and violent” (p. 51) within the context of the colonial ideologies prevalent at that time.

Presently, a new theoretical focus or ‘shift’ accounts for the identities of mixed African-East Indian (Dougla) and multiracial individuals. Literature in this area has highlighted the complexities and underlying structural—as well as the social—relationships that inform the
construction of mixed identities. For instance, one line of inquiry examines mixing in relation to the creolization process in which disparate cultures are amalgamated to create a singular culture (England, 2008). From this perspective, mixing not only refers to cultures, but also includes interracial unions that resulted in persons of diverse ancestral lineages. The creolization discourse of mixing bears relevance to the identity discourse in a Trinidadian context, for through the nationalist narrative, it proffers the view that being “mixed,” in essence, is an identity that Trinidadians have in common, a unified collective identity most prominently illustrated by the common parlance “all ah we is one” (England, 2008). However, nationalist identity framed by the creolization discourse does not accurately reflect the race tensions in societies such as Trinidad (Puri, 1999), and also fails to integrate the Indo-Trinidadian identity (Eriksen, 1992).

Another salient point in the literature indicates that in the colonial era, certain coloured groups, due to European ancestry, achieved middle class status. With specific reference to Douglas as a group, however, being of mixed descent does not confer similar opportunities for shifts in social status (England, 2008). While this is indeed a notable divergence from earlier mixed identities, a pressing concern affiliated with the Dougla identity, however, pertains to the either/or category that influences the process of racial identification for those of mixed African and Indo-Trinidadian descent (Reddock, 1999).

**Belonging/Self-identification: Dougla Identity and Binary Classification**

In particular reference to Dougla, a person of mixed African and East Indian ancestry—originally a derogative term extrapolated from the Hindi language to denote “bastard”—Reddock (1999) argued that “(it) is a category that exists but cannot yet be said to have an
Identity, a category that is highly contested and sometimes highly politicized” (p. 572). Indeed, the meaning applied to Dougla identity, and how it fits into the Trinidadian political and social landscape, is a growing area of literature. For instance, the Dougla identity and the experiences through which this speculative location derives, presents an opportunity to scrutinize if the nationalist rhetoric of a collective mixed identity to which all Trinidadians belong, at least at an ideological level, translates into concrete experiences that prove either the existence of an intergroup racial harmony amongst Trinidadian citizens, or conversely, the presence of less overt forms of racism (England, 2008). One way in which this inquiry can be applied examines how Douglas experience the race discourse and related social interactions in the Trinidadian context (England, 2008).

For example, Reddock (1994/2001), demonstrated how the Dougla identity is mapped across ethnic divisions, further reinforcing the “either/or” nature of this racial category. In her empirical study, Reddock (1994/2001) found that self-identification varied according to social contexts, appearance, and parental closeness. One of her participants revealed, “I see myself as Indian. I grew up among Indians. I love Indians songs” (p. 331). Another individual expressed, “I like Indians, I grow up with them but I don’t hate to be with Negroes if I have to deal with them. But I don’t want people to tell me I am no Negro” (p. 331). In both examples, participants clearly identified with a single racial group—often that of East Indians—and had categorically negated the African aspects of their ancestry. Other studies (e.g., England, 2008) have revealed that participants identify with their African ancestry. Identity, then, is a fluid construct, shifting according to the environmental contexts in which the individual is located.
However, I would be remiss if I did not proffer an alternative line of reasoning as to why many individuals of mixed descent—in this case, African and East Indian—remain fixed in the binary of racial identification. In some cases, family prejudices play an influential role in the development of racial preference. This familial influence is evidenced in Reddock’s (1994/2001) empirical study, in which participants were interviewed about how they perceived and experienced their Dougla identity: “...I always felt that Indian people are more racist than African people because, on my mother’s side, they were always respectful to my father’s family and everything, but they weren’t necessarily respectful to my mother and her family...” (pp. 331-32).

On the other hand, another explanation points to the theoretical discourse that identifies the East Indian identity as being rooted in ancestral culture (Segal, 1993), which persisted, despite adaptations, in opposition to an African identity wherein “mixing with black was not [a matter] of combining two elements, but of filling a void” (p. 94). In line with this view, England (2008), drawing on an analysis of the interview data, reported that “Afro-Trinidadians, unlike Indo-Trinidadians, are much more apt to accept Douglas because, as an already mixed category, they see no problem with mixing even further, in fact they even embrace it” (pp. 19-20). Such perception attributed to African-Indo Trinidadian mixing can be interpreted in two ways. First, there is a belief (although flawed) that African Trinidadians have lost a connection to their ancestral culture, and as result, no longer possess any so-called pure African cultural practices and, by extension, no pure African identity. On the other hand, a counterargument posits that Indo-Trinidadians have a separate and distinct identity because much of their ancestral culture has remained intact. However, as Segal (1993) has noted, Indo-
Trinidadians have also blended their culture with that of others, resulting in cultural forms derived from both ancestral and Trinidadian practices.

Likewise, there is evidence to suggest that mixing (for instance, an expression of African culture created in the Trinidad context), can occur in a positive direction, particularly with respect to the claiming of African ancestral heritage. For instance, the calypso which has been linked to African origins (Liverpool, 1994) has also been noted as symbol of African Trinidadian culture (Eriksen, 1992). Secondly, the concurrence of African Trinidadians as lacking culture of their own, with the Indian-Trinidadian group as one rich with culture and history, converge with the broader, historical analysis of racial ideologies in Trinidad, an analysis which readily identifies the assertion of European superiority as the intersecting political, economic, cultural and social element. More specifically, while the planter elite recognized the ancestral culture of Indo-Trinidadians (albeit perceived as an inferior one); such recognition did not alter the belief in European superiority and its corresponding modes of subjugation (Segal, 1993, emphasis added).

**Phenotype/“Attractiveness” of the Dougla identity, and of Mixed Identities**

Phenotypical characteristics remain a central factor in race relations in Trinidad. More specifically, facial features, skin tones, and hair textures play instrumental roles in societal relations. Beginning with the colonial era, race and colour often determined a person’s socio-economic status (Khan, 1993). However, while this rigid system of social stratification has changed somewhat over the years (Potter, Conway, & St. Bernard, 2010); the intrusive nature of racial criteria continues to operate as a marker of attractiveness or desirability. One of Reddock’s (1994/2001) participants remarked: “I think it feels good in Trinidad to be mixed
because people think when you are mixed, you are beautiful and... you have soft hair... I feel 
good to be mixed” (p. 332). Another participant from England’s (2008) study described the 
Dougla identity from the perspective of the observer as a reference point: “…When they hear 
Dougla, they consider it like nice, ...and automatically when they see someone with nice hair 
then that person had to be a nice person, you’re mixed from two races so you must be nicer” 
(p. 22).

A recent article by Bobbie Lee- Dixon (2010) in the Trinidad Guardian further illustrates 
how mainstream discourses on mixed racial identities are reduced to cataloguing physical 
characteristics instead of interrogating the political and historical factors associated with 
miscegenation. One of the respondents noted, “I love being exotic... I love the way my look 
confuses people, and I love the fact that some men, regardless of their ethnic background, love 
their women mixed” (para. 2). The problem with the emphasis on phenotypical differences, or 
on the exotics of mixed racial identities, is that such stresses reinforce ideological mechanisms 
of colonialism that reduce identities to “otherness,” or to an identity which utilizes the gaze of 
the colonizer to construct a continuum of superficial superior/inferior characteristics. 
Unfortunately, notions of “good” hair and “bad” hair, of “brown” and “red” skin, still dominate 
the Trinidadian lexicon, and thus remain fixed in a colonial frame of reference. Further, what 
such views also illustrate is an awareness (and acceptance) of the hierarchal ordering of racial 
criteria. Clearly, these work in tandem with the evaluation and understandings of the mixed 
identity.

In conclusion, issues of race and racism in the Trinidadian context involve historical 
antecedents such as the colonial racial ideology and its attendant practices that informed
African-Indian social relations. Further, such historical underpinnings continue to manifest themselves in the social construction of racial identities, particularly with respect to how racial characteristics are interpreted. Of equal importance to consider, besides the perceived phenotypical privilege and binary classifications: What does it really mean to be a Dougla in Trinidad? How is this identity constrained by the socio-political climate? Can this identity be mutually inclusive across gender, religion, and class? With specific reference to power relations, how do the macro influences (specifically, the state apparatus) of a specific time period influence the construction of a Dougla identity? These are some preliminary questions that may enhance the scholarship on Dougla identity, while also interrogating how power dynamics intersect with knowledge production as well as racial formation in the Trinidadian context.
CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review

Introduction

There has been considerable research attention paid to the child rearing practices of families resident in the Caribbean context. The scope of such attention, however, has mostly focused on parental discipline practices and other techniques associated with children’s intellectual development. Specifically, limited research exists on parent-child interactions that centre on teaching children about race and the significance it holds with respect to identity and relationships with others. In a similar vein, extant scholarship has largely been confined to a singular, specific socialization context: the family. It is also noteworthy that, although research efforts have primarily targeted African Caribbean families (Evans & Davies, 1997), empirical studies have also examined Indo-Caribbean parental socialization practices (e.g., Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, Narine, Logie, & Lape, 2013; Wilson, Wilson, & Berkeley-Caines, 2003).

The purpose of this literature review is to revisit the existing literature on child socialization in the Caribbean with the objective of illustrating the need for additional research on parental and educators’ socialization strategies and children’s racial identity formation and racial attitudes. In order to situate the current argument, I first explore the most significant empirical investigations pertaining to parenting and teaching in the Caribbean. From there, I examine the literature on socialization in the classroom context and then proceed to explore race in the Caribbean and studies on Caribbean children’s racial identification and attitudes. The final section provides a conceptual definition as well as outlines the most frequent race-related messages documented in the existing empirical literature. In doing so, I hope to
highlight key dimensions of racial socialization relevant to the Caribbean context, as well as to articulate a region-specific feature that can be utilized and expanded in future research studies.

Given the vast number of studies conducted on parents’ discipline practices, this chapter commences with an overview of prior research conducted in this area.

**Discipline Practices**

A common theme gleaned from the extant research is that Caribbean parents value obedient, respectful children, but in some cases, extreme methods of behavior management are employed to the desired end. In fact, parents generally utilize “authoritarian and harsh types of discipline” (Brown & Williams, 2006, p. 33), regardless of their socio-economic status (Evans & Davies, 1997; Payne, 1989). Explanations for parents’ prescriptive children rearing have generally been regarded as influenced by religious persuasions, typified by Biblical scripture: “spare the rod and spoil the child” (Arnold, 1982). Another explanation for parents’ harsh disciplinary measures is that “in difficult ecological niches parents see the need to ‘toughen’ children to meet and cope with the challenging realities of life in their community” (Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, Narine, Logie, & Lape, 2013, p. 4). Therefore, in a more positive light, such parenting measures serve as a protective function for Caribbean children.

Although it is readily acknowledged that some Caribbean parents adhere to an authoritarian approach complemented by austere discipline strategies, research has shown that variations exist within this particular type of parenting practice. Payne (1989), for instance, investigated the attitudes of 499 Barbadian parents, aged 20-59, towards corporal punishment. Using questionnaires, the author found that although a substantial number of parents endorsed corporal punishment, they reported that this form of discipline should be executed sparingly
and contingently, not to cause harm. Brown and Johnson’s (2008) qualitative study of child protection and participation rights in Jamaican families—which scrutinized six child focus groups consisting of 60 children between seven and twelve years of age and eight parent focus groups of 44 adults—found comparable results. Findings showed that parents’ approval of corporal punishment was not associated with their actual discipline techniques. In fact, many parents indicated that they employed less severe methods of behavior management to address their child’s behaviour (Brown & Johnson, 2008).

In taking an example specific to the Trinidad context, Barrow and Ince (2008) provide further empirical evidence to support the assertion that Caribbean parents utilize more lenient discipline strategies. Their study is original in two ways. Firstly, it is one of the few to explore socialization of young children (i.e., of pre-school age), and also, to depart from the enduring preoccupation with Jamaican families by including the islands of Trinidad and Dominica. One of the research questions was related to socialization practices of discipline, care, and stimulation. Data was collected with the use of surveys, focus groups, interviews and observations. In addition to families, interviews were also conducted with professionals in various areas, including medicine, education, and social services (p. 8). Findings revealed that communications between parent and child were skewed towards enforcing discipline. Consistent with the aforementioned studies, it was found that parents did not rely on extreme physical discipline and, similar to Brown and Johnson (2008), mothers, unlike fathers, were the main disciplinarians in domestic households.
Nurturance and Gender

Based on a comprehensive review of the research, Brown and Williams (2006) defined nurturance as “…practices that promote positive parent-child interaction, emotional support, parental encouragement of a child’s intellectual curiosity and reflection as well as their approval of children’s emotional expression” (p. 3). Class status mediates such practices, however. For instance, in their study on the relationship between poverty, stress and interaction levels in Jamaican parents, Ricketts and Anderson (2008) found that 56.4% of parents in the above poverty level group reported high levels of interaction with their children. According to Ricketts and Anderson, the interaction index used for this study included behaviours such as “talking with children, showing affection, and recreational activities” (p. 69). Data showed that for high levels of interaction, only 31.7% of parents below the poverty line engaged in these practices.

In line with this, is the commonly reported finding of children experiencing few opportunities for intellectual nurturance in families of lower socio-economic status. Payne and Furnham’s (1992) study with 628 Black Barbadian parents using an altered version of the Block Child Rearing Practices Report showed that, although parents supported emotional and physical nurturance, far less approval was found for practices aligned with promoting children’s intellectual development. With respect to class, however, data showed that parents in professional occupations represented the majority who displayed practices and beliefs related to intellectual nurturance. Landman, Grantham-McGregor, and Desai (1983) yielded somewhat similar results in a study of 75 Jamaican mothers of children between the ages of 31-60 months. The researchers collected data with a questionnaire, consisting of mostly open ended
questions. Of equal interest were parenting practices that supported children’s language development. For instance, researchers investigated the extent to which parents conversed with children and provided responses to their inquiries. Results indicated that “as many as 30 (40%) mothers said they only attempted to answer few questions, perhaps indicating the little importance they attached to this” (p. 44). In a similar vein, Samms-Vaughan (2005; 2008) reported that the longitudinal research on Jamaican children and parenting practices termed, “The Profiles Project,” which commenced in 1999 with 245 children from six parishes in Jamaica, and continued with follow up studies in 2000 and 2002-2003, found that children in poorer households were least likely to have intellectual stimulating interactions with their parents.

Taken together, these research findings indicate parallel relationships between social class and patterns of parental practices of emotional, intellectual, and physical nurturance. Yet such class variables are underscored by a larger socio-historical perspective of the region, much of which manifests in the economic influences that in turn, impact upon family processes. The research findings, however, have spearheaded a range of parent education programmes, most notably in the Jamaican context.

**Gender.** Research literature on child socialization in the Caribbean has also examined Caribbean fathers’ involvement in child rearing. With respect to African Caribbean fathers, Roopnarine (2013) stated that it was generally perceived that they did not play a role in their children’s upbringing, a view that originated from African Caribbean fathers not being in stable, marital relationships. Anderson (2007) cautioned that such analysis fell short in accounting for the dual identities of Caribbean fathers—parent and spouse or partner. In keeping with this
idea, Roopnarine (2013) further elaborated that “recent research investigations have shown that Caribbean men are involved in minding and caring for children, and can be good fathers independent of being family men” (p. 212). In fact, empirical studies have shown that African and Indo-Caribbean fathers assume an active parenting role in their children’s lives (see Anderson, 2007; Brown, Newland, Anderson, & Chevannes, 1997; Roopnarine & Krishnakumar, 2010). Evidence also suggests that parents socialize children along gender lines. Girls, in particular, are commonly reported as socialized to participate in household chores; they also have less autonomy in their social interactions than their male counterparts (Wilson, Wilson, & Berkeley-Caines, 2003).

**Socialization and Classroom Context**

Parents are arguably the child’s principal socializing agents but the classroom context, for instance, “student-teacher interactions” (Berns, 2013, p. 233), and subject material (Brint, Contreras, & Matthews, 2001), also transmit societal values and norms to young children. With specific reference to the Caribbean region, Kempf (2010) addressed one dimension of classroom socialization by examining teachers’ pedagogical practices. Further, Kempf’s (2010) investigation, from extant evidence, seems to be the sole study undertaken in the Caribbean that explores teachers’ strategies for dealing with issues of race and racism in the classroom. His sample consisted of 41 Cuban teachers who participated in a qualitative interview and 150 who also filled out a survey. The sample of teachers who participated in the interview did not consist of pre-school teachers, as the author noted that they were educators from primary, secondary, and pre-university levels (p. 186). Data from the qualitative interviews showed that teachers’ classroom practices were not consistent with an anti-racism approach (p. 269).
In the classroom context, teachers indeed play a significant role in children’s socialization, but it is also important to consider what type of knowledge is embedded in the curriculum to which they are exposed. The curricula dimension of classroom socialization as it pertains to the Caribbean, has generally received more scholarly attention (see London, 2002) but at the pre-school level, Evans and Davis (1997) have argued that teacher directed instruction is the main pedagogical tool. However, the Ministry of Education of Trinidad provides free, play-based early childhood education at government Early Childhood Care and Education centres located across various parts of the island. At these centres, teachers follow the standard ECCE curriculum, which includes such common ‘strands’ as “wellbeing, effective communication, citizenship, intellectual empowerment and aesthetic expressions” (Ministry of Education, ECCE curriculum, 2006, p. 32). Within the citizenship strand, some of the proposed child outcomes are “to value culture, national pride, regional identity, and moral/spiritual” (p. 33).

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that these play based centres coexist with the academic oriented pre-schools, and parents often prefer these institutions because of the emphasis on traditional teaching methods as well as an early introduction to reading, writing, and mathematical concepts such as number sense and geometry. Parents also believe that since primary school is more aligned with the teacher directed approach, academic based pre-school education will allow for a more successful transition to the primary school environment and related instructional activities.
**Caribbean Children and Race**

This study now turns to research devoted to Caribbean children. Barrow and Ince (2008) have maintained that general literature about the Caribbean contains sparse investigations on children, apart from scholarship that has focused on Jamaican children. The paucity of available empirical literature is also evident in specialized areas, most notably, Caribbean children’s racial identity. An exhaustive review of the topical literature revealed only a few studies conducted with the participation of children from the English-speaking islands of the Caribbean, Trinidad, and Jamaica, with a recent investigation published in 2007. Empirical studies undertaken with pre-school children amount to a considerably lower tally, including notable studies by Anderson-Ferguson and Cramer, (2007); Bagley and Young (1988); Cramer and Anderson, (2003) and Gopaul-McNicol (1988; 1992).

One element of racial awareness that consistently attracts scholarly attention pertains to Caribbean children’s racial identification (e.g., Anderson-Ferguson & Cramer, 2007; Cramer & Anderson, 2003). Methodologies generally take the form of quantitative, experimental designs, such as the replication of the Clark & Clark’s (1947) doll test study and pictures representing Black and White children. Identification is measured by a widely used perceived similarity task, that is, directing the child to select a doll or a picture that most resembles him or her. For instance, Cramer and Anderson’s (2003) sample of kindergarten and grade five and six students included 115 rural and 146 urban Jamaican children of African descent, as well as 150 White children residing in New England. In addition to racial identification and attitudes, the authors also examined attitudes towards body size. Materials for this study were eight pictures, with
pairs showing images of Black and White children depicting a “chubby and average size figure” (p. 401).

Findings revealed that, overall, White New England children had higher levels of racial identification than Jamaican children, which also appeared to be a function of age. More specifically, while 96% of the New England kindergarten children identified as White, 38% of rural Jamaican children and 57% of the urban Jamaican children accurately identified with their racial group. However, with the older age group, the fifth and sixth grade students, the study detected a comparable percentage of racial identification among the Jamaican and White children; 93% of the urban and 64% of the rural Jamaican children identified as Black, while 100% of the older New England children identified as White.

Anderson- Ferguson and Cramer (2007) published a related study focusing on skin colour and its relationship to children’s self-esteem. The sample also included urban and rural kindergarten and fifth and sixth grade children of African descent. Using the same self-identification measure (i.e. “Which picture do you look like?”) as the Cramer and Anderson (2003) study, data showed that 68% of the children identified as Black, and when asked who they would like to look like (ideal self-measure), 50% choose their own racial background. An interesting discovery, however, was that when children did not identify as Black and chose the White stimulus as an alternative identity, data showed that those children had higher self-esteem. High self-esteem was also found for rural fairer-skinned children (p. 355).

In addition to children’s racial identification, there has also been attention paid to Caribbean children’s racial attitudes. Bagley and Young (1988) examined 636 pre-school aged children’s attitudes towards color and Black and White stimuli among children in Jamaica,
Britain (London) Canada (Toronto and Calgary) and Ghana. In addition to the children who resided in rural Jamaica and urban Ghana, the sample also consisted of White English children, and children of Jamaican and Ghanaian ancestry in Britain and Canada. The investigators employed the Color Meaning Test (CMT), the Pre-school Racial Attitude Measure (PRAM) and the Ziller self-esteem measure. Findings indicated that children in Ghana evaluated the color black more positively and also had more positive attitudes towards Blacks as measured by the PRAM. On the other hand, in comparison to the rest of the sample, rural Jamaican children showed a higher pro-White bias. However, Bagley and Young pointed out that when these children were tested between 1977-1983, their pro-White bias had decreased. While the authors noted, as one of their objectives, to assess children’s identification, it appears that identity, as evidenced by the results and measures used, most likely referred to children’s attitudes towards their identity, and not necessarily the ability to recognize similarity between themselves and the stimuli set.

Similarly, Gopaul-McNicol’s replica of the doll test study (1992) with children from Jamaica, Grenada, Trinidad, and Barbados revealed that participants identified positive characteristics with the White doll, and preferred the White doll when asked, “Which doll would you like to play with?” Findings did not vary according to a child’s racial background, skin tone, sex, country, and socio-economic status. The sample sections consisted of children from African, European (White) and Chinese descent; the group of Black children included those of dark and lighter skin tones. In addition to Clark and Clark’s (1947) and some of the Gopaul-McNicol’s (1986) and Powell-Hopson’s (1985) questions, the author also asked children to show
her the doll that “was ugly, rich, pretty, and one that looks like me” (i.e., reference to the experimenter) (p. 393).

Common to all these studies are the authors’ explanations for Caribbean children’s racial attitudes. For instance, much of the interpretations indict the legacy of colonialism and slavery in Caribbean countries as contributing factors to children’s pro-White preference. In a more specific vein, Bagley and Young (1979; 1988) maintained that African Jamaican children’s racial perceptions illustrate the effects of slavery, as there were limited opportunities for Africans to practice and to affirm their ancestral culture. In other words, such experiences have caused a lack of knowledge about African identity, thereby facilitating children’s pro-White attitudes. Indeed, the authors noted that “… secure, deeply-rooted black culture fosters healthy identity development in Black children” (Bagley & Young, 1979, p. 57).

Gopaul-McNicol (1992) offered a similar perspective in the sense that the balance of power relations favours Whites, specifically in regard to economic power, despite Caribbean countries being independent nation states. Likewise, Cramer and Anderson (2003) pointed out that in the Jamaican context, lighter skin tones are associated with higher socio-economic status. Cramer and Anderson (2003), however, explained their Jamaican kindergarten children’s lower instances of self-identification could also indicate a lack of racial constancy. Racial constancy denotes that children understand racial identity as permanent across time, and unchanging despite individual modifications to one’s physical appearance (Aboud, 1987).

While the aforementioned studies have presented additional evidence to buttress the claim of White preference and lower levels of identification in children of African descent, research has yet to illustrate how Caribbean children conceive of racial terms and, by extension,
how they formulate an understanding of—including the knowledge that is based on—a particular racial category. In other words, what does it mean to be African or Indo-Caribbean for a pre-school or middle-school aged child? How do children interpret racial terms? This may partially be attributed to the fact that most studies have utilized quantitative designs which have not, at least from a Caribbean perspective, investigated the relationship between children’s conceptualizations of racial terms and self-identification.

Equally disadvantageous, the ongoing focus on Black/White preference and identification uses stimuli that incorporate either Black and White children, or Black and White dolls, to the exclusion of the pronounced presence of other racialized groups in the Caribbean, (for instance, those of Indo descent, as well as multiracial backgrounds). This is not to say that such studies are not significant to the body of literature on children’s racial attitudes. On the contrary, these investigations illustrate the effects of the colonial system on Caribbean children’s perception of racial criteria. On the other hand, existing research on Caribbean children and race usually examines African Caribbean children’s racial attitudes. As a result, the participation of children from Indo-Caribbean and mixed ancestry, albeit unintentionally, are remarkably absent in the empirical discourse. In order for the research to meaningfully connect to children’s realities, it should reasonably account for the population diversity of the specific Caribbean society and not necessarily impose a race relations reference point (i.e., Black-White binary).

In the foregoing section, I examined earlier studies of race and children in the Caribbean, highlighting similarities in the research and areas that require further investigation. One such area is qualitative inquiries on how children’s understanding of racial terms mediates
the construction of their racial identity. Caribbean family processes scholarship, as well as the literature on classroom socialization, neglects the topic of race and also the factors that may impinge upon the prevalence of racial socialization practices enacted by Caribbean parents and educators. Given this limitation, I provide my own conceptualization of a specific anti-colonial paradigm of racial socialization, and conclude with a call for subsequent studies to address the paucity of research exploring race-related issues facing Caribbean children, their families, and educators.

**Racial Socialization and the Caribbean: Towards an Anti-Colonial Paradigm**

Racial socialization scholarship affirms the agency of African American parents by conceptualizing their child rearing practices as unique and, further, grounding these within a critical analysis of racism in the American context. This critical field shifts the focus from prevailing, negative representations of African American parenting in order to bring attention to child rearing techniques that empower children about their racial identities and prepare them to confront (though not actively challenge) incidents of racism. Research on teachers’ racial socialization strategies is less prevalent but a few studies have examined educators’ racial attitudes as these relate to children’s in-group and out-group attitudes (e.g., Smith, Atkins, & Connell, 2003) and teachers’ racial socialization practices (e.g., McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2003). The following section interweaves racial socialization research with related topics in Caribbean scholarly literature, and addresses a context-specific dimension of racial socialization developed for the purpose of this study.

African American studies have shown that (e.g., Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Spencer, 1983) cultural socialization, defined as the practice of
either verbal or non-verbal communication which parents employ to foster children’s pride in their racial identity, is a dominant theme in the racial socialization literature (Hughes et al., 2006). Be that as it may, in the Caribbean context, while much literature exists on Indo, mixed, and African Caribbean identity (e.g., Abraham, 2001; England, 2008; Khan, 1993; Reddock; 1994/2001; 1999), to my knowledge, no information exists on the process of racial identity formation of Caribbean parents and educators, the content of such perceptions, and how such deep-seated tenets may apply in their child rearing practice. More importantly, several questions remain unanswered pertaining to racial identity, anti-colonialism, and anti-racism in Caribbean spaces that for the most part promote nationalist rhetoric. For instance, what knowledge do parents and educators have at their disposal to teach children about their respective racial identities? What did their parents teach them? Is this the same information they use in their parenting practices?

Another category that scholars have explored in the racial socialization literature is the strategies parents use to inform children about racism and how to manage racist episodes, termed ‘preparation for bias’ (see McHale et al., 2006; Wang & Huguley, 2012). Parents of younger children, however, are most likely to delay this approach until children are older, and instead, prefer cultural socialization (Hughes & Chen, 1997). Arguably, preparation for racism is a much-needed dimension worthy of incorporation in the Caribbean racial socialization research, but I propose a context-specific element more suited to an authentic approximation of the Caribbean region, given that the racial antagonisms are, for the most part, enacted among other racial groups. I have termed this component “anti-racism practices,” for the phrase addresses one of the main precepts of anti-colonial theory, most notably, the act of
disrupting the “othering” process and, likewise, the divisions and suspicions among formerly colonized groups.

By using children’s historical literature as an general entrée, I propose discussions with pre-school children on the history of Trinidad, focusing on how specific racial criteria achieved its “social currency,” coupled with an examination of local cultural figures that have fomented anti-colonial resistance and change. The layperson may argue that such an approach offers “too much” of a cognitive challenge for young children. I beg to defer, on the grounds that children can, and indeed should, participate in discussions about race. In fact, as I will show in the discussion chapter, ample literature exists confirming the need for children’s participation in anti-racism conversations.

Furthermore, decolonization is usually conceptualized from a scholarly perspective. Are parents and educators in the Caribbean practicing appreciable forms of early childhood decolonization with children? What would such practices involve? This study, then, can be classified as more than an investigation on child rearing and socialization in the Caribbean. It is the nascent foundation for future attempts at formulating a family processes and educational decolonization discourse (regionally specific and relevant to the Caribbean, and aligned with an anti-colonial paradigm of identity and intergroup relations for children, parents, and educators). Therefore, it is concerned with, at the primary level, exploring what parents and educators do as socializing agents with respect to honouring racial ancestry and to cultivating anti-colonial/anti-racism social relations. From there, it is hoped that future work will enrich this incipient exploration by creating further dialogue on racial socialization in the Caribbean,
children’s knowledge of their racial identities and positive attitudes towards other racial groups.

**Children and Race: An Overview**

The literature on children and race in the Caribbean has, in broad terms, simply extended studies conducted in the United States and Canada. To give the reader a sense of the origins of these studies, main areas examined, and the findings and methodologies used, I devote the ensuing section to exploring seminal studies and contemporary replications.

The focus of earlier studies (see Clark & Clark, 1939; Horowitz, 1939) on children and race was directed towards discovering at what specific age children developed an awareness of themselves as individual human beings, who can also be classified as members of a racial group. Clark and Clark (1939), for instance, investigated racial identification and self-concept of African American children aged three to five with a slightly altered version of Horowitz’s (1939) research instrument. The stimuli entailed three sets of line drawings that depicted a lion, a dog, a clown, a hen, White boys, and African American boys. Children were asked to show the researcher which drawing most accurately resembled them. Girls, however, were asked to select an image that looked like their “brother, boy cousin or boy playmate” (p. 594).

Data revealed that while 14.7% of three-year-olds made irrelevant choices (e.g., lion, hen, and dog) for their self-identification, this trend was not apparent for the sample of children aged four and five. Furthermore, additional findings indicated that identification with the African American boy was strongly related to the age of participants. Specifically, in comparison to the three-year-olds, a substantially higher number of five-year-olds identified with the African American boy; nevertheless, there was a negligible percentile discrepancy
between the identification selections of the four and five-year-olds. Thus, the authors conclude that “the greatest (most significant) amount of development in self-consciousness and racial identification occurs between the third and fourth years” (Clark & Clark, 1939, p. 597) and that skin colour guides self-identification (Clark & Clark, 1940).

Children’s recognition of similar racial criteria between themselves and stimuli representing their racial group reflects what is commonly referred to as racial awareness. Porter (1971) defined racial awareness as the “knowledge of the social definition of racial differences and of the perceptual cues by which one classifies people into these divisions” (p. 49). In other words, a child is “racially aware” if s/he can discern and categorize physical characteristics such as skin colour, hair texture and facial features, as well as demonstrate knowledge of racial terms.

**Race awareness.** In the 1950s, various studies conducted on children’s racial awareness tended to ask children to identify the similarities and differences in racial cues represented in pictures, puzzles, or photographs. For instance, Stevenson and Stewart (1958) investigated 225 three to seven-year-olds’ ability to discern racial differences. The authors also examined racial preference and attitudes. In terms of racial group representation, the sample consisted of 125 White children and 100 African American children. The research materials for this study included dolls, stories, a discrimination test, and a doll assembly task. For the discrimination test, children were presented with 20 cards which depicted objects and children of different genders and races. Eight filler cards also portrayed three objects, either in colour photographs or via line drawings (p. 400). With respect to race, there were three sets of cards; each set consisted of four cards. Set one and three depicted African American and White children of
both genders, whereas in set two, “the figures were of all the same sex” (p. 400). Data revealed a relationship between age, race and children’s racial awareness. More specifically, the results from set two and set three of the discrimination test indicated that older children from both groups, as well as a greater proportion of White children, attributed race to the reason why the pictures presented were different from others in the set.

Similarly, Ammons (1950) measured children’s recognition of racial differences with the projective doll interview. The sample consisted of 40 White males between the ages of two and six, with 10 children in each of the age groups. To test children’s racial awareness, the author used one African American doll and one White doll. These materials were set up in a “miniature equipped playground” (p. 325). The interviewer invited the child to look at the materials and then asked: “Here are two little boys who would like to play on this playground. Do they look the same? How are they different?” (p. 326). Similar to Stevenson and Stewart (1958), Ammons (1950) found that age also contributed to a degree of children’s racial awareness.

More specifically, only 20% of the two-year-olds recognized that the dolls were different, in contrast to 100% of the five-year-olds. Unlike Stevenson and Stewart (1958), however, Ammons (1950), asked children to provide justifications for their response. Again, age emerged as a significant variable. None of the youngest children were able to provide an answer. However, two of the three-year-olds, five of the four-year-olds, and seven of the five-year-olds indicated that the difference was based on skin colour. However, responses from children aged four and five contained negative attitudes towards the African American group, thereby lending credence to the assertion that racial awareness develops simultaneously with the development of in-group and out-group racial attitudes.
Other empirical investigations of a later era examined children’s racial awareness using classification tasks such as matching, sorting and categorization. For instance, Porter (1971) employed similar methodological procedures in her study of the racial awareness of African American and White pre-school children. In one of the research tasks, the experimenter introduced the activity by selecting a doll representative of the child’s sex and asking the child to find the doll’s mother. From there, the child completed the family set by selecting the doll’s brother and sister (p. 46). The child also did the same activity using dolls of the opposite gender. It was discovered that when “race, class, and gender factors were controlled, three and four-year-old children match families with about the same degree of accuracy” (p. 74). Nevertheless, more five-year-olds than children in the younger age groups paired the dolls correctly.

Porter’s (1971) study confirmed that children can discern racial differences such as skin colour. Expanding on this finding, but taking a somewhat different approach, Sorce (1979) sought to examine whether skin colour was the most salient criteria for children’s racial classification. The author employed a series of sketches depicting a male figure which represented racial features of African Americans and Whites such as skin colour, hair texture, colour of eyes, and shape of nose and lips. A non-racial characteristic was also included in the stimuli set. In four of the sketches, the male figure was clothed in a green shirt, and in the other four, an orange shirt (p. 36). This study was conducted with 72 middle class pre-school children. The discrimination task consisted of three trials in which children were to distinguish the pictures on the basis of skin colour (first trial), hair and eye region (second trial), and nose and mouth region (third trial). In each of the trials, the experimenter presented the child with two
sketches, and asked whether they were the same or different. If the child indicated that there was a difference, Sorce (1979) asked the child to provide a reason for his or her response.

Next, participants completed a classification task which required them to sort the eight sketches into two piles that represented similar attributes. The experimenter also asked children to provide a rationale for the categories they had created. After, the pictures were rearranged and the children were to group the stimuli using alternative criteria. Results showed that for the discrimination task, children discerned skin colour more readily than hair and eye features. To further test children’s racial awareness, the author examined the classification data from children who accurately discerned skin colour difference among the stimuli set. Based on the classification data, findings indicated that children who made groupings according to racial features most often classified the hair-eye criteria as opposed to skin colour. Sorce (1979) further elaborated that “their subsequent verbal justifications indicated that hair texture and hair color were almost unanimously attended to rather than eye characteristics” (p. 40). Thus, it appears that the prominence of racial cues for young children differed depending on the procedures for each racial awareness task.

A more contemporary study reveals that children frequently devise and adhere to categories along dimensions other than skin colour. Lam, Guerrero, Damree, and Enesco (2011), sampled 125 White, Black and Asian children aged three to five. The authors used eight photos of White, Black, and Asian children of both sexes, depicted wearing blue and orange clothing. In order to determine whether the child primarily attended to racial cues, the authors employed the person classification task, which involved presenting the child with the eight photographs and the experimenter asking the child “to put together the ones that go together” (p. 850).
Data showed that only a small percentage of children used race to classify the photos. In fact, 53% of the children classified according to clothes, whereas 22% relied on gender.

In summary, studies have shown that around as early as age three, children are aware of racial differences, the most notable being skin colour. However, children can also discern other racial characteristics, such as hair texture. In terms of classification, it appears that when not directly asked to indicate similarity and differences, race may be least salient to children. Perhaps the reason is that tasks involving “same or different” questions contain an implicit comparison to self. Therefore, children will discern what is most relevant to their racial identification. However, when presented with classification tasks, children may perceive these as not pertaining to their physical appearance and, as such, use characteristics that they may be aware of, but not necessarily what they may have identified as similar to themselves. However, when children use non-racial criteria, an alternative explanation is that race is not salient to the child. An important caveat to raise here, however, is that while young children may perceive the variation of skin tones, and other racial criteria, it should not be construed that they have an abstract understanding of race. Yet to merge colour distinctions with racial group membership illustrates a nascent cognizance of social categories as these pertain to observed physical differences among racial groups.

While children are acquiring awareness in race differences from an early age, evidence suggests that they are also becoming concurrently aware of racial categories, and this ability advances with age. In fact, recognition of racial designations is another dimension of racial awareness. Clark and Clark’s (1947) doll test study is one of the earliest studies to investigate children’s knowledge of racial terms. Using a sample of 253 three to seven-year-olds, the
authors assessed African American children’s racial awareness, preference and identification. Participants attended segregated nursery and public schools in the South, and racially mixed nursery and public schools in the North. Four dolls were used for this investigation, which varied only in skin and hair colour. When the child was presented with the doll, s/he was instructed:

1. Give me the doll that you like to play with
2. Give me the doll that is a nice doll
3. Give me the doll that looks bad
4. Give me the doll that is a nice colour
5. Give me the doll that looks like a White child
6. Give me the doll that looks like a ‘colored’ child
7. Give me the doll that looks like a ‘Negro’ child
8. Give me the doll that looks like you. (p. 169)

Questions five, six, and seven were to measure the degree to which children understood racial labels associated with racial differences. The authors reported that 94% of children accurately pointed out the White doll, with 93% choosing the brown doll when the experimenter asked for the “colored” doll and 72% choosing the same doll when asked for the “Negro” doll (p. 170). Thus, a greater number of children demonstrated knowledge of the terms “White” and “colored.”

Conversely, a noticeably lower number understood the term “Negro.” While it can be argued that this might be attributable to the fact that both “White” and “colored” are loaded with color connotations, the authors defended the findings by referring to other measurements
including a coloring test, a questionnaire, and qualitative data, which, according to them, “strongly support a knowledge of racial differences” (Clark & Clark, 1947, p. 171). Also, it is quite evident from the quantitative data that older children were more aware of racial terms, since 85% of the seven-year-olds selected the brown doll for the label “Negro” as opposed to 61% of the five-year-olds, and 78% percent of the six-year-olds.

After Clark and Clark’s (1947) study, there were other investigations of children’s familiarity with racial labels. In Morland’s (1958) research, for example, he tested 454 African American and White children between the ages of three and six. In contrast to the dolls instrument, the author used a series of pictures depicting both White and African American children and adults. In response to Clark and Clark’s (1947) study in which children had one attempt to identify dolls as “Negro,” “White” or “colored,” Morland (1958)’s research task provided participants with a total of 16 opportunities to locate the stimuli that represented “Negroes and Whites.” For each picture, the interviewer asked the child, “Do you see a White person in this picture?” and “Do you see a colored person in this picture?” After each question, if the child answered with a positive response, he/she was instructed to point to the picture that represented either a White or colored person (p. 133).

The author discovered that knowledge of racial terms increased significantly with age. For instance, a vast majority of six-year-olds (92.5%) identified the pictures of “colored” and “White” children. Nonetheless, a substantial number of five-year-olds (78.4%) also demonstrated an awareness of racial designations. Using a chi-square test, Morland (1958) also concluded that White children aged four and five identified the stimuli representing “White”
and “colored” groups more accurately than African American children from the same age group.

This pattern of children’s recognition of racial labels as applied to racial differences continued into the 1970s. For instance, using a modified version of Clark and Clark’s (1947) doll test, Hunsberger (1978) addressed the racial awareness and preference of 63 Canadian Indian children and 108 White children in the five to nine-year-old age range. The author divided the sample into a younger group (five and six-year-olds) and an older group who encompassed seven, eight, and nine-year-olds. Given the change in demographic, the examiner asked the children to select the Indian doll instead of the “Negro” and colored doll. The author reported an accuracy response of 96% for the questions that measured knowledge of racial terms. However, this could also be a function of children’s various ages because the sample did not comprise of children younger than five years old.

Later, Liu and Blila (1992) would assess the racial awareness of 158 White, Hispanic, African American, Native American, and Asian American descent children between the ages of three and ten. Part of the research procedure was to tap into and document children’s knowledge of racial terms. In contrast to earlier studies, the researcher did not present racial labels to the child but instead directly inquired, “What do you call these people?” (p.14). It was found that “very few children taking part in this survey expressed any racial terms while being interviewed; however, racial terms in the form of epithets were heard being used while the children were playing” (p. 41). Thus, children not expressing knowledge of racial terms may reflect a social desirability effect, and not necessarily a lack of familiarity with such descriptors.

An interesting ethnographic study by Holmes (1995) showed a similar approach with respect to
assessing children’s knowledge of racial terms. In an interview format, she gauged children’s perception of social categories with the question: “What kinds of people do you think there are?” (p. 41). Unlike Liu and Blila (1992), a substantial number of children responded by referring to skin colour (brown, white and black). However, a smaller percentage of children also stated racial terms (Japanese, Chinese and Spanish).

Based on the foregoing studies, several conclusions can be drawn. First, as Porter (1971) had illustrated, racial awareness includes recognition of racial terms or labels and the associated physical differences that correspond to such groups. Historically, studies have examined both of these dimensions. To measure children’s racial awareness, researchers have generally relied on questions that asked children to indicate similarities and differences among stimuli sets representing African American and White physical characteristics. To assess racial terms, questions such as “point to the White or Black” stimulus have also been used. However, as indicated earlier, recent research—for example, Myers’s (2002) work—has utilized a more general question to ascertain if children classify according to race, and what terms they would use to do so. Myers’s (2002) question was: “What kind of people are there in the world?” (p. 172). In response to this question, children expressed skin colour as well as racial terms.

Taken together, these studies indicate that the pre-school age range is the critical period in which racial awareness develops (three to five). Further, racial awareness ability includes perceptual differentiation, primarily skin colour and knowledge of racial terms, and increases with age. On another note, there are some limitations in the existing scholarship. Regarding racial terminology, scant research addresses how children acquire these racial perceptions, and the depth of their understanding of what the terms themselves actually mean.
To clarify further, a child’s perceptual ability to match physical differences to group labels, to a conditional extent, sheds partial light on the broader and more extensive knowledge base of his or her identity. In other words, racial group membership extends beyond appearances; it also encompasses history, cultural knowledge, and other diverse features that distinguish each group.

