

# Parents' Ethnic–Racial Socialization Practices: A Review of Research and Directions for Future Study

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Recently, there has been an emergence of literature on the mechanisms through which parents transmit information, values, and perspectives about ethnicity and race to their children, commonly referred to as *racial or ethnic socialization*. This literature has sought to document the nature of such socialization, its antecedents in parents' and children's characteristics and experiences, and its consequences for children's well-being and development. In this article, the authors integrate and synthesize what is known about racial and ethnic socialization on the basis of current empirical research, examining studies concerning its nature and frequency; its child, parent, and ecological predictors; and its consequences for children's development, including ethnic identity, self-esteem, coping with discrimination, academic achievement, and psychosocial well-being. The authors also discuss conceptual and methodological limitations of the literature and suggest directions for future research.

*Keywords:* socialization, child-rearing practices, racial and ethnic groups, intergroup dynamics, ethnic identity

Over 2 decades ago, scholars introduced the notion that communications to children about ethnicity and race are central and highly salient components of parenting in ethnic minority families. In the early 1980s, in-depth portraits of African American families described parents' concerns that their children would encounter racial barriers and negative stereotypes and their corresponding emphasis on promoting high self-esteem, instilling racial pride, and preparing children for bias (Peters & Massey, 1983; Richardson, 1981; Spencer, 1983; Tatum, 1987). By the 1990s, studies on

racial and ethnic socialization processes across multiple ethnic minority groups had emerged. For instance, large-scale ethnographies suggested that recent immigrants to the United States emphasize children's acquisition of their native cultural values, beliefs, practices, and language (Pessar, 1995; Rodriguez & Sánchez Korrol, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995, 2001; Urciuoli, 1996; Waters, 1990, 1994, 1999). Quantitative studies also attempted to classify and assess parents' racial and ethnic socialization practices (e.g., Stevenson, 1994, 1995; Thornton, 1997, 1998; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990), to examine the sociodemographic and ecological correlates of these practices (e.g., Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Thornton et al., 1990), and to determine their consequences for children and adolescents (e.g., Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, & Ocampo, 1993; Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993; Marshall, 1995; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Quintana & Vera, 1999; Spencer, 1983; Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, & Bishop, 1997). Thus, the literature on parents' ethnic and racial socialization has grown tremendously in recent years.

Increased scholarly interest in racial and ethnic socialization has been precipitated by a complex set of factors. Among the most important has been what some have called the "browning of America." By 2035, children of color are expected to constitute 50% of the U.S. school population, with the greatest increase coming from students of Hispanic descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Thus, scholars, educators, and parents need to know about processes that enable children to negotiate contexts characterized by high racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Parents' socialization

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regarding ethnicity and race is likely to be among the most important of these processes.

Scholars have also recognized that empirical knowledge about normative developmental and family processes within ethnic minority families is limited but sorely needed (Fisher, Jackson, & Villarruel, 1998; García Coll, Crnic, Lamberty, & Wasik, 1996; García Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995; García Coll & Vázquez García, 1995; Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000; Swanson, Spencer, et al., 2003). Thus, recent theory and research has focused on elaborating constructs and processes that may be unique to various ethnic minority groups. For example, recent findings regarding the protective functions of positive ethnic identity (Chatman, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005; Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001; Shelton et al., 2005) have precipitated questions regarding practices that promote it. Again, parents' ethnic and racial socialization are likely to be especially important.

Finally, there is increased recognition that ethnic minority youths encounter unique ecological demands and developmental tasks stemming from societal discrimination against and devaluation of ethnic minority group members (American Civil Liberties Union, 1998; Charles, Dinwiddie, & Massey, 2004; Cunningham, Swanson, Spencer, & Dupree, 2003; García Coll et al., 1996; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). Recent empirical work has documented subtle and insidious forms of bias against youths of color as well as the negative consequences of these for mental health (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999; Szalacha, Erkut, García Coll, Alarcón, et al., 2003; Szalacha, Erkut, García Coll, Fields, et al., 2003; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Thus, studies of ethnic and racial socialization, in part, reflect psychologists' efforts to understand how families of color experience and discuss social inequalities and injustices and how they teach children to manage them.

In this article, we evaluate and integrate existing studies of racial and ethnic socialization.<sup>1</sup> Our primary objective is to take stock of what is known and to pave the way for forward movement in this area. Because the literature is characterized by wide variation in terminology, conceptualization, and operationalization of constructs, we begin by discussing these issues, because they present challenges to integrating the literature. In the remaining sections, we first review studies that have sought to describe ethnic and racial socialization. We focus on the four themes that have emerged most often in empirical research, which we term *cultural socialization*, *preparation for bias*, *promotion of mistrust*, and *egalitarianism*. Then, we review studies of the antecedents of racial and ethnic socialization and its consequences for a range of youth outcomes. Finally, we discuss conceptual and methodological issues that are common across existing studies and limit what is known. We conclude by outlining directions for future research.

To facilitate our goals, we provide basic information about studies of ethnic and racial socialization in Table 1. Where studies have examined multiple dimensions, we list the terms used to reference particular themes and, if possible, classify them according to the four themes that constitute our focus. Although any specific ethnic-racial socialization message may simultaneously contain two or more themes, we believe that it is conceptually and empirically useful to distinguish them.

## Conceptual Issues in Defining the Domain

### *Racial Versus Ethnic Socialization*

The terms *racial socialization* and *ethnic socialization* are each used broadly to refer to the transmission from adults to children of information regarding race and ethnicity. Historically, these terms have been applied to somewhat different phenomena in different groups. Research on racial socialization emanated from scholars' efforts to understand how African American parents maintain children's high self-esteem and prepare them to understand racial barriers given systems of racial stratification in the United States (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Peters, 1985, 2002; Spencer, 1983; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Tatum, 1987; Thornton et al., 1990). Research on ethnic socialization originated in the experiences of immigrant Latino, Asian, and (less often) African and Caribbean groups in the United States, having focused largely on children's cultural retention, identity achievement, and in-group affiliation in the face of competing pressures to assimilate to the dominant society (Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al., 1993; Knight, Bernal, Garza, et al., 1993; Ou & McAdoo, 1993; Quintana & Vera, 1999). Currently, however, the two concepts overlap considerably. Although the term *racial socialization* is still used almost exclusively in research with African Americans, reflecting deeply entrenched constructions of U.S. race relations as a Black-versus-White problem, its current conceptualization includes exposure to cultural practices and objects, efforts to instill pride in and knowledge about African Americans, discussions about discrimination and how to cope with it, and strategies for succeeding in mainstream society. The term *ethnic socialization* is currently applied in research on multiple ethnic groups, including African Americans, and covers the same conceptual territory.

The fact that researchers use different terminology to refer to similar processes in different ethnic or racial groups means that the literature is fragmented and difficult to integrate. However, developing a clear consensus on when the term *ethnic socialization* versus the term *racial socialization* should be used may also pose challenges. Technically, both ethnic and racial socialization are applicable across all ethnic-racial groups, because all people are members of racial categories that are legally recognized by the U.S. government, and all people are members of an ethnic group, defined as a group of people who share a common culture, religion, language, or nationality (Cooper, García Coll, Bartko, Davis, & Chatman, 2005). Moreover, parents from all ethnic and racial groups probably transmit messages to children about issues such as cultural heritage and group social status, including discussions about the prevalence of stereotypes and discrimination based on phenotypic characteristics, language competencies, and other group characteristics. Notably, although White parents are rarely

<sup>1</sup> Our review covers articles from peer-reviewed journals and book chapters in psychology, sociology, and related fields, which were identified by searching PsycINFO, Sociological Abstracts, ERIC, JSTOR, Ingenta, LexisNexis, and ProQuest between 1975 and 2005 using the keywords "racial socialization" and "ethnic socialization" and combinations such as "parenting and ethnic identity" in the title, abstract, keyword, or full-text listings. We perused citation lists for other articles that seemed relevant and searched the Social Sciences Citation Index for recent work that cited key articles. This iterative process yielded over 50 empirical articles. Although the literature seems ripe for an integrative review, too few articles exist to warrant a formal meta-analysis.

included in studies of socialization about ethnicity and race (for exceptions, see Hamm, 2001; Hughes & Chen, 1999), such socialization is quite likely to take place within White families as well, especially in communities that are ethnically and racially integrated. Nevertheless, across racial and ethnic groups, either type of discussion can concern ethnicity (e.g., discussions pertaining to being Puerto Rican, West Indian, or Chinese) or race (e.g., discussions pertaining to being Black, White, or Asian), and the basis for determining when such discussions should be termed *racial* or *ethnic socialization* can be tricky.

In our view, there is not yet a satisfying solution for unambiguously distinguishing socialization that is *racial* from socialization that is *ethnic* or for determining when one term should be used rather than the other. Further, we believe that both terms are too broad and nonspecific to be conceptually or empirically useful. Thus, researchers will need to adopt terminology that is more precise and descriptive. Here, rather than attempting to settle the issue, we use the combined term *ethnic-racial socialization* when referring to the broader research literature and focus on other definitional and conceptual issues that we regard as more important. We later propose that the terms *cultural socialization*, *preparation for bias*, *promotion of mistrust*, and *egalitarianism* be used in lieu of these broad terms to refer to distinctions in the nature of messages parents transmit about ethnicity and race.

#### *Varied Operationalization of Ethnic-Racial Socialization*

To date, studies have varied considerably in how ethnic-racial socialization is conceived and measured, limiting researchers' ability to integrate findings across studies. To illustrate, Table 1 lists conceptualizations in existing work. As the table shows, some studies have focused solely on transmission of cultural values, knowledge, and practices (cultural socialization); some have focused solely on preparing youths for discrimination (preparation for bias); some have examined multiple dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization; and some have examined ethnic-racial socialization as a unidimensional construct. When the broad terms *ethnic socialization* or *racial socialization* are used to refer to these different conceptualizations, it becomes difficult to integrate findings across studies. For the literature to advance, researchers need to use more precise and descriptive terminology that refers to the content or type of message that is under examination (e.g., preparation for bias, specifically, rather than ethnic socialization, generally), much as the literature on parenting distinguishes *harsh* from *inconsistent* discipline and *authoritative*, *authoritarian*, and *permissive* parenting styles.

