

Adoption Matters

PHILOSOPHICAL AND
FEMINIST ESSAYS

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For
Anna and Jonathan
Isaac and Zina

And while our intuitions about justice are tied to constitutionalism, we cannot rely solely on constitutional arguments to fight racism. We may be able to draw a legal distinction between private and public racism, but the picture becomes less clear when we attempt to delineate morally between these two domains. Private racial discrimination in the construction of family life, biological and adoptive, comports with the status quo and thus fails to raise an eyebrow. We think it normal and uninteresting when a white heterosexual couple adopts a healthy white infant. Yet when a white couple adopts a black child, curiosity abounds: "a crazy kind of look from people in a passing car, or a little extra room around our blankets at the beach" (Neufeld 1969, 43). The thought experiment of racial randomization aims to catalyze a rethinking of status quo assumptions about which persons belong together in families. De facto racial segregation in the social and legal construction of family life is an early temporal point in the re-ignition of our structural racism. Antiracist intervention at the point of adoptive placement is a necessary, albeit small, part of a larger project of curbing intergenerational racism.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

You Mixed? Racial Identity without Racial Biology

SALLY HASLANGER

To set the context for this paper, it will be useful to begin with an anecdote. One recent summer I was in my neighborhood park with my then five-year-old son, Isaac. We live in a racially mixed, though predominantly Black neighborhood. The park consists mainly of a cement basketball court and a play structure set in a huge sandbox. We had been playing basketball for about 45 minutes; for the first part of it I had been helping him with his shots, but eventually a few other kids had joined us and I had stepped to the sidelines to let them negotiate their play on their own. For the time we were there, as is common, I was the only White person in the park; Isaac, my son, is Black. In order to capture the potential import of what follows, it is worth mentioning that in appearance I am quite WASPy looking—straight brown hair, gray eyes, pale skin, and Isaac is dark with nearly black eyes and black (virtually shaved) hair. The time came to leave, and we took our ball and headed down the sidewalk toward home. A boy about nine years old rode up to us on his bike—he wasn't one of the ones we'd been playing with and I didn't recognize him, but let's call him "James"—and asked me a familiar question, "Is he your son?" I replied, "Yes." He looked at me hard with a somewhat puzzled expression and con-

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tinued, "You mixed?" I paused. I wasn't entirely sure what he was asking. Although I am well aware that African Americans may have straight brown hair, gray eyes, and light complexions, it seemed a huge leap of the imagination for anyone to read my appearance as mixed-race. I suspected that he might be asking whether I am (or was when Isaac was conceived) in an interracial relationship, thus explaining the disparity in Isaac's and my appearance by an absent (Black) father. Sensing that this wasn't one of those times when a long explanation was called for, I replied, somewhat misleadingly (given what I took him to be asking), "I'm not mixed, but my family is mixed." He responded, "Oh, cool," and rode off.

This sort of conversation isn't at all uncommon when you're in a family like mine, and it's the sort that tends to rattle around in the back of your mind for at least a few days, if not weeks or months. What is "a family like mine"? My family consists of me and my husband Steve (also White) and two African American children: Isaac (I've already mentioned) and our daughter Zina (at the time this is being prepared for publication, they are aged nine and seven, respectively). We adopted the children when they were infants. They have different birth families, and their adoptions are "fully open": we have regular contact with their birth families—including phone contact every few weeks, and visits lasting several days where typically we stay in their homes and they stay in ours. The birth families are an important part of our extended family.

Many conversations rattle around in the back of my head because I worry about what they meant, what I should have said (in contrast to what I did say), or what my kids took away from the contact and how I can usefully follow up on it with them; but most of them don't inspire philosophical reflection. However, this conversation puzzled me about a number of issues, and this paper is my most recent effort to sort out what I think about them.

The philosophical questions arise from a tension between certain theoretical claims about race and my own lived experience. Theoretically, I agree with many others in law and the academy that our everyday racial classifications do not track meaningful biological categories: there are no "racial genes" responsible for the different clusters of physical or cultural differences between members of racial groups, and divisions between "racial" groups are a product of social forces that vary across history and culture. But if that's the case, a certain dialectic develops that raises questions about my response to James and opens further ones.

First, if race is not biologically real, then on what basis do I so easily describe myself as White and my son as Black? On what basis can I claim so confidently to James that I'm not "mixed" (even though my family is)? This is not just a question about the facts of my ancestry—although none of my known ancestors are Black, there are many gaps in the record, and for all

I know I may have some fairly recent African roots. The more pressing question for my purposes here, however, is that if race is a biological fiction, then what does it even mean to affirm or deny that I'm "White" or that I'm "mixed"?

Although I reject the idea that there are biological races in which membership is determined by "blood," and along with this reject the idea of "mixed blood," I don't agree with some theorists who conclude that "there is no such thing as race," simply because there are no racial essences or racial genes. I am a social constructionist about race: I believe that races are social categories, and no less real for being social rather than "natural." As a result, I think it is accurate to classify myself socially as White and my son as Black, and to classify others as "mixed race." But I have a rather complicated and non-standard interpretation of what that means that takes races to be social classes defined in a context of what might usefully be called "color" oppression. In the first section of the paper I'll sketch my account of race and say a bit about how it might handle the claims that I am White and Isaac is Black.

But it will become clear that as it stands my account doesn't provide sufficient resources to understand the phenomenon of racial identity, especially in contexts where race and racial identity come apart. So in the middle of the paper I will discuss racial identity with special attention to the phenomenon of life "on the color line" hoping that this discussion may also be of use in thinking about the phenomenon of "passing."¹ I will suggest that there is a sense in which I can claim a "mixed" identity (though certainly not in any of the senses that James probably had in mind) and in which it is probably true that my kids do and will continue to have somewhat "mixed" identities. However, the suggestion that my kids may grow up without the "correct" racial identity—that their identity may be, at least in a certain sense, "mixed" rather than "Black" or "African American"—raises issues that, of course, are one concern in debates over the legitimacy of transracial adoption. So in the final section I will consider briefly what I take to be the import of my arguments regarding the obligation of parents who adopt transracially to raise their children to have the "right" racial identity.²

1. Some powerful recent accounts of "life on the color line" include Williams (1995); McBride (1996); Lazzar (1997); Derricotte (1997); Piper (1992); Dalmage (2000). Some recent accounts of living in (Black/White) transracial adoptions include Rush (2000); Thompson (2000); Simon and Roorda (2000). The issue of "passing" has received significant attention recently, and I will not be able to do justice to it here. However, some useful (non-fiction) work beyond that already mentioned includes Ginsberg (1996); Delgado and Stefancic (1997).

2. For a glimpse of the transracial adoption controversy, see NABSW (1972); Bartholet (1991); Bartholet (1993); Perry (1993-94); Howe (1994); NABSW (1994); Simon (1994); Smith (1996); Patton (2000); Neal (n.d.). On the question of the "right identity" see also Allen (1993).