Thus, important questions remain: Are Trinidadian parents and or teachers actively instructing children about their racial identity? And if they are, what is the content of such knowledge? Taking the classroom context into consideration, how do teachers contribute to what children know and think about race? More broadly, how do the discursive social practices, etched through the coercions of socio-political and institutional processes, in the context in which children are educated, contribute to their racialized thinking? These issues underscore the subtext of racial socialization that the present study explores in order to advance scholarship within the scope of parenting practices and the education system, and its corresponding effects on children’s racial identities and attitudes.

**Racial identification.** Aboud (1987) conceptualized a child’s racial-self-identification as the “description of oneself in terms of a critical ethnic attribute” (p. 33). Other dimensions of self-identification, according to Aboud, include the child’s ability to discern a particular characteristic that is distinct to his or her racial group, and racial constancy. Racial constancy involves the awareness that race is fixed, despite growing older (continuity), and also refers to the permanence of race despite potential modification of one’s appearance (Aboud, 1987). Many of the measures employed in empirical research follow from these central theoretical underpinnings. Notably, to discern perceived similarity, children are asked, “Which looks like
you?" and, as for self-identification questions, racial labels are used; for example, “Are you White?” or “Are you Black?” (see Pauker, Ambady, & Apfelbaum, 2010).

Also commonly used is a categorization task wherein children are instructed to classify groups of photographs or pictures according to a specific racial category. For example, in Aboud’s (1995) study, 66 Black English-speaking kindergarten and third grade students in Montreal completed a self-categorization task in which they classified photographs of Black, White, and Amerindian children into separate groups, with a directive to put the photographs into piles that “went together.” Children also received a photo that looked like themselves. Data revealed that participants from both age groups accurately categorized their photo with the stimuli set that depicted their racial group.

**Misidentification.** Research on children’s racial identification has often reported a pattern of misidentification among African American children. This was most pronounced in studies where children were asked to select the dolls or photos that most resembled themselves (Aboud, 1987). Such results were also most apparent during the 1950s, but changed somewhat in the 1970s. For example, in Clark and Clark’s (1947) study, findings showed that 80% of light skinned children chose the White doll, 73% of medium brown children chose the Black doll, and 81% of darker-skin toned children chose the Black doll. Accordingly, findings from this study showed that Black children did not reject their racial identification. However, Morland’s (1963) study of 407 African American and White children aged three-to-six from six nursery schools, revealed contrasting results. The test instrument was a set of pictures depicting African American and White children of both sexes, and one adult female from each of the racial groups. The picture test measured racial identification in three ways: appearance
(“Do you look like this child?”), self-identification in being (“Would you like to be this child?”), and racial identification of the mother-figure. In another procedure, the researcher simply asked children whether they were “colored,” or White (p. 239).

The author reported several findings based on the data analyzed in this study. Firstly, no discernible relationship was apparent between age and children’s racial identification. More specifically, African American children, across all age groups, overwhelming identified with the White group in all three measures of racial identification. For instance, in the self-identification appearance measure, 54% of African American children stated they looked more like the White child. A similar finding emerged for the verbal identification using racial terms. Whereas 98.3% of White children stated they were White, only 57.1% of African American children accurately self-identified. Morland (1963) explained the research findings as indicative of the fact that children were aware of the class distinctions between Whites and African Americans in American society, insofar as the White group represented economic power and higher socio-economic status.

In contrast, the 1970s brought a more optimistic outlook vis-à-vis the racial identification of African American children (Fine & Bowers, 1983). An emphasis on the embracing of ancestry, and the refutation of prevailing derogatory stereotypes, respectively informed an emergent consciousness known as “Black pride.” Studies have shown that because of the social transformation occurring at that time, African American children were more likely to feel proud of their race, and that such racial pride positively influenced their self-identification. One widely cited example is Fox and Jordan’s (1973) repeat of Clark and Clark’s (1947) doll test study. Their sample consisted of 360 African American children, 360 American
Chinese children, and 654 White children, ranging in age from five to seven years old. The research materials included a set of male and female African American and White dolls, along with a set of photographs of Chinese and White boys and girls. The doll stimuli was used with 360 White participants, whereas the other half of the group was shown the photographs of Chinese and White children. Fox and Jordan (1973) found that “...significantly fewer children in the present study chose the white doll as the one which looked like themselves” (Fox & Jordan, p. 255).

Positive group identification has also been documented in another study during the same era. Simon (1974) assessed the racial awareness, racial identification, and racial preference of 366 children. One of the research instruments was the Clark and Clark (1947) doll test. Results showed that African American children displayed higher self-identification than in earlier studies. For instance, in the doll test, 76% selected the African American stimulus in response to the self-identification question.

In the 1980s, however, researchers documented a change in this trend, lending further credence to the impetus that societal attitudes at a given point in time significantly impact children’s racial attitudes towards their own racial group. To illustrate further, some studies conducted in the 1980s, a period of decreased racial consciousness, Black pride, and collective movements by comparison to the late 1960s, noted a reversal of in-group identification. For instance, when Fine and Bowers (1984) replicated the doll test study with 58 children aged four to six, they discovered that 69% of children identified with the Black doll. Likewise, Morland and Hwang (1981) reported somewhat comparable results with their sample of African American, White, and Chinese children from Taiwan and Hong Kong. By applying the Morland Picture
Interview, they discovered that, in regard to self-perception (i.e., “Which one do you look more like?”), a mere 49.1% of African American children identified with the accurate stimulus, as opposed to 82.1% of the White children.

There is recent evidence, however, of more positive in-group identification of children of African descent. For instance, Davis, Leman, and Barrett (2007) reported different findings in their study of 112 British White children and British Black children of African Caribbean or African ancestry. Children who participated in this study were between the ages of five and nine. Results showed accurate self-identification for race and ethnicity. Children’s racial identification was based on skin colour, while ethnic identification was related to their familial country of origin (Davis, Leman, & Barrett, 2007).

From the inception of children and race scholarship, various explanations have been put forth to explain why African American children, who are aware of racial differences, identify with the dominant group. One common argument critiques the research instrument of past studies (most notably, the Clark and Clark, (1947) doll test), as limited in the options of skin tones available for children to accurately self-identify. This was also the thrust of Greenwald and Oppenheim’s (1968) investigation. The authors discovered that an inclusion of a “mulatto” doll reduced the incidents of misidentification in light-skinned children to 11%, in contrast to 80% reported by Clark and Clark (1947).

The concept of racial constancy also offers additional interpretations (see Aboud, 1987; 1988). This perspective explains children’s inaccurate identification as emblematic of their distinct cognitive processes, which determine how they attend to racial cues. Specifically, unless children acquire racial constancy, or the awareness that their race is constant regardless
of superficial changes—for example, clothing or costumes—misidentification is more lightly to signify an underlying affective factor in which the child identifies with the group that he or she prefers. Apart from the role of cognition, a child’s racial attitudes may be a corollary of the societal race relations to which he or she is exposed. Indeed, as discussed earlier, children’s perception of others may reflect race-relations specific to a given context. Taken together, it stands to reason that children’s evaluations of racial groups derive from age-related cognitions as well as social-cultural factors.

**Racial attitudes: Key findings and research measures.** Studies of children and race have often, since the landmark doll test study, simultaneously examined children’s racial awareness, identification, and attitudes. Aboud (1988) indicated that children first exhibit racial attitudes around the ages of three and four. However, it is interesting to note that a separate pattern of results has been consistently documented for Black children (Aboud, 1988). In comparison to White children, who show high levels of own-group preference, studies have reported that Black children, prior to age seven, display both in-group pride and out-group preference (Aboud, 1988). More specifically, research indicates an age-related shift in Black children’s in-group and out-group evaluations, for children between the ages of five and seven tend to hold more pro-Black attitudes than their four-year-old counterparts (Aboud & Skerry, 1984). These findings have been interpreted by some as evidence of the impact of the socio-cultural environment on the child’s developing race knowledge, as well as the effects of cognitive processes (for example, racial constancy) which may influence how children develop positive in-group attitudes. For instance, in Aboud and Doyle’s (1995) study, children who showed racial
constancy also displayed pro-Black attitudes. Semaj (1980) reported similar findings, but across a sample of four to seven-year-olds.

Generally, techniques used to assess children’s racial attitudes fall within the domain of experimental tasks with stimuli such as dolls, pictures, and photographs. Among them is the widely utilized—and critiqued—doll test study conducted by Clark and Clark (1947). Their investigative procedure consists of presenting four dolls, two of each gender, with different in skin colour and hair colour. Participants are then posed a series of eight questions related to racial identification, racial awareness and racial preference/attitudes. An earlier study, for example, Crook’s (1970), replicated the doll test technique using a sample of 68 four and five-year-old African American and White children. An additional purpose of the study intended to determine whether an interracial pre-school program “characterized by a numerical balance between Negro and White Children and a deliberate attempt on the part of Negro and White teachers to create an atmosphere of racial understanding and self-respect” (p. 138), would influence children’s racial identification, preference, and knowledge of racial differences. Data revealed that African American and White children in the experimental group displayed more pro-Black attitudes than children who were not exposed to the interracial program.

Friedman (1980) presented similar findings based on a sample of 120 European-American children in homogenous and multiracial schools. Participants were primary students, in kindergarten and grades one and three. Similar to earlier studies, for the terms “nice color,” “likes best,” and “would like to play with,” more children selected the White doll. However, for question three (the nice doll), a slight difference was observed in the choices of Black and White dolls: whereas 61 children chose the White doll, 56 selected the Black doll. Equally
important was the relationship between children’s school context and their preference choices. That is, for students in the multiracial school, the White doll was not disproportionately selected in response to the majority of positive questions. Also, preference for the White doll declined as children grew older, as evidenced in the relatively proportionate selections of Black and White dolls by grade three students.

More recently, the Jordan and Hernandez-Reif study (2009) provided children with cartoon images of different skin tones (e.g., white, light brown, medium brown and black). In addition, to prevent the forced choice outcome in which children chose one stimulus over the other, the author allowed children to answer “neither or both” (p. 392) to the item questions. Across this sample of 40 African American and White pre-school children, the authors examined children’s evaluations of a range of skin tones to determine whether a moral story (the intervention component)—could alter their preferences. The questions resembled that of Clark and Clark (1947), namely, 1) “who would you like as a playmate or best friend?”, 2) “looks nice?”, 3) “looks bad?”, 4) “has a nice skin color?”, 5)“looks like a White child?”, 6) “looks like a Black child?”, 7) “looks like you?” (p. 394). Posttest results indicated that fewer African American children viewed the Black stimulus “as the one that looks bad” (p. 401). For White children, however, a change in preference was not observed; rather, their association of “bad” with the Black stimulus remained a constant despite exposure to the intervention component.

In a related vein, Stokes-Guinan (2011) examined Hispanic children’s in-group and out-group attitudes towards White Americans, African Americans and Asians as a function of age, gender, and skin tone. The sample consisted of 116 children between the ages of three and 10. One of the research procedures involved presenting a doll, followed by 11 positive and 11
negative labels. The child is instructed that if the label fits, s/he can place it in front of the doll, or discard the label in a garbage can (p. 8). Findings are somewhat consistent with the pro-White bias found in earlier investigations. Hispanic children selected the White doll for positive labels more often than the African American and Asian doll.

Despite the substantial evidence confirming pro-White bias in African American and White children, Cameron, Alvarez, Ruble, and Fuligni, (2001), have critiqued the doll test study as a forced choice method. The argument holds that the child may not harbour negative attitudes for the racial group but, because of the limited choices, may assign these to an out-group member in an attempt to escape having to associate his or her group with unfavourable traits (Kowalski, 2003). Given the varied criticisms of the doll test, the majority of studies conducted after 1974, have implemented photographs as their primary research instrument to examine children’s racial attitudes (Phomphakdy, 2005).

The use of photographs to assess children's racial attitudes is closely linked to Williams, Best, Boswell, Mattson, and Graves’s (1975) PRAM II benchmark (Pre-school Racial Attitude Measure). In the first version of the PRAM, children were read a series of short stories consisting of six positive and six negative adjectives. The narratives are accompanied by pictures of “two human figures, one with pinkish-tan skin and blonde hair (“Caucasian”), the other with medium-brown skin with black hair” (“Negro”) (p. 4). Children were then asked to indicate which picture best fits the accompanying description. The second version, on the other hand, assessed racial attitudes and children’s cognizance of gender stereotypes (Williams et al., 1975). Also added to the PRAM II were images depicting children and adults. The PRAM II also contains 24 adjectives. Nevertheless, the procedure is the same in that the child must associate
one of the photos with either a positive or negative adjective. For example: “Here are two boys. One of them is a kind little boy. Once he saw a kitten fall into a lake and he picked the kitten up to save it from drowning. Which is the kind little boy?” (p. 9).

In the 1980s and 1990s, some scholars used the PRAM II to assess children’s racial attitudes (see Aboud & Doyle 1996; Branche & Newcombe, 1986; Doyle & Aboud, 1995). For instance, the Justice, Lindsey, and Morrow (1999) study with African American children revealed findings consistent with previous research. Their study examined how self-esteem, self-concept, and racial preference corresponded to the academic achievement of 56 African American children. In relation to the racial attitude findings, as in previous studies, children assigned positive attributes to the White stimuli. Nevertheless, similar to the doll test study, the pre-school racial attitude measure is subject to critique as a forced choice method since the child can only select one stimulus in response to the questions posed (Tredoux, Noor, & de Paulo, 2009). Nonetheless, PRAM II is not a complicated measurement, and the relatively familiar descriptors (e.g., nice, bad, and kind) are readily understood by children (Tredoux, Noor, & de Paulo, 2009).

To address the flaws of the Pre-School Racial Attitude Measure, Doyle and Aboud (1995) developed the Multi-Response Racial Attitude Measure. It is differentiated from the PRAM as it allows children to assign evaluative terms to more than one group, as opposed to the forced choice format of previous measures. For instance, in Aboud’s (2003) research with 80 White Canadian children aged three to six (study one), and 36 kindergarten children (study two), participants were asked to place a card featuring a pictorial example of the adjective into boxes labeled as belonging to a White, Native Indian, and Black child. A picture illustrating a head,
which varied only by apparent skin colour and hair texture, was attached to each of the three boxes and corresponded to the gender of the participant. An example of one of the phrases, which was read aloud by the researcher, is: “Some children are naughty. They often do things like drawing on the wall with crayons. Who is naughty? Is it the Black child the White child, the Indian child or more than one child who is naughty?” (p. 50). The MRA also consisted of ten positive and ten negative adjectives. Results revealed that five and six-year-olds rated their group more positively than the out-groups.

Likewise, Black-Gutman and Hickson (1996) examined how 122 European Australian children in the age ranges of five to six, seven to nine, and 10-12, evaluated persons of Euro-Australian, Aboriginal and Asian descent. Their findings did not vary from the aforementioned conclusions, as European Australian children generally preferred their own group; however, results also showed a positive evaluation of Asian Australians. Also, a higher distribution of negative adjectives for the stimuli depicting Aboriginal persons was found for the youngest cohort as well as the 10-12 year olds, while data showed a reverse trend for children between the ages of seven and nine.

While several researchers have used the doll test study and the PRAM to assess children’s racial attitudes, recent scholarship validates another instructive measure known as the child-friendly version of the Implicit Association Test. Using this measure, Baron and Banaji (2006) assessed the implicit and explicit racial attitudes of six-year-olds, 10-year-olds, and adults. The authors indicated that pictorial stimuli representing African American and White children were presented on a computer screen, and via the computer speakers, children heard
four positive and four negative descriptors. The researchers reported that in the younger age group, both implicit and explicit racial attitudes showed a pro-White bias.

In sum, researchers commonly assess children’s racial attitudes using photographs, dolls, and the modified version of the Implicit Association Test. Each task has its own strength, and as ample empirical studies have shown, sheds light on the intricate nature of children’s in-group and out-group evaluations.

**Summary**

Accumulating studies indicate that children’s racial identification and attitudes remain an area of ongoing research. The most salient conclusion that has been generally supported is that children as young as three can recognize racial differences based on physical characteristics including skin colour and hair texture. Another core dimension of children’s race knowledge is their ability to identify with their respective racial group(s). While the majority of empirical investigations have examined identification in terms of perceptual similarity and societal labels, considerably less work extends beyond these limited criteria to examine the underlying meanings children ascribe to such labels.

Conversely, research on racial attitudes reveals a prevailing pro-White bias amongst both White and African American children. However, it has been reported that older African American children, starting around seven years of age, display more positive in-group attitudes (Aboud, 1988). Previous investigations and some contemporary studies have employed forced choice techniques, a procedure involving the selection of either an African American or White stimulus in response to stories or hypothetical scenarios containing positive and negative adjectives. Despite their findings of Eurocentric preference, these techniques have garnered a
wide range of criticism. Consequently, more contemporary work adopts an increasingly practical evaluative approach to account for the use of implicit measures (e.g., Baron & Banaji, 2006) and ethnographic/observational studies (e.g., Connolly, 2000; Holmes, 1995; Myers, 2002; Park, 2011; Van Feagin & Ausdale, 2001).
CHAPTER FOUR

Theoretical Framework

Towards an Anti-colonial Caribbean Theory

Introduction

In general terms, a theoretical framework consists of concepts applicable to the explanation of a particular phenomenon and, in the case of empirical investigations; to contextualize research findings, as well as to offer an alternate exegesis should the data reveal inconsistencies with earlier inquiries. The present research aims to establish a Caribbean perspective on the intersecting topics of children, race, and family processes. However, while ample literature on Caribbean social theories pertinent to race exists, to be discussed later in this chapter, it proved challenging to locate a theoretical framework generated either within Caribbean assessments or by a Caribbean scholar who specifically addressed race and racial identity from an interdisciplinary perspective. Furthermore, a comparative historical analysis, such as including the Indigenous experience in the socio-historical narrative of the Caribbean space (in particular, as it converges with similar trends of colonial oppression, violence, and resistance) is also lacking in existing theoretical literature.

Moreover, with the exception of Caribbean literature, discourses that attempt to explain Caribbean societies have largely ignored the significance of Caribbean colonial childhoods in the articulation of race as it related to issues of identity and social relations within the colonial environment. Thus, my conception of anti-colonial Caribbean theory was borne out of what I perceived as perceptible gaps in the extant scholarship. Nevertheless, it should be noted that apart from the theoretical domain, there is evidence to suggest that anti-colonial
praxis occurred (and still occurs) within Caribbean societies. For instance, the race-consciousness movement of the 1930’s among middle class African Trinidadians (see Singh, 1994), the Black power movement in Trinidad, as well as the contemporary Afrocentric narrative (see Brereton, 2010) demonstrate distinct examples of anti-colonial thought; moreover, these practices emphasize pride in African ancestry and also challenge Eurocentric constructions of race. Such patterns of resistance, both ideological and concrete, and an interrogation of the colonial relationships that elicited diverse forms of resistance, inform this study’s interpretation and application of anti-colonial Caribbean theory.

Drawing on extensive literature reviews and the voices of numerous participants, the present study identifies recurrent thematic concerns that continue to preoccupy scholars as central to understanding the particularities of the Caribbean region and the challenges associated with its colonial past. Much of these interpretations, however, appeared as stand-alone arguments, void of interdisciplinary and or comparative perspectives. Instead, an interdisciplinary approach, underscored by analysis of the linkages to contemporary situations, foregrounds this anti-colonial analysis. It should be noted that although anti-colonial Caribbean theory obtains in its incipient stages, and should be considered a work-in-progress, it stands to make a much-needed contribution to the Caribbean theoretical landscape. Further, such theoretical foundations recognize and emphasize the divergent forms of anti-colonial Caribbean literature as cogent examples of resistance against colonial domination. Similarly, anti-colonial Caribbean theory highlights the significant role anti-colonial Caribbean literature has played in conceptualizing the effects of colonialism in Caribbean societies by giving voice to and imputing the legitimacy of the experiences of the former colonized.
An examination of the Caribbean literary canon shows that there are some Caribbean literary texts that reflect an anti-colonial perspective. In light of this, the present study inserts Caribbean literature into the current conceptualization of anti-colonial Caribbean theory. In the creative and rewarding process of developing this theory, and including a literary perspective, I read a wide range of novels from the English-speaking Caribbean annals that specifically explored issues related to colonialism, race, and identity. With each novel, I analyzed how the author articulated the colonial experience by posing a series of questions: How do the characters experience colonialism and the resultant social effects? What is the author’s perspective of colonialism? How does the author address the process of decolonization? How does the author engage with the setting, whether Trinidadian or Jamaican, as a colonized or former colonized space? What symbols and/or imagery were used to develop the main idea of the text? How does the author illustrate issues of identity formation in the Caribbean space?

The bulk of the literature indicated similar representations of the colonial experience and its consequences, but also presented an unanticipated discovery highly pertinent to the current investigation: that of children’s depictions of, and social experiences with, colonialism. In texts such as *Crick Crack*, *Monkey* and *In the Castle of My Skin*, for example, a child narrates the colonial environment with a pellucid candour, supported by what can be characterized as child-like prose, made all the more compelling by the depictions of social relationships and events which reveal a uniquely child-like interpretation of the colonial environment. In such stories, the authors allow the reader not only to discern the child’s voice embedded in the structure of the narrative, but also to identify the child-adult juxtaposition (a juxtaposition that blurs the line between past and present, creating a tapestry woven with a child’s narrative and
an adult’s self-introspection, and often indicative of a memory, a colonial narrative, and relived history). In this process, through a unifying focus upon the period of childhood, anti-colonial Caribbean authors interpret formative exposures to colonialism, and often culminate in a child’s transition to adulthood with an ambivalence about how the child, now an adult, reconciles those earlier tensions (or is inclined to attempt decolonization).

For these reasons, the topical precept of anti-colonial Caribbean theory traces the cultural context of Caribbean childhood experiences as fiction; in both novel format and the short story genre, Caribbean literature interrogates the colonial social order through the eyes of a child. In addition to the subject of childhood, anti-colonial Caribbean theory applies concepts consistent with the Caribbean social and historical landscape. However, to situate my work in the current Caribbean theoretical context, I begin with a discussion of Caribbean social theories.

**Caribbean Social Theories: A Review**

In order to provide a general context for deconstructing race in Trinidad, a distinctly environmental imperative calls for the foundation of this analysis upon discourses and theoretical frameworks specific to the Caribbean region. As the literature indicates, Caribbean scholars have used a variety of approaches to account for the complexity of race issues in Caribbean societies. For instance, Braithwaite (1953), in his work on social stratification, maintained that the rigid divisions in Trinidadian society were demarcated along racial lines. Further, the difficulty to transgress such boundaries, specifically, for persons in the lower and middle class, illustrated a caste-like system. Equally central to Braithwaite’s theory was his analysis of the ideological conditions that gave rise to, and supported, this form of social
stratification. Indeed, Braithwaite expounded on how markers of difference such as skin colour were associated with differential meanings and values, in particular, the commonly held belief in European superiority. Such values, according to Braithwaite, served to maintain a cohesive state, indicating the authors’ functionalist interpretation of Trinidadian society (Yelvington, 1993).

By contrast, Smith’s (1965) pluralist orientation stressed the importance of divergent cultural practices in understanding Caribbean societies, asserting that “…each cultural section has its own relatively exclusive way of life, with its own distinctive systems of action, ideas and values, and social relations” (p. 81). Smith identified such features of a group’s culture as their basic and secondary institutions. Indeed, the concept of institutions is central to the pluralist discourse, for Smith has argued that divergent institutional practices—both basic and secondary—indicate a pluralist society. In reference to race, however, Smith’s theory, in simple terms, indicated that racism is a mere corollary of culture. However, it is important to bear in mind that “Smith’s was a cultural not a racial theory” (La Guerre, 1993, p. 17). Thus, the pluralist theory primarily emphasizes the saliency of culture in the concept of race (see Smith, 1991), and by extension, the practice of racism. While centering culture has its merits, the limitation of this perspective, however, is the somewhat reductionist approach to deconstructing the origins and social significance of race-related issues pertinent to the Caribbean context.

Equally significant to the Caribbean’s theoretical discourse is the plantation model (e.g., Beckford, 1971). The central premise of this exegesis obtains that Caribbean societies were organized according to the social, economic, and political relationships inherent to plantation
labour system (the plantation system being largely an economic one). Additionally, proponents of this model have maintained that such past influences continue to inform the social structure of Caribbean societies (Yelvington, 1993). Apart from the plantation’s model emphasis on the economic factor, Smith’s focus on culture, and Braithwaite’s (1953) social stratification treatise, Hoetnik (1967) provided an alternate analysis with his contribution of the “somatic norm image” concept.

Hoetink (1967) defined the somatic image as “complex physical characteristics which are accepted by a group as its norm and ideal” (p. 120). According to Hoetnik (1967), this concept is extrapolated based on the socio-psychological processes that bestow value upon some physical characteristics, to the detriment of others. The author further noted that the possession of a desired appearance or phenotype related to a person’s class status. Despite their special relevance within a Caribbean social context, La Guerre (1993) pointed out that these theories reflect a singular orientation; consequently, they may not sufficiently address the nuances and complexities that constitute the Caribbean region. In light of such circumstances, scholars who currently engage in Caribbean studies argue for more multidisciplinary perspectives (Yelvington, 1993).

**Towards an Anti-colonial Caribbean Theory**

In discussing anti-colonial theory, it is important to note the key scholars of such scholarship. Indeed, the works of Cesaire (1972), Fanon (1967), and Memmi (1965) are central to any form of anti-colonial theorizing. In addition, as discussed in an introductory chapter, anti-colonial Caribbean theory draws upon Dei (2006)’s anti-colonial theory. For instance, similar to Dei, anti-colonial Caribbean theory is rooted in an analysis of Trinidad’s colonial history, for it
surveys the cultural subtext shaping Trinidad’s race relations, and identifies how such patterns of ideological—as well as material—shape and inform perceptions of race and social relations. In a related vein, anti-colonial Caribbean theory underscores resistance as central to anti-colonial praxis, and resistance as linked to the diversity of ways oppressed peoples have made sense of their realities and, in the process, have opposed the colonial social order. On this count, Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) explained that “it is a way of celebration of oral, visual, textual, political, and material resistance of colonized groups, which entails a shift away from sole preoccupation with victimization” (p. 301). Working with this central notion, anti-colonial Caribbean theory emphasizes the multiplicity of forms and creative expressions found in historical and contemporary narratives of resistance. Such acts of resistance also relate to issues of power, and can be viewed as points of convergence with Dei’s anti-colonial theory.

The anti-colonial theory recognizes that colonialism is marked by unequal relationships, for example, the interaction between the colonizer and colonized, and also functions on a broader, structural level (Dei, 2006). However, anti-colonial theory recognizes the agency of the colonized (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Also, similar to anti-colonial theory which supports the “decolonizing of the mind” (Dei, 2006, p. 11), anti-colonial Caribbean theory is articulated from a perspective that seeks to lay bare the ongoing forms of domination so as to further advance decolonizing initiatives. Briefly, concepts of power, resistance, history, and decolonization entail a convergence between both theoretical frameworks. In addition, this chapter also explores divergent theoretical aspects.

Anti-colonial Caribbean theory, while acknowledging historical accounts, takes a more inclusive perspective by examining historical processes that distinguish between and among
Caribbean narratives, as disparate from former colonized countries. One such practice is that of transplantation: With the exception of Indigenous groups, Caribbean people’s ancestry can be traced to a variety of geographical locations. The equally-diverse implications for racial identity are a key focus of anti-colonial Caribbean theory. Further, anti-colonial Caribbean theory, in addition to centering relationships—inclusive of power—between colonized and colonizer, by extension encompasses the self-other connection among former colonized groups (African and East Indian Caribbean peoples) with respect to the silences and erasures embedded in nationalist politics. In particular, anti-colonial Caribbean theory acknowledges Indo-Caribbean narratives and interpretive innovations as derived from such experiences. Furthermore, I expand on the ‘decolonization of the mind’ precept by arguing for a more holistic trajectory of the decolonization process. In other words, anti-colonial Caribbean theory conceptualizes colonization and decolonization from a life-span perspective by including the period of childhood and by interrogating how such early experiences are manifested in adult life. The diagram on the following page illustrates the divergences and convergences previously discussed.
In sum, anti-colonial Caribbean theory foregrounds an interdisciplinary perspective to define and to enrich the conceptualizations of the Caribbean space, and focuses on themes of Caribbean social realities noted to be pressing concerns for Caribbean peoples using historical, sociological and literary approaches. Likewise, the aim of anti-colonial Caribbean theory is to centre the narratives and voices of Caribbean peoples and foment a decolonizing agenda informed by contemporary issues. The basic tenets of the anti-colonial Caribbean theory are:

1. That Caribbean space is characterized by loss, violence and transplantation vis a vis a narrative of resistance.

2. Caribbean peoples have enacted resistance through both physical acts and literary expressions.
3. Identity formation in the Caribbean space is often a complex and conflicting process and is characterized by distinct approaches: the adapting of ancestral cultures to the Caribbean context (Creolization), the support of nationalist identity, and the claiming of solely ancestral identity (for example, the Afrocentric narrative in Trinidad; see Brereton, 2010). Further, despite its well-documented limitations, the Creolization theory reflects much of the discourse on identity formation in the Caribbean context.

4. Race and racial criteria have shaped the Caribbean culture and retain influence in contemporary social relations.

5. The practice of “childhood reconstruction” within the context of colonialism has been used as an entry point for discussions of race, identity, and decolonization.

Using the historical backdrop as a guiding framework, I then explored resistance against the violence of loss, and transplantation, and how the latter gave rise to specific defining features of the Caribbean Diaspora. Additional analyses of socioeconomic configurations revealed that the overarching theoretical criteria helped elucidate and explain the existence of other themes by bridging socio-historical and contemporary understandings of Caribbean societies.
Conceptualizing “loss.” A fundamental precept of anti-colonial Caribbean theory is resistance and that of loss, violence and transplantation. To be sure, these two precepts, while independent, also act in concert with each other. In other words, despite insurmountable attempts at redressing violence (loss or transplantation), Indigenous peoples and, later, both enslaved Africans and indentured East Indian labourers, have resisted. With a mind to brevity, given the centrality of the concept of loss to violent domination and the prevalence of resistance, this chapter also provides a detailed overview of loss as a conceptual tool. Further, I highlight the experiences of the colonized, primarily African Caribbean peoples, but in the discussion chapter, the reader will note an exploration of the Indo-Caribbean narrative. While anti-colonial Caribbean theory also incorporates Indigenous Caribbean history, particularly as it relates to the theme of loss and violence, due to space limitations, (and the specificity of the subject under study), the ensuing analysis does not include such accounts.

Loss refers to an abstract and multilayered concept, essentially revolving around the equally significant aspects of violence, including both physical and psychological loss. This analysis conceptualizes psychological loss as denoting the imposition and effects of colonial stereotypes on the colonized’s psyche, resulting in distorted views of self and others. Further, the work of Fanon (1967) expediently articulated the psychological aspect of loss. By way of illustration, loss can be viewed as a corollary to violence. In other words, the inherent physical violence of colonialism results in physical death tantamount to genocide (initially for the Indigenous populations and, later, the enslaved Africans). However, it would be somewhat parsimonious to perceive loss as confined to either the tangible, or the physical. In this regard,
Patterson (1982) offered two instructive perspectives. According to the author, slavery constituted of features such as dishonour and natal alienation, and both occurred within a particular socio-psychological interaction pattern between the enslaved and slave owners.

Further to the point of dishonour, Patterson (1982) referred to this element as indicative of the lack of dignity and moral worth assigned to the enslaved. The natal alienation feature, on the other hand, represents a loss of ancestral connections, along with an inability “...to integrate the experiences of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited meanings of their natural forbearers, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory” (p. 5). However, to be sure, Patterson accounted for the agency of enslaved Africans by acknowledging their attempts at cultural preservation. What the author also emphasized, however, is the hegemonic influence of the slave society that constrained such forms of resistance among the enslaved population.

Patterson (1982) further asserted that this process of natal alienation allowed for the dishonouring of the enslaved. These dual constituents of natal alienation and dishonour elicited psychological effects, which Fanon (1967) elaborated on in his widely cited text *Black Skin: White Masks*. Indeed, there are parallels between Fanon’s concepts and those of Patterson’s (1982).

For Fanon (1967), the psychological outcomes of colonization were manifested by “lactification” (p. 47) and the “epidermalization of inferiority” (p. 11). Derived from a colonial culture in which ideological myths denigrated the enslaved, while positioning the colonizer as the epitome of human worth, lactification represents a physical and a psychological attempt to extricate oneself from Blackness by ascribing superior value to Whiteness, inclusive of
appearance and culture. Related to this process, is the epidermalization of inferiority. Once the enslaved internalizes the spurious constructions of Blackness, acceptance ensues, which then operates as a precursor to the lactification of consciousness. Simply stated, these two processes are relational, pathological responses directly associated with the pervasive effects of slavery and colonialism.

Fanon’s (1967) psychoanalytic exegesis demonstrates the psychological aspect of loss, and dovetails with Patterson’s (1982) account of the features of slavery, for the process by which the enslaved is dishonoured and stripped of dignity combines with a loss of natal ties to create a psychological condition conducive for the epidermalization of inferiority and lactification of consciousness. As Fanon (1967) pointed out, “every colonized person—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local culture and originality—finds itself face to face...with the culture of the mother country” (p. 18). Put another way, it would appear that from an analytical perspective, Patterson (1982) explicated specific methods (natal alienation and dishonour) by which the enslaved succumb to the processes Fanon (1967) conceptualized. Using these central features as a starting point, I will now proceed to discuss the themes most relevant to the present study.

**Childhood Reconstruction and Issues of Race, Identity and Decolonization**

Authors of the Caribbean literary tradition have utilized ‘reconstructed’ and fictional childhoods and child characters as a means to critique the colonial experience, especially with respect to race, identity, and decolonization. Indeed, the theme of “colonial childhood” is widely acknowledged in the scholarly discourse on Caribbean literature. The following section provides an analysis of *Crick Crack, Monkey, and In the Castle of My Skin*, literary affirmations of
Caribbean theoretical origin as well as exemplifications of the conceptual and experiential connections between the experience of childhood and the process of decolonization.

In *Crick Crack, Monkey*, for example, the narrative traces a young child’s transition from childhood to adolescence within diametrically opposed familial and educational contexts. Colour and class are at odds in the novel as Tee’s identity and self-pride are assailed by her upper class family’s class and colour prejudices, which cause symptoms of internal dissonance such as alienation, loss, shame, and confusion. After winning an island scholarship to attend a prestigious high school, she relocates to Auntie Beatrice’s residence. In contrast to Tantie, the character that raises Tee, Aunt Beatrice belongs to the middle class, and is bent on preserving the dictates of middle class life. Shielded from the demands of respectability in her earlier years, now an exemplar of the middle class, Tee is ill-prepared for the clash of both worlds; a collusive cultural ideology corrupts her childhood, ultimately pushing her to self-rejection. Alternately, this self-rejection is fraught with tensions and ambivalence, thereby inexorably setting the tone for how Tee reaches such an abysmal psychological state (in many respects characteristic of a young child’s psychic torture). Her descent begins, however, with her aunt’s remark about her skin colour: “Elizabeth Carter was really the last ancestor worthy of mention, for after her things went from bad to worse... If it hadn’t been for him, she reflected mournfully, you might have looked like her” (Hodge, 1970/2000, p. 90). The psychological impact of Auntie Beatrice’s comment resonates with Tee’s subsequent periods of alienation, and also triggers Tee’s internalization of inferiority for the vulnerable young character: “I began to have the impression that I should be thoroughly ashamed; for it seemed to me that my
person must represent the rock-bottom of the family’s fall from grace” (Hodge, 1970/2000, p. 91).

Tee’s rejection of both class and colour identities culminates at the novel’s conclusion, when Tee retroactively views her lower class family with contempt, through a reactionary mode of scorn that operates as a defense mechanism. She projects what has been taught because her child-like character traits preclude coming to terms with a range of complex emotions and the attendant loss: “Then suddenly she sprang to her feet, gathered Dollarie and Toddan while Uncle Sylvester eased his mass up slowly, sighing disgustingly (just like a niggerman I thought)” (p. 119). Understandably, Tee lacks a sense of belonging: “As they disappeared through the door I had one fleeting urge to call them back” (p. 119). Paralyzed by shame, the ambivalent character cannot act upon her feelings. The main protagonist’s formative years taught her to despise and reject her background; nonetheless, because it represents an earlier innocence, the character Tee struggles with an inner desire, however subdued, to reclaim it as a means of restoring a fragmented psychological persona.

Similarly, Lamming’s novel, In the Castle of My Skin, which goes beyond physical characteristics to expound on the topics of race, identity, and history, has much in common with Hodge’s (1970/2000) theme of internal conflict. In the following scene, the child character is uncertain whether slavery had indeed occurred in Barbados. The subject matter also obtains a psychological element, as the character replicates another aspect of dissonance: a sense of longing to know about the past and about one’s history but, met with a pervading social and cultural silence, the child perceives the silence as evidence of his history’s insignificance. This insignificance of Africa as a singular aspect of his identity, and which consequently informs his
current reality, maintains the idea of Eurocentric superiority through the denial of the colonial history (while the youngest character unwittingly comply with insidious colonial convention):

Thank God nobody in Barbados was ever a slave. It didn’t sound cruel. It was simply unreal... It was too far back for anyone to worry about teaching it as history. That’s really why it wasn’t taught. It was too far back. (1953/1991, pp. 57-58)

The possibility of slavery, of bearing any ancestral connection to Africa, does not occur to the character because institutionalized systems such as formal education have silenced the historical narrative through the apparatus of colonial training. The young boy has reconciled his tensions and suspicions by repeating the cycle of disbelief and detachment. Ultimately, challenging topics of identity and history are brought to bear with greater literary poignancy when one of the characters, Trumper, returns from the United States, with a perhaps what can be construed as a definitive “racial identity awakening.” Using the Trumper character’s locus of awareness as a point of departure, Lamming depicts two symbolic losses. Firstly, he demonstrates, as other Caribbean writers have done, the event of departure from the colony as a watershed moment in a shifting of consciousness with respects to race and identity.

Departure harkens to the concept of retrospection—or inversion situated in alternate contexts—as an important precursor for separating one’s self from the commonly accepted colonial imposition of another’s culture or identity. Secondly, by exposing the absence of this consciousness in G, the main character, Lamming emphasizes the subsequent internal conflict that occurs when Trumper shares his newfound knowledge. In an insightful conversation with G, Trumper declared:
...The blacks here are my people too, but they don’t know it yet. You don’t know it yourself. None o’ you here on this islan’ know what it mean to fin’ race. An’ the white people you have to deal with won’t ever let you know. (Lamming, 1953/1991, p. 295)

Most notably, these authors position child-characters as agents capable of understanding and reacting to race-related knowledge in their respective social environments. Another key thematic criterion both in Crick Crack, Monkey and In the Castle of My Skin pertains to the perpetration of European superiority by family and community. In Crick Crack, Monkey, the fictional child feels shame associated with her skin colour. In the Castle of My Skin, the child-characters lack an awareness of their collective history and the characters unanimously conclude that historical context lacks relevance in their day-to-day lives. Shame, loss, and divisive politics contribute to an internalization of the characters’ colonial consciousness, with tragic, often violent, consequences.

“When yuh red, yuh Bess”: Colour Consciousness in the Caribbean

The opening phrase of the above subtitle comes from an adolescent female, and while it is expressed in local parlance, the message is clear enough: the girl observes and interprets how colour prejudice is enacted in her school through peer relationships and preferences of male students. On a scholarly note, Lowenthal (1972) along with other researchers duly recognizes the pervasiveness of “colour consciousness” in the Caribbean which, in essence, is a form of racism characterized by a preference for lighter skin tones. It should be noted however, that the origins of the colour hierarchy have been repeatedly traced to colonialism and slavery (e.g., Charles, 2010; Cross, 1970; Kempadoo, 2004; Robinson, 2011). While such historical accounts help explicate the nascent formulations and attendant practices of colour consciousness in the
Caribbean context, it would be remiss to not advance such discourses from a cultural standpoint. More specifically, lighter skin colour simply did not acquire its social significance based on merely perceived aesthetic appeal. Rather, in a stratified colonial society, colour was the marker of difference that identified to whom power and privileges and belonged, and to whom such rewards were denied (Thompson, 1997). Thus, it stands to reason that colour-consciousness emerged due to intersecting factors, including unequal economic and power relationships, and socially constructed meanings (that of superiority) of White physical characteristics.

Yet, moving beyond the historical relevance, literature reveals that such prejudices have persisted into the contemporary era (e.g., Lewis, 2010; Premdas, 1995). In fact, Michael, one of the parent participants in the present study, noted that: “Parents tend to, you know, rate up their children when they have a little light brown skin colour, and the darker children they tend to... not.” Essentially, the message the parent has conveyed is that within the home context, there is differential treatment based on an ideology that light skin is more desirable. Such perceptions, as previously discussed, are derivative of the Caribbean colonial past, and also reflect the colour-class relationship wherein colour coincided with one’s social position. However, the perceptions surrounding colour transcend the material, or concrete effects; these also operate within the context of self and “other” evaluations.

**Desire and distance: Voices of everyday encounters.** Caribbean fiction, music, and poetry explore aspects of colour consciousness as forms of cultural identification tied to specific behaviour patterns, where lighter skin is designated as a favourable characteristic, mediating both social interactions and perceptions. The forces of desire and distance perpetuate two
seemingly oppositional yet intersecting truths: desire for lighter skin, and distance from darker complexions. The desire results in distance, and the distance, from the perspective of one who has a darker skin tone, informs the desire, all of which are inextricably linked to colonial ideologies of race, value, and status.

In *A Morning at the Office* (1950/2010), Edgar Mittelhofer fictionalizes similar subject matter, using themes that resonate deeply with Caribbean notions of race and social status. In this novel, the main character, a young office boy of African Trinidadian descent, is besotted by a light-skin woman who is also his co-worker, and in a brazen move for the time, seeks to woo her by writing a poem. By examining the conventional colour and class prejudices of Trinidadian pre-Independence society within the fictional context of a failed romance, the author skilfully illustrates the depth of these biases in the lives, thoughts, and actions of well-developed and relatable characters that seem to unite around the central theme of the absence of true self (a void marked by the belief that one’s value is determined by how close one’s skin tone is to that of the colonizer). The interactions with others, the self-abhorrence, and the characters’ respective desires combine to indicate a corrupt consciousness that displays an approximation or mimicry of what the colonizer demands that the colonized believe of themselves. The following passage aptly encapsulates this central meaning:

He considered that it was foolish of him to have become enamoured of this lady. It was true that she was charming and attractive—physically as well as in manner—but he should have remembered that he was only a black boy, whereas she was a coloured lady of good family. His complexion was dark brown; hers was pale olive. His hair was kinky; hers was full of large waves and gleaming. (p. 29)
Horace compares himself to Mrs. Hinckson, and simultaneously devalues himself in the process. She is exalted, while he is debased. The superiority that this character awards her because of her skin colour, class, and other physical characteristics is the reason “he considered that it was foolish of him to have become enamoured of this lady.” As a result of his desire for her, he distances himself from his own identity. He rejects his blackness as it is an impediment to attaining Mrs. Hinckson’s affections.

