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The Multiracial-Black Socialization Model: Conceptualizing racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families

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Abstract

Scholars have spent the last four decades expanding the theoretical understanding of parental racial socialization—or parent–child communication about race. What is largely absent from existing conceptualizations, however, is a consideration for how the practice manifests in Multiracial families. The interracial structure of Multiracial families complicates racial socialization in ways that are not being captured in empirical research due to the overreliance on universal frameworks. It is imperative that we close this theoretical gap as the proportion of Multiracial families in the United States is expanding at record rates. Accordingly, we present the Multiracial-Black Socialization Model (MRB-SM) in this paper. The MRB-SM is designed explicitly for Multiracial-Black families, one of the fastest-growing sub-groups of Multiracial families. The model builds upon the strengths of universal socialization theories by outlining the content, process, and context components of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families. The implications for research are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Black, Multiracial, parental racial socialization

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the percentage of Multiracial people in America increased by nearly 276%.¹ The rapid growth of this demographic is partly due to the ongoing “Multiracial baby boom” marked by a significant increase of children with parents from different racial groups (Bergkamp et al., 2020). Multiracial youth are now the fastest-growing youth demographic in the United States, with a large proportion of them reporting Black racial ancestry (Frey, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Census trends further depict that the percentage of Multiracial-Black people in the United States is growing significantly faster than the percentage of monoracial Black people (88.7% vs. 5.6%).² These demographic shifts highlight the growing diversity of Black American youth and accentuate how necessary it is to expand conceptualizations of important race-based familial processes, like parental racial socialization, to better account for intraracial variation in future research (Nishina & Witkow, 2019). Accordingly, in this paper, we present the Multiracial-Black Socialization Model (MRB-SM). Before describing the MRB-SM, we briefly summarize the extant literature on racial socialization in Black families and highlight the significant gaps in our understanding of racial socialization among Multiracial-Black youth.

RACIAL SOCIALIZATION IN BLACK FAMILIES: A BRIEF REVIEW

Parental racial socialization, or parent–child communication about race, is one of the most valuable processes in the lives of Black youth (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; García Coll et al., 1996; McAdoo, 2002; McHale et al., 2006). Accordingly, understanding parental racial socialization and how to use it to promote wellbeing and reduce risks associated with racism has been a key objective for many developmental and family scholars (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). This literature demonstrates that racial socialization is *promotive* for Black youth as it is positively associated with better academic performance, fewer conduct problems, fewer depressive symptoms, positive self-esteem, and stronger familial relationships (Caughy & Owen, 2015; Grindal & Nieri, 2016; Huguley et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). Racial socialization is also an important *protective* factor for Black youth as it can help them prepare for and cope with racial stress (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). For example, Black youth who report more frequent racial socialization are less likely to experience psychological distress after racist encounters (Neblett et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2020).

The extant research on racial socialization is primarily situated in Hughes and Chen's (1999) conceptualization, which was the first published model to outline the substantive *content* of racial messages in families of all races. This model posits that racial socialization occurs around four dimensions: (1) *cultural socialization*: around racial traditions, history, and the promotion of racial pride; (2) *preparation for bias*: socialization around the realities of racism and how to cope with it; (3) *promotion of mistrust*: socialization that facilitates distrust in interracial interactions, and (4) *egalitarianism*: socialization that minimizes the importance of race while stressing the importance of developing skills to thrive in the “dominant” culture.

¹Multiracial is an umbrella term that includes first-generation Biracial people (e.g., those with parents from two different monoracial groups), second-generation Multiracial people (e.g., those who have one Biracial parent and 1 monoracial parent), and individuals who have two Multiracial parents. We use the umbrella term Multiracial throughout this paper for brevity and because research is often not specific about the groups they are referencing. Please note that Multiracial people are inherently panethnic as they possess multiple ancestries and cultures (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997; Nishina & Witkow, 2019).

²Monoracial includes individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to one race and are socially defined as member of one race (McClain, 2004).

This conceptualization of racial socialization is beneficial because it allows researchers to link specific messages with youth and family outcomes, which has powerful clinical implications (Anderson et al., 2018; Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020).

However, Hughes and Chen (1999) openly acknowledge that their general framework “exaggerates commonalities in [racial socialization] across parents of various racial-ethnic groups” (Hughes & Chen, 1999, p. 469). Racial socialization in Multiracial families is more nuanced than these “commonalities” can capture because the children have racial heritages that they share, partly, with each of their parents in addition to their own Multiracial heritage (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Thus, a more precise conceptualization is needed to comprehend racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families fully.