Closely related to this, although common ethnic-racial themes have emerged in many studies, scholars have not developed a common terminology to refer to them. Among the terms for messages about cultural pride, history, and heritage (cultural socialization) are *cultural emersion* (O'Connor, Brooks-Gunn, & Graber, 2000), *cultural pride reinforcement*, *cultural legacy appreciation* (Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, Cameron, & Davis, 2002), and *integrative/assertive socialization* (Demo & Hughes, 1990). Discussion with children about discrimination (preparation for bias) has been termed *racism awareness training* (Stevenson, 1994, 1995), *racial barrier awareness* (Bowman & Howard, 1985), *racism struggles* (Johnson, 1988), and *cautious/defensive socialization* (Demo & Hughes, 1990). Again, development of a

common terminology that recognizes multiple dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization would benefit the literature immensely.

Finally, the literature is characterized by great variety in how ethnic-racial socialization is empirically operationalized. Although diversity in measurement is needed in any field, the current diversity within the socialization literature presents challenges to synthesis, because different measurement approaches yield different information. A close examination of existing measures indicates that some assess parent (or adolescent) attitudes and values (Stevenson, 1994, 1995), some assess parents' behaviors and practices (Hughes & Chen, 1997), and some infer ethnic-racial socialization from significant correlations between parents' and children's ethnic-racial attitudes or practices (e.g., Barnes, 1980; Smith, Atkins, & Connell, 2003). In addition, inductively coded open-ended questions, closed-ended binary questions, and Likert-type survey questions, each of which have been used across studies, produce different types of information that are not readily comparable. Open-ended questions assess what first comes to mind when parents reflect on their child-rearing goals, an indicator of the salience of a particular ethnic-racial socialization theme. However, such open-ended questions provide limited information about the range of messages that parents transmit, because multiple types of messages are not assessed independently. Binary questions assess the prevalence of specified dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization (e.g., whether they are ever used), and Likert-type survey measures assess the strength of ethnic-racial socialization values or the frequency of ethnic-racial socialization practices. In moving forward, researchers need to determine whether their research questions call for an assessment of attitudes or of behavior and whether relative salience, presence versus absence, or frequency is the variable most relevant to their study goals.

#### The Content and Frequency of Parents' Ethnic-Racial Socialization

We turn now to examining research that has sought to describe the substantive content of parents' ethnic-racial socialization messages. In doing so, we distinguish studies using different assessment methods in terms of what they suggest regarding the salience, prevalence, and frequency of different messages to youths.

#### *Cultural Socialization*

We propose that the term *cultural socialization* be used to refer to parental practices that teach children about their racial or ethnic heritage and history; that promote cultural customs and traditions; and that promote children's cultural, racial, and ethnic pride, either deliberately or implicitly (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hughes, Bachman, Ruble & Fuligni, 2006; Hughes & Chen, 1999; Thornton et al., 1990; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). Examples include talking about important historical or cultural figures; exposing children to culturally relevant books, artifacts, music, and stories; celebrating cultural holidays; eating ethnic foods; and encouraging children to use their family's native language. Cultural socialization shares conceptual space with other well-established social scientific constructs such as enculturation, and it has been central to researchers' ideas regarding parental influences on children's ethnic and racial identity formation (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al., 1993; Knight, Bernal, Garza, *(text continues on page 756)*

Table 1  
*Methodological and Measurement Characteristics of Studies That Directly Assess Ethnic-Racial Socialization*

Study	Study characteristics				Authors' label for proposed dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization					
	Age of target child	Race/ethnicity	Sample size	Participants	Method of assessment	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust	Egalitarianism	Other
Biafora, Taylor, et al. (1993); Biafora, Warheit, et al. (1993)	Grades 6-7 (boys)	African American, Haitian, Caribbean	1,328	Youth	9-item Likert-type measure assessing adolescents' attitudes about Whites and messages received from family about discrimination experiences		Racial awareness/pride	Cultural mistrust		
Bowman & Howard (1985)	14-24 years	African American	377	Youth	Content coding of 2 NSBA open-ended questions to yield fourfold classification	Ethnic pride	Racial barrier awareness		Egalitarianism	Global; taught nothing; self-development
Branch & Newcombe (1986)	4-7 years	African American	76	Mother and youth	17-item Likert-type measure of parents' racial awareness; 40-item measure of parents' Black ethnocentrism; 5 open-ended interview questions about parents' child-rearing strategies vis-à-vis race	Pro-Black attitudes		Teach about racial matters in a pro-Black/anti-White direction	Teach an egalitarian position	No teaching about race
Brega & Coleman (1999)	Grades 10-11	African American	50	Youth	8 content-coded open-ended interview questions assessing racial socialization practices, yielding a global measure and a primary orientation for each respondent	Racial pride	Racial barriers		Humanitarian values	Self-development; no primary orientation
Caughy et al. (2002)	3.0-4.5 years	African American	200	Caregiver	40 items from the PERS to assess socialization practices; 10-item observational checklist of objects in home	Racial pride; Afrocentric home	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust		Spirituality
Constantine & Blackmon (2002)	Grades 6-8	African American	115	Youth	40 items from the TERS assessing the frequency of messages received from parents	Cultural pride reinforcement; cultural appreciation of legacy	Cultural alertness to discrimination; coping with antagonism		Cultural endorsement of mainstream	
DeBerry et al. (1996)	Transracial adoptees (Time 1 $M = 7$ years; Time 2 $M = 17$ years)	African American youth; European American parents	88	Parent and youth	Content coding of open-ended interview regarding ethnic-racial socialization practices that yielded a fivefold classification of families	Bicultural (verbal and behavioral evidence of teaching about heritage)				Deemphasis/denial; ambivalent/inconsistent; overzealous/overenthused; multiracial

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Study characteristics				Authors' label for proposed dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization					
	Age of target child	Race/ethnicity	Sample size	Participants	Method of assessment	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust	Egalitarianism	Other
Demo & Hughes (1990)	Not specified	African American	2,107	Adult	Content coding of 2 NSBA questions	Integrative/assertive		Cautious/defensive	Individualistic/universalistic	Taught nothing
Fatmlehin (1999)	Adolescents (M = 15 years)	Biracial (White/Black)	23	Youth	40 items from the TERS assessing the frequency of messages received from parents	Cultural survival; pride development socialization	Racism struggles socialization			Spiritual coping socialization
Fischer & Shaw (1999)	College students	African American	119	Youth	11 items regarding teen socialization attitudes from the Racism Awareness Teaching subscale of the SORS; 8 items regarding received socialization experiences from the TERS		Racism awareness; racism teaching			
Frabutt et al. (2002)	Early adolescents	African American	66	Parent	7-item Parent Management Questionnaire assessing the frequency and breadth of parents' discussions with children about discrimination		Proactive responses to racial discrimination			
Hughes (2003)	6-17 years	African American, Dominican, and Puerto Rican	274	Parent	10 items assessing the prevalence (ever happen) and frequency of parents' socialization practices	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias			
Hughes & Chen (1997)	4-14 years	African American	157	Parent	16 items assessing the prevalence (ever happen) and frequency of socialization practices	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust		
Hughes & Johnson (2001)	8-11 years	African American	94	Parent and adolescent	15 items assessing the prevalence (ever happen) and frequency of parents' racial socialization practices	Cultural socialization/pluralism	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust		Pluralism
Johnson (2001)	Grades 3-7	African American	37	Parent and child	40 items from the TERS assessing the frequency of messages received from parents	Pride development	Racism struggles			Cultural survival; spiritual coping
Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al. (1993)	9-12 years	Mexican American	59	Parent and child	68 Likert-type survey items regarding ethnic foods, teaching about ethnic culture, Mexican objects in the home, and teaching about ethnic pride and discrimination	Ethnic socialization				

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Study characteristics				Authors' label for proposed dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization				
	Age of target child	Race/ethnicity	Sample size	Participants	Method of assessment	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust	Other
Knight Bernal, Garza, et al. (1993)	6-10 years	Mexican American	45	Parent	36 Likert-type items assessing teaching about Mexican culture; 11 items assessing teaching about pride and discrimination; 21-item checklist about Mexican objects in the home	Teaching Mexican culture; teaching pride; objects in the home	Teaching about discrimination		
Marshall (1995)	9-10 years	African American	58	Mother and child	7 binary questions with open-ended follow-up probes (probes were content coded; answers to binary questions were summed to create measure used in analysis)	Racial pride	Racial barriers	Equality	Nothing; self-development; physical attributes
McHale et al. (in press)	6-17 years	African American	86 families	Mother, father, and 2 siblings	12 items (from Hughes & Chen, 1997) assessing the frequency of parents' racial socialization behaviors	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias		
McKay et al. (2003)	Grades K-8	African American	161	Parent	42-item SORS assessing attitudes toward racial socialization	Cultural pride	Racism awareness		Religiosity
Miller & MacIntosh (1999)	Grades 8-12	African American	131	Youth	Sum of 45 items from the SORS-A assessing adolescent attitudes toward racial socialization				Racial socialization
O'Connor et al. (2000)	8-9 years (girls)	African American and White	140	Parent and adolescent	19 items (based on Hughes & Chen, 1997) regarding parents' racial socialization practices	Cultural immersion	Cultural history	Cultural distance	
Ou & McAdoo (1993)	Grades 1-2 and 5-6	1st-generation Chinese	192	Parent	22 items assessing attitudes toward Chinese values vis-à-vis child rearing and maintenance of Chinese traditions; 1 item assessing attitudes toward child's study of Chinese language	Maintenance of Chinese language; pride in Chinese culture; belief in Chinese culture; preservation of Chinese customs			