In keeping with the desire/distance framework, in Earl Lovelace’s novel entitled The Dragon Can’t Dance (1979/1998), another character, Miss Cleothilda, in her interaction with others, illustrates how light skin tones are more desirable and thus confer a sense of superiority. Lovelace also demonstrates how such social attitudes are interpreted by characters with dark skin. This value judgment shapes and informs the interaction between Miss Cleothilda and the other characters, and is relevant to individual characters’ identity crises. For example, in a discussion between Olive and Caroline, Caroline remarked: “You don’t have eyes in your head to see that is because the woman skin lighter than yours and mine she feel she better than people on this Hill”(p. 13). Skin colour, as a badge of superiority which can be used at will, accounts for Miss Cleothilda’s prescriptive dismissal of blackness, except on occasions when people with dark skin may be of use to this manipulative character. Reminiscent of social distancing, her calculations speak to the divisive aspect of the desire/distance framework.

The character is aware of her preferred social standing due to skin colour and, as a result, adopts a particular way of life, excluding and including persons based on complexion (light vs. dark). On the other hand, the other female characters, perhaps because of a subconscious desire to achieve Miss Cleothilda’s colour and its associated privileges, along with
a distancing of their own blackness, have interpreted her actions as putting on “airs” and, in turn, have dissociated themselves from her. Embedded in the multiple layers of this social discourse, however, also lurks a deeply rooted ideology of colour abhorrence, fostering suspicions and distrust. The belief in colour and its socially constructed worth (for light-skin) and abhorrence (for dark-skin) is so deeply ingrained and enacted, that it ensnares the novel’s characters in a confusion, of internalized colonization.

Nevertheless, it is also essential to consider that African ancestry, and by extension, darker skin, has not been entirely rejected by Caribbean peoples. In fact, speaking from my own experience, I have two aunts, whom I consider “Afrocentric.” Put simply, they embrace their African identity, read books published by Africans, and have not once categorized themselves as “mixed,” although to the discerning and colour-consciousness Trinidadian, they might be perceived as such. On a more professional note, upon completion of data collection, I met with the executive of a Trinidadian government organization to discuss the findings of the study. The individual, a female African Trinidadian, dressed in African garb, openly shared her childhood experiences (where African pride and heritage were a core part of her upbringing). Thus, it stands to reason that in regard to desire and distance, one cannot make categorical statements about all African Trinidadians, nor about how they may deny or distance themselves from their African ancestry. However, what is instructive to consider is why some African Trinidadians prefer a “race less identity”, and while others affirm their African ancestry. I will explore possible explanations in the discussion chapter.
Contemporary Racism in the Caribbean and Trinidad: The “Silenced” Threat

As stated in an introductory passage, the application of this particular theoretical framework involves interpreting data gathered from participants, as well as existing literature on race and racism in the Caribbean. The upcoming section includes participants’ perceptions of racism in Trinidad. While it can be argued that this dissertation departs from the structural norm, given that the findings are incorporated as follows, what participants have expressed presents a rich opportunity to interweave scholarly discourse with experiential evidence that can further strengthen the claim of the persistence of racism in the Trinidadian and Caribbean social contexts.

Presently, racism in the Caribbean has taken on a rather paradoxical and peculiar characteristic: that of silence. Although it may appear a bit peculiar that racism is openly denied in the Caribbean, while considerable evidence points to the contrary, scholars have maintained that generally, this remains a central feature of Caribbean societies. One recent empirical investigation conducted by Potter and Phillips (2008) with second generation British-Barbadian migrants, found that while racism was present in the society, no attempts had been made to rectify the problem. As one respondent noted, “they just sweep things under the carpet. People are just frightened to talk about it. The politicians don't want to talk about it. Everything here is very conservative and very hush, hush” (p. 138). In addition, Thompson (1997) suggested that in countries such as Cuba, Puerto Rico and Martinique racism is an issue, but its presence is not openly acknowledged. Lowenthal (1972), whose remarks remain relevant today, similarly purported that “in the West Indies to talk about the colour question, or race relations is to pick
a way through thorns while walking on eggshells...” (p. 261). In essence, race discussions elicit discomfort, denial, and at times, open hostility: all of which further exacerbate the problem.

Consistent with the scholarship and empirical research, parents and teachers as participants in the current study, echoed similar perspectives on the presence of racism in Trinidad. The majority, however, referenced racism in relation to politics, while others mentioned racism on the job, racial slurs, factors of class and race, and stereotypes associated with African and Indo-Trinidadian ancestry. Interestingly, for some participants, racism, as played out on the political stage, involved a practice of silencing by government officials which, in effect—according to individual study participants—belied the reality of the Trinidadian race situation and precluded any significant endeavors to alter the existing racial dynamics that, for the most part, pervade the country’s cultural landscape. The following quotation from a self-identified mixed Trinidadian sheds light on this significant theme:

There is division in the country and nobody wants to address it. They claim to want to become one; it’s just words, just for it to make headlines. It’s just headlines. They claim to want to be joined, and talk about PP [People’s Partnership, a political party in Trinidad] and togetherness but it’s just to say, well, ok, if there is something, oh the PM of TNT wants to join up the race and deal with racism but it is just a headline. It’s just to say, well, I am trying to do this. Just to be the first to say, well, okay, there is problem of racism in Trinidad and Tobago and I am going to deal with it. But really and truly nobody dealing with it. (Beatrice)
An African Trinidadian parent described the current racial climate as potentially disruptive but at the same time somewhat subdued. She speculated that it possibly could be attributed to the government’s ability to silence the issue:

That’s just it. Nothing is happening now. This country is basically at a standstill you know. Any other government that was ever in power, you used to hear people talking, and there are people who will normally come out on the forefront and they would talk, but now is like some spirit over the land, humbling the people or keeping you in your little barriers. This is the only government that people not talking about outwardly.

(Paula)

Apart from the institutional frameworks and socio-political history, silencing points to an avoidance and fear, much of which can be linked to a range of factors, class and politics included. Essentially, confronting racism would entail confronting our past, but the past is often unpleasant, with attendant unwelcome memories and, in some cases, sanitized to appease delicate sensibilities. History is an affront to progress, or so it would seem. Yet the paralysis of silence illustrates a reshaping of the colonial apparatus that denies rights to history, identity and self-hood. Further, silence operates on many levels, but the most insidious form is that which manifests itself in the psyche of the colonized. The colonial mental entrapment, particularly when extended to self-other relationships, further disrupts the decolonization effort.

While participants implicated the current government of silencing racism issues, Cudjoe (2011) pointed out that the previous government (People’s National Movement) had in fact established a committee on “Race Relations” (p. 338) to address the country’s race-related
issues. There have also been reports of a Centre for Ethnic Studies at the University of the West Indies, an additional initiative of the PNM government, but in an investigative report conducted by the Research Directorate, Immigration and Refuge Board of Canada (2005), a university official claimed that the department is now defunct. What such glaring evidence indicates is the lack of ongoing attention to racism, and possibly as well, the level of political control hindering its elimination. Such realities therefore raise several important questions: Why is the goal of creating an anti-racism nation state not equally important to all political parties? Why is the course of anti-racism affected by the shift in political governments? What is the current government’s anti-racism agenda? It stands to reason, therefore, that perhaps only when decolonization occurs on an individual level then such awareness can engender ongoing attempts at structural social change.

Institutional decolonization will involve meaningful discussions about the racism reality in the Trinidadian context. A caveat worthy to note is that the anti-racism agenda requires the perspectives and input from all members of society; in other words, participation in this endeavour should not be restricted to government officials and other persons affiliated with state-run organizations. Collectivity, through dismantling class barriers and marginalization, is germane to the decolonization process. Indeed, as the lengthy historical record of anti-colonial work has shown, the politics of resistance, with its energizing force, further imbued with the struggles of the oppressed, appeal to men and women from all social backgrounds. Therefore, resistance is not a singular entity; rather, it takes various forms, but also shares the common characteristics of tenacity and hope. Simply put, the act of resistance holds the potential to supersede superficial divisions derived from the colonial enterprise.
To be sure, my proposition for a collective anti-colonial project is not new. Eric Williams, during the independence movement, lectured and gave speeches about the effects of colonialism. He also wrote a book entitled “History of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.” Indeed, such initiative acutely captures the collectivity of the anti-colonial agenda, and shows great promise for forging a truly anti-colonial consciousness without the vestiges of the past and its associated social and psychological ills.

**Identity: The Continued Presence of the Creolization Concept**

Much of the scholarly focus devoted to understanding Caribbean culture and identity formation has been explored through the creolization concept. In its nascent permutation, Braithwaite (1971), using the Jamaican context, defined creolization as a two-way interaction between Africans and Europeans, whereby both groups adopted each other’s cultural practices, which then resulted in a new and distinct Jamaican culture. On the other hand, Patterson (1975) described creolization as more intricate process, constituted by the two models he referred to as “segmentary and synthetic.” According to Patterson, the segmentary model encompassed an Afro-West Indian culture, a culture formed in the Caribbean but was based on African cultural practices; a similar Euro-West Indian culture was formed as well, operated and formed in the same way as the Afro-West Indian culture. The synthetic culture was thus the amalgamation of both Afro and Euro-West Indian cultural forms, albeit in distinct areas. Patterson (1975) further elaborated that “synthetic Creole draws heavily on Euro-West Indian culture for its instrumental components and on Afro-West Indian segmentary Creole for its expressive institutions and symbols” (p. 319). There are, however, additional variants of the creolization concept.
Commenting on Nettleford’s contribution, Bolland (1998) maintained that Nettleford’s earlier evaluation of creolization suggested that creolization represented a hierarchal value system in which European cultural practices received primary significance. However, since then, Nettleford has emphasized a more equal integration of both cultures (Bolland, 1998; Nettleford, 1988). Yet for African Latino writers in the Hispanic Caribbean context, the term creolization implies a denigration of all things African: identity, history and culture. For example, in both his scholarly literature and his literary works, Wilson (1998) positions himself in opposition to the marginalization of African culture as part of the creolization process. One of his poems, “In Exilium” captures this outrage against what he perceived as a denial of his right to claim and embrace his African identity. One of the lines of the poem reads: “How disgraceful! I am Ashanti and they address me as Carlos” (Wilson, 1977, p. 8, as cited in Wilson, 1998, p. 42). For Wilson, the claiming of his African identity is a method of resistance; and through creative discourses, he further highlights the limitations of the creolization theory.

In sum, creolization theorists have been chiefly concerned with interpreting Caribbean society as an amalgamation of disparate cultural forms, namely, African and European. While some scholars have challenged the unequal relationships inherent to the process, for example, the positive value status accorded to European cultures as opposed to African, and how class corresponds with the type of culture enacted, that is, either synthetic or segmented (Bolland, 1998; Patterson, 1975), a contemporary critique centres on the limited inclusion of the Indo-Caribbean narrative in the creolization discourse (see Khan, 2007).
Summary

Anti-colonial Caribbean theory moves beyond the limitations of previous theoretical works by providing an interdisciplinary and current interpretation of Caribbean social issues. This chapter examines literary themes of loss, violence, transplantation, childhood reconstruction, colour consciousness, and racism in Trinidad and the Caribbean, and the Creolization discourse. Such themes coalesce around both the conceptual literature of the Caribbean and the data procured from the current investigation. I do admit, however, that it is a preliminary framework. The themes I discussed previously were given primary focus because of their pertinent specificity to the current study. Moreover, given that empirical data integrated in this framework reflect the view of Trinidian participants, the applicability of this theory to the larger Caribbean region will require additional research conducted in other Caribbean contexts. Indeed, as Hernandez-Ramdwar (1995) has cautioned, although colonialism is a salient commonality of the Caribbean region, these countries are indeed far from being monolithic; furthermore, their distinguishing characteristics also shape and inform context-specific patterns of race relations.

From a disciplinary perspective, I anticipate integrating other significant areas of Caribbean scholarly discourse, namely those related to gender, politics, and economics. I do, however, acknowledge that such areas often intersect with race; nevertheless, as I stated earlier, the present chapter provides a conceptual orientation specifically grounded in issues of race and identity in Caribbean society. Therefore, I have devoted the majority of this chapter to addressing these central issues from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.
CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology

Introduction

The investigation undertaken herein explores Trinidadian parental and educators’ socialization practices along with pre-school children’s racial awareness, self-identification and attitudes. This chapter also contains the methodological aspect of the study, including the method, research design, and data analysis strategies. Furthermore, I will explore special considerations uniquely attributed to child participants and research involving young children. I begin with a discussion on the qualitative approach as it pertains to grounded theory methodology. Next, I move on to provide a brief overview of the methods used in this study. The latter sections discuss ethical review processes, research design, literature on child research, and the interviews and activities conducted with child participants. The chapter concludes with an overview of data analysis and reflections of the field work process.

Grounded Theory Methodology and Qualitative Research

The focus of the inquiry, an exploration of racial socialization and race awareness based on the social practices and perspectives of Trinidadian adults and pre-school children, was compatible with the grounded theory approach. As the name implies, grounded theory refers to a particular set of approaches used to generate theory from data “systematically gathered and analyzed” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). Such form of inquiry involves specific data analysis strategies (which I will explore later in the chapter), but for now, it is important to note that grounded theory belongs to the larger category of qualitative research.
Denzin and Lincoln (2008) have defined qualitative inquiry as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 4). Simply stated, qualitative research converts abstract phenomena into a tangible empirical quantity through the use of individuals’ lived experiences. Further, qualitative research recognizes that such experiences may reflect the particularities of a specific social context(s) (Yin, 2011). Indeed, contextual factors are important to consider as qualitative inquiry presents a rich, detailed and nuanced account of a particular topic, looking at diverse factors that may explain the individual ways in which participants’ construct their varied understandings. Central to this process, however, is the selection of a specific method or methods, consistent with the qualitative research format.

In the qualitative field, researchers have largely relied on interviews for data collection (King & Horrocks, 2010). Essentially, when researchers conduct interviews they seek to learn about “the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). One of the goals of my study was to explore how parents’ child rearing practices pertaining to race, and teachers’ racial socialization, operationalized as their reactions to children’s racial awareness and direct instruction related to racial identities and anti-racism. For teachers and parents, this study makes use of an-open ended format to allow participants to freely express their perspectives on the topic. Questions were also designed to elicit reactive and proactive responses to children’s developing racial awareness; thus, some were scenario-type questions and required participants to reflect on whether or not they had experiences with children expressing their racial identification and attitudes towards members of racial
groups and their respective physical characteristics, and to describe personal reactions to these situations.

The rationale for doing so stems from the fact that parents’ proactive strategies (e.g., “what you do to make your child aware that she/he is African American”) constitute much of the existing literature on young children’s racial socialization. Given that the research shows that young children are least likely to receive overt racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006), and that racial awareness occurs at the pre-school period, this dissertation aims to examine the iterative process of children’s emerging consciousness of race alongside parents’ and teachers’ reactions to children’s verbal remarks and/or overt behaviours. Consistent with extant literature, the interview protocol also included questions on more direct or proactive forms of racial socialization. However, instead of asking “What do you teach your child about his/her identity?” I posed the questions, “Have you discussed your child’s racial identity with him (or her)?” “If so, what they tell him (or her)?” “If not, why not?” These questions were to determine whether parents had initiated this sort of dialogue with their children (identified as prevalence of racial socialization in the extant literature) and, if so, to allow participants to provide a richer and broader account of the experience; for example, to allow for an opportunity to review the context in which it was discussed, and whether specific materials were used. The interviews lasted generally between 30-45 minutes and, after a preliminary analysis, a second round of interviews was conducted with teachers and parents to clarify and elaborate on emerging topics.

In my discussions with teachers, similar to those conducted with parents, interview questions revolved around observations of and responses to children’s racial awareness in the
classroom. Specific inquiries also addressed pedagogical strategies employed to teach children (directly or indirectly) about their racial heritages and to challenge negative perceptions of other racial groups (and physical characteristics such as skin colour and hair texture). Additionally, the interview explored teachers’ perspectives on the curriculum and their effectiveness in addressing race and anti-racism in the classroom, as well as general background information about their teaching experiences and training.

As the investigator, my aim was to understand the practice of racial socialization from the perspectives of Trinidadian parents and educators. What underscored the inquiry were the “why, how, and what” questions surrounding racial socialization as implemented (or not) by participants. In order to do so, I interacted with participants through discussions that allowed them to express their thoughts on the subject matter at hand, their own experiences, and their observations. Simply stated, I did not assume a neutral researcher role; throughout the research process, I learned from participants by encouraging dialogue, listening to their views and asking for clarifications where necessary. Also, during data analysis process, I read each participant’s transcript individually on several occasions to determine the most salient experiences and views on the topic, in accordance with my investigative thesis.

Ethical Consideration and Access

Before contact was made with participants, the University of Toronto Review Board suggested changes to the interview script. Given the sensitivity of the topic, and the vulnerability of the population, a full review was conducted. I received a response one month after my application. Specific concerns raised by the Board included the language of the information, letters for participants, and the child assent script. I revised the review according
to the preceding considerations, reapplied, submitted, and was granted approval a few weeks later.

The sensitivity of the topic, children and their racial awareness, presented a challenge in terms of gaining access to pre-schools. After ethics approval, I contacted the office of Trinidad’s Ministry of Education and another institution to inquire about the protocols I needed to follow in order to conduct research at private and government schools. Despite several attempts, I did not receive the requested information from the Ministry. An administrator at a private pre-school stated that she would respond with further information but after a month elapsed, she had not yet replied. With the end of the school year fast approaching, I sought advice from colleagues in Trinidad about how best to recruit potential administrators for my study. One educator informed me that she was an administrator of two government pre-schools and would be willing to support the research study in two of her schools. After sending the information letters and consent forms for parents and teachers, at the last minute, one of the schools, which was a faith-based institution where teachers had a significant amount of autonomy in the administration of curricula, replied that they were not comfortable with the research topic and were no longer interested in participating. At the other school, some parents gave their children permission to participate, although one parent appeared somewhat offended by the research topic and flatly refused the consent form. With a limited number of participants, the study flagged; fortunately, another administrator expressed interest in the study after we discussed the significance and benefits for teachers and students and, thereafter, granted approval for the study to be conducted with students, parents, and
teachers. Consent forms for all participants were distributed, and only those with signed consent forms were interviewed.

Research Design

While surveying the existing data, I discovered an abundance of empirical studies conducted in the United States and Canada, but little on race, and children, and parental and educational influences in the larger Caribbean context (Trinidad, specifically). Therefore, this dissertation seeks to determine what Trinidadian children know about their racial identity, their perceptions of others, and whether child-rearing or teaching strategies were used to directly or indirectly convey such messages to them. Taking an anti-colonial approach, this examination centres upon an analysis of the socio-historical context of Trinidad and the contemporary permutations of colonial and neo-colonial domination as manifested in the evaluation of race and racial ancestry. Additionally, the study also considers developmental perspectives in order to account for how social cognitions bear on a child’s developing racial identity. Therefore, the analysis of children’s data, as shown in the corresponding discussion-chapter, exemplifies the integration of cognition, micro (racial socialization between parent/child and educator/children) as well as macro (socio-political) factors of Trinidadian society.

Apart from the disciplinary content, the study is a form of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research posits the researcher as an instrument of knowledge production. The interactions with participants and the reconstruction of their views may, at times, lend themselves to the category that positivists deem as “subjective,” but these findings are consistent with the ontological position that affirms reality is socially constructed, and that perspectives/experiences and identity are iterated and constitute a significant aspect of the
research process. However, much of the extant research lacks an awareness of particular locations and the way(s) that disparate contexts hold the potential to engender a specific lens that shapes both the research design and subsequent interpretation of results.

Accordingly, as the researcher for this study, it is important that I share information about my racial background. I am of mixed descent. In the Trinidadian context, because of my physical appearance, my features are often read as that of a Dougla (as indicated, a person of mixed African and Indo-Trinidadian heritage). As a result of my experiences in Trinidad, I am acutely aware of the social significance associated with this particular identity and its related physical characteristics (e.g., hair texture and skin colour). More specifically, my complexion is of a lighter tone, and my hair texture is wavy. Therefore, I am not completely certain whether my appearance was judged as that of being Dougla, multiracial, or even representative of a particular social class. Further, I speculate that participants’ interpretations of my identity may have influenced the content of their responses and willingness to divulge information during the interview. In studies conducted with children however, there may be a general lack of emphasis upon the effect of a given researcher’s race on children’s responses.

However, with the Indo-Trinidadian adult participants, and not with the majority but with only a few, the interviews were somewhat constrained and when asking specific questions about race, what I observed, specifically, body language and silence, led me to wonder whether participants’ reticence was attributable to the topic or because of my mixed identity (which somehow made participants uneasy in my presence). In cases such as this, it is a researcher’s responsibility to make it known in regard to phenotypical perspective as embedded in the
research process; for example, it may shape the experiences encountered in the field, and the meanings constructed out of these encounters.

Additionally, the selection of photographs used for the child interviews and the content of the racial attitude story telling activity are based on what I perceive as both familiar to and representative of African, Indo, mixed and White Trinidadians. These photographs were sourced through family members and otherwise obtained through Google’s “images” search function but were carefully selected to complement the age of participants. As I do not plan to publish the photo stimuli set, I did not seek consent to use the images in the research. Incidentally, the collection of images of females and males on a sheet white paper corresponds with the collage format currently in use in research studies on children’s racial attitudes. Each photograph was approximately the same size to ensure consistency and clarity. For each racial group, there was a photograph of one female and male child. In contrast to other studies, participants in this study were asked to select photos representative of their own and opposite gender to determine the consistency of racial knowledge.

**Participants**

Nineteen children in total were interviewed, along with four teachers and 20 parents at two separate school locations. One of the child participants, however, was three-and-a-half and, in order to maintain consistency with the age range, her data will not appear in this analysis. The demographic of the first school was predominantly Indo-Trinidadian, whereas the second was a mixture of mixed and African Trinidadian, with the majority being African Trinidadian. Most child participants were in the four-and-a-half-year-old age group. Before data collection, I met the children briefly at both locations and also introduced myself to their
teachers. The students were very friendly and warmly welcomed to their school. In fact, students regularly greeted me as “auntie” and, on their own, initiated dialogue during their free time and after school while waiting for their parents.

I also made observations of the classroom, including the pictures on the walls, learning materials, and organization of the area, noting these as part of my analysis to support what teachers had disclosed regarding the curriculum with respect to and addressing race and anti-racism in the classroom. Moreover, as I became a frequent visitor to the school, the students grew accustomed to my presence and initiated dialogue. On one occasion, a student informed me that princesses are White and that brown girls cannot be princesses because they would be “ugly.” Other children overheard and they too joined in and offered their opinions about what a princess should look like which, co-incidentally, were consistent with what the first little girl initially stated. I wrote their responses in my journal and reflected on this entry as I conducted my data analysis of her interview (and her parents’). Interestingly, the same child who blatantly expressed a preference for White characteristics was interviewed later that week, after her parents had provided a consent form and expressed interest in the study. Upon delving further into the interview topics, the reasons for their enthusiasm became clear: They too had observed their child showing a preference for “White” characteristics (but were unsure as to how it developed and what they could do to foster an appreciation for her African ancestry).

After I interviewed children, I arranged to interview parents and teachers at their convenience. While at the school, I had also established a rapport with the teachers but maintained a professional distance so as to impartially process the data collection. I approached the interview with parents and teachers in a spirit of mutual collaboration and, from the outset,
initiated an informal rapport with participants to clarify my singular interest in documenting their stories and learning from them. Consistent with this approach, I provided an interview environment that was both welcoming and non-threatening for all participants. As a testament to the collaborative working relationship between the parent participants and myself, several commented on how appreciative they were that I had decided to investigate this issue as it was not a topic that they had openly discussed in the past, but one which they were interested in learning more about. In line with this sentiment, I spoke to another parent who challenged me to begin working towards a solution. In fact, the father of one of the participants, at the end of the interview, concluded by suggesting that I return to Trinidad and contribute to educational reform by establishing a school with a mandate of fostering positive racial identities for children. During the initial interview, this particular parent also lamented how “hard” it was to “fight” against external forces (for example, racist messages in electronic and print media) that vilified African ancestry.

Profiles of participants: Children. In the section below, pseudonyms designate children and adult participants. If the child or parent had an Indo-Trinidadian name, a new Indo-Trinidadian appellation was created to maintain the Indo-Trinidadian identity of the participant while protecting their anonymity. Thereafter, the chapter presents profiles of parents and teachers. The reader will notice that while some parental information (such as occupation), is listed, other profiles do not contain this information, for the reason that no formal survey was done to collect data of this nature; thus, additional data was only divulged during interviews. Some parents willingly discussed this information—as unsolicited—while others chose not to remark about their education background or occupation.
Elaine is a four-and-a-half-year-old light-skinned child. She appears to be African Trinidadian but her parents have identified her as mixed. Her father has a light-brown complexion, and her mother has darker skin. Elaine is outspoken, and according to her teachers, is an advanced student. She did not appear shy during the interview.

Rajnath is also four-and-a-half, and is from an Indo-Trinidadian background. Raj interacts well with the other students, had a lot to say during the interview, and was an eager participant.

Joseph is about to begin primary school in September. He also has a light brown complexion and his parents are mixed. Joseph was quite open during the interview, spoke about where he lived, and alluded to his status as a “rich” man. He has a playful sense of humour as well.

Sonia has a darker skin tone. Although soft spoken and a bit shy, Sonia showed enthusiasm for the story telling activity. According to her father, Sonia is a fan of Disney princesses, including Rapunzel.

Emmanuel is of Dougla extraction, i.e., half African and half Indo-Trinidadian. Emmanuel is a friendly child, and with minimal prompting discussed his perceptions of racial identity. Emmanuel also shared more personal information regarding pastimes such as going to the beach and playing with his neighbours.
Stephanie has a lighter complexion, and her mother identified her as mixed, although she appears more African Trinidadian. Stephanie is quite verbal and shared her thoughts on racial identity in an open way; she also disclosed information about her church activity, and sibling relationships during the course of the interview. According to her mother, Stephanie is conscious of racial differences (most notably, that of hair texture).

Jonathan: Jonathan is an active four-and-a-half-year-old, and was not intimidated by the interview process. He enjoys playing with action figures, and has occasional disputes with his older sister. Jonathan knows he is Black, although he is mixed. In fact, his mother stated, “for me, he is Black.” When asked to draw a self-portrait, Jonathan reached immediately for the colour pencil and confidently stated, “ah could use Black?”

Melanie is a mixed child of various racial backgrounds. She is brown-skinned with long, curly hair. She loves her hair and made comments about it during the interview. At first, she was a bit shy but as the conversation progressed, Melanie informed me that she thinks her hair “is pretty.”

Fiona is an Indo-Trinidadian child and vocal with her ideas. In her interview, she spoke of her lesson on Indian Arrival day, and her grandfather’s car. She is a vivacious child and her outgoing personality became evident during my visits to the school.
Chris is an Afro-Trinidadian child with a light-brown complexion. Like a few of the other child participants, Chris is highly social, and shared a lot of information in the interview. He enjoys the Disney cartoon *Phineas and Ferb* and sometimes visits Tobago with his family. He also mentioned that he likes to play with his friends.

Kelly has a lighter skin tone and was comfortable enough with the interview process to speak about her sister and her liking for “pooh bear.” She knows her skin colour, but variations in shade confused her, and she had problems selecting the corresponding tones for her drawing. Interestingly, when she wanted to draw her sister, she was reticent about using a black colour because, in her dialect, “ah doh want to make she Black and ugly.”

Krystal sought my attention on the first day that I arrived at her school by walking up to me and confidently initiating a conversation. Krystal loves classic Disney fairy tales and dolls. She also informed me that I looked like I was a princess because I was White, and when I responded that girls of other colours can be princesses too—specifically, “brown girls”—she replied, “no, because they would be ugly.” Krystal appears African Trinidadian, but her parents stated she was mixed (she has a light-brown complexion). Krystal’s mother is a dark-skinned African Trinidadian, self-identified as mixed, and her father, light-skinned, identified as mixed as well.

Clara is an outgoing, friendly five-year-old Indo-Trinidadian student with strong verbal skills. Clara also loved dolls and, one morning, I observed her playing in the ‘dress-up corner’ with a White doll, although there were Black dolls available. Clara and other students refused to play
with the Black doll. Clara showed consistent preference for lighter skin, and made several comments about the tonal preference using words such as “I like” and “pretty.”

*Chandra* is four-and-a-half. She is an Indo-Trinidadian child with a light complexion, who lives with her parents and her grandparents. Clara’s mother disclosed that her in-laws (Clara’s grandparents) are “racist,” and that they use racial slurs, which Clara has overheard in the past. Clara is also aware of her skin colour.

*Vishnu* is four-and-a-half as well. He is articulate and confident in expressing his ideas. He once glanced at the stimuli set and, pointing to the pictures, said, “all ah them brown, just some lighter.” He is being raised in a Hindu household so, in addition to race awareness, he also made remarks about religion.

*Stephen* is an African Trinidadian child with a dark skin tone. At first, he appeared a bit shy but fully cooperated during the interview, and enjoyed the story.

*Matthew* is an African Trinidadian child of light brown complexion. He is five years old and lives with his single mother. Mathew also is very outspoken and showed a high degree of race awareness. Mathew identified himself as “brown” and provided additional details about his home life with his mother and time spent playing with friends.
Jordan is a mixed, African-Indo Trinidadian child at school B. His mom is a Dougla and his father is mixed. However, Jordan wears a Rastafarian hairstyle and it appeared that grooming was his primary characteristic for self-identification. Jordan also used colour to express his racial identity.

Profile of teachers: Past and present. Ms. B is an African Trinidadian female. She is the teacher of the ‘four plus’ class at school B. At the time of the interview, she had five years of teaching experience (two years at a private institution, and three years with her current employer). She has taught the four year plus and five to six age ranges. Her training was not acquired through a postsecondary teacher-education program. Instead, she began her apprenticeship as a teaching assistant and, from there, was trained on the job. She described her in-service training as consisting of lesson plan writing, cultivating effective parent relationships, and building rapport with students. Her teaching experiences, including the present one, have been in academic-oriented settings. Growing up, Ms. B’s parents did not teach her about her racial identity, as she explained: “My mom never really spoke about our ancestral background.”

Ms. P

Ms. P, an African Trinidadian, teaches the second four plus class at school B. Similar to Ms. B, she did not complete a formal teacher training program, but was trained on the job at her first teaching post. She has six years of pre-school teaching experience, with primarily three to five-year-olds. At the time of the interview, she had been teaching at school B for five years, and had recently enrolled in a pre-school education teacher training program at the University of
the West Indies. Additionally, Ms. P also taught at academic-oriented pre-schools. With respect to racial identity, Ms. P recalled that, as a child, her mother taught her: “Well nothing much more than, ‘well, you’re a Negro, yeah, you’re of African descent.”

Mrs. R

Mrs. R is an Indo-Trinidadian woman at school A. She has children of her own as well as grandchildren. She has twelve years of combined teaching expertise and, during her career, completed a pre-school teacher education certificate course at the University of the West Indies (her experience has been primarily at play-based centres). Mrs. R’s recollections of childhood did not contain disclosures regarding racial identity, nor experiences with racism. In her own words: “[Racism] never came up. My mother was always busy and my father drank a lot. When we got older, we knew that we were different but it was never a problem; during my childhood I never had that problem.”

Mrs. C

Mrs. C is an Indo-Trinidadian instructor at school A, with three children of her own. She has fifteen years of teaching experience at preschools, and recently completed her Bachelor’s in Early Childhood Education. Mrs. C also has experience in academic and play-based settings. As a child, Mrs. C became aware of her racial identity through her religious affiliation: “I began recognizing my identity as a child because of the fact I come from a strong Hindu background. I recognized that as a child; you know, linking religion with race.”
Profile of parents: Past and present. Michael is a light-skinned African Trinidadian. He identified as mixed, however. He is married and has two other children. He works in the trades, but he has a partial education in dentistry (financial hardships prevented him from completing the program). Speaking about his childhood recollections of race, Michael discussed his experiences growing up with a light-skinned grandmother, who often made connections with race and class. He was brought up to “speak properly,” so much so that he was, at times, mistaken for a foreigner, and not considered a typical Trinidadian.

Rose is a married Indo-Trinidadian woman with two children. She is a housewife, and remarked that she loves being a mother. Rose grew up in a multiracial neighbourhood and recounted that her childhood consisted of interacting with both “Negroes and Indians,” and while she may have experienced racism at school, at home, her father showed no prejudice and told her, “not to take it on.”

Pat is a light-skinned mixed Trinidadian woman. She works in the business sector, and resides with the father of the child participant. Pat grew up acutely aware of racism because of the fact that she was treated differently by her Indo-Trinidadian grandmother. However, she stated that it was not discussed, and no one at home had “dealt with it.”

James is an African Trinidadian graphic designer who remembers a lot of Trinidad’s post-Independence race history. In fact, he shared his memories of race during the 1960s and ’70s, the time period in which he grew up. He describes it as a time when Black people “degraded
“each other,” adding that, “they will tell you about your hair, you know, you have gren gren (coarse hair texture) if you don’t have nice, straight hair…”

Liza appears African Trinidadian, but identifies as mixed. She described her profession as one in the field of education. She has two other children other than the child participant. When Liza was an adolescent, her grandmother taught her about their different ancestries. As a child, Liza, also preferred to spend time with her Indo-Trinidadian friends. As she further stated: “Yeah from ever since small, mommy tell me, I never used to play with the Negro kids, I always used to play with the Indian children.” Interestingly, Liza’s first husband, Emmanuel’s father, is also Indo-Trinidadian.

Beatrice is of mixed descent. She is a police officer with two other children, other than the child participant. She was raised by her grandmother and stated that she uses similar parenting techniques, when it comes to race and colour, with her children. Beatrice remarked that while growing up, she had it “hard” at home because she was the only child with a light complexion, and her other cousins acknowledged that their grandmother favoured her because her skin colour was lighter than theirs.

Paula is an Afro-Trinidadian woman of light-skinned complexion. She studied Journalism at the local university and has two children, including the child participant. Paula’s childhood memories of race include her mother calling her “Black.” In fact she stated, “when your mother say, ‘this friggin girl, bring your Black so-and-so right here, right now.’ Okay, so we Black, well,
we understood that. You were Black.” Her parents did not offer any context regarding her racial identity. However, when asked how it was communicated to her, she replied, “I just grew up and knew.”

Daniella is mixed and has light complexion and curly hair. She manages a popular store in a mall located in an upper-class section of Trinidad. She explained that, at times, she often encountered racism from customers, who would prefer to be served by a White manager. As a child, she became aware of race by recognizing difference in hair texture: “I would say, ‘mom, why is her hair like that?’ or, ‘how my own curly?’ you know.”

Shanti is an Indo-Trinidian housewife who resides with her family in a predominantly Indo-Trinidadian neighbourhood. Shanti remarked that she grew up with her mother “working all the time,” and thus, it was not possible to have discussions about race.

Alessa is an African Trinidadian woman. She identifies as Negro, but also as mixed with different ancestries; in general terms, she explained that if she was judged based on appearance, she would be classified as a Negro. Alessa’s childhood memories of race included her father avoiding the subject: “He would say, ‘I am a Trinidadian,’ and wanted us to have the same understanding.”

Maria is of African Trinidadian descent, with light skin. She did not “believe” race was “an issue,” and, according to her mindset, the child participant would only become aware of race as
she matured. She has one other child. Maria stated that she was not exposed to racism and racial identity was not discussed at home.

*Anthony* is a self-identified mixed male, married to the mother of the child participant; his wife belongs to a well-known upper class family. He is of middle class background, and works as an electrical technician. Anthony recalled that, as a child, he had encounters tainted by racism:

I was so ... I didn’t know what to think. I didn’t know how to operate ... I say, ‘why I do this—it was a man,’ I say, ‘what I do this man, what I do?’... I was like 11 or 12, somewhere around there. You can’t avoid it ... it’s out there and it’s very real.

*Ava* is an Indo-Trinidadian woman whose daughter is her only child. She is a devout Christian and considers this affiliation to be an important resource for her in terms of child-rearing fundamentals. Ava remembered that growing up, her parents “never really discussed race,” adding that, “I just figured out I was Indian because of my hair.”

*Reshma* is a light-skinned Indo-Trinidadian female, but disclosed that she is mixed with “Spanish” ancestry. She resides with her husband’s in-laws, and admitted that their prejudices are often openly stated in front of the child participant (Chandra). By contrast, Reshma proclaimed disagreement with their views, and cautioned Chandra against using “racial slurs.” Commenting on her childhood, and parents’ discussions about race, Reshma disclosed that, when it came to race, family discussions were not forthcoming: “No, not really; my father never
really talked about it. I have aunts who married Negro. My cousin married a Negro, so it wasn’t talked about much.”

*Kavita* has a daughter in addition to mothering a child participant in this study. She works in her husband’s business and practices Hinduism, which plays an important part in Vishnu’s upbringing. Kavita’s childhood memories consist of being exposed to interracial group friendships since her elder brother and sisters frequently invited persons of diverse racial backgrounds to their home. As she stated: “I can remember going to school from form one (grade seven); my best friend until up to form five (grade eleven) went straight up to form five, was an African girl.”

*Melody* is African Trinidadian with dark skin, and is a working class mother. She has other children, in addition to Stephen. She indicated that she did not have “time” to think about race, nor Stephen’s racial identity. She also remarked that her skin colour was not a hindrance to her, and added that while growing up, she was referred to as a “nice darkie.”

*Veronica* is an African Trinidadian mother. Veronica disclosed using skin colour as an identifier with Matthew, but not racial labels. She also admitted that she fears talking about race, as it may cause Matthew to become prejudiced towards others. Veronica remembered her childhood as one where race, whether positive as in discussions on racial identity, and negative, as in comments about other racial group, were noticeably absent: “When I was growing up, any
negative comments were made not in the family but outside. If I didn’t ask a question, my mother didn’t say anything."

Ingrid is a Dougla Trinidadian woman. She also wears her hair in a Rasta hairstyle, and has a light brown complexion. She is the mother of Jordan and two teenage daughters. Ingrid’s approach to child rearing is to disregard race. According to her, race discussions are divisive and can promote segregation. As a child, Ingrid was not exposed to discussions about her racial identity (her parents did not discuss it). She stated: “It was just observation... I guess when I got old enough, I realized my father was Indian and my mother was Negro.”

School Settings

Learning is fun ECCE centre. The Learning is Fun Early Learning Centre, located in a predominantly Indo-Trinidadian district was originally a faith-based school but, as a result of the government’s initiative to introduce free early childhood play based education, it is now a government operated centre. The appearance of the centre has retained much of its religious past. In fact, the picturesque school resembles a diminutive church, complete with triangular roof, white fence, and a set of steps that precede a small entrance area. It has a fenced-in enclosure for students to play in, and a swing set adorns the left side of the building. The lush green yard leads to fruit trees at the back, via a smooth concrete walkway.

Inside, space is limited, with no partitions for classrooms and an “open concept” design. Upon entry, the administrator’s desk sits at the corner, with a chair and filling cabinet. Students and teachers assemble around circular wooden tables and chairs; age groups are three plus and four plus. In total, there are approximately two groups, one for each age range. The bathrooms
and the kitchen are located at the rear of the school. Centres are interspersed, with the ‘doll house’ located at the back of the school, adjacent to where the four plus students sit with their teacher. After completing their pre-school education at Learning is Fun, a majority of the children enroll in the primary school next door. The daily schedule follows a typical, play-based routine. The morning involves circle and snack time, free play, and structured activities, then lunch, followed by nap time. In the afternoon, children spend free time outdoors, running and playing on the swings and enjoying the tropical sunshine.

**Advanced academy daycare and pre-school.** In contrast, Advanced academy daycare and pre-school is located in a middle-working class, multiracial area of Trinidad. The students at Advanced Academy are from various socio-economic and racial backgrounds. However, the majority are working class, African Trinidadians. The school is housed in a two storey home, with a stairway on the first floor connecting both levels. A red and yellow swing set on the front lawn and a doll house in the driveway round out the property (which lacks space for play). Mango trees grow outside and at the back, there is a semi-garden with numerous types of fruit trees, but this area is off limit to students.

The interior of the school resembles the Learning is Fun centre, insofar as there are no individual classrooms on the first floor. Instead, an open space encompasses three classrooms, including the four plus group, and the teacher’s desk positioned at the front. Hand-drawn pictures of letters and numbers attached to colourful Bristol board are glued to the wall shelves above children’s reach; students complete their academic work and also eat lunch at long wooden rectangular tables and wooden chairs. On the second floor, there are two separate classrooms, one for three-and-a-half-year olds, and the other for babies ranging in age from six
to 18 months. Unfortunately, the area is cramped and does not offer much space for children to move around easily (In the hall area upstairs, as on the main floor picture books are out of students’ reach). Advanced Academy’s daily schedule comprises a traditional academic routine. In the morning, teachers cover the traditional subjects, such as Mathematics, reading, printing and writing. In the afternoon, some free time permits students to play in the dress up centre, which contains dolls (mostly White), dresses, and costumes, which represent various professions.

**Conducting Research with Children: Key Considerations**

Although similarities may exist between adult participants, in addition to significant procedural precedents and parameters, research with children presents unique concerns that warrant special attention, particularly with respect to supporting the best interests of child participants, and maintaining the authenticity of their perspectives. Tensions scholars often point out include researchers’ perceptions of childhood/children, how children are situated in the research process (i.e., as objects versus subjects), ethical issues, researchers’ roles, and the context of the investigation. This section examines these particular concerns in relation to germane procedures of data generation and interaction with children who participated in the present study.