RACIAL SOCIALIZATION IN MULTIRACIAL-BLACK FAMILIES

In this paper, Multiracial-Black families include those with one monoracial Black parent, one monoracial parent of another race, and at least one Multiracial-Black child. This definition does not intend to diminish the race of the other non-Black parent or suggest that all subgroups of Multiracial-Black families (e.g., Black-Asian, Black-white, Black-Indigenous, etc.) are monolithic. Instead, it is intentionally broad based on the notion that Multiracial-Black families have shared racial experiences (e.g., coping with anti-Black racism and parenting conflict due to interracial differences) that significantly shape their racial socialization practices (Christophe, Atkin, et al., 2021; Christophe, Stein, et al., 2021; Roy et al., 2020). Those shared practices are the focus of this paper and the MRB-SM.

Empirical and conceptual gaps

Only 4% of research on racial socialization over the past decade included Multiracial youth and their parents (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020), so we know very little about the practice in Multiracial-Black families. The burgeoning scholarship does indicate that the Hughes and Chen's (1999) conceptualization does not fully capture the multitude of ways parents intentionally or subconsciously teach their Multiracial-Black children about race (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Rollins, 2019). For instance, egalitarian socialization in Multiracial-Black families includes general messages about racial equality and identity-specific messages (e.g., A monoracial parent encouraging their child to identify as “human” instead of using a racial label; Green et al., 2021). The latter form of socialization is vastly understudied because scholars have relied on conceptual frameworks that implicitly assume both parents and their children are monoracial (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Harris, 2016).

The assumption of monoraciality in racial socialization research is most evident in the psychometric scales that researchers use. Existing measures usually expect respondents to be from one racial-ethnic background (e.g., monoracial-Black), so the items assess whether and how frequently youth hear messages like “A *Black* child will be harassed for being *Black*” from their parents (Stevenson, 1995). However, parents also prepare their Multiracial-Black children for experiences of Multiracial forms of discrimination (e.g., identity invalidation; Nadal et al., 2011; Skinner et al., 2019). Preparation for Multiracial bias is simply less understood because scholars are not necessarily aware it is happening or failing to capture it due to the reliance on Hughes and Chen (1999) general conceptualization and related scales.

Scholars have more recently expanded the scope of psychometric scales to capture racial socialization around Multiracial experiences (Atkin et al., 2021; Green et al., 2022). The expansion of measurement is promising, but if the advancement of theory does not simultaneously

accompany it, the gaps in our understanding of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families will persist. More specifically, the field needs a framework for understanding (1) the various and intersectional forms of racial socialization that exist in Multiracial-Black families (e.g., content), (2) the channels through which socialization operates (e.g., process) and (3) contextual conditions that impact it (Jaakkola, 2020). The MRB-SM integrates these components into a single conceptual model that provides a clearer picture of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families.

THE MULTIRACIAL-BLACK SOCIALIZATION MODEL

The MRB-SM is depicted in Figure 1. Rooted in prior literature and theory, the MRB-SM outlines three interrelated meta-components: (1) content, (2) process, and (3) context. With respect to each of these components, the model frames racial socialization as the coaction between the content of messages and the process of transmission (Hughes & Chen, 1999; Yasui, 2015) within the micro-context of nuclear families and their broader socio-ecological environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Hughes et al., 2016).

MRB-SM component #1: The multi-dimensional Content domains

Like the Hughes and Chen (1999) model, the MRB-SM assumes that racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families revolves around several multi-dimensional content domains, including (a) monoracial-Black experiences, (b) Multiracial experiences, and (c) color evasiveness. The first author identified these domains based on the findings from a national cross-sectional survey (Green et al., 2022; Winchester et al., 2023), a meta-ethnographic review (Green et al., 2021), and the growing body of research on racial socialization in