In an earlier paper, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" (Haslanger 2000), I argue that for the purposes of an antiracist feminist theory, it is important to develop accounts of race and gender that enable us to identify the groups who are targets of racial and sexual oppression.³ Although it may well be that in the long run ("after the revolution") we may hope that both race and gender will be eliminated, in the short run it would be a mistake not to recognize the ways in which race and sex oppression divide us into hierarchical classes in which membership is "marked" on the body.

In that paper I propose that in order to accommodate the broad variety of ways in which the notions of race and gender are employed (apparently to refer to quite different things, for example, racial norms, racial symbols, racial identities, racial social roles) we should take a "focal meaning" approach to race and gender. A focal analysis undertakes to explain a variety of connected phenomena in terms of their relations to one that is theorized as the central or core phenomenon. As I see it, the core phenomenon to be addressed is the pattern of social relations that constitute certain social classes as racially/sexually dominant and others as racially/sexually subordinate; norms, symbols, and identities are gendered or raced derivatively, by reference to the social relations that constitute the relevant hierarchy of social classes.⁴ Although my definitions of race and gender help organize and clarify some of our everyday beliefs (or so I maintain), I do

3. The definitions of race below, and some of the text surrounding them, are taken directly from that paper.

4. To understand the notion of a *social class* as I am using the term, it may be helpful to consider other examples. A social class is a group of individuals who are members of the class (or set) in question by virtue of having a certain social property or standing in a particular social relation. So, for example, the class of husbands is a social class. Men who are legally married are husbands, and their standing in a legal marriage relationship is the basis for their membership. Homeowners constitute a social class: they are those individuals who are legal owners of the property that serves as their domicile. I use legal relations for these examples because they are very straightforward cases of social relations, but other relations, for example, being a neighbor of, being a pastor of, are social but aren't encoded in law. Note especially membership in the sets is not determined by and does not presuppose any common set of beliefs, psychological attitudes, behaviors, etc. among the members. (One can be a homeowner without even being aware of it, for example, if a child inherits the home she or he lives in when the parents die.) E.g., consider the class of scapegoats, or the class of teacher's pets. In these cases membership is determined by the way one is both viewed and treated, though even here, we should not assume that the individuals who fall into the classes are aware that they are scapegoats or that they function as teacher's pets; and likewise, we cannot assume a common subjective experience of being in this position. Yet we may want to say of scapegoats, for example, that some do come to have a scapegoat identity. My point is that one might distinguish being a scapegoat from having a scapegoat identity, just as one might distinguish being a member of a race from having a racial identity. On the strategy I will be employing, explaining what it is to have a racial identity will depend on the prior notion of having a race.

not offer them as analyses of our *ordinary* concepts of race and gender (whatever they might be). Instead, I offer these accounts in a revisionary spirit as part of an explicitly political project.

My guiding idea is that systems of racial and sexual oppression are alike (in spite of their many differences) in taking certain real or imagined features of the body as markers for oppressive social divisions. Societies structured by racial and/or sexual oppression will produce culture that "helps" us read the body in the requisite ways and will provide narratives or rationalizations linking kinds of bodies to kinds of social positions; they will also be organized so that the roles and activities assigned to certain kinds of bodies systematically disadvantage them (and to other kinds of bodies systematically privilege them) in concrete material ways. Sex and race oppression are structural—institutional—but they are also internalized in our basic interpretations and understandings of our bodies, ourselves, and each other.

Feminists have often used an (albeit contested) slogan to capture the notion of gender: gender is the social meaning of sex. In keeping with the ideas above, materialist feminists have argued that we must understand the use of "social meaning" here along two axes—on one hand, social meaning includes the cultural readings of the body, and on the other hand, the material (economic, political, legal) divisions between the sexes. It is distinctive of materialist feminism that it refuses to prioritize either the cultural or material dimension as (causally) prior. In other words, it is a mistake to suggest that the ultimate source of the problem is "in our heads" (in our conceptual scheme, our language, or our cultural ideals), or alternatively that it is in the unjust structure of our social arrangements, as if it must be one or the other; "culture" and "social/institutional structure" are deeply intertwined, so much so, that they are sometimes inextricable.⁵

On one materialist account of gender (in particular, one I support), men and women are defined as those hierarchical classes of individuals whose membership is determined by culturally variable readings of the reproductive capacities of the human body. In contexts in which the reproductive body is not a site of subordination and privilege (presumably no contexts we know of, but ones we may hope for), there are no men or women, though there still may be other (new) genders.

Is this strategy useful for thinking about race? Perhaps, though off-hand this idea is not easy to develop. It is one thing to acknowledge that race is *socially* real, even if a biological fiction; but it is another thing to capture in racial terms the "social meaning" of the body. There seem to be too many

5. The interdependence of the cultural and material is an explicit commitment of materialist feminism as articulated in, for example, Young (1990), 33. See also Delphy (1984), and more generally Hennessey and Ingraham (1997).

different forms that race takes. Note, however, that the same problem arises for gender: is it possible to provide a unified (cross-cultural, trans-historical) analysis of "the social meaning of sex"? The materialist feminist approach offered a helpful strategy: don't look for an analysis that assumes that the meaning is always and everywhere the same; rather, consider how members of the group are *socially positioned*, and what *physical markers* serve in a supposed basis for such treatment. Let this provide the common framework within which we explore the contextually variable meanings.

To extend this strategy to race it will help first to introduce a technical notion of "color." What we need is a term for those physical features of individuals taken to mark them as members of a race. One might refer to them as "racial" features, but to avoid any suggestion of racial essences I will use the term "color" to refer to the (contextually variable) physical "markers" of race, just as I use the term "sex" to refer to the (contextually variable) physical "markers" of gender. Note that I include in "color" more than just skin tone: common markers also include eye, nose, and lip shape, hair texture, physique, etc., and it is presumed of the physical markers of *race* that the features in question are inherited through an ancestry that can be traced back to a particular geographical region. Although the term "people of color" is used to refer to non-Whites, I want to allow that the markers of "Whiteness" count as "color"; however, I still use the phrases "people of color" and "children of color" as they are used to refer to non-Whites.

Transposing the slogan used for gender, then, we might say that race is the social meaning of color, or more explicitly, of the geographically marked body. To develop this, I propose the following account (see also Stevens 1993; Stevens 1999).⁶ First definition:

A group is *racialized* iff_{df} its members are socially positioned as subordinate or privileged along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.), and the group is "marked" as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region.

Or in the more elaborate version⁷:

6. Special thanks to Jacqueline Stevens for help in formulating these definitions. My version is quite similar to the one she offers in Stevens (1999), chap. 4. See Omi and Winant (1994), 53–61.

