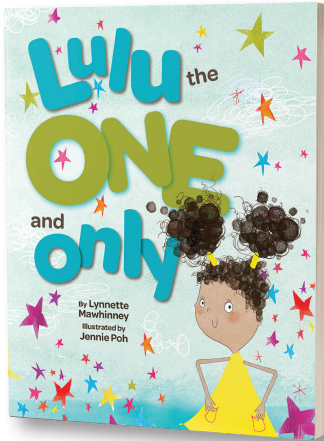




Three Ways to Support Your Biracial Child



There are an estimated seven million people in the United States who identify as biracial, multiracial, or mixed race. Millions of Americans are asked, on a daily basis, “What are you?”

Lynnette Mawhinney, PhD, author of Magination Press book, *Lulu the One and Only* shares insights about what it is to be a biracial child and tips for helping support the emotional development of biracial children in this excerpt from her Author’s Note.

There are many beauties to being mixed race, but one complexity is that both parents do not share the same identity as their children. It is often hard for parents to understand the perspective of their children, and sometimes mixed-race children feel alone in their experiences. In *Lulu the One and Only*, Lulu is fortunate to have a big brother, Zane, to help her understand what to do when people ask, “What are you?” He helps her find her power phrase—a tool to help mixed race children learn how to navigate their emotions and responses to this question.

There are certain practices parents can use to assist in the emotional development of their biracial children.

- **Talk about race.** Even in multicultural families, parents may avoid dialogues about race. Do not be afraid to talk about race and all the complexities that come as a family. This helps children establish a language around race while having the opportunity to articulate their emotions in a safe environment.
- **Listen.** Since biracial children have experiences that may be different from your own, do not feel obligated to act as though you understand their perspective. Sometimes children just need to be heard, valued, and feel supported in their experiences.
- **Work on developing self-love.** Unfortunately there is no escaping THAT QUESTION. People will ask, “What are you?” Self-love is critical in instances when your child is challenged for how he or she looks. Self-love is an intentional process. The power phrase helps children embrace self-love when others might challenge who they are.

Hear author, Lynnette Mawhinney, read *Lulu the One and Only* aloud [here](#).

This Article's Author

Lynnette Mawhinney, PhD, is associate professor and chair of the department of urban education at Rutgers University-Newark helping to prepare future urban teachers for the classroom. She has previously published three books (a fourth in progress) and 27 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. One area of her academic research focuses on autoethnographic explorations around biracial identity and development. To date, she has two peer-reviewed articles and one book chapter on biracial identity. This is her first children's book.