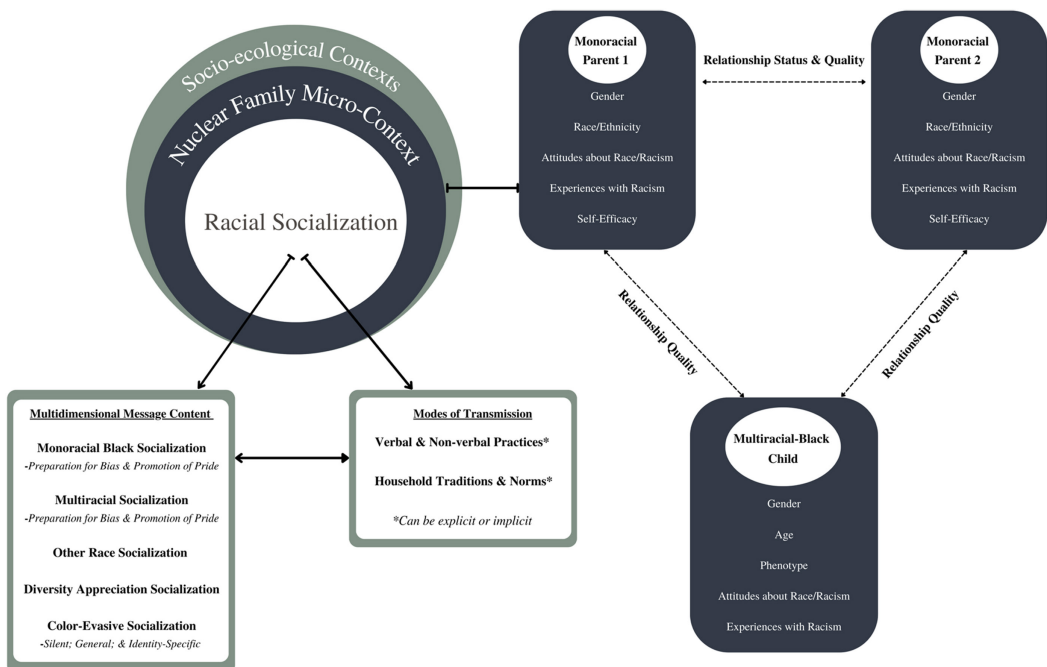


FIGURE 1 The Multiracial-Black socialization model.

Multiracial-Black families (Atkin & Jackson, 2020; Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Orbe, 1999; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Rollins & Hunter, 2013; Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017). Below, we present each domain separately for clarity, but they are not mutually exclusive (Hughes & Chen, 1999). The MRB-SM contends that racial socialization is a synergistic process where parents can simultaneously convey messages from multiple domains (White-Johnson et al., 2010).

Monoracial-Black socialization

Monoracial-Black socialization includes parents' efforts to help their children comprehend what it means to be Black and how to navigate society as a perceived and/or self-identified Black person. Racial socialization within the monoracial-Black domain consists of two dimensions: (1) Black cultural socialization and (2) preparation for anti-Black racism. Black cultural socialization consists of parental practices that teach Multiracial-Black children about their Black cultural heritage, ancestry, and history to foster racial pride (Hughes & Chen, 1999). The second dimension is preparation for anti-Black racism, which includes parents' efforts to make their children aware of racism rooted in anti-Blackness and help them cope with it (Hughes & Chen, 1999).

Ultimately, the extant literature suggests that many parents of Multiracial-Black children possess similar socialization goals as parents of monoracial Black children. Both groups specifically strive to equip their children with racial pride and protect them from racism. One unique difference in Multiracial-Black families is that cultural socialization includes education around the historic hypodescent rule (e.g., one drop of Black blood makes a person Black; Gotanda, 1991). Similarly, parents of Multiracial-Black children may feel like their child's Multiracial heritage makes them naive to their vulnerability to anti-Black racism and take extra precautions to prepare them for it. A Multiracial-Black male in McClain (2004) study, for instance, reported that his mother once said: "Because your father is white, you may try to think that you're not black, or you'll get treated differently from other black people, but everyone who looks at you will see a black man, and you have to be prepared for that" (p. 43).

Multiracial socialization

The second content domain in the MRB-SM is Multiracial Socialization, and it captures the myriad of ways that parents teach their children about their Multiracial heritage. The first two dimensions are Multiracial pride reinforcement and preparation for Multiracial bias. These mirror the dimensions of monoracial Black socialization that but are specific to Multiracial-Black people and experiences. Multiracial pride reinforcement, for example, includes any parental practice that strives to teach a Multiracial-Black child about Multiracial history and instill a sense of pride in them about being Multiracial. Comparatively, preparation for Multiracial Bias consists of socialization around Multiracial discrimination (e.g., social isolation from monoracial peers, identity rejection, etc.). The third dimension of Multiracial socialization is parental racial humility, based on "cultural humility."