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Study characteristics				Authors' label for proposed dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization				
	Age of target child	Race/ethnicity	Sample size	Participants	Method of assessment	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust	Other
Parham & Williams (1993)	Adults ages 16–68 years (no target child identified)	African American	114	Adult	Content coding of 2 NSBA questions				
Phinney & Chavira (1995)	16–18 years	African American, Japanese American, and Mexican American	60 parents, 60 youths	Parent and youth	4 binary questions (teach about cultural practice; teach about mainstream; teach about diversity; discrimination) followed by inductive coding of answers to follow-up probes	Culture; pride	Coping with prejudice; prejudice as problem	Adaptation	Emphasis on achievement
Quintana et al. (1999)	Grades 9–12	Mexican American	43 adolescents and their parents	Parent and youth	21 items assessing frequency of parental practices such as emphasizing heritage, teaching about discrimination, language use, events, and food	Ethnic socialization			
Quintana & Vera (1999)	Grades 2 and 6	Mexican American	47	Parent and youth	5 Likert-type items assessing parents' attitudes about ethnic socialization and Mexican culture	Ethnic socialization			Global
Romero et al. (2000)	Adult college students ( $M = 27$ years)	1st–4th-generation Mexican and Mexican American	244	Parent	19-item survey measure of attitudes about American and Latino preferences, knowledge, and role behaviors	Latino cultural socialization; American cultural socialization			Ethnic social preference; independence; interdependence
Sanders Thompson (1994)	Adults	African American	225	Adult	2 items assessing the frequency of discussions; 2 items regarding impacts on belief and behavior rated on a 5-point scale; 1 open-ended question	Racial pride	Racial barrier awareness	Egalitarianism	Self-development
Sanders Thompson (1999)	Reported retrospectively by adults ages 18–92 years	African American	409	Adult	20 items assessing family's attitudes and advice about race				Global
Scott (2003)	Grades 9–11 ( $M = 16$ years)	African American	71	Youth	5 items assessing parents' messages about race and racism		Racism-related socialization		Global

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Study characteristics				Authors' label for proposed dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization				
	Age of target child	Race/ethnicity	Sample size	Participants	Method of assessment	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust	Other
Spencer (1983)	3–9 years	African American	45	Mother and child	5 binary survey items assessing importance of teaching about race, teaching or not about civil rights, and Black history embedded in larger survey measure				
Stevenson (1994)	Adolescents ( $M = 14.6$ years)	African American	200	Youth	45-item SORS-A assessing adolescents' attitudes about aspects of ethnic-racial socialization	Cultural pride reinforcement	Racism awareness training		Spiritual and religious coping; extended family caring
Stevenson (1995)	Adolescents (14–16 years old)	African American	287	Youth	45-item SORS-A assessing adolescents' attitudes about aspects of ethnic-racial socialization	Cultural pride reinforcement	Racism awareness training		Spiritual and religious coping; extended family caring
Stevenson (1997)	Adolescents (no target age specified)	African American males	204	Youth	45-item SORS-A assessing adolescents' attitudes about aspects of ethnic-racial socialization	Cultural pride reinforcement; cultural survival socialization; pride development socialization	Racism awareness training; racism struggles socialization		Spiritual and religious coping; extended family caring
Stevenson, Cameron, et al. (2002)	Adolescents ( $M = 14.3$ years)	African American	260	Youth	45-item TERS assessing teens' experiences of racial socialization messages	Cultural pride reinforcement; cultural legacy appreciation	Racism awareness training; cultural alertness to discrimination; race communication; cultural coping with antagonism		Spiritual and religious coping
Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, et al. (2002)	Adolescents ( $M = 14.6$ years)	African American	127	Youth	45-item TERS assessing teens' experiences of racial socialization messages	Cultural pride reinforcement; cultural legacy appreciation	Cultural alertness to discrimination; cultural coping with antagonism		Mainstream racial socialization
Stevenson et al. (1996)	Adolescents ( $M = 14.6$ years)	African American	229	Youth	45-item attitudinal 5-point Likert-type scale; single-item question about family discussion of racism	Cultural pride reinforcement	Racism awareness training		Extended family caring; spiritual and religious coping; global

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Study characteristics				Authors' label for proposed dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization					
	Age of target child	Race/ethnicity	Sample size	Participants	Method of assessment	Cultural socialization	Preparation for bias	Promotion of mistrust	Egalitarianism	Other
Stevenson et al. (1997)	Adolescents (M = 14.6 years)	African American	287	Youth	45-item SORS-A assessing attitudes toward racial socialization	Cultural pride reinforcement	Racism awareness training			Extended family caring; spiritual and religious coping; global achievement; self-pride; global
Thomas & Speight (1999)	Adults ages 17-76 years (M = 42 years; no target child identified)	African American	104	Parent	17-item measure of importance of ethnic-racial socialization and specific socialization messages; 4 content-coded interview question about importance of messages, message frequency, messages for boys, and messages for girls	Racial pride; African American heritage; support other Blacks	Overcoming racism; reality of racism	Mistrust Whites	Egalitarian messages; respect others	
Thompson et al. (2000)	College students	African American	84	Youth	Total scale score from the 40-item TERS assessing teens' experiences of ethnic-racial socialization					Global
Thomton (1997)	Adults	African American	2,107	Parent	Content coding of 2 NSBA questions	Black cultural experience	Minority experience		Mainstream experience	
Thomton et al. (1990)	Adults reporting on any child	African American	2,107	Parent	Multiple themes derived from coding of NSBA questions; presence/absence of any racial socialization used in analysis					
Umaña-Taylor & Fine (2004)	13-20 years	Mexican, Nicaraguan, Honduran, Puerto Rican, and Salvadoran	1,065	Youth	8 items assessing the extent to which adolescents receive overt (family teaches about culture) and covert (family participates in practices) socialization	Overt and covert socialization				
Yoon (2004)	12-19 years	Transracially adopted Korean	241	Youth	4 items assessing messages about pride and participation in practices	Ethnic socialization				

Note. Only studies that explicitly included a measure of ethnic-racial socialization are represented. NSBA = National Survey of Black Americans; PERS = Parental Experience of Racial Socialization Scale; TERS = Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization Scale; SORS = Scale of Racial Socialization; SORS-A = Scale of Racial Socialization-Adolescent.

1993; Ou & McAdoo, 1993; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Spencer, 1983; Stevenson, 1994; Thornton et al., 1990).

Studies have consistently highlighted the fact that cultural socialization is a salient aspect of child rearing. That is, promoting pride, cultural knowledge, and cultural traditions are among the first things parents mention when asked open-ended questions about ethnic-racial socialization. For instance, approximately 40% of a nationally representative sample of African American adults who participated in the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA; Jackson & Gurin, 1997) mentioned themes related to racial pride and heritage in response to open-ended questions about their ethnic-racial socialization practices (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Thornton et al., 1990), as did 23% of the NSBA youth sample (Bowman & Howard, 1985). One in 6 African American adults in Sanders Thompson's (1994) study mentioned messages about cultural pride when asked to reflect retrospectively on messages about race that they had received in their families of origin. In studies of Chinese (Ou & McAdoo, 1993) and Latino (Quintana & Vera, 1999) families, parents have stressed that their children should be exposed to their culture and that they benefit from speaking their native language.

Studies that have used binary indicators of whether parents engage in cultural socialization have provided evidence that cultural socialization is also prevalent in many families; that is, most parents report engaging in cultural socialization practices at some point. In studies of African American families, the percentage of parents who report cultural socialization with their children ranges from 33% (Marshall, 1995) to 80% or more (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). About 66% of Japanese parents (Phinney & Chavira, 1995) and 85% or more of Dominican, Mexican, and Puerto Rican parents (Hughes, 2003; Phinney & Chavira, 1995) report cultural socialization. In several studies, parents have been more likely to report cultural socialization than preparation for bias and to engage in it more frequently (Caughy et al., 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1999; Phinney & Chavira, 1995).

The importance to parents of transmitting their cultural heritage to their children has also been documented through observations and ethnographies. In Caughy et al.'s (2002) observational coding of objects in African American families' homes, 96% had multiple Afrocentric artifacts. Ethnographic research with immigrant and U.S.-born Asian and Latino families, as well as with Native American families, has documented that families transmit their native cultural values, beliefs, and practices to their children in the course of daily routines in which the native language is spoken, native foods are served, and native traditions are observed (Pessar, 1995; Rodriguez & Sánchez Korrol, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995, 2001; Urciuoli, 1996; Waters, 1990; Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Washienko, Walter, & Dyer, 1996).

### *Preparation for Bias*

Parents' efforts to promote their children's awareness of discrimination and prepare them to cope with it have also been emphasized as a critical component of ethnic-racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes & Chen, 1999). As can be seen in Table 1, most studies of ethnic-racial socialization among African American families—and a few studies of ethnic-racial socialization among Latino, Asian, and immigrant Black families—have

included measures pertaining to preparation for bias. Qualitative studies often identify discussions about discrimination as a theme that emerges in parents' narratives as well (Tatum, 1987; Urciuoli, 1996; Ward, 1991).

Overall, studies suggest that few parents spontaneously mention discussion with children about discrimination in response to open-ended question about socialization. It is difficult to determine whether this is because preparation for bias is less salient to parents than are other ethnic-racial socialization themes or because discrimination and ethnic-racial bias are too painful or uncomfortable to discuss in the context of interviews with relative strangers. In the NSBA, 8% of parents and 13% of youths mentioned messages to children about racial barriers in response to questions about what parents taught about being Black (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Thornton et al., 1990). In Marshall's (1995) study, 14% of African American parents and 3% of African American children mentioned racial barriers in response to open-ended questions. The exception to this pattern is Sanders Thompson's (1994) finding that 48%–58% of African American adults who were asked to recount race-related discussions during their youth recalled parental messages about racial barriers. This may be because discrimination is more likely to be a topic of discussion than is participation in events or other activities that parents engage in to promote ethnic pride and knowledge in their children. Nevertheless, findings that preparing children for bias is not typically among the first things parents mention when asked about their ethnic-racial socialization practices suggest that either this aspect of socialization is not especially salient to parents or that other factors prevent parents from mentioning it.

Although few parents mention preparation for bias spontaneously, studies using in-depth interviews and binary survey questions have found that parents do discuss issues related to discrimination with their children, although the prevalence varies across ethnic-racial groups. For instance, in qualitative studies, themes emphasizing the existence of discrimination and teaching children to cope with it have emerged consistently (Hamm, 2001; Hughes & DuMont, 1993; Peters & Massey, 1983; Tatum, 1987; Ward, 1991). In Frabutt, Walker, and MacKinnon-Lewis (2002), only 5% of African American parents indicated that discrimination had never come up in conversations with their children. Estimates of the percentage of African American parents reporting preparation for bias in other studies range from 67% to 90% (Caughy et al., 2002; Coard et al., 2004; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997, 1999). However, preparation for bias is more prevalent among African American parents in studies comparing them with parents from other ethnic and racial backgrounds, including Japanese American, Mexican/Mexican American, Dominican, Puerto Rican, White, Haitian, and Caribbean parents (Biafora, Warheit, Zimmerman, & Gil, 1993; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1999; Phinney & Chavira, 1995), although many parents in these ethnic groups also report it. As Ward (1991) observed, preparation for bias among African American families may be part of a set of indigenous child-rearing strategies, transmitted intergenerationally, that emanate from shared knowledge regarding historical experiences of oppression.