Most pedagogical studies relying primarily upon controlled scenarios acknowledge that the manner in which researchers conduct their investigations with children reflects researchers’ interpretations of the childhood period, as well as children’s competencies. As Farrell (2005) has stated, “our understandings of research with children and, indeed, of ethics in research with children, are embedded within our understandings of children and childhood” (p. 5). More
specifically, researchers are often guided by specific but also overlapping perceptions directly related to children’s abilities, characteristics, and their interactions with and understandings of their social environment. Further, it has been widely recognized that these perceptions influence the research design, including data collection as well as how researchers engage with children throughout the research process (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

This investigation’s classification of children’s abilities with specific reference to thinking about racial identity and construction of racial attitudes involves, firstly, an acknowledgement of children’s cognitive processes are different, but not deficient by comparison to that of adults’, and an emphasis on such differences as an essential mediation of how children interpret race and are able to articulate their understandings. Secondly, it is important to note that I do not operationalize cognitions as standalone elements in children’s construction of racial knowledge. To this end, tenets of social constructivism also offer opportunities to highlight a more interactive process that extends beyond age-related cognitive abilities. According to a social-constructivist perspective, children’s construction of knowledge is based on a reciprocal process involving environmental influences along with individual interpretations of information as transmitted (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

In light of this study’s social-constructivist orientation, I approached the field work process with the belief that if I provided age appropriate interview questions, along with child-centred tasks, it would be less difficult for children to express their views. Of equal importance was that my dialogue and interaction pattern illustrated a child-centred approach insofar as I placed the child at the “center” of the interviews. Put simply, I informed them that I wanted to learn from them, and was interested in hearing what they had to say. To account for children’s
interactions with members in their social environment, such as the home and school context, I also explored parents’ and teachers’ racial socialization practices. In a related vein, the findings generated from children’s interviews on the racial identification component of the study produced cogent insights on the confluence of developmental and environmental factors (reviewed in the discussion section).

Parallel in practical importance to the investigator’s conceptualization of children, the extent to which the child is involved in research procedures also stands to impact potential results. Indeed, much of the child-related research has been conducted “on children and not ‘with’ them” (Greene & Hill, 2005). The former refers to the criticisms leveled at investigations in which the “researcher was depicted as the expert on children’s lives...” (Kellett, 2010, p. 12). To elaborate, research of this nature often discounted children as competent participants and reliable informants on their experiences. In recent years, however, the predominant standpoint guiding child-related investigations has been that of children as active participants in their social environment, whose perspectives should be meaningfully sought and integrated throughout the research process. Drawing upon this basic premise, extant evidence suggests that more scholars are moving away from traditional adult directed research, in the sense that children work alongside—or independent from—investigators, to examine issues that stem from their own interests (Tisdall, Davis, & Gallagher, 2009). Although not universally applied across the spectrum of inquiries conducted with children, researchers (including myself) who are committed to giving children a voice, adopt the use of child-centered methods (another salient feature of child-centered research).
It is also noteworthy to highlight the role researchers choose to employ in their interaction with child participants. Some of these roles pertaining to research with children include the least adult role (Davis, 1998). For a researcher who adopts the least adult role (e.g., Mandell, 1988), the interaction with children is solely conducted on their level; the researcher actively participates in children’s play and other activities. This technique has primarily been used in ethnographic studies where the researcher aims for immersion in a child’s setting to observe children over a period of time. In other ways, the ‘least adult’ role can be implemented by interacting with child participants and getting to know them (Davis, 1998). Further, it calls for the researcher to locate children’s knowledge from a child-centred perspective, cognizant that an adult interpolation may not encompass children’s thoughts or feelings about the topic. Such interruptions essentially undercut the notion of children’s agency directed at what knowledge they choose to convey, their reasons for doing so, and its significance to their everyday lives.

Scholars also apply contextual criteria to research conducted with children (e.g., David, Tonkin, Powell, & Anderson, 2005; Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Punch, 2002). Punch (2002) for instance, asserted that, because school as a social context is associated with learning, children may expect that the researcher seeks a specific answer (Punch, 2002). However, conducting research in schools yields interpretive benefits, as it is a location familiar to children, and as such, may make children feel more at ease with the researcher. Nevertheless, to minimize this potential effect, the present study implements an assent procedure in which the researcher informs the child that there is no ‘right or wrong’ answer. Additionally, ice breaker activities introduce the task as an enjoyable game (e.g., Targowska, 2005, p. 148), and promote higher
levels of comfort and responsiveness to the researcher’s interview questions (e.g., Tinson, 2009).

**Equalizing power relations with children.** Clearly, the majority of the literature on child research has focused on the ethical dilemmas faced by adult researchers, particularly the power differential impinging on the child-adult relationship. In addition to informed consent, assent process, and confidentiality, the practice of reflexivity is also considered an invaluable strategy when conducting research with children. On this count, Freeman and Mathison (2009) have maintained that “self-reflexivity is important to explore one’s assumptions about children because decisions about how to seek access and relate within the research context are influenced by what we expect of children” (p. 58). As previously stated, this study affirms that children are active social agents who, when presented with the appropriate methods, are able to clearly articulate their respective ideas. Therefore, interviews were conducted during semi-structured activities as children’s perspectives on race would be more straightforwardly generated by questions aligned with their age-related cognitive abilities. Moreover, in keeping with a rigorous reflexivity, when the drawing activity for the racial attitude interview was observed as too demanding, photographs were substituted for the purposes of this study (a child-friendly technique implemented in a number of previous studies on children’s racial attitudes).

Taken together, consistent interpretations stand to reason that the role researchers assume—along with a set of targeted methods—will elicit children’s views of the topic under study. Freeman and Mathison (2009) have also argued that researchers adopt critical stances linked to their overall philosophies, informed by how surveyors seek to be perceived by child
participants (i.e., “be seen as genuinely trustworthy, caring and interested,” p. 58). This research employs a modest adult role with minimal intervention to unequivocally demonstrate, as a vested pedagogical goal, interest in what children think and know about race. Thus, from my first introduction to participants and throughout the remainder of the data collection, I remained as friendly and approachable as possible, drawing on my professional background as a teacher. Vigilantly cognizant of the potential for an authoritarian reception, I purposely avoided activity or expressions that could have cemented the latter (e.g., assisting teachers, commenting on interview responses with phrases such as “good job”). However, it should be noted that, because of the school environment, children could have perceived the aforementioned role and responded accordingly during our interviews.

**Child Interviews**

Curtin (1995; 2001) and Punch (2002) have advised that when conducting research with children, it is important to consider their expressive language ability. However, given the appropriate modifications, interviews can yield productive data reflective of children’s perspectives. For instance, Mauthner (1997) identified drawing as a good strategy to use with child participants. As an experienced early childhood educator, elementary teacher, and college instructor in the field of early childhood education, I observe the relative ease in which children discuss their ideas when engaged in a drawing exercise either by themselves or in a group. Thus, I implemented this technique in my study based on my professional experience and the methodological review which revealed that drawing activities and other stimuli, such as photographs, elicit children’s perceptions of race.
Racial identity. Audio and visual-recording equipment, including the use of a digital camcorder, documented participants’ responses. A photograph stimuli set with eight photos (male and female, representative of four racial backgrounds) was developed to determine children’s cognizance of racial differences and similarities, and their ability to identify with a photograph that most resembled themselves. For the racial identification task with the photo stimuli set, wherein I assessed perceived similarity, I asked the child to select a photo after posing the question: “Which one of these look like you?” The same stimuli set was employed for the racial attitude task, as well as a categorization procedure in which children classified photos of male and female children with the labels Indian, Negro, mixed and White. Children were also asked to comment on the photos’ similarities and differences so as to assess their basic categorization skills.

Another interview presented children with a diverse range of skin tone markers, crayons and pencils, and asked them to draw a physically accurate self-portrait. The purpose of this activity was to ascertain children’s diagrammatic consistency in racial identification and awareness, as well as their knowledge of racial labels and racial classification. Similar to the perceived similarity and racial awareness tasks, I began this interview with the child assent procedure. After children participants finished drawing, I asked the following questions: “Tell me about your drawing,” and “Why did you choose this crayon or pencil?” Allowing the child the necessary time to provide his or her responses, and to discuss any other detail he or she felt necessary to divulge, I thereafter proceeded to elicit, through conversational and flexible dialogue, the child’s understandings of racial labels using the query: “Do you know what the word _____ [Indian, Negro, mixed, and White] means?” If the child indicated ‘yes,’ I sought an
explanation. For racial identification purposes, I asked: “Are you ______?” If the child responded ‘no’ to the preceding labels, I then asked, “What are you?” or “Who is [child’s name]?”

I also explored whether race was salient to children’s categorization by asking two questions, one of which has been used in previous research, but modified for the purpose of this study: “What is your favourite place to go?” “When you go there, what kind of people do you see?” In addition, to further examine their classification skills using racial labels, I used classmates, myself, teachers and the administrators as examples, and determined whether students identified such persons as Negro, Indian, mixed, or White. With Indo-Trinidadian children, due to the school demographic, I was unable to pose these questions. Thus, data for racial classification consists of children’s categorization of photos based on the readily-supplied racial labels, as well as their responses to the classification question provided during the racial identity interview.

While specific questions related to uncovering the child’s perceptions of his/her racial identity were used, I conducted the interview in a conversational, flexible manner, allowing the child to direct the flow of the dialogue and discuss ideas s/he felt was important. Indeed, Irwin and Johnson (2005) have noted the importance, for researchers, of conceding to children’s desire to discuss a subject not related to the researcher’s inquiry. Such flexibility ensures the child is relaxed during the course of the interview (Irwin & Johnson, 2005).

**Racial attitudes: Storytelling activity.** The vast majority of studies on children’s racial attitudes have used techniques similar to Williams et al., (1975) Pre-school Racial Attitude Measure (PRAM). The aforementioned quantitative measure also involves reading vignettes
with accompanying depictions of light-skinned and dark-skinned figures and asking participants to select a stimulus that fits with a specific evaluative adjective. There are twelve positive and twelve negative descriptors for the racial attitude measure, as well as twelve sex role items. One of the scenarios includes the following description: “Here are two little boys. One of them is a kind little boy. Once he saw a kitten fall into a lake and he picked the kitten up to save it from drowning. Which is the kind little boy?” (p. 9). Responses are scored by using a points allocation strategy in which the assignment of a positive adjective with a light-skinned figure, and the pairing of a negative adjective with a dark-skinned figure, receives one point each.

This study relies in part upon a scenario intended to be age-appropriate and also relevant to the Trinidadian context, involving different characters that were named and described using a total of six traits: bad, selfish, lazy, pretty, smart, and kind. The story revolved around the characters’ attempts at gaining access to “Miss Mabel’s mango tree.” Before I read the story, I casually told children that the story was about mangoes and asked if they liked eating mangoes as well. This icebreaker was included to activate prior knowledge and to establish a comfortable atmosphere for the interview, which was well received as several children took it as an opportunity to point to the mango trees outside and speak about mango trees they had ‘at home.’ After I read the scene in the story where a character exhibited a particular trait, and provided the meaning of the trait (e.g., kind or selfish), I asked the child to select a photo from a stimulus set which consisted of eight photographs: four females and males of mixed, African Trinidadian, Indo-Trinidadian, and European Trinidadian descent.

For each participant, I recorded the adjectives s/he assigned to a racial group and calculated the number of positive and negative adjectives that the selected group received. I
then created a hierarchal (ranking) profile of the child’s most and least favoured groups. Next, I proceeded to a more general analysis by referring to each participant’s profiles to determine which groups were assigned the majority of positive and negative adjectives. I also documented the reasons for their selection (for further discussion, consult this dissertation’s data analysis section on children’s racial knowledge). Specifically, the control narrative included both female and male characters described with positive and negative adjectives. Children responded to questions that involved selecting the same gender as themselves, as well as that of the opposite gender. Indeed, this approach has not been employed in existing studies on children’s racial attitude measures, primarily because some believe that gender would serve as a confounding variable. The rationale for departing from the norm owes to whether similar and oppositional stimuli selections would show a consistent pattern of children’s racial attitudes.

It should be noted that the child interviews were conducted in a quiet area of the school and lasted no longer than twelve minutes, and were videotaped to document nonverbal behavior, thereby providing an additional source of data, especially given the language constraints of young children. I sought each child’s permission before initiating the activity, informing them, to reiterate, that there was no ‘right or wrong’ answer, and that we could stop at any time. During the interview, I also observed children’s reactions to the questions, and if I sensed discomfort or unease, I moved on to another question, or rephrased the inquiry.

**Data Analysis**

Congruent with the data analysis for qualitative inquiries, this study analyzes teachers’ and parents’ racial socialization practices and students’ racial identity interviews using a grounded theory approach. Though originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967),
grounded theory has evolved over the years, with somewhat modified versions, including a recent addition which essentially draws on the precepts of constructivist theory (see Charmaz, 2006). Despite the variations, a central tenet remains that grounded theory involves a flexible, iterative process whereby data analysis is regarded as a tool to uncover participants’ experiences without having these conform or fit into prior hypotheses. In other words, the structure allows the data to ‘speak’ for itself, and in doing so, the researcher is open to discovering conceptual linkages among a range of phenomena salient to participants, which work in tandem to construct a central thrust or ‘bigger picture’ of research findings.

However, prior to the implementation of the investigation, my specific interests were dimensions of children’s racial identity. Therefore, I used such categories to analyze children’s responses for each of the interview tasks. I employed this particular procedure to determine children’s knowledge in each of these areas pertaining to components salient to interpreting children’s overall knowledge of race. To add depth to the children’s data, however, I compared their responses to their parents’ reports. In doing so, a key category on children’s findings emerged, which I will explore in the discussion chapter: “Children’s Racial Identity: Developmental and Environmental Factors.”

Similar to other forms of qualitative analysis, grounded theory also involves a coding process. More specifically, this study applied the coding phases (open, axial, and selective) espoused by Corbin and Strauss (2008). In the open coding phase, I read each transcript line by line and wrote an “in vivo” code to refer to the main idea embedded in the text. Further, during the line-by-line analysis, I applied the questioning technique, asking, “who, what, why, how?” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to gain a more in-depth understanding of the participants’ statements.
Generally, however, I interacted with the data by applying more abstract theoretical inquiries such as: “What study are these data pertinent to?” or “What category does this incident indicate?” and “What is actually happening in the data?” (Strauss, 1987, pp. 30-31).

In the open coding phase, the researcher utilizes constant comparison, in which data is scrutinized to determine commonalities and variations, with the end result being the generation of a conceptual label (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). While reading the interviews transcripts, I compared incidents against each other, formulated questions regarding each text, and recorded their similarities and differences. Then, similar codes were grouped into concepts by again using the constant comparative method. Further, at this point in the analysis, instead of using in vivo codes, the concepts I generated reflected a more abstract interpretation of the data. Taking the analysis further, identifiable concepts were then compared against each other to develop a related category. The memos I used while conducting the open coding, particularly for the comparison between codes and among concepts, allowed for the properties and dimensions of categories to emerge. Properties and dimensions, simply put, denote that a category includes a range of characteristics.

In the next phase, referred to as axial coding, the aim is to illustrate connections among categories and their subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). At this point, the analysis is directed towards interpretation of the “conditions, contexts, strategies (action/interaction), and consequences” (p. 423) of categories developed during open coding. Therefore, using the categories that were well-suited to the research questions, I asked, “when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences?” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 125) so as to interrogate the interrelated factors that gave each category its conceptual breadth.
As a result of the axial stage, core connections among the data are brought into conversation during the last stage of analysis so as to identify a central variable pertinent to all of the existing categories. This is known as selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). To arrive at the central category, I scrutinized the data, posing such questions as: “What is the main analytic idea presented by this research?” and “If I had to conceptualize my finding in a few sentences, what would I say?” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 424). The “explanatory power” of the core theme was then tested by analyzing its relationship to other categories.

**Reflections**

Throughout the field work experience, I simultaneously documented interactions integral to the data and interpretations of cogent findings. For instance, if a child commented on the topic of race that caught my attention, I made note of it and later compared it to the child’s interview in an attempt to corroborate primary assumptions regarding the child’s racial awareness/identity, or attitudes; these notes are included in the data analysis to support the conclusions drawn from the interviews. Another strategy I used to preserve the qualitative integrity of the field work process with adult participants was to document what transpired on a non-verbal basis in the interviews (for example, participants’ body language and their silences). When I began interviewing parents, I noticed that when asked about how they broached the subject of race with their children, there was often a pause, or, in some cases, an anxious or confused reaction. After several interviews, I realized that what I was observing was not an arbitrary phenomenon but rather obtained from the topic of my investigation and, possibly in the case of my Indian-Trinidadian participants, my own racial background.
The apprehension that parents communicated through their silences, in a sense, provided another form of data that informed my thinking and analyses of the study, and of the context in which it took place. I moved beyond simply describing what Trinidadian parents thought or practiced in relation to teaching children about race, to interrogating the lack of racial socialization and the emphasis on egalitarianism. I returned to the literature on racial socialization and, while it confirmed that parents of pre-school children are usually among the least inclined to discuss racism, I felt that with reference to my research, a socio-historical and anti-colonial perspective would adequately address how the former colonial relationship—as well as post-Independence narratives—impact upon race consciousness and anti-racism practice. The fact that a substantial number of parents in my study expressed that “they did not know” how to discuss race or “had not thought about it” prompted me to reflect on the shaping of identity and the confluence of context and history at work in this process.

By framing identity from a contextual, socio-historical perspective, this analysis taps into more profound pedagogical territory. Incidentally, the introductory correlations between the literary survey and what I discovered based on the research conducted with this study’s participants afforded new research opportunities (see data analysis).

Moreover, I also examined children’s racial identities and attitudes. The methodological procedures are similar to those of previous studies, but my aim was to uncover children’s ability to identify themselves based on appearance. I also sought to examine their racial perceptions. While conducting the interviews with children, I soon realized the level of importance afforded to skin colour and hair texture as a source of identification in a Trinidadian context (also a consistent topic in the fictional literature under scrutiny). Reviews of the transcripts indicated
that the study of children’s perceptions of skin colour/tones and hair texture should align with their experiences and age-appropriate racial awareness. Furthermore, for the racial attitude measure, when I asked children to express the reasons for their selection, one adjective in particular, “pretty,” received the most elaborate justifications, while a few other descriptors appeared to be a bit too nuanced for them to understand. In fact, some children repeated the meaning of the adjective, while others relied on skin colour. However, a possible explanation for this could be that, although incipient racial attitudes exist, children are not able to express these in complex ways.

In addition, the use of a story telling activity and photographs may be critiqued as an experimental technique, which basically measures children’s racial attitudes, without illustrating how these are enacted in their daily lives (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Researchers who adopt the socio-cultural approach prefer ethnography and naturalistic inquiry methods for capturing children’s evaluations of others. While I was interested in using this particular approach, time constraints of the program did not permit a prolonged period in the field (a requirement for most ethnographic studies).
CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS

Introduction

The study examines racial socialization in three Trinidadian contexts: parenting, teaching, and the pre-school curriculum. Additionally, I investigated the racial identity of pre-school Trinidadian children. I recruited students, their parents and teachers from two schools. In interviews with parents and teachers, I asked participants to describe socialization practices in response to children’s expressed comments about race such as awareness of skin colour, hair texture, and (if any) negative statements and/or behavior towards a racial group. I also posed questions to elicit parents’ proactive strategies to foster racial pride in their children and to promote anti-colonial/anti-racist values.

I examined children’s racial socialization in the classroom context by asking teachers to discuss how their strategies and the pre-school curriculum allow children to learn about their racial identity and to develop positive out-group racial attitudes. I also asked teachers to report if they observed any incidents of negative racial attitudes enacted among children, and the strategies they used to address such incidents. In addition, I observed and documented the learning materials in students’ classrooms.

For the children participants, I conducted two types of interviews. The racial identity interview consisted of a self-portrait activity, and questions on racial terms and racial classification. A second interview involved a perceived similarity photograph selection where the child was asked to select a photo that resembles him/her and to provide a reason for his/her selection. This interview also consisted of asking children to comment on the similarities
or differences between two photos of same and opposite gender. To assess children’s racial attitudes, I used the same stimuli set along with a story I devised specifically for this study. For analysis purposes, I employed the techniques of grounded theory to determine the most salient categories in the data; by way of the axial coding approach, I established subcategories based on in-depth questioning of the conditions and contexts of the main categories that emerged from the open coding process.

The following chapter presents the most significant findings consistent with the research questions, supported with data from teachers, parents, and child participants. To illustrate the conceptual cogency and clarity of each category, the chapter provides a definition of the pertinent category and, in addition, integrates quotations from participants. The analysis will also highlight connections among the data by including subcategories for the main findings. What follows is a visual display of children’s data. In the interest of clarity, however, individual profiles of each child’s responses to, and selections of, the measures of perceived similarity correspond to the racial identification with labels and classifications. It should be noted that, while I used the specific racial terms with children (Negro, Indian, mixed and White), I documented their individual selections for the classification task in the following section as African Trinidadian, Indo-Trinidadian, mixed and White (I used the terms “Negro” and “Indian” for the children’s interview because both are labels regularly used in Trinidadian society).
Elaine (parent identified her as mixed; light-skinned, African Trinidadian)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms</th>
<th>Activity: drawing</th>
<th>Assessment of categorization: same/different</th>
<th>Classification: labels and interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selected photo African Trinidadian girl</td>
<td>Selected light brown pencil</td>
<td>KA: “Are these two girls the same or are they different (African Trinidadian girl and White girl)?”</td>
<td>White (boy and girl): accurate selections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: “Because we are the same.”</td>
<td>E: “Because this is my favourite colour.”</td>
<td>KA: “Why?”</td>
<td>African Trinidadian girl: selected photo of White girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI:</td>
<td>RI:</td>
<td>RI:</td>
<td>RI:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “Are you Indian?”</td>
<td>KA: “What does that mean you are ‘a Negro’?”</td>
<td>KA: “What other kind of people you see in “___”.”</td>
<td>RI:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: “No, I am a Negro.”</td>
<td>E: “That you have curly hair.”</td>
<td>E: “I see plenty people but they look like China.”</td>
<td>RI:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KA: “They look like China people?”

E: “Yes and, um, some upstairs children name ‘_____’ is an Indian. Only if you have straight hairs.”

E: “And my mommy is a Negro, right? And my father has straight hair so he is an Indian, but my mommy wanted to be an Indian, so she have straight hair... but she is a Negro.”

KA: “Only if you have straight hair, you are an Indian?”

E: Shakes head ‘yes’

Analyses [notes]: The child’s interpretation of the term “Negro,” was not evident in her photo selection. In fact, she identified a White girl as “Negro,” although she proffered a photo of a child with curly hair. However, based on her response, it seems that her understanding of the term “Indian” is restricted to two features: hair and gender. As stated in her interview, her father is Indian because he has straight hair. She selected the photo of the African Trinidadian boy who has short hair; accordingly, the child may have judged the stimulus Indian because, in her view, the African Trinidadian child and her father had the same type of hair.
Rajnath (Indo-Trinidadian boy)

Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms

Activity: drawing

Assessment of categorization: same/different

Classification: labels and interview questions

Selected photo of White boy

Selected light-brown marker

KA: “Why does he look like you?”

R: “He has the same”...(looking at photo, but touching his hair)

KA: “The same what?”

R: Silence

KA: “You don’t know?”

“That’s fine.”

KA: “Where do you like to go with your mommy?”

R: *child names a shopping plaza.

KA: “Like right over there?”

RI:

KA: “Are you Indian?”

R: “No.”

KA: “So what are you?”

R: “Christian.”

KA: “You’re a Christian.”

KA: “And is this boy and this boy the same?” (African Trinidadian and White)

R: Shakes head no

KA: “Why?”

R: “Because he has grey hair (White boy).”

KA: “Grey hair?”

R: “And he has what (African Trinidadian)?”

A: “Black.”

KA: “And is this boy and this boy the same?”

Indo-Trinidadian boy: accurate

Indo-Trinidadian girl: selected photo of mixed girl

White boy: selected photo of mixed boy

White girl: selected photo of mixed girl

African Trinidadian boy: accurate

African Trinidadian girl: accurate

mixed boy: selected photo of White boy

mixed girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl
KA: “So when you go to *-what kind of people do you see?”

R: “I see plenty.”

E: “What do they look like?”

R: “They have on clothes.”
Joseph (light-skinned appearance African Trinidadian; parent is mixed)

**Racial identification:** perceived similarity and racial terms

**Activity:** drawing activity

**Assessment of categorization:** same/different

**Classification:** labels and interview questions

Selected photo of African Trinidadian boy:

KA: “Why does he look like you?”

J: “Because he has the same colour, the same hair and the same smile.”

KA notes: He corrects it on his own.

KA: “Why Red?”

J: “Because I like red.”

KA: “Ok, I know you like red and I like red too but does it look like me?”

(taking red marker and placing it to my skin)

“I want you to draw a picture..”

KA: “These two boys (mixed and White), are they the same or are they different?”

J: “Different because one don’t have the same smile, the same colour, and don’t have the same hair.”

Indo-Trinidadian girl: selected White boy

Indo-Trinidadian boy: accurate

African Trinidadian boy: selected mixed girl

African Trinidadian girl: accurate

mixed boy: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy

mixed girl: selected photo of African Trinidadian girl

White boy: selected photo of mixed boy

White girl: accurate

KA: “What’s your favourite place to go?”

J: “To the park.”

KA: “When you go to the park, what kind of people you see?”

RI:

KA: “Are you Negro?”

J: “No.”

KA: “You’re not Negro.”

KA: “Are you Indian?”

J: “Nope.”

KA: “Are you Douga?”

J: “Nope.”

KA: “Are you mixed?”

J: “Nope.”

KA: “Are you White?”

J: “Nope.”

KA: “What are you?”
J: “I am a rich man... you see a Richmond name? That’s my daddy street. Where my daddy does live, I does live there.”

J: “People you don’t know.”

KA: “What do they look like, those people you don’t know?”

J: “They could be big [KA notes: (demonstrates action with hand)] and small.”

“Big (demonstrates action again) and small.”
Sonia (African Trinidadian)

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<tr>
<th>Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selected photo of African Trinidadian girl</td>
<td>Child selected red marker</td>
<td>KA: “Are these two girls the same or are they different?” (White and African Trinidadian)</td>
<td>Indo-Trinidadian boy: accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “Where do you see a girl that looks like you?”</td>
<td>KA: “But does that look like you?”</td>
<td>S: “Different.”</td>
<td>Indo-Trinidadian girl: selected photo of White girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA notes: looks down at her shirt.</td>
<td>KA: “It has to be a colour that looks like you.”</td>
<td>KA: “Why?”</td>
<td>African Trinidadian boy: accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “Ok, why do you think this girl looks like you?”</td>
<td>KA: “Not your favourite colour or not your shirt.”</td>
<td>S: “Because they not the same.”</td>
<td>African Trinidadian girl: accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: “I don’t know.”</td>
<td>“A picture of (child’s name).”</td>
<td>KA: “So what makes her different?”</td>
<td>White boy and White girl: selected photo of mixed boy and of mixed girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: “Um... this one.”(chooses red again)</td>
<td>S: “I don’t know.”</td>
<td>KA: “What is your favourite place to go?”</td>
<td>mixed boy and mixed girl: selected photo of White boy and Indo-Trinidadian boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI:</td>
<td>KA: “Why?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: “No.”</td>
<td>KA: “Why?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “Are you Indian?”</td>
<td>S: “I don’t know.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: “No.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “Are you mixed?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “Are you White?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: “No, I am brown.”</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

KA: “What is your favourite place to go?”
S: “The beach.”

KA: “When you go to the beach, what kind of
people do you see?"

S: “People, brown like me.”

Analyses [notes]: Child has some race awareness but video data shows that she comes across as shy during the interview. Perhaps this prevented her from articulating her thoughts; for example, only after additional prompting was she able to select a colour for self-identification. Classification response appears to reflect this dissonance.
Emmanuel (mixed: African and Indo-Trinidadian)

Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms

Activity: drawing

Assessment of categorization: same/different

Classification: labels and interview questions

Selected photo of Mixed boy

KA: “Why you think he looks like you?”
E: “Because he looks like me.”

KA: “Are you Negro?”
E: “Yes.”

KA: “Are you Indian?”
E: “Yes.”

KA: “Are you mixed?”
E: “Yes.”

KA: “How could you be all three?”

KA: “Give aunty one.”
E: “My mommy say I’m two.”

KA: “Which two?”
E: “The thing what you do.”

Selected accurate colour: KA: “This boy and this boy the same or are they different?” (mixed and Indo-Trinidadian)
E: “Them look like the same.”
KA: “How?”
E: “Because them is brothers.”

Selected accurate colour: KA: “Why did you choose this one?”
“Because I want to choose it, because I have this colour.” (points to hand)

White boy and White girl: selected photo of mixed girl and White girl
White boy: selected photo of mixed boy
Indo-Trinidadian boy: accurate
Indo-Trinidadian boy: selected photo of White boy
African Trinidadian: selected photo of Indian boy
African Trinidadian girl: accurate

mixed boy: selected photo of African Trinidadian boy
mixed girl: selected photo of mixed girl

*Child claims beach as
E: “The same.”

KA: “Oh, the Negro and the Indian?”

E: “Yes.”

KA: “You’re the two.”

E: “One of people who like to go the beach... and I like to go to the beach and when I go to the beach, I met a friend.”

KA: “So what do these people look like?”

E: “Brown, black, different kind of colours. And I only know black, brown, and white.”

KA: “What does a White person look like?”

E: “An Indian or something.”
Stephanie (parent identified her as mixed, with African Trinidadian appearance)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selected photo of African Trinidadian girl</td>
<td>Accurate selection</td>
<td>KA: &quot;Are these two girls the same or are they different?&quot; (mixed girl and African-Trinidadian girl)</td>
<td>African Trinidadian girl: accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: &quot;Why does she look like you?&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>KA: &quot;This is not the same; why?&quot;</td>
<td>African Trinidadian boy: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: &quot;She has the same hair like me.‘’</td>
<td></td>
<td>S: &quot;Because (points to the photo of African Trinidadian girl) this brown, and this (points to mixed girl), this White.‘’</td>
<td>Indo-Trinidadian boy: selected photo of African Trinidadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indo-Trinidadian girl: selected photo of mixed girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White boy and White girl: both accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mixed boy: first selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy then changed to mixed boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mixed girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>KA: &quot;So, when you go to *-with your daddy and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
you’re having lots of fun, what kind of people do you see?”

S: “I see Brianna my friend, Jahmilla my friend, and Jane, my friend.”
Jonathan (mixed appearance, and identified by parent the same)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selected photo of White boy</td>
<td>Selected Black crayon</td>
<td>KA: “Are these two girls (White and African Trinidadian) the same or are they different?”</td>
<td>When asked to select photos of Indian children: J: I don’t know (gestures with hand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “Why does he look like you?”</td>
<td>J: “I could use Black?”</td>
<td>J: “They are different.”</td>
<td>White boy: selected photo of mixed boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J: “Because of the same hair” (points to his hair)”</td>
<td>KA: “Well, it’s a picture of yourself so whatever you want.”</td>
<td>KA: “They’re different, ok, Why?”</td>
<td>White girl: selected photo of African Trinidadian girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KA: “So why you chose that colour?”</td>
<td>KA: “Are these two the same (mixed girl and Indian boy)”</td>
<td>African Trinidadian boy and girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy and girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[KA notes: he drops it]</td>
<td>J: “No. She hair long and he hair so (pointing to the hair).”</td>
<td>mixed girl: selected photo of mixed girl and White girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KA: “No pick it up, just tell me why you chose it.”</td>
<td>J: “Because they not looking together.”</td>
<td>*no selection for mixed boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KA: “Does it look like you?”</td>
<td>KA: “Are these two the same (mixed girl and Indian boy)?”</td>
<td>KA: “What is your favourite place to go?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J: Silence.</td>
<td>J: “No. She hair long and he hair so (pointing to the hair).”</td>
<td>*child names location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KA: “No..which one of these looks like you?”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KA: “*When you go -*, *what kind of people of do you see?*”

J: “*A lot of people.*”

Analyses [notes]: In an interview with the mother, the woman explained that she had been referred to as “Black while growing up.” She also mentioned that her child recognizes colour. Perhaps child’s selection is due to parental socialization.
Melanie (mixed appearance; parental identification the same)

**Racial identification:** perceived similarity and racial terms

**Activity:** drawing

**Assessment of categorization:** same/different

**Classification:** labels and interview questions

Selected photo of African Trinidadian girl

KA: “Why does this girl look like you?”

M: “Because my mommy combs my hair like that.”

KA notes: first selected black, then brown

KA: “Now, why do you choose that one?”

M: “The same or are they different?”

(M: “Different.”)

KA: “Why?”

M: “I don’t know.”

Selected photo of White girl

KA: “Why does this girl look like you?”

M: “Indian.”

KA: “You choose the...”

M: “The wrong one.”

KA: “Ok, that’s the wrong one...which one is the right one?”

M: “No, a Dougla.”

KA: “Is mommy an Indian?”

[M points at another brown indicator]

KA: “That one, ok.”

M: “No, my mommy does call me Dougla.”

KA: “Because I choose the...”

KA: “What is your favourite place to go?”

KA: “When you go there, what kind of people do you see?”

M: “Granny.”

KA: “So what kind of other people do you see?”

M: “Auntie Cindy.”

KA: “The same or are they different?”

M: “Different.”

KA: “Why?”

M: “I don’t know.”

RI:

M: “Indian.”

KA: “Why, are you Indian?”

M: “Because my mommy call me Indian.”

KA: “Is mommy an Indian?”

[M points at another brown indicator]

KA: “That one, ok.”

M: “No, my mommy does call me Dougla.”

KA: “Indian boy: no selection

Indian girl: selected photo of White girl

African Trinidadian boy and girl: accurate

White boy and White girl: accurate

mixed boy and girl: accurate

White boy and White girl: accurate

Indian boy: no selection

Indian girl: selected photo of White girl

African Trinidadian boy and girl: accurate

White boy and White girl: accurate

mixed boy and girl: accurate
Analyses [notes]: Child identifies difference but does not indicate a reason for response. Such data show additional evidence for the different manner in which children attend to the similarities and differences between the stimuli and perceived similarity task (identification). For the latter, child quickly offered a response for why the photo was similar to her: “because my mommy combs my hair like that.”
Fiona (Indo-Trinidadian)

Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms

Activity: drawing

Assessment of categorization: same/different

Classification: labels and interview questions

Selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl

RI:

KA: “Are you an Indian?”

F: “Yes, I was hiding behind my papa’s car.”

Selected brown

KA: “Why you choose that one?”

F: “Because I like that.”

KA: “Are these two girls the same, or are they different?” (photos of mixed girl and African Trinidadian girl)

F: “They’re same.”

KA: “Why?”

F: “Because they’re sharing.”

White boy and White girl: selected photo of mixed boy and White girl

African Trinidadian boy and African Trinidadian girl: selected photo of mixed girl

Did not select African Trinidadian boy

Indo-Trinidadian boy and Indo-Trinidadian girl:

selected White boy

and White girl

mixed boy: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy

mixed girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl

KA: “What kind of people do you see?”

F: “I see people with Miss Cindy.”
Chris (African Trinidadian)

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Selected photo of African Trinidadian boy

KA: “Why does he look like you?”

C: “Because he has the same smile.”

KA: “Are these two the same or are they different?” (White boy and African Trinidadian boy)

C: “Different.”

KA: “Different, ok. Why are they different?”

C: “Because they don’t have the same smile.”

African Trinidadian boy and African Trinidadian girl: selected photos of mixed boy and African Trinidadian girl

Indo-Trinidadian girl: accurate

Indo-Trinidadian boy: no selection

KA: “What do you do when you go to -?”

KA: “Have fun.”

KA: “You have fun. Who do you go with?”

C: “My uncle my papa, my
granny, and my uncle.”

KA: “And when you go there, do you go to the beach?”

C: “I went on a boat and I see fishes. And I was up on top the boat, and I flipped and I jumped in the water, and I swim. And I had something in my eyes, and something in my mouth so I can breathe, and something on my nose.”

KA: “That sounds like you went snorkeling.”

KA: “Now, when you went there, what kind of people you saw?”

C: “My papa.”

Analyses [notes]: Child’s identification with hair consistent with parent’s reports of his racial awareness.

Interestingly, when asked to identify similarities/differences for same gender, he did not mention hair but, for opposite gender, he identified hair as the difference between the stimuli. An explanation might be found in relation to the fact that pictures representing the African Trinidadian and White boy show similar hair styles (a short, low cut). Thus, the child did not discern any difference in hair. Therefore, when asked to identify sameness/difference, he looked for another attribute (the image of the child’s smile). Taken together, it appears that hair is a salient feature for the child’s identification, as well as for classifying others.
Kelly (African Trinidadian; light-skinned)

**Racial identification:** perceived similarity and racial terms

**Activity:** drawing

**Assessment of categorization:** same/different

**Classification:** labels and interview questions

---

Selected mixed girl

KA: “Why does this girl look like you?”

K: “Ummm, cause she looks like me.”

RI:

KA: “Are you Indian?”

K: “No.”

KA: “Are you Negro?”

K: “I am four, right? So when I finish four, I’m going to turn five. And then I turn six, and then I turn seven and then I turn nine, then I turn 10.” (reading number chart)

KA: “Are you Douga?”

K: “Yes.”

[KA notes: child looks unsure about her response]

Selected red pencil

KA: “Why that one?”

K: “Because I like the colour.”

Photos of Indo-Trinidadian and mixed girl

KA: “Are they same or are they different?”

K: “Same.”

KA: “I don’t know…because they’re the same, because they’re the same like each other.”

African Trinidadian boy and girl: selected photo of White boy and mixed girl

Indo-Trinidadian girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl

Indo-Trinidadian boy: no selection

White boy and White girl: accurate

mixed girl: accurate

mixed boy: “I don’t know.”

KA: “What is your favourite place to go?”

K: “My favourite place is playground and my favourite place is the beach.”

KA: “I love the beach… so when you go to the beach what kind of people you see?”
Analyses [notes]: Recently, Trinidad has seen an influx of Chinese immigrants. Perhaps, due to the perceptible racial differences, the child was able to associate the racial term with the accurate racial group.
Krystal (parents identified her as mixed; appears African Trinidadian)

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Selected photo of African Trinidadian girl

KA: “Why does she look like you?”
K: “Because her hair is like mine and she is brown.”

RI:

KA: “Who is Krystal?”
K: “I am a Negro princess.”

[KA notes: looks at the ceiling]

K: “And princess hair does comb it like so, and take a comb and do it so, and then put a clip.”

[KA notes: action indicates blow-drying]

[KA notes: action indicates curling]

KA: “Oh what kind of hair do you have?”

[KA notes: Silence,]

Child selected red marker

KA: “Is that your colour?”

KA: “Does that look like you?”

[KA notes: participant looks at other markers, looks to me and smiles and nods, ‘yes.’]

KA: “It does...ok. You can draw now. Go ahead.”

KA: “Why you choose this one?”

K: “I like this.”

KA: “Are these two girls (Indo-Trinidadian and African-Trinidadian girl) same, or are they different?”

K: “They’re same.”

KA: “Why?”

K: “Because they’re White.”

Indo-Trinidadian girl: selected photo of African Trinidadian girl

Indo-Trinidadian boy: selected photo of mixed boy

African Trinidadian boy: selected photo of White boy

African Trinidadian girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl

White boy and White girl: accurate

Show me the mixed boy and the mixed girl:

selected photo of mixed girl.

*made no selection for mixed boy

K: “I like to go airport and I does tell my mommy and
thinking].

K: “Indian.”

KA: “Oh, you have Indian hair.”

K: “Yeah.”

[KA notes: child appears pleased when making the preceding comment about her ‘Indian’ hair.]

daddy. So tomorrow, my cousin from Trinidad, he name is Kaiwan and he coming down tomorrow.”

KA: “When you go to the airport what kind of people you see?”

K: “Indians and princess.”

Analyses [notes]: Child explained she is a Negro princess but because this interview was conducted a few days after the racial identity interview, the identification with the term Negro may be the child recalling the term (and possibly parental influence as well). For instance, Krystal’s comment about the ‘Indian’ label mirrors her parent’s remarks. Specifically, her mother stated that the child asks her to blow dry her hair so it hangs straighter, and with curls. On the other hand, the first interview I conducted with Krystal, wherein she selected a photo that looks like her, shows consistency with her interpretation of the label (Indian). The African Trinidadian girl stimulus featured an image of a braid with curls at the end, and the photo of the mixed boy also depicted a curly hair texture.

Further, the parent stated that her daughter “knows a lot” about Indian culture because she loves Indian food but she does not know a lot about “Africans.” The child also shows a preference for lighter skin tones. In an informal interview I conducted with Krystal, she put forward that princesses are White and “if you are brown, you cannot be a princess.” This bias was also corroborated in an interview with her parents, when her father mentioned her preference for her White dolls.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selected photo of White girl</td>
<td>Child selected a lighter colour marker</td>
<td>KA: “And are these two the same or are they different?” ( Indo-Trinidadian girl and mixed Trinidadian girl)</td>
<td>Indo-Trinidadian boy: selected photo of White boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI:</td>
<td>C: “Because my aunty cut it for meh.”</td>
<td>C: “I don’t know.”</td>
<td>African Trinidadian boy: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Shakes head no.</td>
<td>[KA notes: child stops coloring with the red marker and goes to the box of markers to select a brown marker (later discloses she was drawing her “friend” with this marker)]</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed boy and mixed girl: accurate selections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “What are you?”</td>
<td>KA: “Could you tell me something about the colour that you used?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: “I am Christian and I am cute.”</td>
<td>C: “Pink.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: “Why did you use pink?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C: “Because it is my favourite colour.”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KA: “Because it is your favourite colour.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C: “I does go up in the flyover, to get stuff for my daddy in the shop and the flyover in the grocery to get snacks.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KA: “Really?” “So when you go to the grocery what kind of people you see?”

C: “Muslims, Christians and Hindus.”

Analyses [notes]: Child appears to have a preference for lighter skin tones. She clearly identified with the photo of the White child and drew her picture with a light coloured marker; I also observed during ‘free time’ her insistence on playing with the white doll (although dolls of other colours were available). Child classified same gender groupings accurately and shows high level of race awareness. Religious affiliation holds most salience for this child, as evidenced in her classification and identification.
Chandra: Indo-Trinidadian (light-skinned)

Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms

Activity: drawing

Assessment of categorization: same/different

Classification: labels and interview questions

Selected photo of mixed girl

KA: “Why does this girl look like you?”

C: “Because I like her.”

KA: “Why do you like her?”

[KA notes: begins moving around, playing with her hair]

C: “I don’t know.”

RI:

KA: “You’re an Indian?”

C: “Yes, because my mommy tell me so.”

KA notes: Takes brown, but then puts it back and selects a pink one instead.

“Are these two girls same or different?” (White and African Trinidadian girl)

C: “Different.”

KA: “Why?”

C: “Because they have different hair.”

Indo-Trinidadian boy and girl: selected African Trinidadian boy and girl

White boy and the White girl: accurate

African Trinidadian boy and girl: selected mixed boy and mixed girl

mixed boy and mixed girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy and girl.