Cultural humility is a term that psychologists use to define a practitioner's "ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the client" (Hook et al., 2013, p. 355). Cultural humility is symbolized by a lack of superiority regarding another person's cultural experiences, and it positively impacts interracial relations between practitioners and clients (Hook et al., 2013). Given the presence of interracial interactions in Multiracial families, Franco and McElroy-Heltzel (2019) posit that racial humility, a specific type of cultural humility, is a

form of racial socialization that teaches Multiracial youth important lessons about their race and identity. Parental racial humility often looks like providing a Multiracial child with the autonomy and space to explore their racial identity without judgment (Franco & McElroy-Heltzel, 2019; McKinney, 2016).

Parental racial humility specifically teaches Multiracial youth that they have complete agency over their racial identities and the labels they use to define themselves. Parental racial humility, however, is not the absence of communication about race. A white mother of Multiracial-Black children explains, “If they have questions regarding the races, explain it to them, but don't try to make them into one race or the other. Let them go their own way” (McKinney, 2016, p. 151). Thus, parents who exhibit high racial humility will not tell their child that they are “Black” or “Multiracial” but will support their identity exploration through communication and exposure to different racial contexts (Green & Bryant, 2023).

Color-evasive socialization

The final content domain of the MRB-SM is color-evasive socialization, which is characterized by parental efforts to rear “race-neutral” children (Hughes & Chen, 1999; Orbe, 1999). In Multiracial-Black families, color-evasive socialization occurs on a spectrum ranging from (1) general color evasion, (2) identity-specific color evasion, and (3) egalitarianism (Green et al., 2022). General color-evasive socialization includes parents' efforts to deemphasize the importance of race and racial differences altogether (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Parents who engage in general color-evasive socialization deem race as “irrelevant” for all groups and encourage their children to do so by placing more value on a person's individual qualities. General color-evasive socialization also manifests through parental avoidance of conversations about race, even if a child tries to initiate them (Green et al., 2021).

Color-evasive socialization can also be very specific to the identity of Multiracial-Black children (e.g., “I don't see *your* color”). Identity-specific color evasion includes parental messages and behaviors that attempt to influence a Multiracial-Black child's perception of themselves racially (blind for review). This form of socialization often manifests through direct statements about how a Multiracial-Black child should identify (e.g., “Just tell people that you're human, not Black or white”). It may also appear more subtly through emotional responses to a child's racial identity or presentation, such as a white parent feeling “hurt” when their Multiracial-Black child identifies as just Black (Atkin & Jackson, 2020).

Finally, egalitarianism includes socialization where parents introduce their children to the history, customs, and traditions of their racial group(s) and other racial groups (Hughes & Chen, 1999). This approach to socialization falls on the other end of the color-evasive spectrum in Multiracial-Black families as it teaches children about race and racial differences while simultaneously promoting racial equality and the acceptance of people from all racial groups. Egalitarianism is one of the most common forms of socialization in monoracial families, but it may be especially prevalent in Multiracial families given their interracial composition (Villegas-Gold & Tran, 2018). Still, egalitarian socialization is one of the least studied forms of socialization in the literature (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020), so additional research is needed.

Other race socialization

It is important to note that the content of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families will also, to varying degrees, revolve around the race of the non-Black monoracial parent. As stated previously, those aspects of racial socialization are slightly outside the scope of the MRB-SM,

which seeks to outline the *shared* features of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families. Nonetheless, scholars should still utilize Hughes and Chen (1999) model of racial socialization and related frameworks (Mistry et al., 2016) to assess what else Multiracial-Black youth learn about their race.

MRB-SM component #2: The process of transmission

Examining the content of racial socialization (e.g., *what* parents say or do not say about race) in Multiracial-Black families is important, but investigations are incomplete without considering *how* parents communicate these messages. The latter represents the process of transmission, which is the second meta-component of the MRB-SM. Grounded in the Process Model of Ethnic-Racial Socialization (PMERS; Yasui, 2015), the MRB-SM assumes that racial socialization is explicitly and implicitly transmitted through verbal and non-verbal behaviors (see Table 1). The model further contends this transmission of socialization manifests through parent–child interactions and household customs and traditions (Hughes et al., 2016).