Although it seems likely that preparation for bias would be especially common among groups who have historically been marginalized and oppressed, several studies have found that Japanese Americans, who experienced pervasive discrimination during World War II, rarely discuss these issues with their children. In

Nagata's (1990, 1993; cf. Nagata & Cheng, 2003) studies, adult children of Japanese internees reported that their parents rarely, if ever, discussed the internment experience with them. Although 95% of the subsequent generation discussed the internment with their own children, discussions were infrequent and of limited duration. In Chen's (1998) dissertation study of immigrant Chinese families with children ages 4–9 years old, only 10% of parents discussed racial prejudice or discrimination against Chinese people with their children. As Nagata suggested, silence around experiences of discrimination among Asian-origin groups may reflect cultural values that emphasize suppression of emotion, self-restraint, and maintenance of harmony.

### *Promotion of Mistrust*

We propose that the term *promotion of mistrust* be used to refer to practices that emphasize the need for wariness and distrust in interracial interactions (Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes & Chen, 1999). Mistrust may be communicated in parents' cautions or warnings to children about other racial groups or in their cautions about barriers to success. Hughes and colleagues have argued that, conceptually and empirically, messages that promote caution and wariness about other groups can be differentiated from preparation for bias messages in that they contain no advice for coping with or managing discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001).

Themes related to promotion of mistrust rarely emerge in response to open-ended questions, and parents rarely endorse items assessing promotion of mistrust in survey-based studies. For instance, fewer than 3% of NSBA participants mentioned that they instructed their children to maintain social distance from Whites as a strategy for ethnic-racial socialization (Thornton et al., 1990). The percentages of parents who have reported ever conveying cautions or warnings about other groups in survey-based studies are similarly low, ranging from 6% to 18% across multiple ethnic groups (Biafora, Taylor, Warheit, & Zimmerman, 1993; Biafora, Warheit, et al., 1993; Hughes & Chen, 1997, 1999; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Only one study (Caughy et al., 2002) found that a majority of parents (65%) reported promotion of mistrust, but the wording of items, which focused on discrimination rather than on cautions and warnings, may account for the high level of endorsement in this study.

Despite general patterns suggesting that promotion of mistrust is not salient or prevalent, themes related to mistrust have emerged in several qualitative studies, suggesting that a subset of parents transmit these sorts of messages to their children. In Coard et al.'s (2004) intensive interviews with African American parents, messages that taught defensive racial protocols and emphasized social distance and mistrust emerged for about one-third of the sample. In Hughes and DuMont's (1993) focus groups with African American parents, discussions about encouraging children's vigilance in interactions with White peers and adults, and about the need to maintain social distance and skepticism in relationships with them, emerged in every group. Ethnographic studies have also found that immigrant West Indian, Caribbean, and Dominican parents express strong convictions that their children should distinguish themselves from native-born African Americans because of African Americans' low social status. These convictions are typically accompanied by cautions and warnings to children about African Americans' undesirable characteristics (Pessar, 1995; Waters,

1994, 1999). This type of promotion of mistrust—aimed at protecting children from affiliations with groups who are negatively stereotyped—may be substantively different from cautions about closeness to Whites, which have been described among African Americans. Thus, an interesting empirical question concerns whether these phenomena are conceptually distinct and have different consequences for youths.

### *Egalitarianism and Silence About Race*

Many parents either explicitly encourage their children to value individual qualities over racial group membership or avoid any mention of race in discussions with their children (Spencer, 1983). Boykin and Toms (1985) coined the term *mainstream socialization* to refer to these sorts of strategies, because rather than orienting youths toward their native culture or toward their minority status, they orient youths toward developing skills and characteristics needed to thrive in settings that are part of the mainstream, or dominant, culture. We refer to these types of ethnic-racial socialization strategies as *egalitarianism* and *silence about race*, respectively, to distinguish them more clearly from one another.

Studies suggest that egalitarianism is salient to parents and prevalent across multiple ethnic groups. In individual and focus-group interviews, many African American parents have said that emphasizing hard work, virtue, self-acceptance, and equality is the primary ethnic-racial socialization strategy that they use (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Hughes & DuMont, 1993; Marshall, 1995; Thornton et al., 1990). Promoting color-blind perspectives, in which children are taught that they should not notice race, emerged as prominent among White parents in Hamm's (2001) qualitative study, although it was less prominent in African American parents' narratives. Many White parents stated that their children should not choose friends on the basis of their racial or ethnic background or try to initiate cross-race friendships simply for the purpose of diversity. In quantitative studies using binary survey questions to assess egalitarianism, two-thirds or more of parents from multiple ethnic groups (including African American, White, and Latino) report egalitarianism (Hughes & Chen, 1999; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). An exception is that only 22% of Japanese American parents in Phinney and Chavira's (1995) study reported egalitarianism.

Silence about race has not typically been examined as an explicit dimension of ethnic-racial socialization, although failure to mention racial issues also communicates race-related values and perspectives to children. As a result, estimating silence about race is somewhat tricky. When estimates of such are based on the inverse of the percentage of parents who report other ethnic-racial socialization strategies, the percentage is small (e.g., Caughy et al., 2002; Frabutt et al., 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1999). However, when parents are asked open-ended questions about the strategies they use, a substantial minority report doing nothing, with estimates ranging from 20% to 50% (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Parham & Williams, 1993; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Thornton et al., 1990). We suspect that inconsistency in the conclusions that might be drawn from these different estimates is methodological. For example, Brega and Coleman (1999) observed that field-workers who were better skilled at probing answers indicating "no racial socialization" were much more likely to obtain information about how and when racial issues were discussed than were less skilled field-workers.

### Summary

Many studies have sought to examine basic questions about whether parents socialize children about ethnicity and race and to categorize the nature of the messages parents transmit. Four dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization have been investigated most often: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism. Across studies, parents most commonly mention cultural socialization and egalitarianism in response to open-ended questions, suggesting that messages about ethnic pride and appreciating diversity are most salient or central to parents' child-rearing agendas. However, studies that have directly asked parents whether they engage in specific behaviors have found that a majority of ethnic minority parents report preparation for bias as well. Although only a few studies have examined ethnic-racial socialization across multiple ethnic groups, these studies have found that African American parents are more likely than are other parents to report preparation for bias. However, cautions or warnings about other groups are uncommon, regardless of the ethnic group examined or the assessment method used. Asian-origin parents, both Japanese and Chinese, may be least likely to report conversations about discrimination or equality among groups.

In future studies, it will be important for researchers to distinguish different types of ethnic-racial socialization and to provide a clear rationale for specific aspects chosen for examination. Although we propose that four dominant dimensions be distinguished, future researchers may find it important to distinguish these dimensions even further (e.g., emphasizing cultural pride vs. teaching about history and heritage). Moreover, other types of ethnic-racial socialization that researchers have not yet elaborated may also emerge as important (e.g., those containing messages about in-group or out-group stereotypes). For now, if researchers are more consistent about distinguishing different types of ethnic-racial socialization messages, they will be in a better position to understand these messages' antecedents and consequences.

### Predictors of Ethnic-Racial Socialization

Parental practices regarding ethnic-racial socialization are shaped by individual and group characteristics and by characteristics of the contexts in which parents and children operate. In this section, we focus on five demographic and two contextual factors that have been investigated most commonly: children's age and gender; parents' socioeconomic status, immigration status, and ethnic-racial identity; and, as contextual variables, region/neighborhood and discrimination experiences. Children's age and gender constitute developmental contexts that shape parents' views about the types of experiences youths are likely to have and about youths' capacity to understand their messages (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Marshall, 1995; Peters & Massey, 1983). Socioeconomic and immigration status constitute the sorts of social stratification factors that García Coll et al. (1996) described in their model of developmental contexts for ethnic minority youth. That is, these factors operate primarily by shaping parents' worldviews (e.g., ethnic identity, views about discrimination) and by determining the settings and activities in which parents and children participate. Although race and ethnicity are also social stratification variables (García Coll et al., 1996), we have already described available findings regarding ethnic-racial differences in socialization.

Setting-level characteristics and processes constitute proximal influences on parents' ethnic-racial socialization goals and behaviors, because it is through experiences across settings that parents develop ideas about the skills and characteristics children need for effective functioning.

### Children's Age

Studies suggest that parents' ethnic-racial socialization messages are not static or constant throughout childhood but, rather, shift according to children's cognitive abilities and their experiences (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). As children get older, they move from a rudimentary to an adult-like understanding of race (Aboud, 1988; Quintana, 1998). Thus, parents with young children, who lack the cognitive maturity to understand race as a social category, may be less likely than parents of older children to discuss racial or ethnic issues with them, especially discrimination. Moreover, adolescents' identity-seeking processes, their ability to reflect on their experiences, and the greater likelihood that they will encounter racial bias may prompt them to initiate discussions about race with their parents (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Accordingly, the frequency of some aspects of ethnic-racial socialization may increase as children get older. In particular, whereas cultural socialization or egalitarian messages may be transmitted when children are quite young, discussion of more complex social processes, such as discrimination or wariness of other groups, may not emerge until children reach middle childhood or adolescence.

A comparison of findings across studies of younger and older children is consistent with the idea that parents shift their ethnic-racial socialization strategies to align with children's developmental competencies and experiences. Studies involving preschoolers typically find a lower incidence of ethnic-racial socialization, especially discussions about discrimination, than do studies involving adolescents or adults.<sup>2</sup> In Spencer (1983), 50% of African American parents reported that children knew "some" or "a lot" of Black history, 51% taught that all people are equal, but only 33% discussed civil rights with their children. Peters and Massey (1983) and Richardson (1981) found that although many African American parents of preschoolers recognized the importance of preparing children for discrimination, few articulated specific strategies that they used to do so. However, studies of adolescents (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Marshall, 1995) and studies involving adults' retrospective reports about received socialization (Thomas & Speight, 1999) have found that ethnic-racial socialization includes discussions about discrimination.