7. There are aspects of this definition that need further elaboration or qualification. For details see Haslinger (2000), n. 17. Note also that there may be reasons to claim that a particular group is more racialized than another, depending, for example, on the degree of subordination or privilege, or on the role of physical marks. I would accommodate this by saying that like many concepts, there are central and peripheral cases depending on the extent to which something satisfies the conditions.

A group *G* is *racialized* relative to context *C* iff_{df} members of *G* are (all and only) those:

1. who are observed or imagined to have certain bodily features presumed in *C* to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region (or regions);
2. whose having (or being imagined to have) these features marks them within the context of the background ideology in *C* as appropriately occupying certain kinds of social position that are in fact either subordinate or privileged (and so motivates and justifies their occupying such a position); and
3. whose satisfying (1) and (2) plays (or would play) a role in their systematic subordination or privilege in *C*, that is, who are *along some dimension* systematically subordinated or privileged when in *C*, and satisfying (1) and (2) plays (or would play) a role in that dimension of subordination or privilege.

In other words, races are those groups demarcated by the geographical associations accompanying perceived body type, when those associations take on (hierarchical) socio-political significance concerning how members of the group should be viewed and treated. It is important to note that the ideology in question need not use physical morphology or geography as the entire or explicit *basis* or *rationale* for the supposed "appropriate" treatment; these features may instead simply be "markers" of other characteristics that the ideology uses to justify the treatment in question.⁸

On this view, whether a group is racialized, and so how and whether an individual is raced, is not an absolute fact, but will depend on context. For example, Blacks, Whites, Asians, Latinos/as, Native Americans, are currently racialized in the United States insofar as these are all groups defined in terms of physical features associated with places of origin, and insofar as membership in the group functions socially as a basis for evaluation. However, some groups are not currently racialized in the United States but have been so in the past and possibly could be again (and in other contexts are), for example, the Italians, the Germans, the Irish.

The definition just provided focuses on races as groups, and this makes sense when we are thinking of group-based oppression. But the analysis as it stands does not do justice to the ways in which an individual's race is negotiated and depends on context. Racialization is definitely more pronounced in some contexts than in others, and in most cases individuals are not simply passive victims of its effects but are agents who are capable of undermining or collaborating in the process. With this in mind, we can say that *S* is of the White (Black, Asian . . .) race iff Whites (Blacks,

8. The point here is that the racist ideology that sustains the hierarchy may be a form of either *intrinsic* or *extrinsic* racism in Appiah's sense. Appiah (1992), 13–15.

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Asians . . .) are a racialized group in S's society, and S is *regularly and for the most part* viewed and treated as a member.⁹ Yet we may also want to allow that some people don't have a stable race at all, and that even if some are consistently racialized in the society, there are disruptions in this broad pattern when we consider narrower contexts. To accommodate the contextual racialization of individuals (and not just groups), let's say:

S functions as a member of a racial group R in context C if and only if (by definition)

1. S is observed or imagined in C to have certain bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region (or regions) where the group R is thought to have originated;
2. that S has these features marks S, within the background ideology of C, as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social positions that are, in fact, subordinate or privileged (and so motivates and justifies S's occupying such a position); and
3. the fact that S satisfies (1) and (2) plays a role in S's systematic subordination or privilege in C, that is, S is systematically subordinated or privileged *along some dimension* when in C, and satisfying (1) and (2) plays (or would play) a role in that dimension of privilege or subordination.

IDENTIFYING OUR RACES

Of course, there are many controversial aspects of this account that merit further discussion. But I hope it is clear that on an account of this sort (in some sense the details don't even really matter for our purposes here), it is possible for individuals to be members of a race even if there is no biological basis for racial classification. On my view, biological ideology is just one of several possible ideologies that might link "color" with social/political hierarchy. For example, in the contemporary United States, even some who grant that race is not a meaningful genetic category believe that "color" is a marker for "culture," and use such color-culture assumptions to justify social/political hierarchy. On my view, groups that are subordinated or privileged on the basis of color-culture assumptions are no less racial groups than those who are subordinated on the basis of color-genetics assumptions. (Hence, it makes sense to speak of "cultural racism.") What's important and interesting about the phenomenon of race, on my account, is not the invocation of biology to justify hierarchy (after all, prior to the development of genetic theory, theology was invoked to

provide a basis for color oppression [Stocking 1993]), but the historically persistent ways in which the marked body—in terms of color-ancestry-geography—takes on meaning and is used to justify and motivate social/political status.

Although on my account *there are races*—understood as social classes—this claim is not directly incompatible with a view that might be stated as, "There are no races." Typically in current discussions those who deny that there are races believe that the concept of race is committed to a naturalistic form of racial essence. I can agree with those who employ the term "race" with such commitments that there are no races—in *their sense*. My disagreement, instead, is with their background philosophical assumptions about language and conceptual analysis. To clarify my point, then, we might want to employ the terminology "*biological races*" and "*social races*." I maintain that there are no biological races, but there are social races, that is, racialized groups. And I not only maintain that the concept of race is sufficiently open-ended to include social races, but that there are philosophical and political reasons to explicate the notion of race in a way that accounts for racialized groups.

Let's return, though, to my conversation with James. Given this account of race, we now have some way of accounting for the idea that I am White and Isaac is Black, even though race is not an adequate biological classification. I count as White because I reap tremendous White privilege by virtue of the ways people regularly interpret my "color"; Isaac, although he reaps some of the benefits of White privilege through my privilege, is already disadvantaged by the interpretation of his "color" and its social implications. Because Isaac is socially "marked" as of African descent, and this is a factor in the disadvantages he experiences, he counts as Black.

However, it is not uncommon in the adoption world to hear people describe the effects of transracial adoption (of children of color by Whites) by saying, "You will become a minority family." The purpose of such comments is not to alert prospective adoptive parents to the fact that interracial families are in the statistical minority, which of course is obvious, but to suggest that a family with children of color counts as a family of color; the strongest version of the claim would be that by virtue of the race of my children, mine is a Black family. I appreciate some of the intentions behind this comment: it is meant to alert the naïve White prospective parents that they will suffer some forms of discrimination hitherto unknown to them once they adopt children of color. This is true. But I strongly resist the idea that my family or I become Black by including Black children, mainly because my family and I retain enormous White privilege. A weaker version of the claim is just that my family becomes an interracial family and so is exposed to some kinds of and some degree of discrimination not felt by White families; to this weak version of the claim I am more sympathetic. If

9. As in the case of gender, I recommend that we view membership in a racial/ethnic group in terms of how one is viewed and treated regularly and for the most part in the context in question.

it makes sense to say that a family has a race (as opposed to an individual), it may be that our family is racialized as non-white (our collective "colors" are interpreted as a basis for some forms of subordination/discrimination)—but this must be unpacked in a way that acknowledges the White privilege we, the parents, bring to the family.