KA: “When you go to - * what kinds of people you see there?”

C: “All kind of people.”

KA: “So who are these people? What do they look like?”

KA: [notes: Stops... then speaks]

C: “Indian, um..baboons.”

KA: “Baboons?”
KA: “Who’s that?”

C: “The baboons.”

KA: “Who’s the baboons?”

C: “The baboons does walk.”

KA: “And who else?”

C: “The mommies, the parents.”
Vishnu (Indo-Trinidadian)

Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms

Activity: drawing

Assessment of categorization: same/different

Classification: labels and interview questions

Selected photo of White boy
KA: “Why does this boy look like you?”
V: “Because I am a boy.”

KA notes: later in the interview, the child continues to speak:
V: “I think I have a laughing boy hair.” (photo of Indo-Trinidadian child)

RI:
KA: “And are you an Indian?”
V: “No.”

Child selected brown marker
KA: “Why you choose this one?”
V: “Because myself brown.”
KA: “Because what?”
V: “Because my skin brown.”

KA: “What about this boy (African-Trinidadian) and this boy (White) are they same or are they different?”
V: “Different.”

KA: “What about them is different, and why?”
V: “Cause this boy laughing (White boy) and this boy not laughing.” (African Trinidadian boy).

KA: “What about this boy (African-Trinidadian) and this boy (White) are they same or are they different?”

African Trinidadian boy: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy
African Trinidadian girl: accurate
Indo-Trinidadian girl: selected photo of White girl
Indo-Trinidadian boy: selected photo of mixed boy

White boy: accurate
White girl: photo of mixed girl
mixed boy: selected photo of African Trinidadian boy
mixed girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl

V: “Different people... they look Indians.”
KA: “They look Indian. And...
what else..?

KA: “What does an Indian person look like?”

V: “Like God.”

KA: “Who told you that?”

V: “My mommy.”

Data Analysis notes: During the interview, the child also looked at the stimuli set before I asked any questions and remarked “all ah them brown, just some lighter.” Child shows high level of race awareness, including recognition of colour differences and hair texture. This finding was also corroborated by his mother, who stated that one of her daughters has curly hair and when the child sees someone who has this same hair type, he usually remarks: “look _____’s hair.” Hair, in this case, is not only the child’s criteria for self-identification but also for discerning racial characteristics as well.
Stephen (African Trinidadian)

Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms

Activity: drawing

Assessment of categorization: same/different

Classification: labels and interview questions

Selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy
KA: “Ok, he looks like you.”
KA: “Why does he look like you?”
KA notes: silence
KA: “You don’t know why he looks like you?”
KA notes: child shakes head ‘no.’

[S] “Red.”
KA: “What’s this colour?”
Silence
KA: “I need you to make a picture of Stephen, which one of these would you use? Which one of these crayons?” [KA points to marker].

KA: “Which one of them?”
[KA notes: chooses Black crayon]
KA: “The Black one, ok.”
KA: “Why you choose that one?”

KA notes: child shrugs as in don’t know
KA: “You don’t know, ok.”

KA: “Are these two boys the same or are they different?” (African Trinidadian and mixed)
S: “Different.”
KA: “Ok, they are different. Why?”

S: “Because they don’t have the same colour.”

African Trinidadian boy: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy
African Trinidadian girl: accurate
Mixed boy: selected photo of White boy
Mixed girl: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl
Indian girl: selected photo of White girl
Indian boy: selected photo of African Trinidadian boy
KA: “When you go in town, what kind of people you see?”
S: “My friends.”
Matthew (African Trinidadian)

Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms

Activity: drawing

Assessment of categorization: same/different

Classification: labels and interview questions

Selected photo of Indo and African Trinidadian boy

KA: “Why does this boy (Indo-Trini) look like you?”

M: “I just know he looks like me.”

RI:

KA: “You’re not a Negro brown; you’re not an Indian boy.”

M: “I am a brown boy.”

KA: “Why you chose this one?”

M: “This one is black.”

KA: “And which one is this?” (points to another black)

M: “Do I have to use black?”

KA: “You could use the black.”

[KA notes: pauses, looks at markers, drops Black marker, and says:]

M: “I can take this one.” (light marker)

KA: “Why you want to use that one?”

M: “I just want to use it.”

KA: “If I ask you to find one of these that looks like your skin colour, which one would it be?”

M: “Brown.” [brown marker selected]

KA: “Are these two the same (African and Indo-Trinidadian boy) or are they different?”

M: “These are the same.”

KA: “Why?”

M: “Because they’re brown and brown.”

M (continues looking at the stimuli set and observes): “It has three Whites.”

KA: “It has three Whites; where are they?”

[KA notes: child points to White boy (one), points to White girl, points back to White boy then points to mixed boy (two) then asks “this is brown?”]

M: “Tyriq and Robbie.”

KA: “What do you like to do when you go to the beach?”

M: “Swim.”

KA: “When you go to the beach, what kind of people you see?”

M: “Tyriq and Robbie.”

Classified all photos accurately according to labels provided.
Jordan (mixed, with Rastafarian hairstyle)

Racial identification: perceived similarity and racial terms

Selected African Trinidadian boy

Activity: drawing

Assessment of categorization: same/different

Classification: labels and interview questions

RI:

KA: “Are you mixed?”

J: “No.”

KA: “No, you’re not mixed?”

J: “No, I’m brown.”

KA: “And what about these two boys (White boy and African Trinidadian)?”

“Are they the same?”

J: Shakes head ‘yes.’

KA: “Why did you choose the brown pencil?”


J: “Because I am brown.”

African Trinidadian boy: selected mixed boy

African Trinidadian girl: selected White girl

White boy: selected photo of Indo-Trinidadian boy

White girl: accurate

Indo-Trinidadian boy: selected photo of mixed boy

Indo-Trinidadian girl: selected photo of mixed girl

mixed boy: selected photo of African Trinidadian boy

mixed girl: selected photo of White girl

KA: “When you go there, what kind of people you see?”
Analyses [notes]: Child classifies all as brown, although stimuli differ by skin colour. Child appears not to recognize subtleties in shade.

**Descriptive Overview: Photograph Selection and Perceived Similarity**

Results revealed that the vast majority of children selected photos for identification based on perceived similarity of skin colour and hair texture, while (n=2) cited both hair and colour. Almost half of the participants (n=7) indicated hair as the reason for their selection. On the other hand, only (n=2) participants mentioned skin colour and hair. Other examples indicated that when selecting a photo for the perceived similarity task, some children paid attention to one racial criterion at a time (this being whichever is most salient to them). Jonathan, for example, selected the photo of the White boy, but his reasoning was based on the physical characteristics such as sharing the same type of hair. Similarly, Vishnu, an Indo-Trinidadian boy, chose the photo of the White boy and, while he did not gave hair as a justification, later in the interview, he displayed an awareness of differences in hair texture. Colour, in both cases, was not the most salient marker.

In addition, Chandra, who is light-skinned, selected a photo of the mixed child (who is light-skinned) and it would appear, then, that she identified more with her skin colour than with hair. Conversely, Clara, a brown-skinned Indo-Trinidadian, identified with the photo of the
White girl. When asked for a reason, she simply stated “because I like her.” This child also demonstrated a lighter-skin bias in subsequent interviews, so it is safe to conclude that, as opposed to other participants who identified using perceived similarity physical characteristics, preference influenced Clara’s racial identification. Indeed, Aboud (1987) has pointed out that as children’s cognitions mature with age, such processes allow for racial constancy to develop, thereby decreasing the influence of affect (that is, emotional factors), on children’s self-identification. With this interpretation in mind, perhaps the reasoning behind Clara’s misidentification was that she believed she could change her identity to one which she preferred (i.e., White). Additionally, consistent with Aboud and Doyle’s (1993) claim, the evidence suggests that her racial attitudes are more developed than her ability to self-identify. However, an additional factor is that Clara’s mother does not believe in racial socialization, a point I will explore in the discussion chapter.

**Similarity and differences.** When children were presented with same sex photos that represented differences in skin colour and hair texture, and asked if they were the same or different, more accurately pointed out differences in skin colour, with a smaller number indicating differences in hair texture. Other responses included ‘I don’t know,’ and non-racial criteria references. Taken together, these observations indicate that children employ different criteria when assessing differences and similarities more generally than when assessing perceived similarity for self-identification.
**Drawing Activity.** During the drawing activity, children were presented with skin-toned markers, crayons, and pencil crayons, and invited to create a self-portrait. The process of the selection of the markers and their reasons for doing so provided additional empirical evidence to support previous research claims regarding emotional factors in children’s racial identification and stability of racial knowledge. Generally, accurate selection of materials to match skin tone was found for the majority of participants. Some children selected markers that represented darker tones than their complexion, but when I asked individual children whether the selected colour resembled the participant’s skin colour, the child would often glance at his or her respective skin colour and then at the materials provided; at that point many children would “self-correct” by choosing the appropriate colour. On the part of the light-skinned children, two chose the red crayon, but stated that choice was made because they “liked” it. Perhaps the shade differences influenced these children’s selections. However, because persons of light-skinned complexion are referred to as “red” in Trinidadian society, children’s selections may also reflect their internalization of this societal descriptor.

On the other hand, Clara selected the pink marker, although she is of brown complexion, and Krystal, who is also of brown complexion, selected the red marker. Conversely, Chandra selected brown, and then pink, which confirmed that she was, indeed, aware of her own skin colour. The confusion about colour selection during the drawing activity could be indicative of the fact that, for Chandra, hair is a more salient attribute for her self-identification. Also revealing in regard to issues of racial identity and self-perception were children’s responses for their selections. For example, only three participants stated that it was because their colour matched the pencil, crayon, or marker, evidenced by statements such as:
“because I am brown.” Such silence may indicate the influence of children’s age-related cognitions as well as the specificity of the research measure.

By contrast, the photo task was used to assess children’s perceived similarity wherein stimuli represented racial criteria (such as hair texture and skin colour), while the self-portrait activity solely examined children’s ability to identify based on skin colour. Further, pre-school children’s reasoning processes is egocentric; that is, they believe others think the same way as they do (Piaget, 1976). Consistent with this developmental analysis, one interpretation is that children attributed colour to their selection but felt that because it was observable to them (and it was the only criteria present in the research task), then it was also observable to the researcher; therefore, it was not necessary to disclose a response.

**Self-labeling and racial categories.** The vast majority of children did not identify with racial labels and, also, did not know what the latter meant. In terms of accurate identification, two children stated they were Dougla (as stated previously, a mixture of African and Indo-Trinidadian ancestry), and two girls identified as Negro, although it was unclear whether they understood the term. Finally, two girls identified themselves as Indian. Another boy—in this case, of African Trinidadian descent—claimed to be Chinese but, later in the interview, stated he was not (the following was clarified in the interview with his mother: he watches a specific cartoon show on television and, after researching a few episodes of this program, I discovered that one dealt with the main characters’ trip to China; thus, this usage of the racial term is reflective of the influence of digital media and his desire to associate with a TV program that he routinely enjoys). Some children also rejected the racial terms and, instead, identified with skin colour, and in two additional instances, with religious denomination.
**Racial categories and classification.** In contrast to racial identification with labels, some children did show a nascent understanding of the meaning of Negro, Dougla, mixed and White. Nevertheless, participants defined the labels mixed and White in terms of colours, thereby illustrating the effect of racial terms with colour connotations on children’s perception of social categories. In addition, students’ explanations for Negro and Indian phenotypical selections centered mainly on physical characteristics of skin colour and hair. Also, four out of the five Indian child participants expressed their understanding of the term “Indian” in relation to religious affiliation, history, and attire. While these children offered an interpretation of the label, only one identified with the term, although it was also quite evident she did not fully understand the concept. On the other hand, one girl who stated she did not know what the term ‘meant’ after I posed the question to her, indicated that she was indeed Indian. It is noteworthy to mention that ‘Indian’ was the most readily understood term in the vernacular of all participants, with a smaller number providing explanations for the labels ‘mixed’ and ‘White.’

Consistent with the above observations, is the low distribution of participants (n=5) who brought up race as a social category in response to the query: “When you go to [child’s favourite place], what kinds of people do you see?” Participants frequently answered ‘Indians’ (n=3) to this question, but two children also responded with ‘Chinese.’ Out of the total participants who mentioned Indian, two were Indo-Trinidadian children, and one, despite having parents that identified as mixed, phenotypically appeared as African Trinidadian. For the Indo-Trinidadian children who responded with ‘Indian’ to the classification question, it should be noted that data revealed a connection to parental socialization. More specifically, parents
had informed these children of their Indo-Trinidadian identity. For instance, one mother
indicated that through religion her son learns about his Indo-Trinidadian identity. On the other
hand, for the African Trinidadian child (whose parent identified her as mixed), her parents
noted that she had showed a preference for Indian culture and, of equal importance, they had
not implemented any strategies to teach her about African Trinidadian ancestry. Other
responses from children included classifications according to friendships, family ties, religious
identities (Christian, Muslim), and skin colour.

**Photo classification.** While children did not broach the subject of race frequently during
the interviews when presented with the label and photo stimuli set, data showed that children
classified photos of White boys and girls, and mixed boys and girls, with the most accuracy. A
total of nine children classified the pair (White boy and White girl), and four children identified
the mixed pair (boy and girl). Only one child classified the set representing Indo-Trinidadian
children (photo of boy and girl). Alternately, six children identified the Indo-Trinidadian girl, and
three identified the Indo-Trinidadian boy. In the interest of procedural disclosure, the photo of
the Indo-Trinidadian girl showed a lighter complexion than the Indo-Trinidadian boy, and
perhaps the discrepancy in colour affected children’s ability to match both photos accurately.
On the other hand, it revealed the participants’ interpretations along colour lines (for some,
Indian signifies light skin) and how they classified certain photos based on this assumption. This
interpretation is further supported by the data which showed that five children selected the
photo of the White girl for the stimuli “Indian,” and three selected the photo depicting the
mixed girl (features depicted were lighter skin tone and curly hair). A similar pattern emerged
for the photo of the Indian boy: three children selected the photo of the mixed boy (similar
features, curly hair and lighter skin tone) and four selected the photo of the White boy.

Classification for photos depicting African Trinidadian children followed a somewhat different pattern. Briefly, a total of four participants paired photos of both African Trinidadian boys and girls accurately. However, data showed that while 10 children selected the photo of the African Trinidadian girl correctly, only five children identified the African Trinidadian boy.

Based on the classification data, a contextual factor accounts for why children classified the Indian stimuli by colour and accurately selected the photo of Indo-Trinidadian girl. At the time of data collection, an Indo-Trinidadian female Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar and her party, the People’s Partnership, had recently won general elections. The female Prime Minister does, in fact, have a lighter skin tone and straight hair. On a side note, I speculate that with increased race-based politics, coupled with print and electronic media exposure to photos of the Prime Minister, the term was salient due to visible representation.

**Racial attitudes.** The data collected following the racial attitude task indicated a pro-Indian bias. Analysis based on the number of positive versus negative adjectives assigned to all groups revealed that photos depicting Indian children were assigned the highest level of positive—and the least amount of negative—adjectives. Findings also indicated that children exhibit a neutral bias for the White and mixed groups. Same-sex selection of the photo stimuli revealed that male and female participants preferred photos depicting Indo-Trinidadian children. Opposite gender comparisons showed that, in some aspects, these evaluations were maintained when applied to an analysis of the negative adjective distribution. It is important to note that, given the number of photos, coupled with the amount of adjectives used, findings from this measure should be interpreted with caution. Regardless, using the qualitative
analysis, the reasons children supplied for their selection indicated a more positive attitude towards both lighter-skin complexions and straighter hair texture.

Here, this analysis turns to findings derived from interviews with parents and teachers to discuss the prevalence of racial socialization enacted among parents and educators, a category I have termed ‘race silenced identity.’ In the remainder of the chapter, I explore additional categories and corresponding sub-categories, concluding with a summary of the data presented.

Parents’ and Educators’ Data: Race Silenced Identity

Race silence emerged as a key finding from this study. Indeed, silence as a central category typified parental child rearing practices, teachers’ pedagogies, and the pre-school curriculum. More specifically, the majority of parents and educators reported having limited discussions on children’s racial identity or anti-racism towards other groups. Data analysis revealed contributing factors that may explain the lack of racial socialization practices among parents and educators. This chapter presents such relationships and, in an attempt to illustrate the patterns more coherently for the reader, I discuss each subcategory individually, highlighting its connection to the race silenced finding. In the ensuing section, the chapter explores the contexts in which such silences occur, the concrete manifestations of these, as well as the underlying ideologies that support them. In addition to race silence, however, data illustrated other pertinent categories relevant to the subject under investigation. These findings are presented following the discussion on race silenced identity.
Race silenced identity: Connections to child’s age. A substantial number of parents, rarely, or not at all, transmitted race-related messages that would help children learn about their racial identity. In fact, some parents also commented that they had not previously considered teaching children about their racial ancestry. Pat, for example, shared her own lack of parental racial socialization practices: “We never discussed his racial background before,” while Michael, similarly expressed, “I wouldn’t say I have discussed it.” Kavita also remarked that racial socialization was not incorporated into her individual parenting strategies with the child participant, nor was it a factor in parenting her other children: “I never had … at his age, I don’t think with all my kids, I had a discussion with them.”

Data revealed that one child characteristic, in particular, age, partially explained the absence of racial socialization among Trinidadian parents. As Mary stated: “I think maybe later on. Not at this age. Not at this stage, no. I think she will understand it better at a later age. I think so.” Similarly, Melody claimed that race would be an inappropriate topic, given the child’s young age: “Not now… because he still small, like when he reach all six, seven years, I will.” Parents, who made the effort to discuss their children’s racial identities also shared that they did not provide in-depth explanations. One Indo-Trinidadian mother, named Rose (for the purposes of this study), said:

I just tell him he is an Indian. Because in my perspective, I feel that he wouldn’t understand it right now, so why should I get into it? Until he gets older, and maybe recognize it for himself, I will explain to it to him.

In brief, parents emphasized that due to the child’s young age, discussions about race should be delayed until the child grows older. What underscores this particular belief is that
young children may not have the required skills to understand the meaning race carries and how it may also inform their daily lives. While participants’ responses showed that age played a role in their racial socialization, others expressed messages that indicate that the child’s racial identity were not congruent with their child-rearing practice.

**Race silenced identity: Racial identity not salient to child-rearing.** This category encapsulates parents’ views about the incongruence between racial socialization and their child-rearing strategies. Indeed, parents simply stated that verbal discussions to foster racial pride were not a significant part of their child’s upbringing. According to Anthony:

> What I would like her to do for herself, not for me, is to embrace who she is, not really her racial background or where she comes from... but what I really would like, as most parents would like for their children, to embrace who they are, accept who they are, try to be nobody but themselves. Don’t try to change for anybody. If you have to make any changes, make the changes for you, not for anybody or for a situation.

For Anthony, the child’s personality, and the cultivation of this personality, supersedes that of her racial identity. In essence, he emphasizes the “silencing” aspect of racial socialization by referring to a child-rearing practice that focuses on the development of the individual, as separate from any particular racial collectivity. In a similar vein, Ava reported that in her raising her daughter, the teaching of Christian values was her most salient child-rearing practice. She indicated:

> No, we never tell her that she is Indian. What we do tell her is that we are Christian people, and Christian people don’t do certain stuff, you know, and things like that and
that’s it. We don’t do like you is Indian, we don’t do that. We go to church; Sunday is for church. Nothing else.

On the other hand, Ingrid’s opposition to racial socialization showed direct linkages to how she conceptualized race, as well as how she interpreted African-Trinidadian identity. She disclosed:

To discuss race with them...that is not my job description or anything like that to discuss that type of thing with my kids. I mean, if you think about race you will go back into history thinking about Negroes being under the White people as slaves and, to me, that will bring up a lot of hate. It would, if you think like that, you understand. So I prefer not to think like that. I don’t even like watching movies like that. No, I don’t.

She further remarked: “I don’t think that was important to actually sift out the different races. I just want him to look as everyone as being equal.”

In this excerpt, Ingrid reveals central insights about her understanding of African Trinidadian identity. Firstly, she shows that for her, African Trinidadian identity is solely linked to the history of slavery. Secondly, she also interprets such a legacy as one which will resonate with an affective-type of response (i.e., that of hate). Therefore, for Ingrid, because of the trauma associated with African Trinidadian history, a trauma rooted in the experience of slavery, and perhaps because of her own distancing from this memory, she refuses to engage in racial socialization practices with her son. Therein lies another explanation for her emphasis on teaching her son that everyone is equal, and her interpretation that race is divisive: to discuss his African Trinidadian identity would mean exposing him to the history of slavery, which she accurately perceives as one of subjugation. Further, she believes that such knowledge will
hinder her son’s interactions with individuals from different racial backgrounds. Therefore, it stands to reason that Ingrid’s perception of race influenced her lack of racial socialization. This evidence also shows parallels to her overall philosophy regarding child-rearing practices.

Thus for these parents, child-rearing does not include racial socialization because race, more generally, is not significant to the child’s identity, and also contradicts the values to which they subscribe. In addition, data showed a relationship between the patterns of race silenced socialization and parents’ lack of received socialization. I have termed this category “intergenerational connections.”

**Race silenced identity: Intergenerational connections.** As part of this research study, parents, along with educators were invited to describe their childhood recollections of race related discussions with their own parents, in particular those incidents that involved information related to racial identity. The majority of the parent participants indicated that they did not have these conversations with their own parents. The following are examples of memories of racial socialization received during early childhood. In this particular case, Shanti referred to learning about her racial identity through other sources: “I just figure out I was Indian because of my hair.” As Shanti disclosed, she became aware of her racial identity not through discussions with her parents, but through comparison with other racial groups. The fact that there is a stark contrast between Indo hair texture and African hair texture perhaps facilitated this awareness. Another interpretation is that maybe parental factors, such as the saliency of Indo-Trinidadian identity, or socio-economic status, could have influenced the lack of her received racial socialization.
On the other hand, Beatrice remarked that she did not receive any in-depth content about her racial identity, but instead was taught to identify with a racial term: that of, “mixed” or referred to in Trinidadian parlance as “callaloo”. She described it as such: “Well they will just tell you, you is a callaloo, you mix up. Where I grow up there were no set of discussions about race. It wasn’t really a topic.” Interestingly, what both participants revealed is that during their childhood, they were not socialized to understand the meaning, and perhaps even the centrality, of their respective racial identities. In other words, for Beatrice, there is no content affiliated with the “mixed” racial label. Simply stated, what is a mixed identity? What are the knowledges associated with this identity? What is the racial history of the mixed identity in the Trinidadian context? Such omissions clearly indicate other factors, which will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

Another parent of mixed descent, Aleesa, referred to the issue of nationalist identity taking precedence over ancestral connections. She asserted:

Dad was never the person to talk about race. He really doesn’t like it, when people say they’re Indian.... He would say I am a Trinidadian and wanted us to have the same understanding. Yes you could study race but you could do it in the wrong way. I have no problem discussing who I am. At the same time, because I have in Indian in me, I am better than anybody else and I think that is what he wanted to stay away from.

Aleesa, whose father has Indo-Trinidadian ancestry, indicates that her father’s approach was to emphasize Trinidadian identity. However, equally apparent in her explanation is her awareness of a particular concept of race, as evidenced by her statement: “At the same time, because I have in Indian in me, I am better than anybody else and I think that is what he wanted
to stay away from.” What this particular expression demonstrates is a relationship between what she believes was her father’s conceptualization of race (as a signifier of difference and status) and the corresponding conceptualization of racism. More specifically, as Alessa’s comments indicate, an Indian identity—or the claim of Indian identity in one’s ancestry—maintains a specific social significance in Trinidadian society. Accordingly, to circumvent such reasoning and the practices that may have derived from it (for example, differential treatment of other groups), her father opted not to raise her in a race-consciousness manner. The influence of her father’s child rearing techniques, and, in particular, the values attached to other groups, shows some consistency with the reasons she offered for not teaching her son about his African Trinidadian identity:

I didn’t tell him that because I didn’t want him to think, ‘well, I am a Negro and I can’t do this,’ because some people categorize children and say, ‘the Negro child will stay there and the Indian child will stay there and the White child will stay there.’ From the time I open his mind like that, he is going to start to look at certain things differently. His mind is going to open up now to certain things of how they look at children and I don’t want how I’ve grow him up to change, and how they are going to perceive him.

Yet in contrast to her father who believed that adopting Indian identity would result in thinking that she was somewhat more superior to others, Alessa indicates with the above extrapolation that she is hesitant to teach her child about his African Trinidadian identity because she is aware of the negative associations linked to such ancestry. In essence, her avoidance of discussions of racial identity is a means of protecting her son from the racism she perceives he will encounter.
The foregoing section of this chapter addressed the race silenced identity category in relation to the intergenerational connections. With reference to contemporary parenting, however, important variants of this pattern, however, were uncovered in the course of this study. For instance, when children remarked about racial differences, parents disclosed that they followed up with a discussion on racial identity, although these were consistent with children’s inquires, as parents referred to mainly physical characteristics and racial terms. These responses also illustrated what meanings parents attached to race. Daniella, a mixed Trinidadian woman, whose child, Melanie, is also mixed, stated:

I will tell her, you know, because she has other cousins … well, their hair—not like hers—you know, and then she will be like, ‘my hair is long and curly’ and you know, her lil’ cousin hair is not like that and then I will say, ‘well, Melanie you are mixed, look at mommy hair, look at daddy hair, you know and look at their father hair.

In this excerpt, Daniella demonstrates reactive socialization; that is, had not the child inquired, she would not have addressed the child’s racial identity. Additionally, ample evidence suggests that Daniella’s concept of race is indeed one that relies on physical characteristics. She explained that, “at home, everyone by us has hair like us, you know, so to me it will be no way—in other words—to explain anything.”

In a similar vein, Liza reported that she informed her son (half Indo and half African Trinidadian) child of his racial identity by referring to physical characteristics and racial terms. As she pointed out:

It is when he started preschool ‘cause, more or less, he was with me and Ms. ___ who was a teacher at that time took special interest in him because he had long hair and I
don’t know if he asked her ‘how come her hair so,’ and ‘how come his hair so?’ And then when he came home, he said ‘mommy, Ms. ___ has long nice hair just like me you know, but my hair not like her own, my hair different.’ I say ‘ok,’ and then he like, ‘how come my hair like this and your hair like this, mommy?’ And then I started explaining to him, I said, ‘you see how your hair nice and curly and long, and your brother curly, curly, curly, and mommy hair hard? Okay, you know your daddy right, your daddy has straight hair,’ I took out our wedding pictures and I show him, your daddy has straight hair and mommy hair hard. So when mommy and daddy make you, you get the mixture, and now your hair like that. Hear him, ‘oh... and how come my skin this colour and your skin this colour?’ I said because mommy is Negro and Negro people tend to have brown skin and I said your daddy is Indian.

Interestingly, similar to the previous example, hair was the signifier that prompted the child’s recognition of racial differences among racial groups. Likewise, Liza’s discussion—as transcribed above—did not move beyond visible markers to substantive content that would have assisted the child in understanding the meaning of a mixed identity. Liza’s conception of race, which also showed an intergenerational connection in the following transcription, bore similarities to the messages she shared with her son. More specifically, she perceived race in terms of ancestry:

I used to say I am a Cuban because my grandmother on my father side came from Cuba and we knew about it from early ’cause she always used to tell us. But I only knew about my mother side when I was probably in high school because my grandmother was like,
‘you know my father is a Chinese.’ Ah say, ‘no, you never tell me that.’ And my mother is half Indian, half Negro, so she’s a Dougla.

To Liza, race refers to observable characteristics and a term implying one’s ancestral heritage. She received such awareness as a result of her grandmother’s racial socialization messages, which as the excerpt shows, involved racial labels. Therefore, when the situation occurred with her son, she employed practices consistent with her conceptions of race as well as her received racial socialization.

Likewise, an African Trinidadian father remarked that he implemented racial socialization in response to his daughter’s comments about Rapunzel. His technique was to affirm the child’s African ancestry and features. James explained:

She mentioned something recently, and I always tell her, ‘Black people, you’re African, your hair, you have good African hair, the Afro, is gorgeous,’ she looks beautiful. She was looking at Rapunzel so I always try to tell her. I do tell her. I mean, maybe I don’t tell her often enough. But this is something I am quite aware of.

James’ report, above, further demonstrates the pattern of children’s awareness of hair texture. However, an analysis of James’ interview transcript indicated correspondences among his conception of race (as linked to ancestry and racial markers), the societal values associated with hair texture, and the type of discussion he enacted with his daughter. As he pointed out:

People will attack your hair, they will attack your features, ‘you have thick lips, your nose big, look at you, you Black and ugly’… Every African household had a hot comb. Hot comb that you heated and straighten your hair because your hair was constantly being attacked especially if you was strong. Your hair it ain’t have any influence, and you have
it roll up, and they call it all kind of names. Even today, you expect to know better, they still have issues. They still have a poor concept of beauty. Straight hair is better... that is something we still need to work on.

Therefore, being cognizant of how others may perceive his daughter’s hair texture, he purposely ensured that he instilled positive messages about African-textured hair. Regardless, it was not a proactive decision; rather, James implemented such practice when he overheard the child’s positive remarks about White features (namely, hair). Therefore, for James, many interesting and complementary factors impacted upon his ability to enact proactive and ongoing racial socialization.

To summarize, data indicated that the child’s age, the disconnect between parental overall child rearing beliefs and racial socialization, intergenerational patterns of race silence, as well as conceptualizations of race, influenced the level and type of racial socialization parents performed with their children. At this point, this section turns to similar trends found in teachers’ narratives.

**Race silence: School context.** Similar to parents, information pertaining to teaching children about race, specifically racial identity, were also notably absent in educators’ responses. According to Mrs. R:

If the topic comes up, we may touch on it, but we really don’t teach those things. The activities we do are ‘who you are,’ ‘getting to know you,’ those things. We will talk about you as an individual, not as East Indian, not as an African, not as a mixed.

Mrs. R emphasizes that race, perceived as ancestry, runs counter to her teaching approach. In fact, as she notes, race is not central to children’s early learning experiences; in line with this
view, she accords primacy to the child’s personal characteristics. This response also implies that racial difference, as noted earlier in the parental responses, should not be discussed with young children.

On the other hand, teachers also indicated that, while sending messages about racial identity were not an everyday practice, such discussions occurred as part of ethnic-holiday celebrations, for example, Indian Arrival Day and Emancipation day. Ms. B explained: “Well, like, for instance, we have the different holidays, cultural holidays, Indian arrival day, we have the Emancipation. For Indian Arrival day, we tell them how the Indians came, when they came, and what they came on.” Similarly, Mrs. C reported:

The only time we would teach about ethnic background, really, would be for Indian arrival day. I would say also for Emancipation day. The only problem is that we are not in school because school is closed, that is where it kind of loses out, but other than that, no.

Discussions on children’s racial identity, as evidenced by educators’ reports, also mirrored that of the race silence curricula. Indeed, similar to what educators described above, the curriculum did not contain an overarching framework that included content as well as teaching strategies that would assist educators in exposing children to a varied body of knowledge about their respective racial backgrounds.

**Race silence: Curricula.** The majority of teachers indicated that racial identity discussions are not integrated within the entire pre-school curriculum. For instance, Ms. P explained that unless she initiates the discussion, children in her class would not have the
opportunity to learn about their racial identity. According to Ms. P, the curriculum precluded opportunities for dialogues on racial identity:

If I had to rate it a scale of one to ten, helping a child learn about their racial background and stuff like that, I would give it a very low rating, because I don’t see it helping as much, right? That is the curriculum that is, so I probably would give it a 4/10 because only if I, or only if the opportunity comes up, that I could probably drop in something... like for example, you know, ‘this colour is nice,’ or ‘your hair is nice,’ racial thing, that is the only time there and then I could see it fitting in the curriculum.

Conversely, Ms. B, a teacher in the same school, believed that through the Social Studies program, children could be exposed to information on their racial ancestry. She pointed out: “Yes, within Social Studies, because Social Studies helps them to learn about the different cultures and how to identify themselves on the whole, whether they be African or Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, what have you.” Mrs. C, a teacher at the play based centre consistent in her pedagogical views with the play-based philosophy, believed that teaching children about race includes using more hands-on, diverse play materials. She explained: “There are, as you can see, the dolls we have. We also have some felt puppets and we also have some cut-outs of different ethnic community workers. So you would see the different races and that sort of thing.” (Mrs. C)

In comparing the curriculum to teacher-directed pre-schools, Mrs. C, who has experience in both settings, noted that teaching children about racial ancestry was also lacking in the academic pre-school curriculum. Speculating as to why this occurs, she offered an insightful explanation:
I would say maybe, just maybe, being in, having, living in a multicultural, multiethnic society, that Trinidadians tend to welcome and have this, you know, ‘everybody is your family’ thing, so is a kind of unity thing. We don’t really want to segregate and to point out and you make distinct, create that kind of segregation. So I would say maybe that is why it is not promoted in the centres.

This particular narrative illustrates a conceptualization of race that reflects the nationalist slogan of “all ah we is one.” Yet analysis of such interpretation clearly reveals the imposition of the colonial experience on the construction of the nationalist ideology. Indeed, through the mechanism of divide and rule, as well as the corresponding economic and political measures, colonial administrators pitted groups against each other to tilt the power equilibrium in their favour. Thus, in an attempt to move away from such antagonisms, the nationalist framework de-emphasized race. While such an approach may have its merits, in the sense that the goal is to rupture the colonial methods of provoking interracial conflict, it nevertheless reinscribes the notion that race in itself is the issue, rather than the historical processes that imbued it with its particular social significance. As Dei (2000) pointed out, “the problem lies not in the articulation of racial differences but in the act of fastening negative meanings to them” (p. 38). Therefore, based on this educator’s response, it appears that within the classroom context, such discussions are somewhat marginalized because of the nationalist emphasis on a collective Trinidadian identity.

Additionally, consistent with silencing at a national level, teachers’ responses illustrate that the pre-school environment, inclusive of curriculum and teachers’ pedagogies, also reflect that of race silenced identity. On the other hand, a more micro-analysis approach shows that
other factors, such as received socialization (intergenerational connection), and personal
encounters with racism and conceptualization of race, may also explain why educators failed to
teach children about racial identity and engage in anti-racism discussions.

**The centrality of race: Lived race(ism) realities.** For the Indo-Trinidadian teachers, data showed that they perceived race not as a personal issue and stressed positive intergroup interactions. In fact, a commonality to the philosophy of both Indo teachers is the theme of inclusion or acceptance. For the African Trinidadian teachers, however, race held two different meanings: racism and physical characteristics. This section begins with the views of the Indo-Trinidadian teachers:

To me, [racial identity] doesn’t matter, I can fit in anywhere. Anywhere, it is not a problem because I treat people like there is no difference. I would fit into anything. I don’t feel, well, you know, ‘no I can’t fit into that, because they that,’ ‘no I will fit in anywhere.’ I will get into a conversation with anybody and sit and eat and laugh and talk and, you know, not even thinking, well, you know, ‘these people.’ I see people as human beings, and I don’t see them as being different to me, I see them as being the same. The only thing that is different is the colour of the skin or hair. Other than that, we all live on the same planet and, for me, that is the way. (Mrs. C)

Mrs. R indicated a similar experience:

We live in a country where there are East Indians, Africans, and Chinese. There are a lot of races here with us. I have worked with people from the other race and they tend to treat me, I find, maybe better than my own. Because I have worked with other Negro people, African, I never had a problem, never ever. When I used to go to UWI
[University of the West Indies], my son, sometimes, the last one I had, I used to take him with me. And it had this African girl, she was in class with me, she used to hold him and play with him. They used to love him so much. I never had a problem.

For one of the African Trinidadian teachers, racism in the larger Trinidadian society is indeed a salient reality; consequently, she was quite circumspect about what type of information she transmitted to students. She mentioned her fear of exposing children to the history of Emancipation because she believed it would foster somewhat of an internalized racism. As Ms. B pointed out:

I guess growing up hearing racial slurs, people calling, well, identifying me by using racial slurs, and I said, growing up I did not want to like... I wouldn’t say I wouldn’t want to use it [racial terms] but to me, I think that sometimes when you use it ’cause more than often I would hear people. Just recently, I heard an Indian man cursing me out and saying I am a ____ and I did not appreciate him saying that so I was, like, even if I am teaching about race I will not go into depth... yes, I would like them to know their ethnicity is different but I would not go into depth to let them know ‘Indians,’ ‘Africans,’ I wouldn’t categorize them.

**Contradictions:** In contrast to Ms. B and the other educators, Ms. P revealed no hesitation about exploring race, often referring to introducing children to role models of African descent and affirming skin colour and hair texture. It should be pointed out, however, that such strategies are not integrated into her daily practice but rather are techniques used when race incidents occurred in the classroom. It also appeared that, perhaps, her child-centred pedagogy informed her racial socialization techniques:
I am a good listener towards the kids so that sometimes when they are playing, I will sit with them, I will mingle with them, while they are actually doing something. I am that kind of person. That is one aspect I use to teach instead of I am just this person at the top and I am just putting down the rules of whatever. I try to get involved into the activity with them as well. I try to be real as possible so I try to use a lot of examples that they can relate to at their age.

In keeping with the idea of tailoring her teaching according to children’s developmental logic, she described—when the topic arose during multiple interviews—her approach to educating children about their racial identity:

Definitely at that age, the only thing I could do is probably the hair and the skin colour and having them learn to appreciate it just the way that it is. I would show them a lot of examples in terms of different persons that are probably in high positions that came from different backgrounds and yet is still able to reach to that position. So because in their little minds, I think, they would be looking at, but auntie or miss, the lady who was probably at the library, she has long hair and she sits nice in the office but the guy who comes to clean the yard, might be one that shabby looking or doesn’t have the long hair or has the harder texture of hair, so I would use that for example, to show them that even if they have different job, or they look different, or have different texture, both of their jobs are important, both of them are important people, so that is how I will teach it seeing that they are young.

In addition, she further stated:
First of all, as an individual of African descent, I would try my best to be a positive influence to them. So I would tell them, ‘these are attributes of the African person.’ I would carry myself in a proper and respectable manner. Well, they are a bit too young to explain to them. Well, I find, so some of my academic achievements as an African Trinidadian. So I will show them probably to an older child, my academic achievements, some of my abilities, I will explain to them. So obviously, that would be showing or giving out my attributes.

Explanations for teachers’ perceptions and lived experiences of race(ism) can partially be explained by examining such narratives within the context of the creolization discourse. As discussed in chapter two, creolization, specific to the Trinidadian context, promotes the view that all Trinidadians are mixed; consequently, there is no need to claim any pure racial ancestry (England, 2008). Such ideology appears consistent with the Indo-Trinidadian teachers’ responses, insofar as they de-emphasized the salience of race in their lives. Participants’ acknowledgement that Indo-Trinidadian identity posed no threat to their interaction with others also highlights the influence of politics on race relations, and the perceptions of such relations. More specifically, the rhetoric for the political party—largely represented by Indo-Trinidadians—in power at the time of data collection, was interracial solidarity. Therefore, it is safe to argue that Indo-Trinidadian teachers interpreted Trinidadian society as one marked by intergroup harmony (perhaps because of their positionality, and the privilege it afforded in terms of race acceptance and the ability to “not see race”) within the broader context of racial dynamics at that time.
On the other hand, as the views of the African Trinidadian teachers demonstrate, because of its emphasis on homogeneity, creolization can in fact, mask the race tensions embedded within the social structure of Trinidadian society. In a more specific vein, the African Trinidadian teacher who reported her experiences with racism illustrated that, while creolization denies racial differences, the legacy of racism in Trinidad contradicted this view. However, another analysis points to the main precept of creolization. Working with the notion that creolization implies the combination of European and African cultures and, as Smith (1991) indicated that culture also involves “conceptions of race” (p. 7), then perhaps as racial groups interacted with the dominant discourse about race and racialized culture (i.e., the colonial ideology), they also adopted such views of others. In other words, they too contributed to the process of racialization. Indeed, as I pointed out in the theoretical chapter on anti-colonial Caribbean theory, the self-other connection includes not only the colonizer and the colonized relationship, but also how the ideologies that underpin this relationship mediate interactions among other racialized groups.

**Teachers: Intergenerational factor.** Responses from teacher participants illustrated a similar intergenerational pattern. For instance, Ms. P, an African Trinidadian teacher, disclosed that the sum of her racial socialization experience included being taught to identify with racial terms: “Nothing much more than, well, you’re a Negro, yeah, you’re of African descent.” In a similar way to Ms. P, Ms. B claimed that she was not exposed to any substantial information about her racial identity thusly:
Growing up, my mom never really spoke about our ancestral background. The more we ask, it was like ‘ok, your grandfather is from India, and your grandmother is from Africa.’ And that was it. She didn’t elaborate much about our racial background.

The foregoing responses indicate, along with the earlier discussion on parents’ conceptualization of race that, in terms of racial identity and African Trinidadian identity in particular, such knowledge solely reflects use of racial labels. Indeed, parents’ responses to how they would foster their children’s racial identity development provide additional evidence to support the argument that, with respect to African Trinidadian identity, this sample of parents (and educators) may not know what such identity entails. Kelly, for instance, stated the following in reference to teaching her child about her African Trinidadian identity: “I guess I would probably have to use something from the States, the history of Black Americans.”

Michael, in commenting about his understanding of African Trinidadian identity, recounted: “…Because we don’t know who we are as a people, right, and it was never taught to our parents so our parents couldn’t teach it to us.” He also expressed that, in contrast to African Trinidadians, Indo-Trinidadians possessed an identity; he believed that such identity stemmed from their religious affiliations. As he pointed out:

Indianness is mostly attached with their religion… whether it may be Muslim Indian or Hindu; it is taught through their religion. There are still some Indian people that teach their children who they are, their Indianess, their religion is instilled in their schools.

Consistent with Michael’s interpretation of Indo-Trinidadian identity, one Indo-Trinidadian educator’s reflections illustrated how religion and cultural practices shaped her understanding of her racial identity (as she explained in with the following narrative):
I began recognizing my identity as a child because of the fact I come from a strong Hindu background. I recognize that as a child, you know, linking religion with race. Again, I think growing up as a child, my parents would say, ‘being an Indian there are certain things you will have to live up to.’ Maybe the way you dress, the way you carry about yourself. Maybe the food that we eat, that kind of thing. (Mrs. C)

On the other hand, Mrs. R, another Indo-Trinidadian teacher, with her example, highlighted both class and family structure as reasons that precluded her experience with racial socialization. She divulged: “It never came up. My mother was always busy and my father was an alcoholic. When we got older, we know that we were different but it was never a problem.”