Studies that have examined children from different age groups have also found age-related differences in the frequency of parents' discussions with children about discrimination (Fatimilehin, 1999; Hughes & Chen, 1997; McHale et al., in press), and some suggest differences in cultural socialization as well (Fatimilehin, 1999). For instance, McHale et al. (in press), using within-family

<sup>2</sup> Caughy et al. (2002) found high levels of ethnic-racial socialization in their sample of African American parents with preschool children, including ethnic pride (89%), preparation for bias (67%), and promotion of mistrust (65%). Here, however, items did not ask specifically about the target children, and thus, it is unclear that parents were answering questions about 3-4-year-old children (M. O. Caughy, personal communication, March 16, 2004).

analyses, found that mothers engaged in more preparation for bias with their older than with their younger children. Among the studies that have reported nonsignificant differences in parents' ethnic-racial socialization across different age groups (Caughy et al., 2002; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Quintana & Vera, 1999), two were based on samples with too limited an age range (approximately 8–12 years) for age differences in ethnic-racial socialization to emerge (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Quintana & Vera, 1999), and one (Quintana & Vera, 1999) combined items about cultural pride with those about discrimination, precluding analysis of age differences by message type.

In sum, findings suggest that ethnic-racial socialization increases as children age, probably reflecting parents' sensitivity to children's developmental competencies and experiences. However, the literature does not permit firm conclusions in this regard. Only a handful of studies have examined age differences, and even fewer have included an age span that is sufficient for detecting relationships. Longitudinal studies that both distinguish the range of messages parents transmit and assess change in these messages over time are sorely needed.

### *Children's Gender*

Boys and girls have different experiences related to their ethnicity and race. Compared with ethnic minority girls, ethnic minority boys are more likely to be viewed by others as threatening (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, et al., 2002), and, indeed, they report more discrimination (Fischer & Shaw, 1999). Thus, one might expect ethnic-racial socialization messages to differ for boys versus girls because of the possibility that parents anticipate their differential experiences in external contexts such as neighborhoods and schools.

Studies that have examined gender differences in parents' ethnic-racial socialization have yielded mixed findings (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002; Thomas & Speight, 1999). Several studies, all based on African American samples, have found that boys are more likely to receive messages regarding racial barriers, whereas girls are more likely to receive messages regarding racial pride. For example, Bowman and Howard (1985) found that girls were more likely to report that parents taught nothing about racial status or emphasized racial pride, whereas boys were more likely to report that parents emphasized egalitarianism and racial barriers. In Thomas and Speight (1999), parents' descriptions of socialization themes for boys emphasized negative stereotypes and strategies for coping with racism, whereas those for girls emphasized achievement and racial pride. However, other studies have reported no significant gender differences in ethnic-racial socialization (Caughy et al., 2002; Frabutt et al., 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Scott, 2003; Stevenson, Reed, & Bodison, 1996; Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000). These findings do not appear to vary according to method of assessment, source of information, parents' ethnicity, or child's age.

### *Parents' Immigration Status*

Among immigrant groups, perspectives on what it means to be an ethnic group member and on the types of cultural knowledge that children need for effective functioning are likely to shift with the length of time in the United States and according to other social

processes, including acculturation. For recent immigrants, socialization about ethnicity occurs naturally as families participate in the routines and practices of their home country. Among later generations, parents may need to make deliberate efforts to promote children's identification with their ethnic group (Waters, 1990). Immigrants' understanding of U.S. systems of racial stratification may also shift across immigrant generations (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters, 2004), influencing messages about ethnicity and race.

Not surprisingly, studies have shown that parents' immigration status is associated with the type and frequency of ethnic-racial socialization messages parents transmit to children. Recent immigrants are more likely to socialize youths regarding their ethnic origin, native language, and traditions (cultural socialization) than are their same-ethnicity counterparts who have been in the United States longer (Alba, 1990; Cheng & Kuo, 2000; Knight, Bernal, Garza, et al., 1993; Quintana, Casteñada-English, & Ybarra, 1999; Rumbaut, 1994; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004; Waters, 1990) and as compared with successive generations (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rumbaut, 1994). In Knight, Bernal, Garza, et al.'s (1993) study, more recent immigrants were also more likely to discuss discrimination with their children.

Less is known about other correlates of changes in ethnic-racial socialization among immigrants to the United States. For instance, shifts over time in the nature or frequency of preparation for bias may vary according to a group's country of origin, phenotypic characteristics, and patterns of assimilation. Likewise, socialization practices among successive generations may shift as families move from ethnic enclaves to ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods. These sorts of issues represent important areas for future investigation.

### *Parents' Socioeconomic Status*

Parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds and with different occupational and educational histories may have different ideas about ethnicity and race and about experiences related to them. For instance, higher income and better educated Blacks perceive more prejudice and discrimination than do their lower income and less well-educated counterparts (Williams, 1999), as do socioeconomically advantaged immigrants (Portes, Parker, & Cobas, 1980). Thus, one might expect that socioeconomic status (SES) differences in experiences vis-à-vis ethnicity and race would be reflected in differences in ethnic-racial socialization.

Consistent with this, several studies have found that higher SES parents report more ethnic-racial socialization than do their lower SES counterparts. Cultural socialization and preparation for bias are each higher among parents in professional and managerial jobs than among parents in clerical or sales jobs or in service, machine trades, or bench-work occupations (Hughes & Chen, 1997). Cultural socialization and preparation for bias are also more frequent among parents with higher incomes and more years of schooling (Caughy et al., 2002; McHale et al., in press). In Caughy et al. (2002), higher income parents were also more likely to provide an Afrocentric home environment than were their lower income counterparts. Although several studies have not found SES differences in ethnic-racial socialization, these studies are characterized by smaller samples (e.g.,  $N \leq 66$ ) and limited variability in SES (e.g., Frabutt et al., 2002; Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al., 1993; Phinney &

Chavira, 1995), reducing statistical power to detect significant effects.

Several studies have found curvilinear associations between SES and ethnic-racial socialization. Specifically, in studies using both income and education as socioeconomic indicators, middle-SES respondents have been more likely to focus on discrimination and mistrust, and less likely to focus on egalitarian messages, than respondents in lower or higher groups, suggesting that race and ethnicity are more relevant to them (Caughy et al., 2002; Thornton, 1997)

### *Region/Neighborhood*

Regions of the country vary in their racial histories, racial composition, and patterns of intergroup relations, and these differences may shape the nature of parents' ethnic-racial socialization messages. Only the NSBA has examined regional differences in ethnic-racial socialization; other samples have tended to be within small geographic areas. Using NSBA data, Thornton et al. (1990) found that men in the Northeast were more likely to report ethnic-racial socialization than were men in the South, although no regional differences were evident among women. In a separate analysis combining men and women, respondents in the West were less likely than those in the South to report socialization as related to being a member of a minority group (Thornton, 1997).

Neighborhoods, like regions, vary in their racial composition and in patterns of intergroup relations. Thus, one might expect ethnic-racial socialization to vary according to aggregate characteristics of neighborhoods, especially ethnic composition. For instance, preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust may not be very common among parents rearing children in neighborhoods in which intergroup relations and discrimination are not salient. In contrast, egalitarian messages may be especially functional among parents living in neighborhoods in which children need to relate across groups, such as when children are in a numerical minority.

Studies have only recently begun to examine neighborhood context as an important determinant of, or moderator of, ethnic-racial socialization. The few studies that exist have found greater preparation for bias in integrated neighborhoods (e.g., Caughy, Nettles, O'Campo, & Lohrfink, 2005; Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, et al., 2002; Stevenson, McNeil, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2005; Thornton et al., 1990) as compared with predominantly Black (Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, et al., 2002) or predominantly White (Caughy et al., 2005) neighborhoods. However, neighborhood racial composition is, in part, a proxy indicator of other neighborhood social processes such as intergroup conflict, neighborhood violence, availability of resources, and social capital, which are also likely to influence ethnic-racial socialization. For instance, one might expect different types of messages about race in neighborhoods that differed in the extent of animosity, competition, and closeness between groups. In Caughy et al. (2005), parents in neighborhoods characterized by a negative social climate were more likely to report preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust than were other parents. Stevenson (2004) found that African American girls reported the most preparation for bias when neighborhood danger was high and neighborhood support was minimal.

### *Parents' Racial Identity*

Parents' ethnic-racial identity shapes the frequency and content of ethnic-racial socialization messages, because parents for whom

race and ethnicity are more salient may have stronger convictions regarding the particular types of racial, cultural, and ethnic knowledge they want their children to develop. Dimensions of ethnic identity such as centrality, ideology, and regard (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997) should be especially important. For instance, parents for whom race is a central social identity (i.e., high centrality) and those who believe their group is negatively valued by others (i.e., low public regard) may be especially likely to discuss discrimination with their children. Those with high centrality and favorable views of their ethnic-racial group (i.e., high private regard) may be especially likely to transmit messages about group pride to their children. Surprisingly, few studies have examined the extent to which parents' identities shape their ethnic-racial socialization practices. Virtually no studies have taken the sort of nuanced look at these relationships that seems warranted.

Nevertheless, in the few studies that have investigated the extent to which parents' identities are associated with their socialization practices, significant relationships have been found. For instance, in studies of African American (Thomas & Speight, 1999), Dominican and Puerto Rican (Hughes, 2003), and Mexican/Mexican American (Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al., 1993; Romero, Cuellar, & Roberts, 2000) parents, those with greater attachment to their ethnic group have been more likely than their counterparts to emphasize cultural socialization. In Hughes's (2003) study, relationships between parents' ethnic identity and cultural socialization were more pronounced among parents of older (10–17-year-old) than among parents of younger (6–9-year-old) children. Stronger ethnic identity has also been found to predict more frequent preparation for bias among Latino parents (Hughes, 2003; Knight, Bernal, Cota, et al., 1993; Knight, Bernal, Garza, et al., 2003).