However, even if it is true that I am not able to exercise some of my own White privilege when in the company of my family, I maintain that this does not mean that I somehow become racialized as Black (or more vaguely as non-White). For me to be a member of the Black race (to any degree), it would have to be that my subordination (or in this case, my diminution of privilege) was due to interpretations of my "color" as linked to recent ancestry in Africa. In those cases in which my privilege is weakened by virtue of my being a parent of Black children, it is not on the basis of anyone viewing me as Black, though my Whiteness may be relevant to my status in their eyes.¹⁰

But there is also something more I want to say about the possibilities of racial "crossing" in the context of transracial adoption. To put the point bluntly, I believe that my own racial identity has been substantially altered by being a mother of Black children, and although I am White, there are ways of thinking about identity on which my racial identity is better understood as "mixed." But so far the account of race I've offered provides no resources for thinking about this, for although it offers one way of thinking about *race*, as it stands it doesn't begin to address the issue of *racial identity*. Although races as social classes are the central phenomenon to be considered on my approach, a crucial next step is to make the link between race and racial identity.

RACIAL IDENTITY

In the interdisciplinary literature on race and gender there are many different senses of the term "identity." I do not want to argue that there is one true sense of "identity"; I am happy to allow that there are several

10. This is complicated. It may be on the basis of my status as a White adoptive mother of Black children that my privilege is denied. In this case I would want to say that the subordination is intersectional—racial assumptions are working together with other non-racial assumptions to disadvantage me. What this highlights is that race often does not function (does it ever?) as a single variable in oppression. It may be in contexts such as we are imagining that my Whiteness is diminished, and this in turn may suggest that race, even as I have defined it, is a scalar notion, not all-or-nothing, that is, some individuals as well as some groups of individuals may be more "racialized" than others. (Thanks to Larry Blum for helping me think through some of these complexities; as I understand his view, Blum would argue that this is evidence that I am giving an account of racialization (and racialized groups), but not race. See Blum (2001).

senses that are important. My goal here is modest—to highlight a sense of identity that is often left out of philosophical discussion.¹¹

On the approach I've proposed, the social construction of race depends on both a set of symbolic and narrative resources for interpreting human bodies and a set of social and political institutions structured to privilege certain of those bodies, as interpreted. One strategy for thinking about racial identity would be to focus first on the social and political institutions in which racial injustice is materially implemented, and to view racial identities as the normative subjectivities that are deemed appropriate for (and help sustain) those institutions. The relevant analogy would be to see gender identities as the modes of subjective femininity and masculinity that are regarded as suitable to females and males respectively, and whose "proper" or "appropriate" development create subjects who, more or less, function effectively in the institutions constituting gender. Black, White, Asian (etc.) identities are made available to us as part of the process of constituting racial subjects who can function effectively in the institutions constituting race.

There are some advantages to this strategy: societies/cultures have ways of constructing subjects whose lives "unfold" in the sorts of ways that fit within the structure of social life. Racial identity becomes the (idealized) self-understanding of those who are members of racialized groups. Individual members may have the relevant self-understanding to a greater or lesser extent, but the strength of their racial identity is evaluated relative to the "ideal."

This strategy, however, is problematic for several reasons. First, it (at least) appears to prioritize the institutional over the cultural: subjectivity is formed in order to suit the needs of social structures. But we must acknowledge that social structures also mutate in response to cultural shifts in symbolic resources available for the construction of subjectivity. This is a corollary, I believe, of the claim that racism is the joint product of social structures and cultural meanings. On this approach, the shape and evolution of culture, and so of subjectivity, cannot be accounted for by a simple social functionalism.

Second, this strategy appears to make us victims of racial and gender identities: it is unclear to what extent we are agents in constructing our own identities, and it is unclear whether identities that are, admittedly, con-

11. Note that one of the uses of "racial identity" is for the notion of race (or racialized group) as I've defined it above (or for a similar notion). In the context of this paper I use the term "racial identity" to draw a contrast with the notion of race as social class. I don't mean to legislate that the term "racial identity" should not be used to refer to one's racial class membership (one's race); I'm using the term as I do largely because I'm drawing on work in psychology and feminist theory where the more psychological/somatic meaning I am explicating is one of the standard uses.

structured in the context of race or sex oppression, can have emancipatory elements. If one has a racial identity only to the extent that one is a "good" racial subject, that is, a subject whose "identity" enables him or her to "fit" with and so sustain institutions of racial domination, then we have no way to accommodate the importance of racial identity, particularly in subordinated groups, in *resisting* racism.

One possible response is to think of identity, and so racial identity, as a much more self-conscious and potentially political kind of awareness. On this account to have a racial identity is not just to have a certain kind of self-understanding, but for that self-understanding to include as an explicit (and perhaps chosen or at least "owned"?) part that one is a member of a particular race. As an example of an account that leans in this direction, consider Anthony Appiah's account of racial identity in "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections" (Appiah and Gutmann 1996, 30–105). On Appiah's account racial identity involves a process of "identification," and "identification" according to him is defined as

the process through which an individual intentionally shapes her projects—including her plans for her own life and her conception of the good—by reference to available labels, available identities. (Appiah and Gutmann 1996, 78)

He goes on to define racial identity (roughly) as:

... a label *R*, associated with *ascriptions* by most people (where ascription involves descriptive criteria for applying the label); and *identifications* by those who fall under it (where identification implies a shaping role for the label in the intentional acts of the possessors, so that they sometimes act *as an R*), where there is a history of associating possessors of the label with an inherited racial essence (even if some who use the label no longer believe in racial essences). (Appiah and Gutmann 1996, 83–84)

As I understand this view, "White", for example, is a racial identity just in case it is a label that has a history of being associated with a racial essence, and it is ascribed to people on the basis of descriptive criteria, and those who are White identify with the label in the sense that they sometimes form intentions to act *as a White person*, and subsequently so act.

The part of this view that is of primary interest for our current purposes concerns what it is for an individual to have a particular racial identity. (The suggestion that the identity is the label puzzles me somewhat.) Taking White identity as our example, Appiah's answer seems to be that *X* has a White (racial) identity just in case "White" is a racial identity (it is a label of the right sort) and the label "White" plays a role in *X*'s self-understanding, so at least some of *X*'s intentional acts are performed *as a White person*. (Is it also required that *X* be considered White?)

This account solves several of the problems mentioned above, while also providing a model that could be adapted to my account of race. Appiah makes explicit that he does not view racial identities as (wholly) voluntary (Appiah and Gutmann 1996, 80), but insofar as the main role of racial identity is in the framing of one's intentional action, and this is a primary site of agency, this account frees us from the concern that we are victims of our racial identities. Moreover, the racial labels Appiah has in mind are linked with a history of racial essentialism, but there seems to be no functionalist assumption that requires us to explain the use or evolution of the labels in terms of their role in supporting the background social structure. Admittedly, Appiah counts certain labels as "racial" by virtue of their association with racial essences, and my account of race makes no reference to supposed racial essences; but it would be possible to require instead that the labels count as "racial" by virtue of their association with a hierarchy of "colors," that is, geographically marked (and ranked) bodies.