In sum, thus far, this chapter has explored race silenced identity among parents and teachers and the connections among the patterns evident in participants’ responses. What participants clearly revealed was a particular type of racial socialization, that is, race silence, and the antecedents that inform such practices, whether these may be intergenerational connections, perceptions about race and the experiences associated with these, parents’ child rearing goals, or the beliefs about young children’s developmental readiness to understand the significance of race. At this juncture, however, the chapter will examine additional findings that shed further light on parents’ and teachers’ inclinations towards the issues of race, young children and socialization.

**Racial innocence at pre-school age: Connections to conceptualizations of racism.** It is commonly believed that young children, especially at the pre-school age, do not ‘see’ race, that is, they are ‘color blind’ and, consequently, do not exhibit any identifiable racist behavior towards others. Data from this study showed that parents and educators held similar views
regarding young children’s potential to construct and to enact racist attitudes. However, what is also central to this finding is adult participants’ conceptualization of racism. Indeed, data analysis showed that parents’ and educators’ interpretations of children as being race innocent was closely related to how they, themselves, perceived racism. Specifically, adult participants provided examples of children’s interactions with others, and lack of explicit racial attitudes—either verbal or non-verbal—as indicators that race was not a significant factor in children’s lives. Their conceptualizations of racism illustrate similar perceptions. For example, participants’ responses revealed that both parents and educators perceived racism as either an overt act, as exemplified by exclusion and racial slurs, or as an ideological stance, which refers to beliefs about the stereotypes attached to specific racial groups in Trinidadian society. The former, however—that is, racism as overt—represented the majority of participants’ views. Paula, an African Trinidadian mother, declared:

Don’t matter where we go. The other day we were at *these two Spanish children came in. He just went take up two balloons from the lady, give it to the children and the girl said, ‘thank you’ and the girl said it in Spanish but the brother said it in English. Hear him ‘nah, all yuh is Spanish people,’ so the father laughed. So the boy said, ‘yes’ and the boy said, ‘you know Spanish.’ Hear him ‘am uno, dos,’ them thing ent. So the guy said ‘yes’; so they went to a table and you wouldn’t believe … was with us. Anybody came in there would have sworn that …belonged to that group of people that was there. He just went in and fall in like cheese in a sandwich. I had to beg _____ for us to leave. He did that with those Spanish people; the other day in Pizza hut he went and hang out with some Chinese people normal.
Paula’s excerpt, above, indicates that she interprets her son’s friendly interactions with others from a different racial group as indicative of his race innocence. Yet, Paula also shares that to her, racism is marked by an overt act, such as the exclusion of others based on race. She further expounded on this point with the following statement:

I have a friend who used to work for a company. I was asking her if another friend of mine, if she could come there to work because she is a good accountant. She said she could come, you know, ‘but I am telling you, she will only get it part time.’ I say, ‘so why’... ‘them Indians down in the department,’ she say, ‘no other race don’t come in there and stay for no long set of time.’ Sometimes you watch advertisements in the papers. Another friend of mine too, she said she called this place the other day and the woman asked her, ‘what race are you?’ She said, ‘excuse me.’ She said, ‘are you like Indian, mix up, Dougla, Negro?’ She said, ‘I’m you, whatever’...she cursed the woman and hang up.

Paula reveals that adults not only ‘see’ race, and execute racist behavior but that also such acts involve separating oneself from those perceived as racially different and conferring material advantage to one’s own racial group. Given that her son freely interacted with the Spanish and Chinese children, and did not isolate himself from them, Paula reasoned that her son did not harbour any negative attitudes towards these groups. Likewise, Reshma indicated her daughter’s racial innocence by disclosing her child’s biased-free play interactions: “If she sees Negro children, if she meets them up, she will play with them.” In contrast, Reshma shared her understanding of racism as one associated with racial slurs: “This family I marry in is kind of racial [racist] in a way that they will talk and they will say not ‘Negro,’ they will say ‘N***’”
Therefore, Reshma’s indicators of racism, in this case, would be a more overt reaction (such as racial slurs), and not necessarily attributable to the child’s playmate preferences.

In a similar vein, Mrs. C further strengthened the theme of childhood racial innocence by referring to children’s lack of explicit racial attitudes demonstrated by intergroup friendships, and identification based on racial group membership:

I have never, within the ten years that I have been teaching here, had the experience where you find children identifying themselves as being one identity and the others as being of some...of another...you know. I never had that experience. They all see themselves as being equal. They play together, they share, they interact together and there is no real segregation or grouping to say, ‘you know, we are going to sit together because we are of African or Indian descent.’

Mrs. C’s conceptualization of racism shows similarities to her evaluations of children as race innocent. More specifically, data indicated that for her, segregation is racism, and also functions as a conceptual framework in which she interprets children’s social interactions. Indeed, as she stated: “You look at carnival and everybody is having a great time together. You go to the beach and everybody is having a good time together. You go to any fête, any function, and everybody is together.”

While the majority of parents and teachers indicated that pre-school children were race innocent, there were two contradictions to this general pattern. One educator from school A, in which the demographic primarily consists of Indo-Trinidadian children, explained a scenario where a child had refused to play with a classmate of African Trinidadian descent. The teacher
addressed this situation by using Christianity to teach children about the principle of treating everyone equally despite differences in appearance. As Mrs. R pointed out:

They may, yeah; they may shy away from a child. Like not want to play with the child but never call names. They never use any terms at all. But they would probably stick to their group and things like that.

KA: How did you respond to that?

Mrs. R: I spoke to them and told that everyone is the same. I use religion. Jesus taught us to love everybody, not just one person, not because they look like us. They understood. We do sing songs and write stories about Jesus, that Jesus loves everybody and to share, so they understand it.

It is important to note that Mrs. R also associates segregation with racism. For instance, she recounted:

Okay let’s say for example a place like -*, you will go and you may not see much African or Chinese, you would see East Indians. If you look at a place like -* or -*, you would see mostly African people. So they kinda stick to their own.

Adding further depth to her interpretation of the racism-segregation linkage, she remarked that she was not exposed to racism during her childhood:

I never grow up like that. In those days, they never look at people, like race, everybody was like one family….I remember growing up two Negro people used to be hanging ‘round, helping my parents. We practically grew up with those people.

Similar to other parents, she employs her conceptualization of racism as well as her childhood experiences to make sense of the children’s exclusion of out-group members. Additionally, the
preceding section illustrates that parents and educators perceive children’s race innocence in relation to their own concepts of racism. The next section considers another contributing factor: parental influence.

**Parental influence.** Some of the parent participants and one educator believed that if children displayed racial bias, it can solely be attributed to socialization within the home context. In other words, children’s acquisition of racial attitudes is a process of transmission and mimicry, shaped by interactions with persons in their immediate surroundings. The views presented below refer to this central idea as held among adult participants. For instance, James asserted: “… Children are innocent until certain things in society start influencing them whether is the parents or outside influence.” In line with these assertions, a teacher known for the purposes of this study as Mrs. C, also remarked:

I would say race is something that could be promoted from adults because if you were to put children, you know, babies, together in a daycare or simple as the early childhood centre, and you don’t point out to a child, you know, ‘that child is African,’ or ‘that child is East Indian and you’re not to play,’ those children are going to interact and continue playing until someone would have pointed out to them that they are different.

Such connections provide additional analytical depth to the present category and also bring into sharper focus the theoretical orientations that account for children’s racial attitudes. More specifically, questions that arise from the analysis include: What, exactly, are valid indicators of children’s racial attitudes? On what grounds can educators and parents confidently assert that children are race innocent? The discussion chapter will address these questions in greater detail by grounding such analyses in the scholarly literature that have
attempted to explain how and when children develop racial attitudes. On this note, the chapter now examines additional findings: egalitarianism, parents’ and educators’ recognition of children’s racial awareness, and school as a site of learning about racial differences.

**Egalitarianism**

Parents and educators frequently cited the importance of teaching children about the equality of others. The notion of equality was also evident in the breadth of the discussions about future child rearing practices, as these related to developing anti-colonial/anti-racist attitudes. Many teachers also referred to an egalitarian pedagogy. The following section presents parents’ and educators’ socialization practices (which parents vociferously believed to be conducive to fostering anti-racist attitudes). One parent, Beatrice, shared the connection between her childhood experiences with conflict in the home due to her skin tone and her current child rearing practices. She explained:

I was the only red person at home and I had it hard at home. My cousins at home, they were dark. They tried to push me down as an individual. Granny bought four dresses for me, they thought she favoured me and not the fact that, basically, she adopted me and had accepted the responsibility. It was more like that, ‘granny like this white girl, taking her anywhere.’ I know what I went through growing up so I try to avoid it in my family. I let them know that everybody is equal. Just let them know from my personal experience.

Pat similarly related her approach as:
And in terms of people of different race or whatever, you can’t bring them down because everybody is equal and you need to deal with everybody on the same level and treat everybody just like how you would like them to treat you.

Conversely, Mrs. R, an educator, described her teaching strategy as routinely embracing an anti-racist approach. She said:

I love working with children. It could be anybody. And you know when we go to workshops or visit another school, they all come to me, it doesn’t matter whether it is an East Indian, an African, a Chinese, I don’t know, I does be drawn to all of them. I will teach fairly to all children.

Mrs. C, on the other hand, emphasized that communication to children about race should stress the equality of others, regardless of different physical characteristics:

I would say that all children are equal and we need to put that to them. You know, don’t matter your race or the colour of your skin, or the texture of your hair, you know, we are all equal, and we are all human beings, and we need to be treated along the same lines. Treat others the way you want to be treated.

As the foregoing examples indicate, parents and educators are of the opinion that equality is a form of anti-racism. Indeed, such interpretations reflect parents’ conceptualizations of race, wherein they classified the race concept in relation to markers of difference and racial terms. These indicators also show a relationship to how parents conceived racism. Simply put, if race is an observable criterion, and/or related to ancestry, then racism is an action and or ideology that engage both of these constructs. With specific reference to racism, however, the inclination that equality or sameness would foster anti-racism is
consistent with parents’ perceptions that racism is a corollary of paying attention to racial
differences. Thus, according to participants’ views, the silence apparatus (as evidenced in
egalitarianism and approaches to racial identity) which reduces racial groups to a race-less
identity, takes on additional relevance, particularly with respect to challenging the presence of
racism in young children.

Curricula egalitarianism. Apart from parents’ and teachers’ views, data revealed
evidence of egalitarianism at the educational level. However, the implementation of anti-racist
curricula was remarkably divergent across the two schools. In the academic pre-school, it was
described as ‘non–absent,’ whereas in the government centre, teachers referred to the strand
on citizenship and belonging as part of the government ECEE curriculum.

Ms. P clarified the lack of anti-racism curricula in her school:

The materials do not help me in any way because, as I said, that is what they are seeing,
that is what they could relate to, so if I am coming to say, ‘well, ok, everybody is pretty,’
or ‘every colour person should be given that amount of respect,’ they will be in their
little minds, ‘but I am only seeing white dolls with long hair,’ or ‘I am seeing white dolls
that looking pretty,’ or, ‘if I do find a Black one, it not nice.’ So the materials, definitely,
would be giving me a harder task.

Ms. B expressed similar evaluations but also stressed the need for parental support, should
anti-racism be formally integrated in the curriculum. She explained:

In the curriculum, I can’t see it happening. Because it is a lot of ...racism and anti-racism
is a big topic to cover with four and five-year-olds, and if we tried to instill it, well, to put
it into our curriculum it has to be a 50-50, meaning when we do it here, parents must be able to continue it at home.

Teachers based at the government centre, including Mrs. C in her comments, below, shared similar views on anti-racism as it is prescribed by the curriculum. Mrs. C pointed out:

We have a strand in our curriculum guide that speaks about citizenship and belonging. In citizenship and belonging, we have that same thing, children are equal, they are to be treated equal, everything there, the music, we look at the different type of music, and everything is incorporated. We look at all the different festivals. We try as much as possible once we are here, to celebrate all the different festivals even if we not celebrating it or if it is over the weekend, we try to talk about it.

To be sure, for the government ECCE centre, the responsibility of curriculum development lies with the Ministry of Education. Thus, there is a point of convergence among institutional influence, knowledge production and, by extension, children’s learning experiences. Indeed, such interrelationships characterized the education system of the colonial era. As scholars have shown (Dei, 2006; London, 2002), colonial education emphasized Eurocentric knowledges, which further operated as an institutional method of producing a colonized consciousness. With specific reference to the contemporary Trinidadian pre-school education, the egalitarian approach, without an explicit anti-racism counterpart, resonates with similar structural factors (that is, the nationalist ideology and its overarching influence, which permeates both individual and institutional relations).
Parents’ and educators’ recognition of children’s racial awareness. Interestingly, while parents and educators stressed the egalitarian approach; they also acknowledged that children recognized racial differences such as hair texture and skin colour. Beatrice, for example, remarked:

I believe so because she is aware that her skin colour is different from her siblings. As I said two are fair skin and two in between so she is aware that even the hair is different. She is aware because she will say it…she will say mommy how is my hair like this and _____ hair like this. She is aware of the difference but nobody, I never told her, well ok you dark skin or ______ is light skin. She noticed it for herself, her own observation.

For an Indo-Trinidadian mother, her child had recognized differences in hair texture at school:

A day he came from school, and he asked mommy, it have people with different hair? He sees the guidance officer coming in, and he sees different people coming in that don’t look the same. So a day, __________, if you know ______ I don’t know the child’s name, her mother is a Negro, she straighten her hair, he say mommy, she have different hair from us. (Rose)

On the other hand, African Trinidadian teachers, but not Indo-Trinidadian teachers, indicated that their students were aware of phenotypical differences. Ms. P stated: “So skin colour as well, yeah they use that as well. Hair as well but hair is the biggest among children what they use…they look at hair to differentiate.”
Socialization (reactive practices) to children’s racial awareness: Hair and skin colour.

Based on the findings, it is reasonable to assume that parents’ interactions with children as well as social comparison among peers and siblings, allow for a greater visibility and by extension, saliency, of skin colour and hair texture in young children. In other words, these signifiers are actively reinforced in children’s social lives, and from a developmental perspective, are also congruent with age-related cognitions. Yet while parents generally acknowledged children’s racial awareness, only a few parents reported evaluations of the signifiers disclosed. However, parents who were cognizant of children’s attitudes towards skin colour and hair texture indicated a range of socialization practices. The example below illustrates the child’s incipient value judgment of hair texture different from her own, and her mother’s response:

You know and then she will be like my hair is long and curly and you know her little cousin hair is not like that...Her cousin has Negro hair.

...She always in front of the mirror, when I am shampooing her hair she looking at it, and modeling I should say you know...like mommy I have nice hair, and ______don’t have nice hair.

KA: “How do you respond when she say things like that? When she say I have nice hair and this child doesn’t have that kind of hair?”

Daniella: I say to her___ don’t say that, everybody has nice hair and she does be like well mommy my hair is long ent.. I say yes your hair is long.. like my dolly right, mommy.. I say yes..I just leave it like that.. But I won’t like tell her... you know..I would stop her you know and let her know, no this is not the right way..you know..don’t say that but everybody has nice hair in their own way.
With respect to colour, Anthony shared an experience where his daughter had compared her skin tone to a family member: “She would sometimes ask me or ask her mom, daddy how come she so fair, she fairer than me. Even one her uncles, she say daddy that man real dark, and we will just laugh it off.” An African-Trinidadian mother disclosed an event in which her son was told he had “nice hair” and had approach her seeking clarification. Her strategy was to refute the “nice hair” comment by pointing out that the term is applicable to all hair textures, instead of her son’s curly hair texture, as he had been informed by his sister and female classmate:

The other day his sister said, ______ give me your hair. He said, why? And she said because it short and it softer, hear him, it softer. And then two days later he came home and said mommy I have curly hair. I say well yeah I guess when we make it grow. Hear him because and he call the girl name in class, and she say, ______ has curly hair. So then he said, does it mean I have nice hair. I say I don’t like to hear that. Don’t tell me nothing about no nice hair. Everybody have hair, some people can’t have hair and their head bald so it doesn’t matter. Once everybody have hair. I say don’t ever let me hear you say nothing about nice hair. Hear him, so everybody have nice hair. I say yes, it’s just different types, different textures. And he say alright, but my sister wanted mine. I said because she’s lazy. (Paula)

On the other hand, one educator remarked that conversations about race, in her classroom, took place within the context of children’s peer social interactions. She reported:
Definitely that will have to be with two girls while talking to each other, they would say well your hair short, or your hair picky and I have long hair, and some of them will even take out the ribbons to show they have long hair. (Ms.P)

KA: What was your response?

Well most of the times, I would use another child who is probably dark with short hair, and say well look at the nice hair style she has. Or I would say but look at the top it looks nice on her because she is dark. Things like that I would say to them to not always show it in a negative sense that because you dark you can’t look nice or your hair can’t comb in a nice style.

As the data showed, only a few parents and one educator reported socialization practices in response to children’s emerging racial awareness, which, for the most part, included correcting the child’s negative remarks. One interpretation is that parents’ belief in children’s “race innocence” also extends to their assumptions about children’s evaluations of racial criteria. Conversely, with respect to the children who did display a bias towards skin colour and hair texture, it is equally important to consider why and how children interpret these signifiers. Taking a contextual perspective, as discussed in chapter two, racial criteria holds particular significance in Trinidadian society, and perhaps such environmental factors play a role in shaping children’s perceptions of racial characteristics. Additionally, the content of parental reactive strategies, if examined closely, reveals a parsimonious attempt at dislodging not only the attitude or perception, but also the racial understandings that underscore the child’s judgments of skin colour and hair texture. In other words, the conversation with the child was quite brief, contained limited information concerning why racial markers carry such
social significance, and also illustrated what can be construed as an authoritarian approach. An explanation of this finding is that perhaps parenting style, coupled with parents’ attitudes regarding race, influenced how parents’ responded to the child’s statements. Indeed, studies have shown that Caribbean parents tend to employ the authoritarian parenting style, and perhaps, such an approach may be inconsistent with having in-depth conversations about race and racial bias with young children.

At this juncture, however, this chapter now takes a retrospective turn, by examining teachers’ and parents’ accounts of race-based interactions and experiences in the school environment.

**School as a site for racism and learning about racial differences.** Results from the study indicated that, while growing up, participants encountered racism from their teachers and fellow classmates. Included in this category are the specific memories participants stated about the types of racism they experienced. As Ms. B noted:

> When I was growing up, I heard is only ‘black children behave so.’ I got that… heard that going to school. I had a teacher, regardless how good you were in his class or not, it was always, ‘the black-head chickens.’ That was his term. So it was like, ‘these black-head chickens will never learn.’ So he had already categorized us as the children who cannot learn. But the Indian children were the ones who were the ‘A’ plus students and the ones coming out with their full passes [high school certificate].

Ms. B comments indicate that her teacher had differential expectations for African and Indo-Trinidadian children. Such a negative experience may shed additional light on Ms. B’s
willingness to teach children about their African heritage. Thus, for Ms. B, it appears that lived experiences further strengthened her resolve to avoid race discussions with her students.

On the other hand, parents and educators described segregation as a type of racism that they encountered in schools. For instance, Mrs. R, in addition to segregation, also remarked about her experiences with racial slurs:

You know when you hear them talks [racism] at school... The name calling. They use to call the names and so on. It used to have like a set or a group, and this group would stay and each would be on their own path. It never bothered me so I never told my parents.

We had a mix of people in school, Chinese, Indian. I would probably have forgotten before I went home. It didn’t make a significant impact on me.

Similar to Mrs. R, Ingrid recounted her experiences with segregation at the high school she attended. She explained:

Well I went to -*, at that time it was private but it’s now joined with the government.

And you would see only Negroes...and I mean we will talk to the girls and everybody will talk but when it’s really the time to branch off, you would see certain types liming with certain types, and not everybody interacting with each other.

Additionally, Anthony, an African Trinidadian father reported: “When I was like 10, now going into standard five, I was hearing those things... you know the differences, ‘she’s Black, she’s White, he’s a C**, he’s a N**.’ Those sorts of things.”

A few other parents also remarked that learning about the physical characteristics occurred as a result of interacting with peers. As Beatrice recounted:
So probably at school is where you was introduced to what is a Dougla because growing up, as a child, nobody at home, nobody will say, ‘well, ok, you’re an Indian,’ or ‘you’re a Negro,’ or ‘you’re a Dougla,’ is until you reach in school and exposed to peers. Then, they will let you know, ‘well, okay, you kind of mixed eh? Your hair kind of soft.’”

Also, Daniella commented that after she recognized the differences in hair texture, she received socialization about such differences from parents and educators. She stated:

You would start to question, ‘why my hair is this way?’ ‘Why is his hair that way?’ You know, until, well... my parents would describe, ‘you’re from a mix race,’ and, you know, from there, you know, you eventually pick up and going to school, as well, you know, you see different kids looking differently and you will question your mom as well, or your teacher, and you know, yeah, they will explain.

As participants expressed, school was a salient context in which parents and educators obtained knowledge about racial differences, and also learned the racist meanings attached to racial groups. Be that as it may, it is also important to consider why the school setting is a site of such encounters. The main finding from this study, the prevalence of race silenced identity, coupled with the contradictory nature of race relations in Trinidadian society, help explain this occurrence. More specifically, the social relevance of race exists alongside a prevailing rhetoric that emphasizes interracial harmony and collective identity. Children may find such contradictions puzzling and, depending on what they notice within their social environment or with the larger society, they may then formulate their own opinions about the significance of race and use these in their interactions with peers. Such dynamics illustrate the significance of
peer socialization. As Connolly (2000) has shown, children often express their understandings of race within peer contexts.

Summary

For the children participants, findings indicated an understanding of race in relation to visible racial markers, and positive attitudes for the Indo-Trinidadian group. Data also showed that children’s racial knowledge corresponds with both developmental and environmental factors. With respect to parental and educator racial socialization, data from this study indicated a race silenced form of socialization among parents, educators, and the curriculum. More specifically, the vast majority of parents’ child rearing practices and teachers’ pedagogies did not emphasize discussions about children’s racial identity and anti-racism. Consistent with the grounded theory procedures, the data analysis considered “broader structural conditions” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 422), which revealed that nationalist rhetoric influenced such patterns, particularly with respect to how parents and educators conceptualized race and racism. Additionally, other connections from the data analysis showed that child’s age, intergenerational factors, and parents’ overall child-rearing practice may have influenced race silence.

The role of lived experiences in educators’ and parents’ approaches to addressing children’s racial identity also raises interesting interpretations. Furthermore, participants’ responses showed a lack of understanding of the meaning of African Trinidadian identity, apart from race markers and ancestral terms. Equally relevant was that parents and educators alike strongly believed in egalitarianism as a method of developing positive out-group attitudes in young children. The data also revealed a common consensus among parents and educators that
children are racially innocent and that the pre-school age is not a time period in which to broach the topic of racism and racial identity. Parents and educators also shared experiences regarding learning about race, and experiencing racism within the school context. These were usually in the form of name calling, segregation, and stereotypes, in the case of one educator. It also should be noted that parents remarked that discussions of children’s racial identity were not subjects they had previously considered until the interview. One can offer a range of speculations as to why this situation persists, and a few of my own interpretations will be addressed in the ensuing discussion section.
CHAPTER SEVEN
Discussion

Introduction

A great deal of research attention has been paid to the study of racial socialization among African American families. Much of the findings reveal that the content of parents’ racial socialization messages usually fall into the following categories: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism/silence about race (Hughes et al., 2006). The bulk of the research, however, has been conducted with the participation of parents of adolescents, with a few studies utilizing samples of parents of younger children. Additionally, scant empirical literature demonstrates linkages between parents’ and educators’ racial socialization and young children’s knowledge of and identification with their racial group. Furthermore, though a significant area of family studies research, only a single extant published study on racial socialization targets Trinidadian families. In an effort to explore racial socialization among Trinidadian parents and educators, as well as pre-school Trinidadian children’s racial identity, the present study focused on the following key questions:

1) How do pre-school Trinidadian children understand race? How does this understanding influence self-identification? Do they hold attitudes (positive and negative) towards out-group members?

2) Do parents’ of pre-school-aged Trinidadian children engage in racial socialization related to racial identity development and anti-colonial attitudes/anti-racism? If so, what are parental practices that address children’s racial awareness (i.e., recognition of skin colour and hair texture), racial identity, and attitudes?

3) a) How do teachers address race in the classroom?
   b) Does the pre-school curriculum allow teachers to deal with racial identities and anti-racism?
4) How are parents’ child rearing strategies, teachers’ practices and curriculum connected to children’s racial knowledge?

I obtained data using interviews with parents, educators, and children, and observed classroom learning materials. I also engaged students in a storytelling activity with a photo stimuli set and a drawing exercise. For purposes of data analysis, I performed grounded methodological coding procedures, namely, open, axial, and selective coding. As a result, I identified central and sub-categories relevant to the study’s research questions. In addition, I analyzed young children’s data racial identity interviews by examining the content provided in response to the interview questions and the selection of appropriate stimuli for the perceived similarity tasks. Similar to previous empirical investigations on children’s racial attitudes, I calculated selections quantitatively but, given that children were also asked reasons for their selections, I also performed a qualitative analysis in which I listed the type of specific criteria that children mentioned (for example, skin colour and hair texture).

In the previous chapter, I presented an overview of the major findings. In this chapter, I examine existing literature that supports the data, commencing with an overview of race silence identity as it pertains to child, parent, and teacher characteristics. Next, I explore how teachers address students’ racial identities and foster anti-racist attitudes through teachable moments as well as through their day-to-day learning activities. From there, I move on to a more in-depth discussion on identity formation in the Trinidadian context where I situate nationalist discourse as a conceptual tool to further analyze parents’ responses to the question: How are you going to promote a positive racial identity? Taking on an interdisciplinary focus, I
conclude with an examination on the intersections among parents’, children’s and educators’ data.

**Interrogating Racial Socialization (identity) Silence: Child, Parent and Teacher Characteristics**

It is generally agreed that racial socialization is a multidimensional practice, influenced by several factors, ranging from child and parental characteristics to contextual conditions, such as socio-historical factors that inform particular patterns and perceptions of race relations in a given society. Such contextually-bound understandings of—and experiences with—race may play a role in the prevalence and type of messages parents employ in their race-related discussions. Conversely, parental characteristics, which include income, education level, and socio-economic status, and child characteristics, such as gender and age, have also been documented as key mediating variables of parents’ racial socialization practices.

Research has shown that the parents of younger children report more racial pride messages than messages that deal with preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997). By contrast, owing to their beliefs about children being too young to discuss racial identity, a substantial number of parents stated that they had not provided racial identity messages to their children. Such findings appear consistent with Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, Narine, Logie, and Lape’s (2013) study on the relationship between ethnic socialization, parenting style, and associations with children’s pro-social behavior among Indo, African, and Mixed Trinidadian parents of pre-school children. Findings from this investigation showed a “moderate level” of ethnic socialization (p. 1). While this may be the case for Trinidadian parents, however, recent African American racial socialization studies conducted with parents of pre-school children reveal an opposite pattern of results.
For instance, Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, and Brotman (2004) have shown that parents of young children are increasingly attending to children’s identity formation by providing positive messages about their child’s racial ancestry. In fact, Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, and Brotman (2004) discovered that 93% of parents emphasized racial pride messages in their child rearing practices. In a similar vein, Suizzo, Robinson, and Pahlke (2008) found that parents of three to-six-year-olds provided racial socialization through a combination of direct and indirect methods of racial pride socialization, some of which included: reading books by African American authors, purchasing African American dolls, and discussing African American history, but refraining from more sensitive topics such as slavery (p. 300). Participants also mentioned taking part in African American related holidays and cultural celebrations. Based on these studies, it is safe to posit that racial socialization, for the purpose of developing a positive racial identity, can be successfully implemented, regardless of children’s age. Such discrepancies between Trinidadian parents and African American parents, however, point to alternative explanations; I will provide these in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

**Race innocence.** Results revealed an overwhelming pattern of responses indicating that children were “race innocent.” That is, a substantial number of parents and educators expressed the view that children do not demonstrate racist attitudes, such as attaching negative values to physical characteristics. This line of reasoning is not exclusive to Trinidadian parents and educators; in fact, literature suggests that despite an ample body of empirical studies that reveal children’s ability to not only discern racial cues, but also demonstrate negative racial attitudes, the myth of children’s racial innocence continues to hold sway over how adults perceive children’s understandings of race and racism. An earlier assertion by Park
(1928) captured much of the central meaning affiliated with the myth of children’s racial innocence:

Race consciousness, like the racial reserves, antipathies, and tabus in which it finds expression, is invariably, as far as observation goes, an acquired trait, quite as much as the taste for olives or the mania for collecting stamps. Children do not have it. (p. 16)

Although dated, Park’s statement retains a measure of relevance to everyday assumptions about children’s capacities surrounding race and racial issues. The statement that “children do not have it,” is a profound one and emblematizes the presumed abilities of young children where race is concerned. Further, the author made it quite clear that children are, due to natural dispositions, bereft of racist proclivities and, as such, race bears no significance on the quality of their social interactions.

More recently, Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) have stated that adults find it difficult to believe that young children can enact prejudiced behaviours. With specific reference to the present investigation, Katz’s (2003) assertion shows an even more striking similarity:

People unfamiliar with the psychological literature (and this includes parents and teachers) typically hold two strong beliefs about racial prejudice. First and foremost, they believe that young children are innocently color-blind and do not notice racial differences unless they are pointed out. (p. 897)

In a similar vein, Winkler (2009) prefaced her article on how best to engage children in meaningful discussions on race and racism by highlighting the myth of children’s race innocence in “popular culture” (p. 1).
Over the years, the lay beliefs in children’s impartiality have not waned, and as the literature and my research illustrate, continue to manifest itself in both parenting and teaching contexts.

On a broader scale, what it is essential to consider is, in my estimation, the possible relationship between parents’ and educators’ beliefs about when children conceptualize race and the linkages to child developmental theories. For instance, an emphasis on developmental readiness was positively related to parents’ responses when asked to explain why race identity discussions were not provided to children and when they thought it was a good time to do so. Some parents indicated they believed race can be discussed with children around eight years of age. The belief in a stage-like gradual process of thinking abilities, such that, as one gets older, complex issues including race and racism are more readily understood, is consistent with the cognitive interpretations of child development. To take a Piagetian perspective, pre-school aged children are in the pre-operational stage of development. This stage is characterized by egocentric thought, defined as the inability to attend to a perspective different from the child’s own. As children grow older, their cognition matures, evidenced by an ability to think abstractly and to reflect on the meanings and implications of social issues. Parents’ position on the nature of children’s thinking demonstrates an intuitive awareness of this last stage of cognitive development, and as the results indicate, influenced—at least partially—their perspectives on holding race discussions with children.

The notion that children’s thinking patterns are different from adults is not a point I dispute here. On the contrary, I call attention to the continued presence and strength of developmental theory as noted by participants and evident in society at large, reflected in the perceptions of children’s abilities to partake in racialized thought and behaviour. I further
advance the argument that the significance accorded to children’s enactment and interpretation of their social worlds should not be solely based on the maturity of their cognitions. Rather, what is of considerable importance, in my view, is the interaction of cognition as well as other factors (for example, socialization by parents, teachers and society) that shape how the children make meaning of/interpret race, how these understandings are applied in their daily lives, and the impact (if any) on the collective academic, social, and emotional well-being.

With respect to children’s racial attitudes, however, both parents and one educator implicated “environmental” influence, such as the home environment, as a determinant of children’s racial attitudes. From a theoretical standpoint, their views share similarities with core features of Allport’s (1954) work *The Nature of Prejudice*. According to Aboud (2005), Allport (1954) examined an array of factors that contribute to children’s racial perceptions, including developmental stages as well as parental socialization. Allport maintained that children learn prejudice from parents through observation and mimicking and not necessarily via explicit instruction. Nevertheless, empirical studies have documented instances of both positive and negative correlations between parents and children’s racial attitudes (Levy & Hughes, 2009), which thereby illustrates the lack of definitive conclusions that can be drawn on the influence of parents on children’s racial bias.

Apart from parental input, cognitive and socio-cognitive frameworks have been put forth to explain children’s racial attitudes according to an age/stage progression. Such structures converge with the child-innocence theme because for the most part, these theories, which we will come to shortly, identify pre-school children’s negative racial attitudes as not
“real” or as “developing.” Goodman (1952), for instance, maintained that while children may exhibit negative and positive attitudes around four to five years of age, it is only around the time they reach the seven to nine age ranges that “true” racial attitudes are expressed. Katz (1982), in a similar vein, stated that the last stage in the development of children’s racial attitude, which occurs around middle childhood, is one of “attitude crystallization.” Recently, a theory known as Social Identity Developmental theory has also been applied to children’s racial attitudes. With respect to a child’s age, Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, and Griffiths (2004) asserted that “…ethnic prejudice would normally be unlikely to occur in children younger than six or seven years” (p. 239). According to this perspective, younger children cannot be classified as holding prejudice, but rather as merely expressing a preference for their in-group. Indeed, the “ethnic preference” phase is characterized by children showing preference for racial groups they perceive as being more valued in their respective social contexts; it is also believed that such an association affects children’s self-esteem in a positive way (Nesdale et al., 2004).

Like cognitive developmental theorists, social identity developmental theorists claim that children develop prejudice at a much later age; according to the theory, prejudice occurs because children realize that they belong to a particular social category, and such awareness is also tied to the child’s developing cognitions (MacNaughton & Davis, 2009). In other words, the child becomes prejudiced, characterized by dislike for others, because of a strong attachment to the child’s racial group (Nesdale, Lawson, Durkin, & Duffy, 2010). By contrast, Aboud (2008) has suggested that young children exhibit prejudice as a result of immature cognitions that cause them to dislike out-group members because of perceived dissimilarity. More specifically, because younger children tend to rely on observable criteria, they cannot attend to internal,
personal traits; such cognitive limitations create the condition for developing prejudice.

However, according to Aboud (1988), children’s prejudice will decrease as they grew older, instead of increasing with age, such as the suggested models by Katz (1982) and Nesdale et al., (2004).

The notion that pre-school children are racially innocent completely, or partially, as evidenced by the theoretical orientations noted above is an area of ongoing scholarly tension. For the vast majority of parents and the educators who participated in the study, however, it is quite evident that they viewed the pre-school age as a time in which children do not necessarily confront and engage in racial matters. A contradiction however, does exist, in terms of the developmental model parents employ and the model used by socio-cognitive theorists to account for racial attitudes. For socio-cognitive theorists, children’s racial attitudes are a consequence of their developing cognitions; for parents, however, it appears the opposite. According to parents, young children neither form judgments based on race, nor practice these in their relationship with others. Perhaps, parents’ developmental persuasion is a simplified interpretation of children’s thinking abilities, one which rely strictly on age for deducing what is either beyond or within children’s intellectual capacities.

While developmental and parental factors illustrate possible explanations of children’s racial attitudes, interpreting children’s racial attitudes requires a more socio-cultural perspective, most notably, the prevalence of colour–consciousness, as discussed in the anti-colonial Caribbean Theory (Escayg, 2013). To clarify, racial prejudices inherited from colonial rule persist in Trinidad despite often exuberant claims to the contrary. Allahar (2003) pointed out, “although most are unwilling to acknowledge it, lighter skin colour is seen as more socially
acceptable across all colour segments of the Caribbean population” (p. 30). This pattern of preference for lighter skin tones was evidenced by children’s selections on the photo stimuli set, and parents’ and one educator’s remarks about observations of children’s racial awareness. To be sure, there were children of lighter-skin tones who participated in the study, so their preference may indicate a positive attitude towards themselves. The present study however aims to examine children’s attitudes of out-group members. In addition, there were responses that indicated children made their selections based on a positive evaluation of photos representing curly hair of the mixed child and straight hair of the Indian child. Children’s positive evaluations of hair type are consistent with Allahar’s (2003) general assertion of the significance such racial criteria holds in Trinidadian society. While Allahar’s account is not necessarily an empirical study of children’s racial attitudes, the assertion does provide a contextual interpretation of children’s race evaluations.

Conversely, though parents acknowledged children’s recognition of racial differences, only a few parents mentioned children expressing negative attitudes towards skin tones and or hair texture different from their own. The majority indicated that children’s racial awareness recognition did not translate into racial biases. For parents who did disclose children’s racial awareness and related attitudes, only a small proportion mentioned responses either to counteract the child incipient negative attitude or to affirm the child’s physical features.

It is also important to mention that I assessed racial attitudes using a story that contained both male and female characters. The female character, Crystal, was described as pretty. Both male and female child participants therefore selected a photo of a girl that they thought represented this particular adjective. Possibly related to a gender effect, more girls
than boys gave a response when asked to explain why they selected a particular photo. Thus, I mostly incorporate verbal justifications from female child participants. To make the convergences and departures between the child-parent dyad clearer, in the table below I compare parents’ responses with female children’s justifications for their photo selection. The first responses represent consistency between parents’ and children responses, whereas what follows are departures between parent and children’s data.

**Children’s verbal response**

Krystal, a brown-complexion child:

“Because she looks like a princess.”

KA: “Why?”

Krystal: “Because she’s white.”

**Parents’ observation to child’s racial awareness and reactions**

Michael: *Even with her dollies, ones might be darker, ones might be lighter, but I have sat down and watched her play with these dollies, comb these dollies hair, you so nice, and you so this, and the other darker dollies, I don’t know why, but the other darker dollies, she will like have them aside and deal with them after. And she will deal with the lighter dolls first. And she will strip the clothes way off, all (the darker dollies).*

Stephanie, medium brow-complexion:

“Because she looks pretty.”

KA: “Is there something about her that makes her look pretty?”

KA notes: Stephanie points to girl’s hair

KA: “her hair?” (ask for confirmation) --Stephanie shakes head yes.

Beatrice: *With her sister because she ask once while combing my hair, as I said before how come your hair long and my sister’s hair soft and mine own so short and I just without trying to go into it, I just explain well that’s just how the way you born.*
Melanie, dark brown complexion:  
“Because she has curls.”

Daniella: You know, and then she will be like, ‘my hair is long and curly’ and, you know, her lil’ cousin hair is not like that and then I will say, ‘well you are mixed, look at mommy hair, look at daddy hair, you know, and look at their father hair.’

**Departures: Child**

Sonia, a dark-skinned child:

“Her smile, her hair and her eyes.”

**Parent**

James: I always tell her, ‘Black people, you’re African, your hair, you have good African hair, the Afro, is gorgeous,’ she looks ‘beautiful.’ She was looking at Rapunzel so I always try to tell her. I do tell her. I mean maybe I don’t tell her often enough. But this is something I am quite aware of.

Kelly (light-skinned child):

“Well, her face and her lip is pretty.”

Maria: “I didn’t notice that she knows differences in skin types.”

The child-parent dyad indicates two central themes. Firstly, racial attitudes seem to be directed more towards hair texture than skin colour. Also, for the convergence’s factor, it would appear that because parents did not apply strategies and or engage in conversations that would challenge children’s biases, and on a frequent basis, children’s racial attitudes characteristics were further reinforced, as evidenced by their photo selections and verbal responses. Indeed, Kofkin, Katz, and Downey (1995) found that meaningful discussions about race can assist children in developing anti-racist views and attitudes towards others. On another note, the lack
of association between what parents said in response to their observations and reactions to children’s racial awareness, and children’s selections, illustrate that firstly, parents’ attitudes towards race discussions and awareness of children’s racial knowledge may hinder racial socialization, and secondly, race-related messages may need to be frequently communicated in order for children to develop positive racial identities. Several studies have taken into account the frequency factor in parents’ racial socialization practices (see Hughes, 2003; Lesane-Brown, Brown, Tanner-Smith, & Bruce, 2010; McHale et al., 2006) by asking parents to indicate how often they communicate race messages to their children. Further, findings from McHale’s et al., (2006) showed that youths who received frequent race-based messages ascribed higher centrality to their racial identity.

I now turn to exploring parental characteristics, namely, parents’ socio-economic status. Participants for my research were mostly working class and a few middle class parents. Consistent with this, research has shown that middle–class and upper-class parents discuss race more frequently with their children than parents of lower socio-economic status (Hughes et al., 2006). For instance, findings from Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, and Allen (1990) revealed that older mothers, who possessed more years of education, generally were more likely to engage in racial socialization (p. 407). Similarly, Caughy, Randolph, and O’Campo (2002) based on an Africentric home inventory method, indicated that parents of more elevated financial means had “items in the home reflecting a distinctly African American culture” (p. 49). Thus, it stands to reason that class, defined as a combination of education and income levels, impacts upon parents’ ability to impart racial socialization messages insofar as it determines what resources
children are exposed to (that will teach them about their racial history and, by extension, instill racial pride).

In addition to socio-economic status, the paucity of literature that exits on received socialization has shown an intergenerational link between such experiences and parents’ racial socialization practices. As indicated in the results of the present study, parents and educators barely mentioned receiving racial socialization from their parents, and cited other contexts as sites in which they were exposed to racial knowledge during their formative years, one of which was at school through interaction with peers. Hughes and Chen (1997), using questions that asked parents to reflect on cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages transmitted during childhood, discovered that parents who practiced cultural socialization with their children, were also taught these messages by their own parents. In a more contemporary study by White-Johnson, Ford, and Sellers (2010) of African American mothers, researchers similarly found that racial socialization was more prevalent among parents who received race-related messages while growing up.

Taken together, results from this study indicate that parents, for the most part, had limited received racial socialization, and, therefore, may be ill-equipped to address race with their own children. Although scholarship on the intergenerational transmission of race socialization is scant, literature on the continuities of parenting beliefs and behaviours from one generation to the next, interprets generational patterns of parenting practices in relation to the social learning theory (see Erzinger & Steiger, 2014). Such perspective implies that parents model the child rearing strategies they received from their own parents. Further, parents may not have the information to teach children about their racial identity, which also coincides with
the class and education factors. A good example of this point is the recurring responses by participants who, when asked if they had discussed racial identity with children said, “I didn’t think about it,” or when asked about future racial socialization or how to promote a positive racial identity, simply stated, “I don’t know.” In addition to other pertinent factors, the intergenerational aspect, in the context of the present study, showed positive linkages between parents’ current child-rearing with respect to race and their own lack of exposure to direct forms of racial socialization.

One way of addressing this issue, in my opinion, derives from government-sponsored parental programs that would, firstly, introduce parents to literature on children’s racial awareness and attitudes. Additional information on teaching parents about how to discuss race with children in meaningful ways can also be provided through workshops, monthly newsletters, and (possibly) one-on-one sessions with a parenting education counselor with specialized knowledge of the development and attributes of children’s racial knowledge and techniques to support healthy racial development in children and adolescents. The central goal of these programs would be to curtail the effect of class on racial socialization by ensuring parents receive the knowledge, tools, and procedures needed to engage children in conversations about race, as well as to provide information related to their racial identity.