### *Parents' and Youths' Discrimination Experiences*

Studies of parenting have documented that parents try to inculcate in their children the skills that they themselves have needed to function effectively across contexts (Kohn & Schooler, 1978). Accordingly, one might expect that parents who experience discrimination will be more likely than others to anticipate that their children will also experience it and to provide their children with tools for coping with it (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). Findings from several studies are consistent with this expectation. Hughes and Chen (1997) found that African American parents' messages regarding discrimination (preparation for bias) were significantly associated with their perceptions of interpersonal prejudice at work. Parents' cautions and warnings about Whites (promotion of mistrust) were associated with their perceptions of institutional-level discrimination at work. These relationships were evident among parents of children 9–12 years of age but not among parents of children 4–8 years of age. In Hughes (2003), parents' community-based discrimination experiences predicted preparation for bias, although these relationships were only evident among African American and Dominican parents of children 10–14 years of age (as compared with parents of children ages 6–9 or Puerto Rican parents). In Stevenson, Cameron, et al. (2002), adolescents who reported that a family member had experienced discrimination reported receiving higher levels of cultural socialization than did adolescents who reported no discrimination experiences.

Children's experiences of discrimination also prompt parents to discuss discrimination with them. For instance, adolescent girls and boys report more frequent ethnic-racial socialization overall when they have experienced discrimination (Miller & MacIntosh, 1999), and adolescent girls report fewer mainstream messages if they have experienced discrimination (Stevenson, Cameron, et al., 2002). In Stevenson et al. (2005), relationships between discrimination and preparation for bias were especially strong among boys living in diverse neighborhoods. In Hughes and Johnson (2001), parents reported more preparation for bias when they believed their early adolescent children had experienced discrimination by adults and more promotion of mistrust when they and their children believed that the children had been discriminated against by peers.

### Summary

Parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices vary according to children's and parents' characteristics and according to characteristics of their contexts. Children's gender and age are two such characteristics. Preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust appear to increase in frequency as children get older, perhaps reflecting shifts in children's cognitions about race and their prior experiences with discrimination. Some studies have found that cultural socialization increases with children's age as well, although findings have been mixed. Children's gender also plays an important role in shaping parents' ethnic-racial socialization. Where mean-level gender differences in ethnic-racial socialization have been found, boys are more likely to receive messages regarding racial barriers, whereas girls are more likely to receive messages regarding racial pride. However, the work of Stevenson and colleagues suggests that these gender differences interact in complex ways with youths' discrimination experiences and neighborhood contexts (Stevenson, 2004; Stevenson, Cameron, et al., 2002; Stevenson et al., 2005). Future studies should be designed to more thoroughly examine these relationships. As the literature develops, studies should also examine a broader set of child characteristics than have been examined thus far. Among those that are likely to be important are a child's temperament and skin color, which may directly influence or moderate parents' ethnic-racial socialization (García Coll et al., 1996).

Parents' demographic characteristics serve as a critical backdrop for ethnic-racial socialization, underscoring the fact that parents bring to the process a set of prior experiences and worldviews that shape their socialization practices and determine the proximal contexts in which families and children operate (García Coll et al., 1996). Generally, higher SES parents are more likely to engage in cultural socialization and preparation for bias than are their counterparts. In some studies, these relations are curvilinear, with middle-SES respondents reporting more socialization about ethnicity and race than their lower or higher SES counterparts. Although the literature on immigration status is small, it suggests that some aspects of ethnic-racial socialization, especially cultural socialization, are shaped by the length of time that immigrant parents have been in the United States and by the nature of parents' ties to their country of origin, which tend to be closer among more recent immigrants. Parents who identify more strongly with their ethnic group also value ethnic-racial socialization more and report using certain strategies more often.

Studies of how neighborhood context and discrimination experiences shape parents' ethnic-racial socialization underscore the importance of understanding aspects of parents' and youths' ecological experiences in relation to messages that children receive. In particular, when features of settings make race highly salient, as when settings are ethnically integrated or highly discriminatory, parents are more likely to communicate messages about ethnicity and race to their children. However, it is unclear whether more frequent messages stem from parents' expectations for their children's experiences or are reactions to experiences children have already had.

### Ethnic-Racial Socialization and Youth Outcomes

We turn now to a consideration of the research literature regarding relationships between ethnic-racial socialization and youth outcomes. Notably, this literature is still small and underdeveloped. Although a range of youth outcomes have been examined, only a handful of studies have examined any particular one of them. Moreover, the literature lacks a theoretical rationale that specifies how ethnic-racial socialization might operate vis-à-vis particular youth outcomes. We begin by describing studies that have examined relationships to youths' ethnic identity and self-esteem. These aspects of youths' self-system seem most proximal to parents' socialization efforts and may mediate relationships to cognitive, behavioral, and achievement outcomes. We then describe studies that have examined relationships to coping with discrimination, academic achievement, and other psychosocial outcomes. Where the literature is precise enough to permit distinctions between types of messages, we discuss the dimensions that have emerged as most important. Further, we discuss studies of early and middle childhood separately from those of adolescents and young adults because of our view that ethnic-racial socialization processes may have different consequences across these age groups.

#### *Ethnic Identity*

Youths' ethnic identity has been the most commonly investigated outcome of parents' ethnic-racial socialization. This is likely attributable to the fact that many ethnic-racial socialization practices are targeted directly toward instilling a sense of pride and group knowledge in children. Aspects of cultural socialization—including an emphasis on ethnic pride and language use, exposing children to positive aspects of their history and heritage, embedding children in cultural settings and events, and having ethnic objects in the home—have been examined most often. A few studies have also examined other dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization, or unidimensional measures, in relation to youths' identity outcomes.

*Early and middle childhood.* Most studies have found that cultural socialization facilitates children's knowledge about their ethnic-racial group and their favorable in-group attitudes. In early studies conducted among African American families, a plurality of factors—parents' own racial attitudes (Branch & Newcombe, 1986); the value they place on teaching children about history, civil rights, and discrimination (Spencer, 1983); and worldviews combining a system-blame orientation, support for collective action, and involvement in the community (Barnes, 1980)—have been associated with children's more Afrocentric and less Euro-

centric racial attitudes as assessed via projective techniques. In more recent work, Marshall (1995) found that African American parents who reported more ethnic-racial socialization had children who were more likely to express racial identity views characteristic of W. E. Cross's (1991) *encounter* stage, characterized by questioning allegiance to the dominant culture's worldview. In two studies among Mexican American families, parental teachings about ethnic pride and cultural knowledge (cultural socialization) and about discrimination against Mexican Americans (preparation for bias) were significantly associated with elementary school children's knowledge about Mexican traditions and with their reports about preference for Mexican behaviors (Knight, Bernal, Garza, et al., 1993; Quintana & Vera, 1999). In the Knight, Bernal, Garza, et al. (1993) study, the presence of Mexican objects was also associated with children's ethnic knowledge and preferences.

*Adolescents and adults.* Similar to studies of young children, studies among adolescents and adults have found that parents' ethnic-racial socialization is associated with indicators of ethnic identity. This general pattern has emerged in studies using unidimensional (Quintana et al., 1999; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, 1995; Thompson et al., 2000) and multidimensional (O'Connor et al., 2000) measures and in studies across multiple ethnic groups (Lee & Quintana, 2005; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). For instance, cultural socialization has been associated with identity exploration, more advanced stages of identity development, more positive group attitudes, and more group-oriented ethnic behaviors among African American and Mexican adolescents and adults (Demo & Hughes, 1990; O'Connor et al., 2000; Stevenson, 1995; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004) and among cross-racially adopted Korean and African American youths (DeBerry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1990; Lee & Quintana, 2005; Yoon, 2001, 2004). Preparation for bias has also been associated with youths' identity development. For instance, adolescents who believe more strongly in the importance of teaching about racism are more likely than their counterparts to evidence more advanced stages of ethnic-racial identity development (Stevenson, 1995). African American adolescent girls whose mothers engage in greater preparation for bias are more likely to have Black over mixed-race or White music preferences (O'Connor et al., 2000). In the NSBA, however, there were no significant differences in ethnic identity among adults who received messages about discrimination, those who received messages about egalitarianism, and those who received no ethnic-racial socialization messages (Demo & Hughes, 1990).

### *Self-Esteem*

Self-esteem is commonly conceived of as the central evaluative dimension of youths' self-concept (Harter, 1999; Rosenberg, 1986), and it is associated with varied psychological and behavioral outcomes (Greene & Way, 2005). It is highly sensitive to parenting (Jacobvitz & Bush, 1996; Laible, Gustavo, & Scott, 2004), to individuals' awareness of their membership in devalued groups (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994), and to expectations that one is likely to experience discrimination (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Thus, it seems likely that ethnic-racial socialization would be associated with youths' self-esteem. For instance, when ethnic-racial socialization leads youths to expect persistent discrimination and unfair treatment, one might expect it to be associated with lower self-esteem (Branscombe et

al., 1999). When such socialization enhances youths' positive views of their ethnic-racial group or allows them to attribute unfavorable outcomes to an external source (Crocker & Major, 1989), one might expect it to be associated with higher self-esteem (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999). Among the handful of studies that have explicitly examined relationships between ethnic-racial socialization and youths' self-esteem, we did not identify any that included younger (early and middle childhood) samples. Below, we describe the few studies that have examined adolescents.

Studies of ethnic-racial socialization in relation to adolescents' self-esteem have produced conflicting results, possibly because of differences in foci, methodology, and measurement (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Fatimilehin, 1999; Stevenson et al., 1997). For instance, whereas Constantine and Blackmon (2002) examined domain-specific self-esteem, others have examined global self-esteem (Fatimilehin, 1999; Stevenson et al., 1997). Similarly, whereas Stevenson et al. (1997) conducted separate analyses for boys and girls and examined a unidimensional indicator of ethnic-racial socialization, neither Fatimilehin (1999) nor Constantine and Blackmon (2002) conducted analyses by gender, and both distinguished multiple dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization. Thus, findings across these studies are not readily comparable. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that youths' self-esteem may be sensitive to ethnic-racial socialization messages from parents. For instance, in Constantine and Blackmon (2002), preparation for bias and cultural socialization were associated with higher family self-esteem, cultural socialization was associated with higher peer self-esteem, and mainstream socialization was associated with lower school self-esteem. Although this specific pattern may have been difficult to predict a priori, several plausible explanations come to mind that could be pursued in future studies. The positive association between cultural socialization and peer esteem suggests that cultural socialization may facilitate student's competence and confidence in interacting with their age-mates. Conversely, mainstream messages may lead to expectancies for equal treatment at school that are unrealized, consistent with Spencer's (1983) view that color-blind approaches leave children unprepared for racial realities. Stevenson et al. (1997) also documented that adolescents' beliefs in the importance of ethnic-racial socialization, assessed globally, are associated with self-esteem. In this study, relationships were positive among girls and negative among boys. Notably, given the use of a global scale score, girls and boys with similar mean global scale scores may have been differentially endorsing discrete dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization (e.g., spirituality vs. extended family caring vs. coping with antagonism), which may in turn have been differentially associated with self-esteem.