However, I don't think this captures much of what is at stake in theorizing racial identity. So I want to offer a different notion (perhaps just to add to the collection) that I think is better suited to understanding how race is not just an idea acted upon or acted with, but is deeply embodied. Part of what is motivating me is the sense that most people who I'd locate centrally as having a White identity do not seem to employ the label "White" in the way Appiah's view would require, since Whites, as the privileged group, tend to think of themselves as "raceless," and I suspect that most would find it difficult to point to any actions they perform "as a White person." They don't "identify" as White in the strong sense in question, but they are White, and I would like to claim that they also have a White identity.

What worries me most about Appiah's approach is its hyper-cognitivism, particularly its intentionalism. There are important components of racial identity, I want to argue, that are somatic, largely habitual, regularly unconscious, often ritualized. Our racial identities deeply condition how we live our bodies and relate to other bodies. Individuals are socialized to become embodied subjects, not just rational, cognitive agents; so race and gender socialization isn't just a matter of instilling concepts and indoctrinating beliefs, but are also ways of training the body. Training the body to feel, to see, to touch, to fear, to love. I do not claim that our identities are entirely non-cognitive, but to focus entirely on the cognitive, especially the intentional, is to miss the many ways that we unintentionally and unconsciously participate in racism and sexism.

A further concern that arises in philosophical discussion of identity is that there is a tendency to think of identities as something that either one has or one doesn't, and there is a canonical way of having one. Psychologists, however, tend to see identity formation as a developmental process, as something that happens in stages, that can be disrupted, that can be re-

visited (e.g., Tatum 1997). One also finds in the psychological literature a strong interest in disaggregating the elements of identity; for example, in one study (Cross 1991, 42) Black identity has been theorized as having two main components (personal identity and reference group orientation), the first of which (PI) is broken down into nine elements,¹² the second (RGO) into eight.¹³ This disaggregation allows, among other things, that an individual's racial identity can be strong along one axis and not another, and can shift with respect to the balance of elements over time.

Although I think that the philosophical and political uses of the notion of "identity" shouldn't bow to the psychologists as experts on the sense we want or need, it is helpful, nonetheless, to bear in mind that identities may not be all or nothing (e.g., racial identities may come in degrees and have different formations), and that a conception of identity that we happen to be focused on may be only one stage of a much broader developmental process. I have a particular interest in the developmental issues, because I am keen to understand the process by which societies construct individuals with particular race and gender identities, and how those identities are lived and unlived, embodied and disembodied. To make this point more vivid, let me turn to some more personal reflections.

Let me emphasize to begin, however, that I am speaking from my own experience and a very small sample of others, and I don't mean to suggest that the phenomena I describe occur in all adoptive families or all interracial families. Moreover, I certainly want to allow that some of the experiences I describe can happen in other contexts besides transracial parenting, for example, in close inter-racial friendships and love relationships; further, as our communities become more anti-racist, the boundaries of racial identity—should there be any—will have very different meanings than I describe here and, in fact, one may find important generational differences already. What interests me, however, are the ways that racial identity can be disrupted and transformed, and how.

CROSSING THE COLOR LINE

Begin with the body. Although adoptive parents do not have a biological connection to the bodies of their children, like most (at least female) parents, adoptive parents of infants are intimately involved in the physical being of their baby. Parents learn to read the needs and desires of the baby from cries, facial expressions, body language, and in some cases it is as if

12. Self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, self-evaluation, interpersonal competence, ego-ideal, personality traits, introversion-extroversion, level of anxiety.

13. Racial identity, group identity, race awareness, racial ideology, race evaluation, race esteem, race image, racial self-identification.

the patterns of the child's hunger and fatigue are programmed into your own body. You know when to expect hunger; and when they are a little older, you know when to suggest that they use the potty or take a nap. In the case of older adoptees from other countries, the same may happen in the early phases of trying to parent across language barriers. This empathetic extension of body awareness, this attentiveness to the minute signals of another's body, does not in any metaphysically real sense make the other body part of your own. But taking on the needs and desires of another body *as if* your own, perhaps especially if the other's body is marked as different, alters your own body sense, or what some have called (following Lacan) the "imaginary body." Moira Gatens has argued, "[The] psychical image of the body is necessary in order for us to have motility in the world, without which we could not be intentional subjects. The imaginary body is developed, learnt, connected to the body image of others, and is not static" (Gatens 1996, 12). In some cases of transracial parenting I think it would be correct to say that one's "imaginary body," that is, the largely unconscious sense of one's own body, becomes racially confused.¹⁴

The constant attentiveness to the other's body trains one to read it: one is cued to respond to it. But importantly, as a parent, one comes to love it. The child and future adult to which one will have some person-to-person relationship is not there yet, and so parental love often takes the form of a delight in the body of the infant—its shape, movements, warmth, etc. The playful and loving engagement of a White parent with a Black infant, however, disrupts what some theorists have called the "racial social geography" (Mills 1999, 52; Frankenberg 1993). Charles Mills develops this notion: "Conceptions of one's White self map a micro-geography of the acceptable routes through racial space . . . imprinted with domination" (Mills 1999, 52). Among other things, such maps "dictate spaces of intimacy and distance" and carry with them proscriptions and punishments for violation. A White parent's daily routine demands these violations. However, the experience of "trespassing" does not give way just to a sense of neutral ground; the experience of holding and physically cherishing one's child can bring the Black body into one's intimate home space—that space where the boundaries of intimacy expand to encompass others.

Interestingly, the effect is not just to alter one's "micro-geography" of race to accommodate one's relationship to one's children; one's entire so-

14. I've heard a story recounted in which a White mother of two Korean-born adoptees returns with them to Korea when they are still children. Upon arriving, she expresses a delight in being somewhere where "everyone looks like us," only registering after receiving some curious and puzzled looks that (in the relevant sense) she doesn't look like those around her. On the "imaginary body" see Gatens (1996), viii and chap. 1; Cornell (1995), chap. 1. Both Gatens and Cornell discuss the gendered imaginary; here I am suggesting that their discussions are relevant to the racial imaginary.

cial map is redrawn.¹⁵ For example, I can find many changes in my physical presence among others: whose faces do I first notice in a group? With whom do I make eye contact? Next to whom do I sit? How close do I stand to others in conversation? Whom do I touch in an affectionate greeting? These questions have different answers than they used to. I am physically at home amongst African Americans in a way I was not before.