**School as a Context of Racial Socialization: The Role of Teachers**

Although the family is often regarded as the most influential force on children’s socialization, teachers and peers are also important agents of racial socialization. Taking the role of the teacher into account, Branch (1999) conceptualized several ways in which educators might influence students’ racial knowledge. One factor, however, indicates a focus relevant to
This study investigates, in varied respects, teachers’ attitudes towards diversity. Further, I have extended this theme to include specific pedagogical practices Trinidadian teachers employ in response to children’s racial awareness. That is, how they respond to racial matters in the classroom, along with the information they use to impart knowledge about students’ racial ancestry (as well as to cultivate positive racial attitudes). Consistent with the literature on racial socialization, such practices are both reactive and proactive. And yet, it would also be beneficial to bear in mind that teachers’ attitudes obtain to a larger framework containing intersecting factors, such as teacher identity and teacher training. In other words, how do teachers develop their anti-racist or color blind teaching approach? What are the professional and personal aspects that inform teachers’ classroom practices? In the concluding chapter, I address some of these points as implications of this study and possible directions for future research.

In the ensuing discussion, I first situate the types of race discourse by pre-school Trinidadian teachers (for example, their activities for Indian Arrival day and Emancipation day, within the general body of literature on teaching race to young children). However, I preface the following discussion by reiterating that, although it is my intent to maintain a Caribbean-centered focus throughout, research limitations pertaining to the topic of Caribbean teachers’
pedagogical practices impinge upon pedagogical studies about race and racism, with the exception of Kempf (2010). To address the lack of available Caribbean scholarship, I have included literature from Canadian and American Journals of Early Childhood Education. In so doing, I draw upon some of the main features of anti-racism in the early childhood classroom and demonstrate their applicability, albeit modified, to the Trinidadian context.

“We Don’t Teach Race Here.” Pertinent research often suggests that one of the main impediments to discussing issues of race and racism with young children, particularly in early childhood settings, is the prevailing myth of children’s “color blindness.” Additionally, teachers’ perceptions concerning children’s ability to grasp the meaning of racism further hinder the inclusion of anti-racism pedagogy in early childhood education (Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, & Powers-Costello, 2011). However, empirical and theoretical works have consistently demonstrated that around the pre-school age, children identify racial differences such as skin colour and hair texture. A related line of inquiry also reveals that racial attitudes emerge around the three to five-year-old age range, with various theoretical orientations based on age-stage progression offered to explain the development of children’s racial attitudes and the characteristics associated with each stage. Empirical works on children’s racial awareness have not been completely ignored; however, as recent literature indicates, a range of anti-bias materials and curriculum-specific initiatives have arisen to ensure anti-racist early childhood classroom spaces.

The growing body of research literature that advocates for anti-bias curriculum and teaching practices in early childhood settings has taken several positions in support for discussing and addressing race issues with young children. Much of the rationale has focused
on the diversity of the United States demographic (Hyland, 2010), the need to recognize that children are affected by the race discourses that surrounds them but which might not necessarily be openly challenged and or talked about (Husband, 2012), as well as teachers’ responsibilities in promoting anti-racist attitudes and cultivating positive racial identities (Derman-Sparks, 2004; 2008; Tenorio, 2007).

To teach children about their racial identity, teachers in the current investigation admitted to using holidays such as Indian Arrival Day and Emancipation Day, although because of respective dates on the calendar, children were not exposed to a lesson on Emancipation. According to the tenets of the anti-bias curriculum, such practices reflect the “tourist approach,” in which “classroom activities focus on special times, such as a holiday celebration, or an occasional multicultural event” (Derman-Sparks, 2004, pp. 21-22). Anti-racist education also takes issue with this particular style of teaching as it does not challenge students to think beyond superficial representations of culture to issues related to power and privilege.

However, it is important to point out that within the American context, where Whiteness is constructed as the norm, and that emphasis on “holidays and heroes” does little to interrogate systemic inequities, the critiques of anti-racist and anti-bias curricula are indeed pertinent. However, in my view, the Trinidadian context warrants an alternative analysis, and as I soon realized, requires a Caribbean-focused anti-racism/anti-colonial early childhood curriculum.

Holidays as a method of imparting knowledge about students’ racial ancestry are not entirely problematic. In this particular case, holidays provide some basic information about racial backgrounds. The problem lies elsewhere; I argue that because it is presented as a fleeting topic, and not necessarily integrated into teachers’ everyday practices, as well as
learning materials, such brief historical treatises send the message that they bear no relevance to children’s contemporary lives. In other words, such lessons are represented as the belonging to the “past,” a historical occurrence and, after the lesson is over, the deeper conversations about how and why Africans and East Indians came to Trinidad are simply ignored. Furthermore, teaching a lesson on Indian Arrival Day also pertains to Indian identity, and African and Indo-Trinidadian early social interactions. Developmentally appropriate discussions on racism between the country’s dominant groups, African and Indo-Trinidadian, can also be included to support anti-racist and anti-colonial early learning experiences.

In line with this, the literature suggests a range of teaching strategies to engage children in conversations about race and racism. For instance, opportunities can arise through “teachable moments,” such as when a child makes a comment about another’s race or skin colour and or demonstrates bias in their play interactions. Tenorio (2007) pointed out that much of her unplanned anti-racist discussions occurred as a result of children’s speaking about difference, such as race and language, in a derogatory manner. As it has been noted before, one aim of the current study was to examine teachers’ responses to racial incidents in the classroom. Two teachers proffered descriptions of situations in which they dealt with these issues. An African Trinidadian teacher recounted scenarios where African Trinidadian children made derogatory remarks about a child’s African-textured hair. Another example provided by this same teacher included girls preferring playmates of lighter skin tones, and rejecting their darker-skin friends. Further, a teacher of Indo-Trinidadian background shared an event where Indo-Trinidadian children excluded an African Trinidadian classmate from their play group.
Minimally, teachers’ responses to these situations share similarities with an anti-bias/anti-racist approach. For example, both teachers stated that they had intervened instantly after they overheard and saw what was taking place. With respect to the Indo-Trinidadian children, the teacher’s strategy was to address the incident by speaking to all the children involved and telling them that “we are all the same,” and “Jesus loves everyone.” On the other hand, the African Trinidadian teacher—with reference to her second example—asked the children to play with the child and, as the teacher, she felt it was best to “show preference” for the child so that her students would become more “aware of her presence.” In the first example, she responded by having a conversation with her class on the beauty of African-textured hair.

Their decisive reactions mirror what Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010) have advised as strategies for responding to prejudice and discriminatory behavior in the classroom: “It is essential to respond quickly and clearly. Ignoring comments and actions that indicate prejudice gives the child permission to attack another’s identity and it leaves all children feeling unsafe in your classroom” (p. 34). Nevertheless, clearly missing were opportunities for children to explain why they were not comfortable with interacting with someone from another race and the reasons behind their preference for lighter skin tones, or their rejection of African textured hair (exemplified by the event reported by the African Trinidadian teacher).

Further, such strategies do not acknowledge the effect this rejection may have caused the African Trinidadian children and what feelings it may have aroused regarding the status of their group identity. Instead, what should have been implemented, in addition to speaking to both children and attending to their feelings, was “to go beyond no; try and figure out what
underlies the rejecting child’s behavior” (Derman-Sparks, 2010, p. 34). This crucial aspect of anti-bias/anti-racist teaching—namely, addressing what children may have felt as a result of being shunned and disregarded because of physical characteristics, and having conversations that would elicit children’s rationale for their behavior, which could possibly extend into deeper dialogue about race—were not part of teachers’ expressed pedagogies. Perhaps they were caught off guard and did not know how to respond. Another possible explanation is that teachers require training and a personal willingness to implement anti-racist practices in their classroom. In the conclusion and implications chapter, I will address the role of teachers’ identities and teacher training, but for now, I examine how educators’ practices, along with parenting approaches, are inconsistent with anti-racist teachings.

**Egalitarian Racial Socialization Among Educators and Parents: Interrogating the Liberal Agenda**

As previously stated, adult participants openly purport that direct discussions about race and racism were not a focal part of their teaching and child rearing practice. However, when asked how they would develop anti-racist attitudes, with the exception of one educator who remarked on the value of empowering children to “stand up for themselves,” the majority emphasized teaching children that everyone is equal. While not directly associated with parental measures for inculcating anti-racism, Marshall’s (1995) study of 58 African American mothers’ racial socialization practices similarly found that close to 30% of parents reported egalitarian messages. More recently, in a study of racial socialization of African American boys by their fathers, Thomas, Caldwell, and De Loney (2012) found that half of the sample of fathers gave frequent egalitarian messages to their sons. In essence, egalitarian values stress the equal value of all human beings regardless of racial backgrounds. By taking into account an
anti-racist perspective, however, we detect a paradox of sorts in such an approach. Despite its attempt at dislodging a prescriptive status and/or value based on race, egalitarianism is indeed marred by inherent contradictions; while such approaches propose a universal human worth, in order to realize this worth, considerations necessarily overlook race which, consequently, discount issues of identity and racism.

Additionally, from an educational perspective, teaching children to ignore race by promulgating humanistic values contrasts sharply with an anti-racist/anti-colonial approach. More specifically, the goals of the anti-bias education developed by Derman-Sparks (1989), and the modified working version of the *Caribbean Anti-Racism Early Childhood Guide* (which I have created [Escayg, 2013]), are to engage children in conversations about race issues and to develop skills to effectively confront prejudice directed at themselves and others. Anti-racist/anti-colonial early childhood education does not operate from a position of silence. Rather, it is guided by an overarching goal of disrupting contemporary silence on race issues, and current permutations of the colonial race archetype operating through existing ideologies that afford supremacy and social significance to particular racial identities. Unfortunately, it is quite evident that parents’ and educators’ strategies depart considerably from these central underpinnings. On the other hand, what their practices reveal parallel core features of liberal ideology.

Liberal ideology is usually characterized by its emphasis on “the equal moral worth and basis rational capacity of individuals” (Cochran, 1999, p. 5). However, this claim of universality has fomented a range of race and gender-based critiques. Regarding racial identity, Christman (2002) has maintained that for liberalism, the self is constructed as devoid of any particular
social identity (namely, that of race). Taking an anti-colonial perspective, a proposition of this nature is untenable primarily because race, although inherently without any biological merit, remains an inherent organizing principle in Caribbean societies. Additionally, liberalism’s abstract conception of “self” cannot account for the experiential realities encountered thorough one’s racial identity. In fact, as Dei (1996) so rightfully observed, “we must avoid the suppression of individual and group identities which is an inherent feature of modern discourses on equality and sameness” (p. 51). The rhetoric of sameness creates a pernicious denial of the significance of racial identity. Indeed, racial identity has been noted not only to afford a sense of belonging, but also to serve as a shield against the effects of racism (Roberts & Taylor, 2012).

By its very de-emphasis on race, an egalitarian approach stands at odds with the acknowledgment of racism. Indeed, this logic of sameness allows for racism to persist in various forms, given that its main precept promulgates an absence of racial categories. Such practices are indeed present in the Trinidadian context. Nonetheless, at times, this particular silence demonstrates a contradictory reality, a reality that exposes the ‘real’ or lived experience of racism. For instance, in 2011, The Express carried a story by reporter Ria Taitt, in which Taitt alleged that a principal of a Hindu school sent a letter to the Teaching Service Commission indicating she was instructed by her superior to deny admission to African Trinidadian children. The author further reported: “As a result of this, she requested a release from the SDMS board and a transfer to the Government Teaching Service” (Taitt, 2011, para. 3). A direct quote from the principal read:
The Secretary General threatened to lock me out of the school for taking in non-Indian children who were within the catchment area. He told me in no uncertain terms that I must not admit black children into the school and admissions lists for both primary and pre-school are being scrutinized to ascertain whether I am following instructions. (Taitt, 2011, para. 4)

In response, Alexander (2011) reported that the Prime Minister of Trinidad commented: “We’ll see what they (ministry) have to say but should those allegations be true, it is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. There should be no discrimination anywhere in this country” (Alexander, 2011, para. 2). It would have been interesting to determine what the PM intended when she stated that “there should be no discrimination anywhere in this country.”

Taken in purely a literal way, does it denote that the PM and her government are working towards creating a “non-racist” society? Further, if so, then what is the federal government’s approach to addressing the situation? Much can be critiqued about this particular response, but for now it suffices to note that the PM’s reaction to the allegations of racism illustrates an assumption that, somehow, racism is not a perceptible issue in Trinidadian society.

Equally significant is that the current prime minister of Trinidad is an Indo-Trinidadian woman, and the political party she leads (People’s Partnership [hereafter, ‘PP’]) is an amalgamation of different political parties with members across Trinidad’s diverse racial groups. In theory, the party’s common rhetoric usually emphasizes national unity. Perhaps unity is a motto primarily engineered to further political expediency, by emphasizing collective citizenry and, thus, alluding to equal distribution of state resources. In practice, however, it would appear that unity translates into Indo-group solidarity, with state jobs being distributed
on the basis of ethnic group membership and not necessarily according to qualifications. The Reshmi Ramnarine story illustrates this point clearly. In 2011, despite lacking the required academic or professional expertise, Reshmi, a junior clerk, was promoted to the position of director of the state-operated Strategic Services Agency. After the story broke, Reshmi resigned and the Prime Minster, in an interview later that year, conceded that she, in fact, had made an error in supporting Reshmi’s appointment (see Martin, 2011).

To be sure, African Trinidadians have also been implicated in using race and not merit as criteria for allocating state resources and assigning public service positions. Much of this occurred as a result of the lengthy history of political power enjoyed by the PNM, a party dominated by African Trinidadians. Yet, the long-standing reign of the PNM ended in 1986 when the National Alliance for Reconstruction (a party composed of members from different racial groups), won the general election (Ryan, 1996). However, despite this victory, it appears that racial tensions persisted. As Ryan (1996) noted, the NAR political party disbanded soon after the 1986 election. Moreover, around 1988, thousands of Indo-Trinidadians “fled” to Canada seeking “refugee status” claiming they were victims of racially inspired discrimination “in their own country” (p. 166). Premdas (2007) and Ryan (1996) have also maintained that similar discrimination was carried out against Indo-Trinidadians through exclusion from government employment and other state opportunities afforded to African Trinidadians.

Data from the present study support literature that theorizes racism as related to issues of politics and power. For instance, two Indo-Trinidadians parents believed that racism, for the most part, was a matter of politics but, interestingly, none of them implicated the current government of perpetuating racism. By contrast, African Trinidadian parents, however,
reported job discrimination as well as personal encounters with racism. There were a few participants who felt that racism was not present in Trinidadian society. With respect to the race-based politics perspective, Ava (Indo-Trinidadian parent) seems to negate the race influence, but still clearly indicates that voting along racial lines is a form of racism:

I think it’s just about politics. I don’t think it is about race. I think people do things because they are higher than other people because like the PNM there are Creole supporters, so you will expect to have creole supporters more than Indian supporters because they are leaders of Creoles and Indians... stuff like that. In a way it is racialism because they would love what UNC does, or the Indian people would love what the PNM does, but when time comes to vote, they vote for their race. That’s how it is... it’s not right.

Similar to the literature previously discussed, Alessa stated that with the ascendancy of the PP into political power, there were informal reports of discrimination against African Trinidadians:

Well when it is the PP win you heard the tension in the air and it wasn’t like a party win, it was the Indians, that’s what I heard, it’s the Indians’ win. Now even more so that things are changing around in the country, you’re hearing that they letting go all the Negro people and hiring all the Indian people.

Given the empirical data along with the existing literature, it appears that equality, as applied to a race and racism analysis of the Trinidadian society, holds no conceptual significance to the present and historical racial dynamics played out between the country’s main groups: African and Indo-Trinidadians. Further, racial differences based on the rhetoric of “sameness” (Kelly, 2005) undermine attempts at revealing the presence of racism. To extrapolate, I argue
that by way of homogenizing all identities, the prevalence and persistence of racism is denied; for example, if we are all the same, on what credible grounds can one articulate experiences of racism?

Using these arguments, I advance the view that an egalitarian approach to child rearing and teaching is problematic on several accounts. Firstly, it denies the existence of racism in Trinidad, rendering anti-racist strategies to be carried out by parents and educators unnecessary. Second, such an approach dismisses the reality of racial attitudes amongst children which, as my research and that of others’ demonstrate (and equally alarming is that parents and educators have not practiced racial socialization techniques to counteract derogatory perceptions of race, and to instill racial pride). Thirdly, children are denied the possibility of becoming agents of anti-racism in their thinking and social interactions with others. Clearly, much of the literature on anti-racism in early childhood classrooms, as well as parenting, speaks to the theme of empowering young children to think more critically about race issues. Additionally, the silence about race identity and racism is not situated solely within the confines of parenting, but is also visible within the educational context, represented by teachers’ practices and the Early Childhood curriculum. On this note, I turn now to an examination of Trinidad and the Caribbean Early Childhood Curriculum guides.

Curricula Considerations: Saliency of Culture, Absence of Anti-Racism

Data produced from my observations, as well as interviews with teachers, showed a lack of anti-racism curriculum at both schools. At the private pre-school, there were no learning materials such as books or toys that reflected students’ racial backgrounds. On the other hand, at the government centre, there were puppets and dolls of different skin tones but, as in the
private school, age appropriate picture books on race, skin colour, and hair texture were also not available. However, teachers at the state-run centre are required to implement the national ECCE curriculum. Yet a silence on anti-racism features quite evidently in the (2005) Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood Development in the Caribbean: A Curriculum Resource Guide as well as Trinidad’s National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide (Ministry of Education, 2006) However, it should be noted that these documents are not specifically devoted to anti-racism or anti-bias curricula. Instead, the focus centers on different components of early childhood education, and the best practices for each specific area. Therefore, one can argue that the lack of anti-racism is partially due to the fact that the guide was not prepared with this central goal in mind. In line with this view, much of the regional curriculum guide featured several examples consistent with the multicultural approach. To clarify, please find a limited sample of the strategies recommended for the three to five-year-old age group listed below:

“Encourage multicultural awareness through representative dolls, puppets, pictures, and books” (p. 68)

“Highlight cultural aspects of all families and learn recipes, songs, and information about their cultural celebrations “(p. 68).

Trinidad’s document does not depart in any large degree from its regional counterpart. The third goal of the citizenship strand is: “... they value culture and develop an appreciation of their own and other cultures, building early understanding about diversity” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 43). More specific learning outcomes are listed as, “an appreciation and
recognition of differences and similarities among themselves”, “some early concepts of the value of appreciating diversity”, and “willingness to participate in cultural activities” (p. 43).

Taken together, I would argue that the overarching theme of the ECE guides appears more aligned with tolerance, “appreciating differences,” and learning about culture. While recommending that children be exposed to different songs, festivals, and the religions of other cultures is commendable as it contributes to inclusion for children from various cultural backgrounds, it certainly leaves racism unattended. In light of this, I have taken the liberty, using the structure of the Caribbean ECE guide, of developing a preliminary regional anti-racism ECE curriculum resource.

As the reader will notice, this working model contains recommendations aligned with an anti-racist and anti-colonial focus. Such perspectives are consonant with the childhood colonization/ decolonization theme featured in the anti-colonial Caribbean theory, for it recognizes the prevalence of race and racism in the lives of young children. Therefore, the aim of the proposed anti-racism guide is to challenge such realities by enriching children’s early years education with an anti-racism pedagogy that will affirm their identities and cultivate anti-racist attitudes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Milestones of Development</th>
<th>Signals of performance in early learning settings</th>
<th>Signals of appropriate pedagogical practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-to provide children with opportunities to learn about their racial identity and develop racial pride</td>
<td>-recognition of racial differences (hair, skin colour at age three)</td>
<td>-child will use colour when speaking about him or herself</td>
<td>-teacher will intervene immediately when negative comments are made about a child’s race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-to encourage children to think positively of all skin tones and hair texture</td>
<td>-rational identification in terms of skin colour</td>
<td>-child will make accurate selection of crayon, marker, or pencil for self-portrait</td>
<td>-addressing the issue will involve: engaging in a conversation with children, in which the teacher acknowledges the feelings of the child to whom the comment and or behavior was directed; teacher will also speak to the other child to determine the reason for his or her behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-to equip children to realize the ills of racism and practice anti-racism</td>
<td>-limited understanding of racial terms</td>
<td>-child will not yet establish racial constancy, so may assume that skin colour can change if he or she wants it to</td>
<td>-teacher will facilitate dialogue with children about skin colour to firstly ascertain their thoughts on the issue; teacher makes a note of what was said to be used for a subsequent teacher led conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to introduce children to the history of their respective country</td>
<td>-rational attitudes begin to form; value designations being attached to racial groups</td>
<td>-explicit racial attitudes displayed as exclusion, or comments about race</td>
<td>-teacher will facilitate dialogue with children about skin colour to firstly ascertain their thoughts on the issue; teacher makes a note of what was said to be used for a subsequent teacher led conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-limited understanding of racial terms</td>
<td>-implicit racial bias can also be present; examples of these can be found in children preference for learning materials (for example, shade of doll or crayon)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-rational attitudes begin to form; value designations being attached to racial groups</td>
<td>-teacher will facilitate dialogue with children about skin colour to firstly ascertain their thoughts on the issue; teacher makes a note of what was said to be used for a subsequent teacher led conversation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-educator uses regionally-produced picture books on the beauty of all skin tones and hair textures, followed by a discussion with children</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- an equal distribution of dolls and puppets that represents a range of skin colour and hair texture

- learning environment will contain images of children of different racial backgrounds

- historical discussions about context-specific race and racism issues; entry point for subsequent conversations on racism

- teacher will facilitate discussion on children's understandings of racism

- teacher will use children's perceptions of racism as material for further discussions

- the practice of anti-racism/anti-colonialism (historical and contemporary) in the students' country could also be integrated in the curricula

- introduce children to anti-racist and anti-colonial workers/teachers activists

- encourage children to draw, or narrate what they believe they could do as anti-racist worker
-teacher will be attentive to children’s dialogue with others and their play

-involvement with parent community: teachers will offer parents tips on teaching children about race/addressing race-bias comments.

-in September, teacher will inform parents of the anti-racist curricula focus, whether through a “meet the teacher” night or through a class newsletter

-consistent with young children’s race awareness understandings (that is, skin colour and hair), teacher will stock different shades of markers, crayons, etc.

It is instructive to note that, although early childhood spans the period of birth to eight, according to the Caribbean Anti-Racism Early Childhood Guide, this study focuses on the preschool age range (three to five) due to the scope of my investigation and professional experiences working with this age group. However, in the near future, I intend to develop a guide for middle school and adolescent age groups by collaborating with regional scholars who
specialize in Caribbean education and teaching. A collaboration of this nature may not only enhance the content of the curriculum and suggested pedagogical strategies, but also continue the goal of situating a Caribbean focus, as well as furthering the aim of translating regionally created material into concrete classroom practices.

**Contextual Considerations: “All ah we is one” (Nationalism in Trinidad and Contradictions with Racial socialization)**

There can be no Mother India ... There can be no Mother Africa ... There can be no Mother China... and there can be no Mother Syria or no Mother Lebanon. The only Mother we recognize is Mother Trinidad and Tobago, and Mother cannot discriminate between her children. (Williams, 1962, p. 279)

The above excerpt foregrounds a renowned quotation from PM Williams. His statement, a cogent précis of the ideology underpinning Trinidad’s nationalism, offers an entry point into deconstructing how such narratives inform attitudes towards race and racial identity in the Trinidadian context. However, owing to the conceptual commonalities link between Trinidad’s mode of nationalism and the body of literature that addresses nationalism more generally, this section will begin with a discussion of the latter.

Over the years, nationalism has been defined in several ways. In his seminal and often cited work, Anderson (1983) referred to nationalism as “imagined communities”. Using Trinidad as a reference point, the term “imagined” is indeed relevant, for it illustrates the distinctions (Hearn, 2006) put forth involving the difference between primordialist and modernist versions of nationalism. The latter is more applicable to Trinidad as it addresses the heterogeneity of the population as a consequence of colonialism, and the attempt to coalesce a heterogeneous population into a cohesive and harmonious group committed to a particular
nationalist identity. The significance of colonial history, particularly as it relates to the challenges of homogenizing Trinidad’s diverse ancestral groups, cannot be overstated. In fact, Eriksen (1993) offered an accurate analysis when he observed that “nationalists in these societies, particularly if they are poly-ethnic, cannot possibly draw upon shared imagery representing presumably ancient collectivities and transform it into images of the contemporary nation in embryonic form that standard works on nationalism would presuppose” (p. 2). Consequently, nationalism, and the identity it supports in contexts such as Trinidad, often utilize emergent cultural creolizations, formed out of the mixing of both ancestral (for example, African) and Trinidadian culture.

Such practices illustrate the ideological component of modernist -nationalism (Hearn, 2006); that is, the formation of nationalist narrative is reflective of the localities of all citizens. It is on the account of this narrative that Trinidad’s nationalist identity has been charged with being exclusionary to Indo-Trinidadian cultural forms. Indeed, much scholarly work privileges the rise to nationalism as the historical period in which Trinidad’s nationalist identity became associated with cultural expressions produced by African Trinidadians, such as the steel band, calypso and carnival (see Brereton, 2007, Eriksen, 1992; Khan, 2004; Munasinghe, 2001; Premdas, 2007; Wahab, 2006). It is also important to note that the preceding cultural expressions were considered lower-class cultural forms, and were only ascribed significance during the Independence movement when middle class politicians co-opted them for their nationalist agenda (Wahab, 2006).

Despite the many years that have passed since Independence, and a current government led by an Indian female Prime Minister, literature continues to suggest that these
cultural forms, such as calypso, carnival, and steel pan are otherwise regarded as iconographic representations of “Trinidadian” identity. Nonetheless, the repeated emphasis on Trinidadian identity as linked to African Trinidadian culture warrants further scrutiny, especially in light of the findings produced by this investigation. When asked, “how are you going to promote a positive racial identity?” the vast majority of African Trinidadian and mixed parents replied, “I don’t know.” In fact, one parent responded in a way that bore striking parallels to Williams’s (1962) quotation:

This is Trinidad and Tobago. It don’t have no kind of difference in race and thing. We might have different hair, different this. It have no Indians, no Negroes, no Chinese, nothing, all of us is just Trinidadians or Tobagonians. (Veronica)

Other notable responses included using African Trinidadian family members as role models and, in more striking and dramatic ways, parents indicated that they will use Obama, Oprah, and African American inventor, Garret Morgan. The inconsistency shown by parents’ responses, in contrast to racial socialization literature, remains particularly glaring, for much empirical work has documented African American parents using African American cultural figures and history.

This begs the following question: If Trinidadian identity is so attached to African Trinidadian cultural forms, such as calypso, steel band, and carnival, why did parents omit these? Although the sample size is small, and a generalization is not possible, is it safe to proffer the argument that precisely because calypso, steel band, and carnival have been co-opted by the state, they have since ‘lost’ their African origins (to the point where to think of calypso, steel band, and carnival, induces no awareness of a rootedness in African Trinidadian history)? Evidence to suggest that subsuming African Trinidadian culture and, by extension, its identity,
within a Trinidadian (nationalist) identity, has produced this particular awareness is also discussed by a participant in England’s (2008) study on mixed racial identity in Trinidad:

In Trinidad the African culture is Trinidad culture. They don’t have any African—from the continent—tradition that would really bring them together—everything they have is what they developed right here (p. 20).

In a similar vein, the parent below articulated his perception of what being an African Trinidadian meant to him. Implicitly, however, what can also be gleaned from Michael’s response is the integration of nationalist and African Trinidadian identity—to the point where the former becomes defined by the latter—thereby giving rise to phenomena wherein no distinction can be made (for African Trinidadians) between Trinidadian and African Trinidadian identities. He explained:

For me, to be quite honest with you, I have formulated my own identity because I don’t quite know what the African identity is because I can’t say that I am an African from Africa because I am not. I don’t know what a Trinidadian African identity is because we don’t have one. We don’t have one. (Michael)

In the first example, the participant conflates Trinidad’s national character with that of African Trinidadian culture, and takes it one step further by, proclaiming that there is no organic or entirely extant African culture in Trinidad. On the other hand, what the participant reveals is a lack of awareness of what actually constitutes an African Trinidadian identity, which perhaps is also consistent with the aforementioned interpretation. Similar to the first quotation, Michael also stated that he has no ancestral connection to Africa. The commonality between both responses is that neither disclosed a definition of African Trinidadian identity.
Such viewpoints further strengthen this dissertation’s contention that, within the Trinidadian context, due to how nationalism was conceived and the imagery that supported it, racial identity for some African Trinidadians appears one and the same when compared with a nationalist identity.

In sum, nationalist rhetoric as a societal factor that impacts upon African Trinidadian parents’ knowledge of their racial group as well as racial socialization practices, while conceptually pertinent, warrants additional research due to the small sample size of the current investigation. Still the Indo-Trinidadian parents’ racial socialization offers interesting analyses, particularly when compared to the prevalence of racial socialization among African Trinidadian parents.

**Indo-Trinidadian Identity and Racial Socialization**

One dominant theme in the literature on Indo-Trinidadian identity involves the preservation of ancestral culture (Roopnarine, 2009). Such cultural forms are most notably, Indo-Trinidadians’ religion, for example, Islam, Hinduism, and customs such as the close-knit family structure (Klass, 1961; Lewis, 1983; Roopnarine, 2009). Yet, not all East Indian practices have been retained in the contemporary era. According to Roopnarine (2004; 2009), caste beliefs “barely survived the subversively beguiled indentured system” (2009, p. 96). Historical conditions affiliated with the Indentureship program, however, have been noted as factors that strengthened and maintained Indo-Trinidadian and Indo-Caribbean identity.

Drawing upon a more regional analysis, Itwaru (1989) explained that a strong Indian identity emerged as a result of the antipathy Indo-Caribbean peoples encountered by colonial authorities, and the antagonisms between Indo-Caribbean and their African Caribbean
counterparts (much of which were caused by the introduction of indentureship following the period of emancipation). As Itwaru (1989) pointed out, “Indianess served as self-identification, as necessary resistance to persecution, and as the means for maintenance of psychic strength under the atrocity of oppression” (p. 205). Similarly, Roopnarine (2009) remarked that separation from the rest of society due to indentureship regulations confined East Indians in the Caribbean to the plantations in which they worked and engendered the establishment of collective ties, through which features of Indian identity were continued. In the Trinidadian context, Jha (1974) attributed indentured labourers’ marginal status in Trinidadian society to distinct cultural practices (for example, “language, religion, dress, food and values”, p. 19) that helped preserve the primacy of Indian identity among Indo-Trinidadians.

Indo-Trinidadian identity, defined as continuance of religion and family customs inherited from East-Indian ancestors, shows partial consistency with the data collected. For instance, one parent stated that, while she may provide direct socialization such as discussions about her child’s racial identity, this is not a practice she frequently employs. In fact, she stated that if the situation arises—for example, if the term Indian comes up, or if it is an Indian-related festival—she will “inform him” of his identity. In a related sense, a teacher remarked being exposed to the Hindu religion made her aware of her Indian ancestry. Similarly, another parent stated that she learned about her racial identity because of the extended family in which she was socialized and added that she currently resides with her in-laws. Incidentally, this parent also disclosed that she informs her child that she is Indian, as well as mixed (with “Spanish” ancestry). The impact of the extended family—in this case, the racial attitudes of the child’s grandparents—is also readily apparent in Reshma’s parent’s racial socialization practices: “I
does try to put her in the right way and say, ‘it’s not N**, it’s negro, and you cannot say things about them because everybody is human.’” In this case, the parent provides reactive socialization, primarily because the child is exposed to her grandparent’s racist attitudes, which are at odds with the parent’s own child-rearing goals. She demonstrates awareness that the child may inculcate these same values and by responding with an alternate perspective, she hopes to mitigate the effect of the grandparents’ socialization on her child’s attitudes towards others.

Ultimately, for the limited sample of Indo-Trinidadian parents and educators, (five parents and two educators), data showed that three parents made reference to informing their child about being Indian, while two did not. However, consistent with Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, Narine, Logie, and Lape (2013), more Indo-Trinidadian parents discussed their child’s racial identity than African Trinidadians (n=1) and mixed (n=2) parents. It should be noted that Indo-Trinidadian parents did not engage the child in an in-depth conversation but rather simply informed the child that he or she was Indian. One parent also indicated that such discussions about Indian culture are normally linked to religious practices.

**Children’s Racial Identity: Developmental and Environmental Factors**

For young children, racial identity encompasses “racial awareness, self-identification and attitudes” (Byrd, 2012, p. 4). As the literature indicates, these dimensions are also linked to various socio-cognitive models that attempt to explain how children progress from a rudimentary understanding of race to the meaning and awareness of collective group identity, along with the direction and content of children’s attitudes. Models of children’s identity development are distinguished by their emphasis on an age/stage progression, and a belief in
children’s active construction of racial knowledge influenced by their general age-related cognitions. For example, Alejandro-Wright (1985) offers a socio-cognitive interpretation of children’s racial classification abilities, while Quintana (1998;2008) proposes a consideration of children’s racial perspective taking ability model. Although the developmental models vary slightly, there is a noticeable agreement that the pre-school age corresponds with the nascent stage of racial identity development. This initial phase marks an awareness of racial variants such as skin colour and hair texture.

Consistent with the idea that young children make use of concrete, observable criteria in their racial identification as demonstrated by level zero (*The Physical and Egocentric Perspective of Race*) in accordance with Quintana’s (2008) *Racial-Perspective Taking Ability Theory*, he described it as denoting how “children’s expressed understanding of race is focused on observable physical aspects of race, including most often skin, hair, and eye color, but also including hair texture and other racial phenotypic characteristics” (p. 21). This is consistent with children’s data, as the vast majority of children selected the accurate colour of maker or pencil crayon for their portrait and, also, during the interviews identified with skin colour and hair instead of racial labels. For the perceived similarity tasks in which they were asked to choose a picture that looks like them, the majority of the children selected the accurate photo. Most often the rationale given by participants for selecting the photo hinged on skin colour, but some also made reference to hair texture as well. From a developmental perspective, a plausible reason for pre-school children’s tendency to rely on physical characteristics is that categorization serves as a developmental tool for children in comprehending their social world,
and this particular logic of differentiation is also applied when they are confronted with racial differences (MacNaughton & Davis, 2009).

**Racial labels.** In addition to children becoming aware of racial differences around the pre-school stage, they also identify with labels associated with their racial group. Aboud’s (1987) definition of racial identification incorporates children’s use of racial labels, and also encompasses other features, such as the following traits: “ancestry, or parentage, national or religious background, language, skin color, and the group’s label” (p. 33). I analyzed children’s identification with a racial label by assessments carried out within a format similar to other studies. Simply, children were presented with four labels—Negro, Indian, mixed and Dougla—and asked to indicate if either of those applied to them.

A comparison of the findings with Caribbean scholarship was not possible as the small body of empirical work on children and race in the Caribbean (e.g., Cramer & Anderson, 2003; Gopaul-McNicol, 1992) has assessed racial identification using the perceived similarity task, which includes asking a child to select stimuli that looks like him/her. Consequently, no evidence, to my knowledge, exists on Caribbean children’s identification with racial terms. Research studies on this aspect of children’s racial identification have been conducted elsewhere, however. For instance, Davis, Leman, and Barrett (2007) found that Black children responded positively to the question about racial group membership, affirming that they were indeed Black. Similarly, in Aboud and Doyle’s (1995) study of Black-Canadian children, the authors stated “self-identification scores indicated little confusion about racial labels even in pre-schoolers” (p. 243). Data from the present study contradict literature on Black children’s accurate racial identification, which may be attributed to the fact that the terms used did not
dictate colour. In fact, the majority of the children—African Trinidadian and mixed—simply stated they were neither Negro nor mixed, Indian nor Dougla.

Given that an additional source of data was collected from parents and educators, perhaps socialization also played a role in children’s lack of familiarity with racial labels. Indeed, parents and educators stated that they did not use racial terms in discussions with children. One parent emphatically stated that she emphasized colour, and not racial ancestry, when conversing with her child. Veronica declared:

If I was to say go and call that guy there for me and is an Indian guy, I wouldn’t say go and call that Indian guy ‘cause I will think, like, he will look at me, like, ‘what you mean an Indian guy’? Because you don’t call people, like, ‘go and call that Indian guy for me,’ ‘go and call that Chinese man for me,’ ‘go and call that guy’ because…. he don’t consider this colour as red, he will say, ‘cream.’ I am like what colour am I, and he will say ‘you’re cream.’ I’m like chocolate brown, he will say that ‘I am chocolate brown and you’re cream.’ So I wouldn’t say go and call that Indian guy, I would be, like, ‘go and call that brown skinned guy for me there’ or something like that.

Here, the parent prefers to teach her child, although unintentionally, about race using skin colour and not racial labels. Consequently, physical characteristics as opposed to racial terms will hold more significance for the child, because not only are they taught explicitly, but also perceptual differentiation is congruent with social cognitive skills that allow for recognizing racial differences.
Racial terms: Meanings of labels as applied to children’s identity. While there is ample empirical work on children’s racial identification using the labeling task, less research exists on how children interpret racial terms. More specifically, the bulk of research studies have largely focused on self-identification without simultaneously examining how children define racial labels and how cognition and parental instruction may mediate individual understandings of these terms. In fact, Ruble et al., (2004) have indicated that children’s identification with racial terms does not fully capture the meanings children impute to such descriptors. By contrast, from the data collected for this study, it seems that children’s perceptions of racial labels are, in some respects, influenced by parental racial socialization. The following diagram shows examples of parental-child-racial socialization interaction patterns and children’s racial identity knowledge. Data incorporated from the interviews with parents and children elucidate these correspondences (which precede further discussion of existing literature on pre-school children’s racial knowledge and parental racial socialization).
Child’s identification with racial label

Chandra: “Yes.”

Response: “Because my mommy tells me so.”

Child’s knowledge of what the term means

None

Parental instruction

I said my grandparents were both Chinese and Indian and Spanish and one of my cousins is real Spanish, eyes and everything; well, a few of them, on my mother side. When we go down there, I explain to her them have more Spanish in them.

Emmanuel:

KA: “Are you Negro?”
E: “Yes.”
KA: “Are you Indian?”
E: “Yes.”
KA: “Are you mixed?”
KA: “Yes My mommy say I’m two.”

KA: “Do you know what Negro means?”
E: “Yes that means brown.”
KA: “What does Indian means?”
E: “Indian means White.”
KA: “And what does mixed mean?”
E: “Mixed up paint with a different colour.”

Liza: “I say because mommy is Negro and Negro people tend to have brown skin and I said your daddy is Indian but your daddy daddy, yes grandpa White, I say well right you know that.”

No, my mother does say something, and he pick it up but he don’t know that ... She does tell him he’s a half breed. When he get she vex, she does be like, ‘you half breed.’ And he will be like, ‘mommy, what half breed mean?’ I put it across as him being half Negro, half Indian.”

Melanie: “My mommy does call me Dougla.”

None

Daniella: “I will just tell her you are mixed. If anybody asks, you know what race are you, you are mixed, you are a mixed person.”
Contextual factors and age-related thinking processes contribute to children’s racial identity development (Corenblum & Armstrong, 2012). For instance, Clara’s remarks show evidence of her mother’s instruction regarding Indian identity: “Indian were people who don’t go to carnival, they go to beach and prayers.” Interestingly, in my interview with her mother, she revealed that she emphasizes behaviours that she deems consistent with her Christian identity, some of which included attending church on Sundays and refraining from secular social activities. Additionally, Clara demonstrated how her mother’s religious identity had been translated into religious socialization practices, resulting in her identifying with a Christian, as opposed to an Indian, community. Though some studies examine the effect of parental racial identity on racial socialization (e.g., Rowley, Varner, Ross, Williams, & Banerjee, 2012; Scottham & Smalls, 2009; Thomas, Speight, & Witherspoon, 2010) none, to date, examines the intersections between parents’ religious identity and their racial socializations strategies. Nevertheless, in this particular case, one domain of Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous’s (1998) model of racial identity may provide an interpretation worthy of consideration. The domain is centrality, meaning the significance an individual ascribes to race...
as part of his or her self-concept. With respect to the child’s mother, perhaps she has a low centrality of her Indian identity. However, it is important to keep in mind that since no specific measures to assess racial centrality were carried out in the study, the interpretation should be accepted with caution.

Also worthy of note, Reshma’s discussions about being Indian were limited to informing her child of the racial label, which was then reflected in Chandra’s self-identification, without explanation (for instance, references to history or cultural practices) of what the term actually signifies. Additional examples illustrated parental influences on children’s racial identification. In one instance, Emmanuel identified as Dougla and also supplied a meaning of the term using colour references. More specifically, he posited that Negro meant “brown” and Indian meant “White.” During her interview, his mother stated that she had discussed his racial identity and had introduced the term Dougla in response to his inquiry about differences in hair texture. With regards to colour, the mother informed me of the child’s grandmother, who is Indian and light-skinned, and added that his African Trinidadian grandfather is ‘brown.’ She recounted that he had made these observations on his own, and when he broached the topic of race with her, she used examples that he was familiar with to teach him about both of his racial backgrounds.

Similarly, Melanie, a child of mixed descent indicated that she was Dougla, but upon further probing, revealed that her mother had conveyed this information to her. However, when asked what the term meant, she was unable to provide a definition, speaking instead of her hair. The parental role was also clear in this example as the mother, similar to the approach in the previous example, informed her daughter that she was mixed because of the child’s
recognition that her hair texture was different from that of her cousins’. The mother explained this difference by telling her daughter that she was mixed; according to the mother, she did not convey any further information about the child’s racial identity, aside from indicating that she was to identify as mixed.

These findings dovetail with the literature on the transmission of racial socialization. Briefly, parents’ communication about race can either be deliberate (Lesane-Brown, 2006) or unintentional, with the latter enacted in situations where children initiate discussions about race (Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2009). These findings also support Hughes et al.’s (2006) assertion that parents, especially where race is concerned, are sensitive to children’s cognitive readiness and, thus, tailor the content of their conversations to suit children’s ages and comprehension levels. This was exemplified by the parents who confined their race-related discussions to the physical characteristics that children had observed (most notably, hair texture and skin colour). These examples further illustrate the bidirectional relationship of racial socialization. In particular, the data show an interaction pattern involving child’s race-related inquiry that informs the type of parental message parents impart, as well as the child’s own subsequent internalization and application of parental instruction regarding his or her racial identity.