### *Coping With Prejudice and Discrimination*

One of the primary functions of ethnic-racial socialization may be to enable youths to recognize and cope with societal discrimination (Barnes, 1980; Spencer, 1983). Among the dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization that we have proposed, one might expect preparation for bias to be especially influential in this regard, because it presumably includes proscriptions for coping with discrimination. However, other aspects of ethnic-racial socialization may influence coping as well. For instance, cultural socialization may bolster youths' resilience in the face of discrimination through

its influences on self-esteem and ethnic identity (Barnes, 1980; Branch & Newcombe, 1986; Spencer, 1983). Messages about appreciation of all groups and equality, however, may leave youths ill-prepared to cope with discrimination by socializing them to expect equal treatment (Spencer, 1983).

*Early and middle childhood.* Only a few studies have examined ethnic-racial socialization vis-à-vis coping with discrimination among young children, perhaps because issues of discrimination are less salient during this stage. In Szalacha, Erkut, García Coll, Alarcón, et al (2003), only 12% of Puerto Rican children in Grades 1–3 reported having been discriminated against, whereas almost half of Puerto Rican adolescents reported discrimination.

Nevertheless, in the two studies that have examined whether ethnic-racial socialization is associated with young children's coping with discrimination, significant relationships were reported. In Quintana and Vera (1999), Mexican American children whose parents discussed discrimination with them evidenced greater knowledge about Mexican Americans and, in turn, greater understanding of prejudice. In Johnson's (1994) study of 41 parent-child dyads in middle-class African American families, parents' preferences for how children should cope with discrimination were associated with children's actual coping behaviors. For instance, children whose parents believed children should respond proactively to racial situations (engaging the person, asserting oneself, or getting parents help) were least likely to use passive coping strategies or strategies that indicated internalized racism.

*Adolescents and adults.* Adolescents whose parents communicate with them about discrimination (preparation for bias) have also been found to demonstrate more effective strategies for coping with it. For instance, when asked about ways they would cope with hypothetical situations involving discrimination, these adolescents are more likely to describe proactive strategies such as seeking support and using direct problem-solving strategies (Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Scott, 2003), and they are less likely to describe ineffective coping strategies such as engaging in verbal banter (Phinney & Chavira, 1995). Fischer and Shaw (1999) also found that youths' reports about their actual exposure to discrimination were significantly associated with poorer mental health outcomes only among youths who reported that they received no ethnic-racial socialization from their parents. However, not all studies have found that preparation for bias is adaptive. In Brega and Coleman (1999), African American youths who received more ethnic-racial socialization from their parents reported feeling more stigmatized than did their counterparts who received less. This was especially true among youths who received conflicting messages.

### *Academic Outcomes*

The possibility that parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices are associated with their children's cognitive abilities, academic orientations, and success in school has been of critical concern to social scientists. A positive ethnic identity and high self-esteem are positively associated with youths' academic orientations and outcomes (Chavous et al., 2003; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994), and thus, one might expect indirect influences of ethnic-racial socialization by way of these components of youths' self-systems. In addition, ethnic-racial socialization can contain messages about opportunity, which in turn influence youths' own perceptions of opportunity and their subsequent investment in the academic domain (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; see W. J. Cross, 2003, for a contrasting

perspective). In addition, certain types of messages, such as preparation for bias, may lessen adolescents' vulnerability to stereotypes about their groups' intellectual capabilities, which in turn influence performance and achievement (Mendoza-Denton, Downy, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002; Steele & Aronson, 1998). And, finally, ethnic-racial socialization messages may shape how youths construct their achievement goals vis-à-vis their ethnic-racial group. For instance, in a recent school-based intervention study, Oyserman et al. (2001) found that African American students who were exposed to a curriculum that encouraged them to view academic achievement as an important component of their identity had fewer absences and higher grades than did their nonexposed counterparts.

*Early and middle childhood.* Two studies have examined ethnic-racial socialization in relation to academic achievement or cognitive functioning among younger children (Caughy et al., 2002; Marshall, 1995). In Marshall (1995), children who reported that their mothers socialized them about a broad range of racial issues had lower grades on their school report cards. However, mothers' own reports about their ethnic-racial socialization practices were unrelated to children's grades. In Caughy et al. (2002), an observational measure of the number of Afrocentric items in the home was associated with children's greater factual knowledge and better problem-solving skills, as indicated by the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children. As in Marshall (1995), however, mothers' self-reported ethnic-racial socialization was unrelated to their children's cognitive outcomes. This pattern suggests that children receive messages independent of parent's perceptions of them and that such messages may be most important for their academic behaviors. Smith et al. (2003) reported that children's perceived racial barriers were inversely associated with their achievement, whereas children's cultural pride was positively associated with their achievement.

*Adolescents and adults.* Similar to studies of early and middle childhood, studies that have examined ethnic-racial socialization in relation to academic outcomes among adolescents and adults have produced mixed results. In the three-generation NSBA study, youths who were taught about racial barriers reported higher grades in school than did youths who were taught nothing about race (Bowman & Howard, 1985). Miller and MacIntosh (1999), however, found no significant relationships between adolescents' views about ethnic-racial socialization and their grades when zero-order relations were examined or in models controlling for other demographic, risk, or protective factors.

### *Psychosocial Outcomes*

In keeping with the view that ethnic-racial socialization serves a variety of protective functions for ethnic minority youth, scholars have predicted that such socialization is associated with more favorable psychosocial outcomes. Among the psychosocial outcomes that have been examined are internalizing symptoms, depression, externalizing symptoms, anger management, and physical fighting.

*Early and middle childhood.* To date, only one study of ethnic-racial socialization in relation to youths' psychosocial outcomes has included children in early or middle childhood (Caughy et al., 2002). In this study, parents' cultural socialization was associated with fewer total behavior problems and fewer internalizing and externalizing behavior problems among boys. Among

girls, cultural socialization was marginally associated with fewer internalizing problems and unrelated to externalizing behaviors. All analyses controlled for general level of parental involvement, suggesting that relationships were not attributable simply to greater parental activity.

*Adolescents.* In studies concerning the consequences of ethnic-racial socialization for adolescents' psychosocial outcomes, findings often differ for boys and girls and depend on the dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization examined. No studies have examined the consequences of ethnic-racial socialization for psychosocial functioning among adults.

Many of the studies documenting gender differences in the consequences of ethnic-racial socialization for youth psychosocial outcomes come from Stevenson's extensive program of research with urban African American adolescents. In one study, boys with higher global ethnic-racial socialization scores reported more frequent sad mood and greater hopelessness than did their counterparts, whereas comparable girls reported less frequent sad mood and less hopelessness (Stevenson, 1997; Stevenson et al., 1997). In a second study, boys who believed in the importance of emphasizing cultural pride and heritage (cultural socialization) reported higher levels of anger control than did those who endorsed a focus on discrimination against Blacks (preparation for bias; Stevenson, 1997; Stevenson et al., 1997). In Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, et al. (2002), those who received messages regarding coping with antagonism (preparation for bias) together with messages regarding cultural pride and legacy appreciation (cultural socialization) reported lower levels of fighting frequency and initiation. Thus, findings from this program of research suggest that cultural socialization is largely protective, but they also hint at potentially maladaptive consequences of parents' exclusive focus on discrimination, especially for boys.

There is other evidence as well that an overemphasis on discrimination may yield unfavorable outcomes among youths, especially when it leads youths to expect discrimination or to mistrust others. In one study, Asian and Black (immigrant and U.S.-born) adolescents who expected that others would discriminate against them reported more depressive symptoms and greater conflict with their parents than did those who did not express such expectations (Rumbaut, 1994). In a study among African American, Haitian, and Caribbean adolescents, racial mistrust was a significant predictor of deviant behavior, both minor and major, with SES, peer values, family cohesion, and religiosity controlled for (Biafora, Warheit, et al., 1993).

### Summary

Studies suggest that ethnic-racial socialization has potentially important consequences for youth outcomes, but relationships vary according to types of measures used and the type of ethnic-racial socialization assessed. When studies have used unidimensional measures, findings have been mixed, with favorable, unfavorable, and null relationships reported in relation to self-esteem, stigmatization, academic achievement, and psychosocial functioning. This mixed pattern of findings underscores the need for researchers to move beyond global measures if they are to fully understand the consequences of ethnic-racial socialization for youths. Studies that have examined cultural socialization consistently suggest that it is associated with favorable outcomes. Not surprisingly, youths have reported stronger and more positive ethnic identities when

parents incorporate cultural socialization practices into their parenting repertoire. Cultural socialization has also been associated with other youth outcomes, including fewer externalizing behaviors, lower fighting frequency and better anger management (especially among boys), higher self-esteem with peers, fewer internalizing problems, and better cognitive outcomes. Fewer studies have examined the consequences of preparation for bias for youth outcomes. In studies that have examined these consequences vis-à-vis ethnic identity, findings have been mixed. Studies of children and adolescents have also found that preparation for bias provides youths with skills for understanding and coping with discrimination, although these relationships tend to be weak. At least one study found that preparation for bias is associated with higher grades in school among older adolescents.

Findings regarding the potential protective properties of preparation for bias are tempered by findings that less favorable outcomes are evident when youths develop expectations for discrimination and mistrust of other groups. This pattern has emerged in Stevenson's work on anger management and fighting frequency (e.g., Stevenson, 1997; see also Bowman & Howard, 1985) as well as in Biafora, Taylor, et al. (1993), Biafora, Warheit, et al. (1993), and Rumbaut's (1994) large-sample survey studies of ethnic minority youths. As we discuss below, a challenge for future studies will be to determine the conditions under which preparation for bias is protective, possibly by distinguishing it more clearly from promotion of mistrust.