It is hard to lovingly parent a child without finding him or her beautiful—sometimes exceptionally beautiful. For a White parent of a Black child, this process also disrupts the dominant society's "somatic norm image" (Mills 1999, 61; Hoetink 1973). Insofar as the dominant society teaches us the aesthetics of racism—which is common, but fortunately not ubiquitous—Black bodies are regarded as less beautiful than White ones; or at least more typically under the current aesthetics of racism only those Black bodies that fulfill certain White stereotypes of Blacks (the exotic, the "natural") count as beautiful. Mills suggests:

The norming of the individual also involves a specific norming of the *body*, an aesthetic norming. Judgements of moral worth are obviously conceptually distinct from judgements of aesthetic worth, but there is a psychological tendency to conflate the two. . . . (Mills 1999, 61)

But a White parent's (White) somatic norm image cannot remain intact in the face of her child's beauty. One can find lengthy conversations on adoption email lists showing how dramatically the transracial adoptive parent's personal aesthetic does change: White babies come to appear pale, wan, even sickly . . . there's a magnetic pull to babies of color. Although some have suggested that such an aesthetic and emotional response to babies that look like your own is a "conditioned reflex" that parents develop (Register 1990, 45), it isn't just an infant or child aesthetic that changes. One's

15. It is important to think about the similarities and differences between the White parent of a Black child, and the Black nanny of a White child. I argue here that the "trespassing" involved in a White's allowing a Black child into intimate space disrupts some important aspects of White identity. But it would seem that there is an asymmetry in the case of a Black nanny of a White child: the nanny allows the White child into intimate space, but this arguably does not (in most cases?) disrupt her Black identity. How can I account for this? Although I don't have a full answer, I think attention should be devoted to thinking about different modes of intimacy, the specific contours of racial geography, and what counts as racial trespassing: Black caretaking of Whites carries a very different meaning than White caretaking of Blacks. Perry (1998), sec. 1. So the operative factors include not just contact and affection, but power relations and the details of the transgressive relationships. Even with this in mind, it isn't clear that the asymmetries can be accounted for in any simple way. Consider, for example, the relationship between Cora (a Black servant) and Jessie (Cora's white employer's daughter) in Langston Hughes's "Cora Unashamed" (Hughes 1962 [1933], 3–18): "In her heart [Cora] had adopted Jessie." Although the relationship altered Jessie's racial geography to be closer to Cora's, arguably Cora's racial geography was not affected. Is this because the danger to Cora of such a shift would be so clear and present?

response to and "evaluation" of adult bodies and, in my own case, even my own body—my shape, my skin, my hair—can change.

Sometimes, through parenting a child of another race, one is drawn into cultural rituals concerning the body. In the case of White parents of Black children, the most obvious are the rituals of caring for hair and skin. I remember vividly our first trip to a Black barbershop for Isaac's first haircut, our anxiety at crossing an important color line. Having moved several times since Isaac joined our family, each time we've had to negotiate the dynamics of entering with him a predominantly Black male space. And when Isaac met his birth grandparents for the first time (we visited them for a long weekend), one of the most important trips of the weekend was to the barbershop, where we were introduced as family.

The issue of girls' hair is even more laden and contested: a friend and mentor confided in me shortly after our daughter Zina joined our family that when she gave birth the second time and the doctor announced, "It's a girl!" the very first thing that went through her mind was, "Oh my gosh, *three* heads of hair to do each morning!" I had only the vaguest appreciation of what she meant until I found myself trying to comb out my sleeping (toddler) daughter's hair to find myself two hours into it with her awake, screaming, and me in tears. But I have been guided and coached, by friends and acquaintances, by beauty store clerks, the crowd at the barbershop, by Zina herself. It is not just that I have learned various techniques and the use of products I never knew existed, but the hours and hours Zina and I spend together doing her hair have a deep effect on our relationship, and I'm certain that this would have no correlate with a biological daughter of mine. Moreover, this experience has affected my relationship with Black women (both friends and strangers!)—we talk of hair, of the effects of hair rituals on mother-daughter relationships, of aesthetic and political values represented by hair.

Steve and I master the rituals of the body not just for Isaac and Zina's sake, but because norms of appearance vary across race, and we as parents are judged by those norms. Although it is not the case that there is a single unified African American "culture" or set of appearance norms—these vary by class, region of the country, even neighborhood—norms of appearance for children, for example, how the hair should be worn, what sorts of clothes and shoes are appropriate, in most contexts are race-specific. These norms are gradually internalized: I feel anxious at not meeting the standards; I judge others by them, etc. Although I don't uncritically accept the norms of the local Black community in deciding on the appearance or behavior of my children (isn't everyone's relationship to their local norms complex and negotiated?), those norms are ones that I daily consider and respond to.

My own sense of community has dramatically changed. I'm not entirely

comfortable anymore in an all-White setting; if I go to a large event that is filled with a sea of White faces, I'm unsettled. Some of the discomfort may come from the wariness that develops when my children are with me in such contexts; I'm concerned about other people's responses to them, their own sense of belonging. This may rub off so that similar feelings arise even when they aren't with me. But it is more than this, for I think it is similar to the discomfort that arises sometimes for those with non-White ancestry who are not distinctively marked physically as a person of color. One carries a background anxiety that someone, not knowing your family, your background, is going to assume that you're White or of a White family and display their racism (Piper 1992; Derricotte 1997). And then you'll have to say something, or not, and you'll have to live with what they said or did. In my own case, it is actually easier for me to bear offensive actions actually directed at me, than to bear them, whether performed knowingly or not, directed at my kids. Racism is no longer just something I find offensive and morally objectionable; I experience it as a personal harm. There is an important sense in which a harm to my kids is a harm to me; by being open to that harm, I am more fully aware of the cost of racial injustice for all of us.¹⁶

But it isn't just a matter of anxiety around large groups of White strangers; in mixed settings where there is a tendency to group by race or at least by White/non-White, I am drawn to those who aren't White. Often I feel that I have more in common with them, that their life concerns are closer to mine. I am a mother of Black children, my extended family is at least one-third Black. When I want to talk about my kids, their future, our family, there's a lot that I don't think my White friends and family understand.

RACIAL IDENTITY REVISITED

Is there some way to organize these anecdotes toward a more theoretical account? It appears that together they highlight several different dimensions of racial "identity" we might want to capture:

16. Sharon Rush (2000) suggests the concept of "transformative love" for this experience:

Transformative love . . . moves beyond racial empathy because it does not depend on Whites' imaginations. A person who experiences transformative love literally *feels* some of the direct pain caused by racism. . . . Importantly, I am not saying that I *know* what Blacks feel when racism hits them; I don't and never will. I am saying that I used to think empathy was as close as one could get to understanding another's pain. Loving across the color line, I am feeling something that is deeper and more personal than empathetic pain. Ironically, this new feeling, although situated in feeling the pain of racial injustice, is more empowering than empathy when it is mixed with love. (169)

- unconscious somatic (routine behaviors, skills and "know-hows")
- unconscious imaginary (unconscious self-image/somatic image)
- tacit cognitive (tacit understandings, tacit evaluations)
- perceptual (perceptual selectivity, recognitional capacities)
- conscious cognitive (fear, apprehension, attraction, sense of community)
- normative (aesthetic judgments, judgments of suitability or appropriateness, internalized or not?)