Much of the research literature acknowledges children’s active role in racial socialization. Be that as it may, pre-school children’s understanding of their racial identity as associated with parental socialization has rarely been investigated. In one of the few studies on the racial socialization of pre-schoolers, although children were not data participants, the authors maintained that “it is not possible to use children as the source of information
regarding racial socialization practices because of the limited verbal ability of young children” (Caughy, Randolph, & O’Campo, 2002, p. 39). While this view has some merit, it was not my position, and as the data show, children’s responses did reveal evidence of parental and teacher instruction. While few identified with the label and others provided history related to their racial identity, this was precisely due to the content transmitted by parents and teachers. Similarly, Branche and Newcombe’s (1986) findings indicated that African American children, who had been exposed to teachings about race by their parents, demonstrated a higher level of racial identification, positive in-group attitudes, and general knowledge about race.

Nonetheless, the data from this investigation show a significant point of departure with the findings of the above study. In other words, there were instances in which children defined the label in their own words, but did not identify as such, which may be attributable to the extent in which knowledge of racial identity is reinforced by parents and the restraint of the child’s developing cognitions. In line with this, I offer a visual demonstration outlining evidence of both developmental and parental factors that may have impacted certain children’s racial identification (for clarification purposes, quotations preceded by ‘P,’ indicate a parent’s response, whereas those marked by an ‘E’ refer to a quotation supplied by an educator).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s identification with racial label</th>
<th>Knowledge of what identity means</th>
<th>Developmental Evidence</th>
<th>Parental and Educator influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajnath: “No.”</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>P (Rose): I just tell him he is an Indian. Because in my perspective, I feel that he wouldn’t understand it right now, so why should I get into it? Until he gets older, and maybe recognize it for himself, I will explain it to him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vishnu:</td>
<td>KA: “What does the word <em>Indian</em> mean?”</td>
<td>“Indian means you dress up with your new clothes.”</td>
<td>P (Kavita): “On one, twice occasion, when it comes up, maybe in television, or maybe in a festival or—and the name come up, I does tell him but not frequently.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “And are you an <em>Indian</em>”?</td>
<td>V: “<em>Indian</em> means you dress up with your new clothes.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V: “No.”</td>
<td>KA: “What does <em>Indian</em> mean?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona:</td>
<td>KA: “What does <em>Indian</em> mean?”</td>
<td>KA: “And are you an <em>Indian</em>?”</td>
<td>E (Mrs. R): Well, it happens because, like I say, during the year we have different festivals. So let’s say Indian arrival day comes around, that is how we identify. Our ancestors came from India, they came on a big boat, they brought with them these things, you are an EI; that is how we would try to put across to children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “What’s the boat name?”</td>
<td>F: “It means to go in the boat.”</td>
<td>F: “I was somewhere else hiding.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: “I know what’s the boat name.”</td>
<td>KA: “But are you an <em>Indian</em>?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KA: “What’s the boat name?”</td>
<td>F: “Yes I was hiding behind my papa’s car.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: “Fatel Rozack.”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A juxtaposition of knowledge of racial terms with children’s racial identification shows that developmental and parental factors may influence how children come to conceive of themselves as members of a racial group. For instance, as Vishnu stated, “Indian means you dress up with your new clothes.” It would appear that his response is influenced by reasoning consistent with the pre-operational stage of development. More specifically, he made a generalization based on his understanding of Indian (incidentally, because I fit this particular “representation,” he also considered me an “Indian”). Further, he did not state he was Indian, because according to the criteria for Indian, he was not “wearing dress-up clothes.” Consequently, he considered the label as inappropriate for his self-description.

This particular type of thinking is characteristic of transductive reasoning, characterized by casual connections between experiences, such that if one aspect of the experience is present, then the child assumes the present circumstance reflects the experience in its entirety (Davies, 2011). In this case, the child acknowledged the connection between church clothes and an Indian identity. According to the interpretation he adhered to, he could have not been an Indian on the day the interview was conducted because he was not dressed in his “church clothes.” However, as I was dressed in more formal apparel (one aspect of his conclusion), he interpreted my appearance as indicative of an Indian identity.

His response is also reflective of Quintana’s (2008) literal interpretation of race, in which children “…infer racial heritage from observations about racial customs and traditions…” (p. 24). Given the child’s construction of an understanding of his social world, it is quite likely that he associated his religious practices with the label, although it remains unclear how he learned to make this connection. It is important to bear in mind, however, that his mother also made the
remark about religion as part of the child’s upbringing. Perhaps he overheard conversations with his parents at home or at their place of worship, but his interpretation cogently demonstrates children’s understanding of their racial identity as multidimensional, thereby involving the child in consciously creating meaning based on his or her social interactions with parents and other socializing agents.

In a related sense, Fiona indicated that Indian meant “to go on the boat,” but when asked if she was Indian, said “yes.” At this point, she offered an interesting explanation, but one which shows a clear developmental constraint. Quite possibly, the label itself held no meaning to her developing self-concept because it was not reinforced at home. It should also be noted that according to the developmental literature, the ability to see oneself as a member of a collective usually occurs during middle-school to adolescence years (Quintana & Smith, 2012). According to Quintana and Smith (2012), young children are not cognitively equipped to understand the collective aspects of group identity. In this case, racial identification is characterized by children’s awareness of sameness in skin colour between themselves and those of the same racial group (Quintana & Smith, 2012). Given that Fiona accurately identified based on skin colour for the drawing activity, and for the perceived similarity task selected a photo that matched her skin colour as opposed to her texture of hair, it stands to reason, through an application of Aboud’s (1987) conceptualization of children’s racial identification, that skin colour is her “critical attribute” for self-identification.

**Racial Attitudes**

Over the years, theoretical orientations have been offered to account for children’s acquisition of racial attitudes. Some of the theories that combine developmental and
environmental considerations include Social Identity Theory (Nesdale, 1999; 2004), and the more recent Developmental Intergroup Theory (Bigler & Liben, 2007). Conversely, Aboud’s (2008), socio-cognitive framework acknowledges the influence of environmental factors, but also imputes primary significance to children’s age-related cognitions. Apart from the theoretical trend, the research conducted specifically with Caribbean children utilized stimuli representing African and White children. Thus, the findings do not support existing scholarship specific to Caribbean children owing to the fact that this study did not restrict the photo stimuli to only two groups, but instead offered choices that represented the demographics of the research context. Once again, photographs reflected four racial groups: African Trinidadian, Indo-Trinidadian, multi-racial, and White.

Notably, in response to the adjective ‘pretty,’ children overwhelmingly selected the photo of the mixed, light-skinned child and a light-brown Indo-Trinidadian child. This finding can be interpreted by analyzing the specific attitudes towards race and racial markers in Trinidadian society. Indeed, applying a contextual interpretation respects children’s individual racial attitudes. Quintana (1998) tellingly pointed out that “children’s racial attitudes and early prejudice reflect the pervasive racial attitudes embedded within the larger society” (p. 30). Adopting this perspective, the research findings of children’s evaluation of lighter skin as “pretty” is congruent with literature that implicates Caribbean societies as “color conscious” (e.g., Cross, 1970; Lowenthal, 1972), insofar as lighter skin tones carries a particular social significance. Furthermore, it would appear that skin colour alone was not the sole criteria that children evaluated positively. Indeed, the data also indicated participants’ preference for hair texture. As indicated earlier in the theoretical chapter—and the section on liberalism as it
departs from addressing racism issues—this particular aspect of children’s racial attitudes reflects the racialized culture of Trinidadian society (further research is still needed on children’s attitudes towards racial criteria, such as hair texture, however).

**Summary**

While it has been well-established that African American parents engage in racial socialization, to date, there exists only a single published study on racial socialization in the Trinidadian context. However, the current investigation shows consistency with some of the main currents found in the African American racial socialization literature. For instance, a large majority of the parents in this study had not provided direct racial socialization practices, such as discussions about the child’s racial background, racial history, nor ostensible cultural heroes. This may be in part due to parents’ received socialization. Indeed, it has been acknowledged that parents’ received socialization may account for the prevalence and content of racial socialization messages they impart to their children. On the other hand, with respect to contextual considerations, this study’s empirical uniqueness and scholarly significance are most incisively revealed.

More specifically, scholars of African American family processes often implicate the deeply-rooted racist ideologies and social structures of American society as reasons for racial socialization practices. Conversely, while the socio-historical antecedents of racism in Trinidad depart from the race relations pattern in America, an analysis of the variants is further compounded by the rise of national identity, resulting in the contextual factor requiring a more nuanced and analytical framework grounded in local-specific histories. In other words, race as an organizing principle in Trinidad operates both at a silencing level, and on a nationalist level,
and, within the intersections of both, I interpret the lack of parents’ racial socialization. However, the nationalist discourse as it effects racial identity formation, although demonstrated by parents’ interviews, warrants further examination.

Children’s racial identification, and understanding of racial terms, constitute another significant dimension of the present investigation. Consistent with empirical and theoretical literature, the majority of children identified with skin colour and hair texture, while only few demonstrated an awareness of racial terms. Research on parental socialization and children’s racial awareness that incorporate samples of both child (pre-school aged) and parental participants is virtually nonexistent, but the present findings indicate parental awareness of children’s racial awareness, and confirm the salience of skin colour and hair texture as central components of children’s racial knowledge. The confluence of parental and developmental factors, which has rarely been studied with respect to pre-schoolers’ racial identification, was most apparent in children’s knowledge of racial terms, as well as the difficulty children showed with respect to identifying with a particular label. Nevertheless, given that there were children who identified complex traits, it is safe to argue that parental socialization also plays a role in children’s abilities to identify with the appropriate racial label. More importantly, while the child may identify with the label, this may simply reflect self-identification, without an understanding of the collectivity attached to racial group membership.

The concept of child innocence remains a tenet shared by educators and parents alike. In fact, parents and the majority of educators denied children’s forming or acting upon negative racial attitudes of others. While parents and educators thought that children were not biased, the results with children using the photo stimuli set indicated quite the opposite. Further,
findings showed that they had a pro-Indian bias. In other tasks, positive attributes were most frequently assigned to the photo of the Indian child. On the other hand, the curriculum also reflected somewhat of a silence on anti-racism issues. In response to this, the present study contains a *Caribbean Anti-Racism Early Childhood Guide* (to be expanded in the near future). The main features of this nascent pedagogical aid were illustrated graphically, extrapolated from a chart found in the *Learning outcomes for early childhood development: A Caribbean curriculum resource guide* (2005). Additionally, a practice related to the avoidance of race was also apparent in educators and parents’ liberalist approaches to instilling positive out-group attitudes. In the previous section, I critiqued this approach on the grounds that it runs counter to an ant-racist and anti-colonial early childhood education and parenting practices.

In conclusion, this study shares some similarities with existing work, but also reveals unique data that may be related to the context, its colonial history, as well as the time period in which the study was conducted. More specifically, racial identity formation in the Trinidadian context as associated with specific knowledges and how these are imparted through parental child rearing practices and early learning experiences, speak to specific contextual considerations revealed by historical and contemporary analyses of Trinidad’s society. Another central point is that the divergences between racial socialization in the United States and the Trinidadian context involve issues of visibility (overt racism coupled with historical precedents of extreme physical violence, as opposed to the colonial history of Trinidadian society, contemporary practices of silencing, and how these inform the development or non-development of racial identity and, by extension, racial pride). In essence, the contrasts between race relations in both contexts, and the significance ascribed to African American
identity in the United States, as opposed to African Trinidadian identity, may shed light on why parents and educators reported a lack of racial socialization practices.

Of pressing concern, therefore, is the centrality and visibility of knowledge related to Indo and African Trinidadian identity in the Trinidadian context. For instance, due to cultural retention, are Indo-Trinidadian children learning more about their identity than their African Trinidadian counterparts? Has African Trinidadian history lost its visibility because of sublimation within a nationalist narrative? As one of my participants wondered “what really is an African Trinidadian identity?” These are just a few of the issues that originated from the study, with significant implications for Caribbean family processes and anti-colonial scholarship. In the upcoming chapter, however, I offer a discussion of directions for future research and concluding remarks.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

This study sought to examine the race-related messages pre-school Trinidadian children receive from parents, educators and the pre-school curriculum. I selected Trinidad as the site for the investigation for several reasons. Firstly, while scholarship exists on Trinidad’s race relations, only one current published study has examined race as it relates to parenting practices. Indeed, much of the literature on Caribbean child-rearing pays a disproportionate attention to disciplinary practices, with no work devoted to parental techniques used to address children’s early racial identity development and/or to cultivate anti-racism and anti-colonial attitudes. Secondly, there is a dearth of empirical work on the ways in which educators address race in classrooms, especially in the Caribbean context. Thirdly, from a curricula perspective, considerable content changes have taken place in the Trinidadian education system, such as the introduction of Caribbean history for secondary students, and Caribbean reading texts for primary level students. It should be noted, however, that such modifications are found at the primary and secondary levels. Far less work has focused on pre-school curricula. Thus, the present study aims to investigate how and if the pre-school curriculum integrates content about students’ racial identities and anti-racist messages. The interactions among parental, teacher, and curricula socialization, and pre-school children’s racial identity were also explored.

Robust samples of studies on children and race have been conducted in the United States and Canada, with a paucity of investigations carried out in Caribbean contexts. Furthermore, participants have been primarily comprised of African Caribbean children.
Literature shows that, to date, no empirical study on racial identity and attitudes has been carried out with mixed or Indo-Caribbean children. Further, quantitative studies represent the majority of work conducted on Caribbean young children’s racial awareness. Consequently, no existing qualitative investigation exists that specifically examines what children know and think about their respective racial identities, including comprehension of racial terms.

To this end, I conducted interviews with 20 parents, 18 children, and four teachers, and observations of the learning materials at the respective school sites. By employing a qualitative approach, it becomes apparent that the majority of the studies on racial socialization have been primarily quantitative and conducted with pre-established questionnaires. Moreover, by using open-ended questions, this study avoids restricting parents and educators to pre-determined criteria and, instead, allows for a broad range of contextual responses that reflect and account for individual experiences.

To assess children’s racial identification, the interviews used short and developmentally appropriate lines of inquiry, similar to existing research studies on children’s race awareness. The racial attitudes measure developed a culturally relevant narrative to engage pre-school Trinidadian children, along with a photo stimuli set, which invited participants to select photos for six adjectives. It became increasingly clear throughout the field work process that children related to the story and found it enjoyable as well.

**Empirical Findings**

Findings indicated that few parents practiced racial socialization with their pre-school Trinidadian children. Race-related discussions were also absent in the classroom context. While other factors were apparent, careful analysis also showed that the nationalist ideology
presented the greatest influence on parents’ and teachers’ racial socialization practices. In regard to educators, data revealed that their racial socialization with students excluded teacher education anti-racism training, and relied solely on their personal views and experiences surrounding race (in the absence of curricula support). Additionally, both parents and educators failed to practice racial socialization because of a prevailing belief in children’s racial innocence. Again, this relates primarily to the child’s age, since the adult participants indicated that race was not central to children’s perceptions of others, nor their social interactions, in stark contrast to the findings from the children’s racial attitude measure (which revealed a pro-Indian bias). Perhaps this belief in racial innocence prevented parents and educators from broaching the topic of anti-racism with children. The data also showed a correspondingly low prevalence of socialization strategies pertaining to anti-racism practices.

Closely related to the racial pride socialization techniques were parents’ responses to the question about how to promote positive racial identities. Most parents simply stated that they did not know, while others provided examples of African American historical figures. Interestingly, this particular finding illustrated a possible corollary of the nationalist movement which, in the Trinidadian context, is characterized by a de-emphasis on race and ancestral ties. Such dismissals of racial issues along with the socio-historical racialized culture of Trinidad may explain African Trinidadian and mixed parents’ and educators’ reticence to address children’s racial identity and anti-racism. In essence, the effects of nationalist rhetoric and practice, and the silencing of racism, were central conceptual arguments that helped flesh out the deeper meanings embedded in both parents’ and teachers’ interview data. Apart from the input of
parents and teachers, however, it was also instructive to consider how children themselves perceived their racial identity.

Child participants understood their racial identity in terms of racial criteria, such as skin colour and hair texture. With respect to racial labels, however, it appeared that such knowledge was influenced by a combination of parental and developmental factors. More importantly, the parental influence was strongly associated with children’s identification via racial terms, conversely, with a lack of understanding of what the term implied (again, illustrating the significance of the children’s age-ranges as well as parents’ sensitivity to age-related cognitions). On the other hand, for the racial attitude findings, data showed that children positively evaluated the Indo-Trinidadian stimuli. The importance of this finding is that it contradicts parents and educators’ reports; namely, that children are race innocent. Furthermore, parents and educators’ reported strategies for developing anti-racism involved an emphasis on humanity and equality amongst all persons.

A key point of congruence among parents and educators was the importance on egalitarianism. By contrast, the curriculum included mostly diversity and multicultural activities. Working with an anti-colonial model, I argue that such practices do not address racism but instead deny its subtle yet insidious presence which, in turn, impedes progress towards its elimination. Further, the discussion chapter provides a preliminary curriculum in the form of an anti-racism guide for Caribbean pre-school educators. Parental resources may also integrate some of the suggestions contained therein.

In sum, fruitful findings obtained from this study not only address the study’s questions but also reveal additional areas of insights not previously considered. Some of these will be
presented in the section on future directions; on another note, given that racial socialization is a multidimensional practice, it is instructive to bear in mind that societal factors, class, and the ages of the children in question are only a few of the possible variables that mediate parents’ and educators’ lack of race-related discussions with pre-school children. However, given that this investigation is one of the first to be conducted in the Caribbean context, this analysis stands to make a significant contribution to the child and race scholarship in the Caribbean, and also highlights future directions for research on Caribbean family processes. More specifically, the present study shows that additional work should be carried out on Caribbean parents’ child-rearing practices (chiefly, those related to forming positive racial identities and out-group racial attitudes).

Theoretical Implications

Findings derived from racial identity interviews with child participants support Aboud’s (1987) definition of racial identification, as well as theories espoused by Alejandro-Wright (1985), Goodman (1952) and Quintana (1998; 2008), for skin colour and hair were the most critical attributes for children’s racial self-identification. Children use these markers of racial differences because, according to the developmental perspective, race knowledge develops firstly “with the knowledge of color categories and culminates with conceptual awareness of racial categories” (Swanson, Cunningham, Youngblood, & Spencer, 2009, p. 270). In other words, not until children reach adolescence do they understand the collective meaning of racial group membership. Further, young children may identify with a skin colour or hair texture because, at this developmental stage, perceptual cues guide children’s self-perceptions. Indeed, the role of cognition in children’s racial identification has been well documented. However,
discussions of the implications of children’s reliance on racial criteria for self-identification are sorely lacking. Simply stated, if research indicates that young children use skin colour and hair texture as markers for self-identification, then what are the implications regarding child-rearing practices in light of such knowledge?

Research on a specific topic pertaining to racial socialization, racial pride, serves to highlight and identify parental techniques that teach children to feel good about their skin colour and hair texture. In Scottham and Smalls’s (2009) study, the authors investigated this component by using the Racial Socialization Questionnaire-Parent. Included in this questionnaire was an item that asked parents to respond to the following question: “I have told the target child never to be ashamed of his/her Black features (e.g., hair texture, skin colour)” (p. 811). While direct statements such as these are indeed important to children’s developing perceptions of racial criteria, I suggest additional strategies. For instance, parents can actively reinforce the direct strategy of telling the child not to be ashamed of his/her African features by purchasing dolls of darker skin tones, and books with images of children with darker skin tones and African, Indo, or mixed hair texture. However, simply purchasing these items for children is not sufficient; parents should also demonstrate that such materials have significance by incorporating the objects into discussions about the child’s racial identity. For instance, in the Caughy, Randolph, and O’Campo (2002) study on an Africentric home environment—defined as materials in the home that reflect the child’s African American heritage, such as toys, and Black artwork—the authors concluded that, while parents may have exposed their child to an Africentric home environment, this did not always translate into other child-rearing strategies specific to teaching the child about his or her African American identity. Further, such
strategies, such as discussions and the use of certain objects and learning materials, would also involve informing the child of the meanings of racial terms, including labels that refer to the child’s racial background.

Results of the present analyses indicated that parents should also be cognizant of the fact that young children may or may not know the meanings of racial terms. Therefore, in the event that the child inquires, or in the case of parental proactive socialization, it is important to provide the child with substantive definitions to engender sentiments of racial pride. For example, an Indo-Trinidadian parent can use cultural traditions—such as Indo-Trinidadian foods and Indo-Trinidadian history and more specifically, Indentureship—to describe the child’s racial identity. Similarly, an African Trinidadian parent might opt to discuss African Trinidadian history, cultural contributions such as calypso, and the conditions that gave rise to this cultural art form. It is essential however, to keep in mind that such recommendations should be employed in ways that are consistent with child’s developmental level and receptive language abilities.

Partially due to their age and lack of parental instruction, children showed limited understanding of racial labels, and also revealed that the content of such labels was influenced by information imparted by parents and educators, as well as the child’s developing reasoning capacities. The association between awareness of racial terms and racial identification also demonstrated an interesting phenomenon which, on the one hand, revealed the impact of parental practices but, on the other hand, showed how children themselves are active agents of socialization, often interpreting these messages according to the cognitive processes available to them. Apart from the developmental aspect, however, this disconnect could also be
associated with the lack of frequency in which parents communicate messages to children about their racial identity (the majority of parents reported racial socialization messages as a result of child-initiated race-related discussions). Another component of children’s racial identity consists of the attitudes they hold towards their racial group, as well as others. For the purpose of this study, children’s racial attitudes towards out-group members were also examined.

There has been no comprehensive work on children’s racial attitudes using stimuli photographs of children from Indo-Caribbean backgrounds. Interestingly, the results from this study indicated that children had a stronger preference for the Indo-Trinidadian children. I explained this finding as likely attributable to the time period in which the study was conducted. As previously noted, an Indo-Trinidadian female Prime Minister had recently won general elections, and perhaps the increased visibility of Indo-Trinidadians, coupled with the race rhetoric which usually becomes more explicit around election time, possibly contributed to children’s pro-Indian bias. Indeed, scholars have noted that children acquire racial attitudes by consciously attending to the societal values attached to specific racial groups (e.g., Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996; Gopaul-McNicol, 1992). Therefore, when accounting for children’s racial attitudes, interpretations should address the specific nature of children’s social contexts.

The interaction, however, between context and parental factors on children’s racial attitudes, is potentially incisive. Findings from the present study indicated that many parents and educators gave limited consideration—and consequently, employed few strategies—to promote anti-racism, although the majority indicate that racism endures in Trinidadian society. The
implications of the former have already been explored, and I now turn to an examination of the educational implications.

At the educational level, some of the parental strategies recommended are germane. For example, discussing children’s racial identity, inclusive of racial history, addresses many of the issues broached in this study, but it should be noted that implications for educational context encompass additional areas such as curricula and anti-racism training. Broadly speaking, the Anti-Racism Curriculum Guide contained herein consists of strategies that educators may implement in the classroom, with the aim of cultivating positive racial identities and attitudes. This preliminary guide also highlights children’s awareness of skin colour and recommends direct strategies such as teacher-led conversations about skin colour and hair texture, as well as curriculum materials that represent children from diverse backgrounds. Curriculum implications, however, are just one aspect of the changes required at the educational level. Given that teachers will implement these changes, it is also essential to consider how (if at all) anti-racism approaches are incorporated in Caribbean teacher education programs.

Although a pertinent research focus, there is also a paucity of work that addresses the training of Caribbean teachers in anti-racism pedagogy. Building on earlier studies (Lopez, 2013; Wane, 2006), I also define anti-racism pedagogy as a teaching style that requires the educator to, firstly, situate his or her own social identity and reflect upon how it may influence his or her teaching practice. Secondly, anti-racism pedagogy as defined for the purposes of this study, necessitates that educators dispel the ‘color blind’ myth by recognizing and assigning pedagogical value to children’s racial backgrounds. Anti-racism pedagogy can be accomplished
through curricula integration, as well as supported by age-appropriate discussions about race and racism in the Caribbean context. Teaching practices that engender anti-racism classroom spaces, for specifically Caribbean contexts, call for an usurping of the ‘silencing’ of race and racism issues. Given the lack of literature on anti-racism in Caribbean teaching training programs, it would appear that the silencing pervades societal, parental, and even educational contexts.

The execution of an exhaustive literature review notwithstanding, I found no existing examination of how Caribbean teachers are prepared to confront or deal with race issues in the classroom. This stands in stark contrast to the growing North-American literature that continues to be produced on race and anti-racism in the teacher education context (e.g., Cross, 2003; Daniel, 2009; St. Denis & Schick, 2003). Addressing race with young children can be a challenging task. It is necessary, therefore, to provide educators with the evaluative skills they need so that they are well equipped to foster inclusive classroom spaces for all children. Teacher training, however, comprises one aspect of teachers’ social identities: that is, their professional training. Their personal experiences with racism, and regard for racial identity, can also interfere with effective anti-racism teaching practices.

Similar to the lack of scholarship on teacher training, no work on Caribbean teachers, to date, has investigated the relationship between teachers’ personal experiences with racism, centrality of racial identity, and approaches to integrating anti-racism teaching and curricula in the classroom. Given the assumption that pedagogy is, to some extent, shaped by individual teachers’ social identities, it is only fitting that future research examine the extent to which educators’ lived experiences involving race/ism are associated with anti-racism or other less-
race centred teaching practices. In the parental racial socialization literature, such variables corresponding to parents’ professional and personal lives are referred to as predictors of racial socialization.

Accumulating literature shows that many factors determine parental racial socialization. Findings from the current investigation are consistent with some of these (namely, parents’ socio-economic status, children’s age, and parents’ received socialization). In studies where class was a factor, as defined by income support and educational backgrounds, results have shown that higher-income parents generally provide more opportunities for children to learn about their racial heritage (e.g., Caughy, Randolph, & O’ Campo, 2002). By contrast, most of the parents in the current investigation were identified as working class by pre-school administrators and, perhaps, in congruence with the lack of resources and time, were not able to engage children in discussions about race, nor purchase culturally pertinent learning/play materials. As previously acknowledged, parents’ received socialization also shape how parents approach race-based socialization.

A dearth of literature on how parental upbringing relates to learning about race continues to impact a crucial area of racial socialization research. For example, if parents were exposed to more substantial teachings about their racial identity, and empowered with such knowledge, the argument suggests that they would, in turn, transmit these knowledges to their children. In other words, “they can’t teach what they don’t know.” Although the foregoing comprises a simplified interpretation, it does, in fact, reflect the majority of what parents reported regarding how and what they learned about race during their childhood. The salience of the intergenerational factor, however, should not be confined to the individual parent-child
relations nor family processes in the household; rather, precipitating factors related to the social structure—such as Trinidad’s colonial history, which created and supported a racialized culture; and nationalism, a movement that paradoxically, deemphasized race while retaining much of the features of colonial racism—are also integral to understanding the nature of Trinidadian parents’ racial socialization practices.

The preceding review of the major findings from the investigation illustrates how these supported existing literature. The next section articulates potential future lines of inquiry to build upon the present investigation, so as to offer additional empirical data on possible variables that influence Caribbean children’s race awareness and parental and educator racial socialization.

Future Directions

1. Child Predictors: Age (Cross-Sectional Study). In order to assess the significance and consistency of the age factor, future studies should also incorporate parents, including those of pre-school, middle school and adolescent children. Further cross-sectional studies would contribute significantly to the current literature by illustrating how children’s ages determine racial socialization (as enacted among Caribbean parents). In addition, including a sample of parents representing different age groups will serve to heighten scrutiny upon the factor of age, which may give rise to other possible explanations for the lack of racial socialization practices among Trinidadian and other Caribbean parents.

2. Parents’ socio-economic backgrounds and indirect socialization. Research indicates an association between parents’ socio-economic status and their racial socialization practices. Therefore, additional work to extend the current investigation should examine racial
socialization in a sample of upper class parents. This line of inquiry should also focus on the content of parental racial socialization messages. It may also be productive to consider how parents of higher social status teach children about their racial identity, and if there are any other means in which they cultivate racial pride or instill anti-racist attitudes. Moreover, given that this study focuses primarily on direct (verbal) racial socialization practices, future work might look at indirect (non-verbal) socialization practices (such as providing toys and books that reflect children’s racial backgrounds, cooking ethnic foods, and other customs that would help the child to learn about his or her racial ancestry).

3. **Parents’ Racial Identity.** Studies that examine the influence of parents’ racial identity (e.g., Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thomas, Speight, & Witherspoon, 2010) have shown that parents for whom African American identity is a source of pride and a significant part of their self-concept, engage in more racial socialization practices than parents for whom race is less important. Future investigations conducted in the Caribbean or Trinidadian context should also examine how parents’ racial identity informs their racial socialization practices or attitudes towards racial socialization. It would be also interesting to determine exactly what knowledge parents have relied upon to conceptualize their particular racial identity. In other words, a key question, as one of the participants put forward in the current study, would be to ask parents, ‘what does an African Trinidadian or what does an Indo-Trinidadian identity mean to you?’ The data received from this particular question will shed light on the process of identity formation in the Trinidadian context, and can also confirm or refute this study’s speculation on how features of Trinidad nationalism impinge upon citizens’ perceptions of race and racial identity.
In order to acquire a more in-depth view of parents’ racial identity, it may be beneficial to utilize a methodology consisting of life story narratives, in which participants discuss how they began to learn about their racial identity, from whom and, how, as they grew older, they made sense of these messages. In so doing, a clearer picture will emerge of the trajectory of parents’ racial identity formation, highlighting key areas or periods in which knowledge was transferred, what types of knowledge they were exposed to, and the connections among these and parents’ current evaluation of their respective racial identities.

4. Parents’ gender. With the exception of a few studies, including McHale et al. (2006), limited research exists on how mothers and fathers differ in their racial socialization techniques. The likewise limited number of fathers (n=2) in this study preclude definitive conclusions in this regard. Therefore, additional empirical investigations on Caribbean family processes in relation to racial socialization should integrate a sample of both fathers and mothers to discern whether or not mothers and fathers apply similar racial socialization strategies.

5. Racial Socialization Regarding Skin Colour and Hair Texture. To my knowledge, this is the first investigation that considers the simultaneous interaction of children’s developing race awareness and parents’ reactive socialization. More specifically, this dissertation examines parents’ responses to children’s statements about skin colour and hair texture. Data revealed that parents generally provided answers that reaffirmed children’s observations, with some keeping the conversations at a very superficial level. Therefore, additional studies might examine the types of messages parents proactively employ, as well indirect socialization
messages that allow children to appreciate and feel proud of their skin colour and/or hair texture.

6. Peer socialization. The present study assesses children’s knowledge of their racial identity using interviews and stimuli sets. Another method of examining the same phenomena can be conducted through observations of children’s play in the classroom. A study of this nature would examine how children discuss race with their peers, how they make sense of what their friends might inform them of race, and whether this information is used to guide their play interactions. Methodologically, an ethnographic study would be appropriate for this type of investigation.

7. Children: Cross-Sectional Study; Developmental and Environmental Influences. Cognitive theories on children’s racial identity propose that developmental processes influence children’s ability to see themselves as belonging to a particular racial group. By contrast, another explanation holds that children’s racial identity development is informed by broader structural factors; for example, the society in which the child is located exerts an influence, as well as the interaction with peers, and family members. However, there seems to be little consensus on the exact nature of the interaction between developmental forces and environmental input, such as racial socialization, and how these two work in concert to shape children’s understandings of their identity. Data from the present study illustrated some possible linkages, but the sample size was small and the participants were all the same age. Therefore, future studies on Caribbean children’s racial identity and attitudes need to utilize a cross-sectional design to, firstly, determine the effects of age on children’s knowledge of racial identity and, secondly, to ascertain content of how such knowledge changes at different stages
of children’s development. In other words, guiding research questions might entail, ‘how do five, seven, and 10-year-old children differ in their understandings of racial identity? Are children’s knowledge about their racial identity a function of age or parental racial socialization?’

Research of this nature may offer further empirical support to existing cognitive-based theories of children’s racial identity development. Further, to measure the parental influence, potential studies should also include the parents of child participants, using interviews that include questions on child rearing practices similar to the present investigation (but also including questions on more indirect socialization practices as well). In this regard, additional support can also be obtained for the association between parenting practices related to race and children’s understandings of their racial identity. Additional analysis of the influence on social and political contexts on children’s racial identity attitudes can also be examined, but this may be appropriate only for the middle school and adolescent-age children. In keeping with the public regard dimension of the Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998) racial identity model, adolescents can also be asked to indicate how they think others in society view their racial group. Additionally, the private regard, a dimension which examines individuals’ attitudes towards his or her racial group, can also be explored with older child participants.

**Teacher Training: Anti-Racism.** The context of teacher education is an equally important area of focus for additional work on children’s racial socialization. As the data indicate, the majority of educators who participated in this study had not been exposed to anti-racism pedagogy training. In fact, two of the educators had no prior academic qualifications in Early Childhood Education. It is important to note, however, that pre-school education in Trinidad
operates within both private and government-funded systems. Private school principals create their own guidelines for hiring of new staff, which may or may not include degrees or diplomas in Early Childhood Education. At the government level, by way of contrast, all pre-school teachers require an ECE diploma. Given that the majority of teachers in the present study did not report anti-racism training specifically, an additional line of inquiry might focus on teachers who received formal training in anti-racism education, either at the University (UWI) or through other initiatives, and how such training informed actual classroom practice. Of considerable importance would also be the effects of anti-racism pedagogy on children’s attitudes towards their race and cross-ethnic interactions.

In fact, Dr. Carol Logie, head of the University of the West Indies Child and Family Centre in St. Augustine, Trinidad, reported in an interview that at her centre, “if a teacher hears someone speak about another student in a derogatory manner, they have to know how to embrace that and bring it into the discussion. Children talk about everything from disability to hair to skin colour” (Martin, 2010, para. 13). Based on Dr. Logie’s description of the curriculum used at the centre, this location can be an excellent site for future investigations on teachers’ anti-racism practices and outcomes associated with students’ in-group and out-group racial attitudes.

**Concluding Remarks**

My central goal in conducting this research was to elucidate Caribbean children’s racial knowledge, and to examine family processes—specifically child rearing practices, along with educational context—as agents of racial socialization. The data attained entails a rewarding body of knowledge with the potential to benefit children, parents, educators and scholars.
Firstly, the content of children’s racial awareness can foster awareness for parents and educators alike, in regard to the fact that children do pay attention to and formulate their own understandings of race. Such knowledge serves to prompt parents and educators to foster positive regard for children’s racial identity, using role models, racial history, and other knowledge suited to the child’s developmental level. Secondly, instilling racial pride can also be achieved within the classroom context, using the strategies found in the *Caribbean Anti-Racism Early Childhood Guide*.

The importance of children developing healthy racial identities has been well established. As they grow older and are confronted with pernicious biases that target their self-worth, parental and/or educational socialization employed in the earlier years can, ideally, work to counteract negative effects of societal, institutional, and individual racism. Parents and teachers play an instrumental role in ensuring that children are well-equipped to confront such challenges by applying a combination of indirect and direct racial socialization strategies. Moreover, both parents and educators can foster positive intergroup attitudes between and among pre-school children, through initiating developmentally appropriate anti-racism discussions. Indeed, the early years are the critical period in which to develop positive racial identities and anti-racism attitudes.

Although the pre-school age may be considered an incipient stage of childhood decolonization, the practice of anti-colonial/anti-racism parenting and teaching should occur across different developmental periods of the child’s life. Likewise, certain fundamental beliefs underscore this process; for instance, all children deserve to be equally valued, regardless of phenotypic features. Moreover, children deserve to feel good about their respective racial
background(s) and also deserve a decolonized Caribbean context. In sum, our children are worthy of the ongoing research efforts and advocacy that call attention to and actively challenge the colonial values routinely assigned to racial criteria. For, while the lingering effects of the colonial past may hold a tenacious grip, such spectres cannot contend with the combined spirits of resistance and hope, which can be cultivated in the minds of young children and displayed by usurping the silence that precludes attempts for social change. Ultimately, this resistance works with the cogency of collectivity and courage to chart a course towards an authentically anti-colonial Caribbean space.
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APPENDIX 1

Interview questions for parents

Parents’ received socialization

1) How would you define your racial identity?

2) How was this communicated to you?

3) Did your parents discuss your racial identity with you? If so, what did they tell you?

4) While growing up, what values do you remember were attached to this group and others? How did your parents respond to these?

Racial socialization: Child’s identity and racial awareness (Prevalence)

5) Do you think your child recognizes racial differences? If so, how did he/she explain these to you? Please provide the context. How did you respond?

7) Can you recall when your child expressed his racial group identification? Please describe the situation. What terms did he/she use? What was your child’s reaction to his/her identification?

8) Have you discussed your child’s racial background with him/her? If so, what did you tell him/her? If not, why not?

9) Have there ever been instances where your child expressed positive/negative characteristics of his racial identity? Please describe the situation. How did it occur? What was your reaction?

Racial Socialization: Attitudes towards identity and racial differences

10) Have there even been instances where your child expressed favourable/unfavourable characteristics of other racial groups? If yes, please describe the situation. Which characteristics did he/she use? How did you respond?
11) Have there been instances where your child evaluated racial differences using signifiers such as skin colour, or hair texture? Please describe the situation. How did you respond?

12) Do you believe it is important for parents to discuss race with children? If yes, please explain. If not, please explain.

**Future racial socialization goals and context**

13) How are you going to promote a positive racial identity for your child?

14) What parenting resources in Trinidad are available for cultivating positive racial identities and attitudes in children? Please explain why or why not. Why do you think it is missing?

15) What are some strategies you will use to ensure your child does not develop negative racial attitudes for other groups?

16) Do you think race is an issue in Trinidad? If so, please explain.
APPENDIX 2

Interview questions for teachers

Received socialization

1. How would you define your racial identity?
2. How was this communicated to you while growing up?
3. Did your parents discuss your racial identity with you? If so, what did they tell you?
4. Can you describe instances when values/designations were used to describe your racial background? If so, what were they? How did your parents respond?
5. Can you describe instances when other racial groups were discussed? How did your parents address these?

Classroom socialization

6. Can you provide examples when you overheard children discussing race in the classroom? Please describe the situation. What did it entail? What physical characteristics did children frequently mentioned? What was your response to this?
7. Have there been instances when children evaluated their peers based on phenotypical characteristics such as skin colour and hair texture? How did you address this to the class and the children involved?
8. Have there been instances where children express negative racial attitudes towards other children in the class? Can you provide examples of these events? What were the contexts? What was the children’s reaction? How did you address these?
10. How do you see your role as a teacher, particularly in respects to promoting positive racial identities and anti-racism?
11. What types of support do you believe is needed in order for this to be a feasible endeavour?

12. Tell me about your teaching background

13. Describe your teaching training program

14. Describe the curriculum that you currently use

15. How does it support teaching children about their racial identity?

16. How does it support anti-racism?

17. How would you teach children about racism?

**Context**

18) Do you think race is an issue in Trinidad? If so, please explain.
Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a PhD Candidate in the Dept. of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. For my doctoral research, I will be conducting a study on the role of parents and teachers in pre-school Trinidadian children’s racial identities and attitudes. Information collected from this study can provide a greater understanding of how children use racial criteria in forming perceptions of themselves and others.

The University Of Toronto Office Of Research Ethics (416-946-3273; ethics.review@utoronto.ca) has granted approval for this study. The school administrator has also granted permission for this study to be carried out in your son’s/daughter’s school.

I will conduct two separate interview sessions with students. Your son or daughter will be asked to draw a picture of him/herself and will be asked questions based on his/her drawing (e.g., can you describe your drawing for me; can you tell me about yourself?) These questions will be asked to explore how he/she perceives his/her racial identity. In the subsequent interview, I will read a short story describing different characters with a set of pre-selected adjectives. This activity will be done to assess students’ racial attitudes. From a set of photographs which will represent the diverse racial groups in Trinidad, participants will be asked to select one photo that he/she thinks best fits the description. Interviews with students will be videotaped. Each activity will last no longer than twenty minutes and will be conducted in a quiet area of the school. He/she may withdraw from the study at any time.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your son’s or daughter’s attendance in class or his/her evaluation by the school. The data collected during this study will be kept strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used for all participants. Transcriptions of interviews and video data will be uploaded to a password protected computer, consistent with the University of Toronto’s data security and encryption standards. All raw data will be disposed of within five years of the successful completion of this project.

I will also be interviewing parents and teachers. Should you agree to participate, your part in this research will involve a 30-45mins interview session that will be audio recorded. Please note, I am only interested in your experiences; there are no right or wrong answers. Once you have agreed to participate, you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. On
completion of the study, parents, teachers, and the administrator of the pre-school will receive a brief summary of the research.

If you would like further information about this research, you may contact my supervisor Dr. Njoki Wane at (416) 978-0426 or njoki.wane@utoronto.ca, or me at 416-895-2809 or kerryann.escayg@utoronto.ca. You can also contact the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca. Please indicate on the attached form your intention to participate and your permission for your son/daughter to participate in the study.

Your co-operation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kerry-Ann Escayg, PhD Candidate
Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Permission Form

Please indicate your consent for your child’s and your own participation in this study by checking the boxes below:

YES □ I give my child (__________________________) permission to participate in the research study.

YES □ I (__________________________) interested in participating in the study

NO □ I do not give my child __________________________ permission to participate in the research study. NO □ I __________________________ am not interested in participating in the study.
Date: ____________

Parent/Guardian signature: ________________________
Dear Teacher,

I am a PhD Candidate in the Dept. of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. For my doctoral research, I will be conducting a study on the role of parents and teachers in pre-school Trinidadian children’s racial identities and attitudes. Information collected from this study can provide a greater understanding of how children use racial criteria in forming perceptions of themselves and others.

The University Of Toronto Office Of Research Ethics (416-946-3273; ethics.review@utoronto.ca) has granted approval for this study. The school principal has also granted permission for this study to be carried out in your school.

Should you agree to participate, your part in this research will involve a 30-45 mins interview session that will be audio recorded. Please note, I am only interested in your experiences; there are no right or wrong answers. Once you have agreed to participate, you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Please be assured that the research is non-evaluative, and that your decision to participate or not, and your individual-level responses to questions, will not be shared with the pre-school or school board.

Data collected during this study will be kept strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used for all participants. Transcriptions of interviews and video data will be uploaded to a password protected computer, consistent with the University of Toronto’s data security and encryption standards. All raw data will be disposed of within five years of the successful completion of this project. On completion of the study, each participant will receive a brief summary of the research.

If you would like further information about this research, you may contact my supervisor Dr. Njoki Wane at (416) 978-0426 or njoki.wane@utoronto.ca, or myself at 416-895-2809 or kerryann.escayg@utoronto.ca. You can also contact the University Of Toronto Office Of Research Ethics at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca

If you are interested in participating, please sign and date the attached consent form. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kerry-Ann Escayg, PhD Candidate
CONSENT FORM

I, ________________________, have read and understood the information provided in the Letter of Informed Consent, and agree to participate in this study.

Participant                                   Print Full Name   ____________________________
Signature              _____________________________
Date:                    _____________________________