More studies are also needed that examine the consequences for youths of parents' emphasis on egalitarian views. Constantine and Blackmon's (2002) findings regarding negative relations between egalitarianism and school self-esteem, together with Bowman and Howard's (1985) finding that no discussion of race is associated with lower grades, serves as a reminder of the fine line between strategies that undermine youths' competence and goals and strategies that leave them unprepared for the racial realities they may encounter.

Finally, although we differentiated studies examining children during early and middle childhood from those examining adolescents and adults, findings to date have been fairly similar across these age ranges. However, differential findings have been reported for boys and girls. Thus, extant studies underscore the importance of considering youths' gender when examining relationships.

### Conceptual Gaps and Methodological Issues

In the remaining paragraphs, we underscore thorny conceptual and methodological issues that cut across studies of ethnic-racial socialization with the goal of shaping the way that researchers think about and study this process in future work.

#### *The Need for Research Across Multiple Ethnic Groups*

The facts that only a few studies have examined ethnic-racial socialization across multiple ethnic-racial groups (Hughes, 2003; Phinney & Chavira, 1995) and that, to date, studies have focused primarily on African American families limits empirical knowledge. In our view, comparative information would not only be descriptively interesting, it would also enrich understanding of these processes in a number of ways. For instance, it is likely that some aspects of ethnic-racial socialization are rooted in a group's

historical experiences and in family practices that are passed down through successive generations (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Ward, 1991), whereas other types of messages are reactive to contemporary constraints, opportunities, and social processes, including discrimination. Examination of groups with similar historical experiences but different current opportunities and constraints, or groups with different historical experiences but similar current opportunities and constraints, could help to unpack these origins (Hughes, 2003).

Moreover, comparative studies are needed because specific ethnic-racial socialization behaviors may have different meanings across groups and, therefore, different correlates and consequences. For instance, Kofkin, Katz, and Downey (1995) found that White parents' avoidance of discussions about race emanated from their views that race does not matter, whereas African American parents' avoidance of such discussions emanated from their views that their children were too young to understand. Here, differing beliefs systems underlay similar patterns of behavior, underscoring the need to understand these processes both within and across groups.

Additional within-group studies of ethnic-racial socialization among families from diverse groups would also contribute to researchers' understanding of the process. To date, studies of African American families have dominated the literature, followed by studies of Mexican/Mexican American and Korean families. For other ethnic-racial groups—including White, Puerto Rican, Chinese, Japanese, and Native American families—either no empirical information is available or available data come from only one or two studies. Investigation of ethnic-racial socialization within cultural communities that vary in the salience of ethnic-racial issues, in their social status and history, in the ways intergroup relations are constructed, and in their beliefs about how race and ethnicity should be represented and communicated to children may illuminate additional features of ethnic-racial socialization processes and of the mechanisms through which they operate. In particular, more studies are needed that include White parents and youths, not only because they have largely been ignored in the ethnic-racial socialization literature but because they represent the largest contrast to groups that have most commonly been studied on factors that shape ethnic-racial socialization (e.g., distinctiveness of cultural rituals and routines, salience of ethnic identity, prior discrimination experiences, exposure to negative group stereotypes).

### *Conceptualizing Ethnic-Racial Socialization in the Broader Context of Parenting*

Parent-child relationship quality, disciplinary practices, autonomy-granting behaviors, and monitoring are powerful determinants of outcomes among youths. Thus, one cannot reasonably understand parents' ethnic-racial socialization in isolation from these factors. In a recent study using the Racial Stories Task, processes of negotiating, scaffolding, and turn-taking with children were as important to the children's racial coping as were parents' spoken messages (Johnson, 2005). Greater maternal warmth (Caldwell, Zimmerman, Bernat, Sellers, & Notaro, 2002), positive and involved parenting (Frabutt et al., 2002), and academic involvement at home and at school (McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2003) have also been associated with ethnic-racial socialization. Thus, studies suggest that ethnic-racial social-

ization and its effects are embedded in other aspects of parenting, but more information is needed regarding how.

### *Synergy and Bidirectionality*

Ethnic-racial socialization is clearly a bidirectional process shaped by parents and children, but studies have not yet sought to understand the dynamic ways in which it unfolds. For example, children's experiences and questions may prompt parents to share values and information regarding race, ethnicity and intergroup relations, regardless of parents' predetermined racial socialization agendas (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Children can also disagree with, miss, misinterpret, or ignore parents' socialization messages (Marshall, 1995). Thus, it is important to conceptually distinguish the messages parents intend to impart from those that children perceive by studying both. Marshall (1995) found that many children whose parents had described a range of ethnic-racial socialization strategies reported that their parents did not teach them anything about ethnicity or race. Hughes et al. (2006) reported that children perceive more preparation for bias messages than their parents report sending, whereas they perceive fewer messages about cultural socialization and egalitarianism. Thus, distinguishing situations in which ethnic-racial socialization is child-initiated from those in which it is parent-initiated, elaborating the synergistic qualities of the process, and exploring correspondence between parents' and youths' perceptions are each essential for a complete understanding of the process.

### *The Need for a Greater Range of Assessment Tools*

Most studies of ethnic-racial socialization rely on self-report measures. The limitations of such methods are of special concern in this literature, because parents are frequently unaware of the many types of messages they transmit or are unable or unwilling to report them. Caughy et al.'s (2002) finding that observational measures of an Afrocentric home environment predicted cognitive outcomes, whereas parents' self-reports about ethnic-racial socialization did not, serves as a reminder that parents may not consider all relevant aspects of ethnic-racial socialization when responding to self-report measures. Lewis's (1999) description of hair combing as a culturally relevant context for ethnic-racial socialization in African American families is also a reminder that self-report measures may not capture the many subtle but relevant messages that are embedded in families' cultural practices and daily routines. Thus, to fully understand the range of messages that parent transmit, self-report methods need to be complemented by more holistic and culturally anchored methods. Experimental methods, which have not been used to our knowledge, could also be extremely useful for identifying the mechanisms through which different types of socialization exert their effects. For instance, one might examine whether youths' beliefs and feelings following experimentally induced encounters with unfair treatment vary according to messages they report having received.

### *Reliance on Single Informants and Correlational Designs*

As is common in any emergent literature, most studies of ethnic-racial socialization and its consequences have obtained information from a single source. Thus, respondent bias and unmeasured third variables remain as plausible alternative explana-

tions for many documented relationships. Studies are needed that obtain information at the family level, including relevant caregivers and youths. Most studies have also relied on correlational data, which do not allow researchers to establish the causal nature of relationships. As in other areas in developmental psychology, longitudinal studies that track changes in ethnic–racial socialization and its correlates over time are needed.

### Sampling

Most studies in this area have also relied on self-selected ad hoc and nonrandom samples, recruited from a single or small number of settings (e.g., Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Stevenson, 1994, 1995; Stevenson et al., 1996, 1997) or from a single or small number of cities (e.g., Caughy et al., 2002; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997). Only the NSBA used a nationally representative probability sample, enabling greater confidence in the findings (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Thornton et al., 1990). Limited statistical power and restricted range are always issues of concern when samples are small and drawn from single settings, and effect sizes have not been reported in most studies. Moreover, recruiting respondents from a single or small number of settings limits variability in both ethnic–racial socialization and its correlates, because respondents are more similar to those who share a setting than they are to the population as a whole. Thus, studies using larger and more representative samples are critical to the development of knowledge in the area.

### Implications for Policy and Positive Youth Development

Ethnic–racial socialization is a complex multidimensional construct. Our review suggests that most parents engage in such socialization, and thus it is critical that future studies focus on building a theoretically grounded base of knowledge about its nature, antecedents, and consequences for youths. Conceptually and operationally differentiating the multiple dimensions of ethnic–racial socialization that we propose (cultural socialization, preparation for bias, egalitarianism, and promotion of mistrust) is especially important, because studies have indicated that messages differ in their salience to parents and in their prevalence and frequency.

We reviewed a range of distal and proximal factors that are likely to shape parents' ethnic–racial socialization. Characteristics of parents, their children, and the settings in which they operate are each associated with the types and frequency of messages that parents transmit. As this literature expands in quantity and sophistication, researchers will need to examine individual and contextual factors in more complex ways—for example, as moderators of ethnic–racial socialization rather than as predictors. Children's age and gender both predicted ethnic–racial socialization in many studies. Gender also moderated its antecedents and consequences across many studies. Although we did not identify studies that examined children's age as a statistical moderator vis-à-vis youth outcomes, and patterns of findings were quite similar across the age groups we examined, the literature base is too small to support conclusions in this regard. Thus, in generating future research, studies that include boys and girls across a wide swath of the developmental spectrum are needed to test hypotheses about whether processes are similar or different across gender and developmental stage.

In studies examining the consequences of different types of ethnic–racial socialization for youth outcomes, the literature is uneven in terms of the types of questions that have been asked. Cultural socialization has been examined most often, across samples that were diverse in terms of children's age and ethnicity, and studies have consistently spoken to its benefits for youths. However, there is not as yet a sufficient literature base from which to draw conclusions about other aspects of ethnic–racial socialization, most notably preparation for bias and egalitarianism. Findings regarding the consequences of these messages have been mixed, such that among the foremost challenges for future studies will be to disentangle the conditions under which each type of message leads to positive versus unintended negative consequences for youths. Thus, researchers need to generate empirically based knowledge that scholars, practitioners, and parents can use about how to effectively prepare youths to deal with discrimination without undermining their sense of competence and possibility and about how to encourage youths to value diversity without setting false expectations about societal structures and relationships.

Finally, because interest in ethnic–racial socialization is a relatively recent phenomenon, the existing literature has not kept pace with methodological and statistical advances that characterize other areas of inquiry in developmental psychology. At a basic level, studies need to use larger and more representative samples, longitudinal or experimental designs that permit examination of causal mechanisms, and data from multiple informants. Ultimately, however, the literature on ethnic–racial socialization will need to include mixed-method studies to understand the process's depth and texture, multilevel nested models to understand the influence of context, and interventions to understand mechanisms for change.

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