Many of these, I believe, cannot be captured in the kind of intentionalist account Appiah offers (Rorty and Wong 1990). And plausibly we will need a quite complex model to do justice to all of them. At this point we may have to make do with metaphors that point to a model.

In his book on African American identity, William E. Cross provides a compelling account of the development of racial identity. According to him,

In a generic sense, one's identity is a maze or map that functions in a multitude of ways to guide and direct exchanges with one's social and material realities. (Cross 1991, 214)

(Remember, the map image was also present in Mills.) Does the image of an internal map help in rethinking racial identity? In the context of feminist work on gender, the image of a map is more often replaced with the image of a script. But the map image might be preferable insofar as it need not be understood linguistically, and may involve a "map" of one's own body. Some may prefer the notion of a "program," since it seems even less cognitive than a map—but it can also invoke the specter of determinism.

There are some advantages to the metaphor of a map: map boundaries vary—what's included and what's not; their design is responsive to different concerns (contrast road maps with topographical maps) and different values (what's central, what's marginal); they vary in scale and effectiveness. Maps also function to guide the body: they are a basis for exercising "know-how," they provide information on the basis of which we can form intentions and act. And yet, the image of a map suggests that one's racial identity is something conscious (to be consulted?) and still rather cognitive (e.g., the idea that one knows how to ride a bike because one employs an internal "map" is not plausible). Moreover, we need racial identity not only to guide social interactions but also to frame in a much more basic way our perceptions and evaluations of ourselves and others. (Yet when navigating in unfamiliar locations, don't we sometimes fail to see what is not included on our map?) Perhaps the solution is to think of "maps" as sometimes tacit and unconscious, sometimes more explicit and conscious.

Interestingly, it is plausible that in crossing "the color line," as in transracial adoption, the tacit racial maps are forced into consciousness and made explicit.¹⁷

Nonetheless, keeping in mind these limitations of the metaphor (and perhaps drawing on Cross's other suggestion of an internal "maze"—a framework or structure of thought), is there some way to distinguish different racial maps that function as different racial identities? And is there a way to do it without assuming that all Blacks, or all Whites, or all Asians have the same substantive identity, that is, that their identities have the very same content?

Here is a proposal. The account of race I offered above gives some way of identifying the "social and material realities of race" for particular groups: the social and material realities of Whiteness, for example, concern the cultural process of marking the body as apparently descended (predominantly) from Europeans, and the structural privileging of those so marked. Given this, however, we can then focus on those aspects of our overall identity, that is, our broad map—perhaps our atlas?—that guides and directs exchanges with the racial dimension of our lives. So, someone has a White racial identity just in case their map is formed to guide someone marked as White through the social and material realities that are (in that context) characteristic of Whites as a group. More generally, one has an X racial identity just in case their map is formed to guide someone marked as X through the social and material realities that are (in that context) characteristic of Xs as a group.¹⁸ Note that on this account a White person who resists the privileges of Whiteness—and so works from a map that navigates them *around* those privileges, rather than *toward* them—nonetheless has a White identity, for their map is formed in response to (though not necessarily accepting) the material realities of being White. Likewise, a Black person who resists the disadvantages of Blackness—navigating around those disadvantages in any number of different ways—has a Black identity.

Note that this proposal addresses the two concerns raised before: it does not entail that a White racial identity is constructed to sustain White privilege (or that the identity of a person of color must be constructed to sus-

17. So, anticipating what is yet to come, not only is a transracial adoptee's (and transracial parent's) racial identity different from other racial "typicals," by being "mixed," but is also different in being less tacit and taken for granted, and more conscious and navigated. Thanks to Charlotte Witt for helping me think through this point.

18. Note that this analysis depends on the prior definition of race or racialized groups insofar as it presupposes that we can specify the markings and social/material realities of particular racialized groups. But because I am offering a focal analysis in which racial identity is the derivative notion and race the central or focal notion, this is not problematic. It is in fact an important feature of the project that the derived notions depend in this way on the central notion.

tain their subordination); the point is rather that the identity is formed in navigating the social and material impact of one's race. In special cases, one's identity is formed or reformed in navigating the impact of one's loved one's race, or perhaps a race one wants or needs to have; it can also be formed or reformed through a conscious commitment to anti-racism. This account allows that, at least insofar as it is possible to have some critical agency with respect to the maps that guide us, we are not helpless victims of racial socialization. Moreover, it allows that racial identity comes in degrees: we vary in the extent to which our lives and self-understandings are formed in response to the social frameworks of race. Let me conclude this section, however, by saying that although I am hopeful that uses of the notion of a map by Cross and Mills will be helpful in developing further this account of racial identity, I think quite a bit more work needs to be done in explicating it.

"MIXED" IDENTITIES

Earlier I suggested that there is at least one sense of identity in which my racial identity has changed tremendously through the experience of parenting Black children. It would be wrong, I think, to say that I am Black, or that I see myself as Black, or that I intend sometimes to act "as a Black person"; I don't even think it is correct to say in a much weaker sense that I have a Black identity. But I do think that my map for navigating the social and material realities of race has adjusted so that I'm now navigating much more often as if my social and material realities are determined by being "marked" as of African descent. As I've emphasized, I am not marked as of African descent. But as a parent of children who are, my day-to-day life is filled with their physical being and social reality, and by extension, the reality of their extended families and their racial community. And their realities have in an important sense become mine.

But it is also the case that there is much of my life in which I continue to rely on old (White) maps, and in which I work to contest and challenge the realities of my Whiteness from the position of being White. As a result, I'm tempted to conclude that my racial identity, in at least the specific sense I've outlined, should count as "mixed." I have, in an important sense, been resocialized by my kids, and although I do not share their "blood," I have "inherited" some aspects of their race.¹⁹

It may be worth taking a moment, however, to consider different ways in which racial identity might count as "mixed." The term "mixed" is typically used to refer to individuals whose recent ancestors are differently marked

19. Thanks to Jackie Stevens for pointing out this inversion.

racially. And in contemporary racial politics, there is a movement to affirm the identities of those who count as "mixed" (note the recent change on the U.S. Census to include a biracial category). My point here is not to claim a mixed identity in this sense:

X has a racially "mixed" identity₁ just in case (and to the extent that) X's internal "map" is formed to guide someone marked as of "mixed" ancestry through the social and material realities that structure (in that context) the lives of those of "mixed" ancestry as a group.

But there is an alternative notion that may also, at least in some contexts, characterize those of "mixed" ancestry:

X has a racially "mixed" identity₂ just in case (and to the extent that) X's internal "map" is substantially fragmented, that is, is formed to guide, in some contexts and along some dimensions, someone marked as of one race, and in other contexts and other dimensions, a person marked as of a different race.

In contexts where it is important to keep our terminology clear, we might speak of racially "mixed" identity (the first sense) and racially "aggregated" (or fragmented?) identity (in the second sense).

But what of my kids? What is their racial identity? Of course the racial identity of young children is a very different matter than the racial identity of adults. But what are the prospects for their racial identities? Given that neither have any prospect for passing as White, they will grow up with the realities of racism and will develop identities that are responsive to those realities. A more pressing question, however, is whether they can, as our children, develop healthy Black identities. Living in a Black neighborhood, attending integrated schools and a Black church, having Black friends and extended family, I think it is almost certain that they will have resources for developing strong and healthy Black identities, that is, it will be possible for them to construct maps that guide them in self-affirming and racial group-affirming ways. But no doubt they will also be sheltered from certain aspects of racism by living with us, they will learn by our example some patterns of social interaction that are responsive to White privilege, and they will develop some primary somatic connections to White bodies. So it is arguable that their identities will also be, at least to some extent, "mixed" (i.e., "aggregated"). But is this a problem? Is this by itself grounds for doubting that transracial adoption is acceptable?

To begin, let me note that there are many different reasons for questioning the practice of transracial adoption, especially as it occurs under current social conditions.²⁰ Even if one believes that in many cases trans-

racial adoption is permissible, one might object to the child welfare policies and broader context of economic injustice that make transracial adoption appear to be the best option for some birth families and children of color (Perry 1998; cf. Bartholet 1999). It is important to keep in mind that the debate over transracial adoption is not *just* about "identity" but also concerns questions of power (racial, sexual, cultural, and economic) and autonomy (individual, community, and national).

With this in mind, I want to maintain that the fact that transracial adoptees plausibly develop "mixed" ("aggregated") racial identities is not a basis for opposing transracial adoption. First, it is plausible that many middle-class Blacks have similarly "mixed" identities, and it is problematic, I think, to insist that there is a form of "pure" Black (or other raced) identity that should be the ideal for anyone, including adopted children. Second, although there is much of value to be found in racialized communities, I would argue that organizing ourselves (both psychically and as communities) primarily around race—rather than, for example, values, histories, cultures—should not be our long-term objective. It is politically important to recognize that race is real and has a profound effect on our lives, but it is also important to resist being racialized and participating in racial forms of life. (Recall that on my view, race is inherently hierarchical; ethnicity is its non-hierarchical counterpart [Haslanger 2000]). To this end, the formation of "aggregate" or "fragmented" identities is one strategy (of many) for disrupting the embodiment of racial hierarchy and the hegemony of current racial categories. Another (not incompatible) strategy might involve working against racial hierarchy (and so, on my view, against race) in a way that maintains extensional equivalents of racial categories that function more like ethnicities: by re-valuing racialized traits, reconfiguring racialized practices to be more egalitarian, eliminating racist institutions.

But perhaps my argument does not address the real issues. The more common objections to transracial adoption are not to cases in which children of color are part of an integrated community in open adoptions. The cases of greater concern are those in which the parents' identity does not shift, because the ordinary somatic norms and racialized maps are entrenched, or in which the children are given little or no resources for forming the kinds of identity that will enable them to integrate into a Black

adoptions in which the adoptee's race differs from that of the adoptive parents, tends to be used more often in the context of domestic Black-White adoptions, specifically where the adoptees are Black and the adoptive parents are White. ("Cross-cultural" adoption is more commonly used for international adoptions of children of color by White parents.) Throughout this paper I have focused on the domestic Black-White "transracial adoption," mostly because I've been explicitly drawing on my personal experience in such a family. However, I intend the points I am making here to apply under the broader sense of the term. See Perry (1998).

20. The term "transracial adoption," although sometimes used to refer to international

community (or a community of individuals "marked" in relevantly similar ways as the child), or to form adequate defenses against racism. This can happen, no doubt about it. And it certainly would be a horror to be brought up by parents whose racial identities cast you, their child, as a racialized Other. If it can be determined in advance that particular prospective adoptive parents would be incapable of a loving attachment to a child of a different race, this is obviously a good reason not to allow a transracial adoption in the particular case. Whether placement would be absolutely precluded would have to depend, I think, on what the other options for the child are. But I hope that the anecdotal evidence offered above shows at least that it is possible for the racial identities of White parents to shift in significant ways, for their racial "maps" to be profoundly altered.²¹ This is crucial in order for parents to mirror back to the child the kind of affirmation and love that enables self-love, and that one demands of healthy parenting.²²

It does seem possible for White parents to overcome some of those aspects of their identity that would make transracial parenting only a poor imitation of same-race parenting; and it does seem possible for White parents to provide a context in which children of color can form healthy racial identities. This is not easy; it is a challenge for any parent (biological or adoptive) of a child of color to raise a child with secure self-esteem and effective strategies to combat racism. White parents of a child of color will no doubt have to depend on the skills and knowledge of the child's racial community in order to succeed.

But a further question is whether and to what extent encouraging the development of a racial identity is a good thing. If, after all, race is a system of dominance and subordination, shouldn't we be attempting to bring up children who do not identify with one race or another, shouldn't we foster color blindness? And aren't transracial families the ideal place to do this?

On the rough account I've given of racial identities, they are responsive to the realities of race and racial subordination/privilege, but they don't necessarily sustain those realities, for the maps we use to navigate our racial positions may also guide us in resisting them. I would argue that it would be irresponsible to bring up kids who will inevitably face racism without the resources to handle it and identities that provide a defense against it. This requires attention to the social differences between White parents and children of color and, I think, over time, requires providing children the tools to construct their own political analysis of those differences. But

21. In fact, Cross cites one study in which the RGO of transracially adopted children at age four is "stronger" and more "Black oriented" than that of their inracially adopted peers. See Cross (1991), 111.

22. On the development of self-love in a context of injustice, see Thomas (2000).

the sense of race they develop need not be essentialist and can be pragmatic. My hope is that ultimately cultural/ethnic differences will replace racial differences. In the terms of my account, that cultural/ethnic difference will not be marked as a site of subordination and privilege. When that time comes, I think we will no longer have the need of racial identities; that is to say that we will no longer need maps that guide us in navigating the social and material injustices of race. I am deeply committed to bringing about that day, but clearly it is not today, nor will it be tomorrow. Until then, the best I can do is to navigate the racial spaces of my life with maps that support and guide me in resisting racial dominance and subordination, and to offer my children resources for constructing maps that will sustain them in the face of it.