As demonstrated in Table 1, explicit racial socialization includes the conscious and intentional efforts that parents take to teach their children about the meaning and significance of race, or the lack thereof. Explicit socialization is most easily identified through verbal messages between parents and children. It can also be transmitted through intentional non-verbal behaviors like facilitating or inhibiting a child's interactions with racially significant toys, artwork, literature, entertainment, and environments (Yasui, 2015). For example, one parent in O'Donoghue's (2006) investigation shared, “We always bought Black dolls and looked for books that featured Black or Multiracial characters, even books with Biracial families” (p. 139). This excerpt further illuminates how Multiracial-Black families practice explicit non-verbal socialization around multiple content domains (e.g., monoracial-Black cultural socialization and Multiracial pride reinforcement). Thus, when examining explicit racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families, scholars must consider (1) verbal and nonverbal practices and (2) messages from various content domains (Atkin et al., 2021; Green et al., 2022).

Explicit socialization occurs alongside more subtle forms of implicit socialization, where parents inadvertently teach their children about race (Yasui, 2015). Parental racial humility, for instance, is a form of socialization that can manifest through explicit channels (e.g., directly asking a child which racial label they want to use) and implicit behaviors (e.g., a parent being open to hearing about their child's Multiracial experiences). Several aspects of parental racial humility, like “openness,” may be largely subconscious. However, they still have a significant impact on a “child's view of their racial identity and their sense of belonging to their racial/ethnic group” (Yasui, 2015, p. 18). In addition to attitudes, implicit racial socialization often emerges through automatic responses (e.g., facial expressions and gestures), routine practices, and modeling (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Lesane-Brown, 2006). Paasch-Anderson et al. (2019), for example, found that monoracial-Black adolescents developed a sense of racial pride by observing their mother's appearance (e.g., Afrocentric apparel or natural hairstyles) and behaviors (e.g., support of Black-owned businesses and churches). The MRB-SM assumes that Multiracial-Black youth learn about race through similar channels.

Another common form of implicit racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families is indirect communication (e.g., overhearing racial discussions among parents or other familial adults). For example, a Black father in Rautkis et al. (2016) study shared that he told his white wife that “as a Black man he never leaves home without identification due to safety concerns” after encouraging him to continue driving when he forgot it. If their children overheard this exchange, it could be an implicit source of preparation for anti-Black racism. Hughes et al. (2016) argue that implicit forms of socialization like this scenario are necessary to examine as they

TABLE 1 Modes of transmission examples.

Content domain	Explicit verbal	Explicit non-verbal	Implicit verbal	Implicit non-verbal
Monoracial Black	Direct messages like “Police might target you because you are Black” <i>[PC]</i>	Provision of toys that celebrate Black features (e.g., coily hair texture) <i>[HH]</i> <i>a</i>	A Multiracial-Black child frequently hearing music by Black or African American artists played in the home <i>[HH]</i>	Attending a predominantly Black church <i>[HH]</i>
Multiracial	Direct messages like “You should be proud to be Multiracial” <i>[PC]</i>	Provision of books that represent Multiracial people and experiences <i>[HH]</i>	A Multiracial-Black child overhearing their parents argue about which racial label they should use <i>[HH]</i>	Exposure to and participation in “Multiracial Family” affinity groups <i>[HH]</i>
Color-evasive	Direct messages like “You’re human, not Black or white” <i>[PC]</i>	Actively rejecting/avoiding conversations about race even if a Multiracial-Black child attempts to initiate them <i>[PC]</i>	A Multiracial-Black child overhearing their parent(s) say things like “Race does not matter” to other people <i>[HH]</i>	A Multiracial-Black child witnessing their parent(s) become upset when race is brought up <i>[HH]</i>
Egalitarianism	Direct messages like “You should respect people from all racial groups” <i>[PC]</i>	Exposing children to racially diverse spaces <i>[HH]</i>	A Multiracial-Black child witnessing their parent(s) celebrate a racial or cultural group that is different than their own.	A Multiracial-Black child overhearing their parent(s) advocate for racial equality.

[PC] = parent-child interaction and [HH] = household custom/tradition.

“shift researchers' gaze from studying ethnic-racial dynamics as individual-level processes to studying the features of *settings* that produce them” (p.31).

The subtle nature of implicit racial socialization makes it more difficult to assess in empirical research than explicit racial socialization (Yasui, 2015). Some self-report measures can capture distinct forms of implicit socialization like racial humility (Franco & McElroy-Heltzel, 2019; Green & Bryant, 2023) and racialized aspects of household environments (Caughy et al., 2002). However, implicit racial socialization is best understood with observational designs and Implicit Association Tests (Dunbar et al., 2021; Yasui, 2015). The use of diverse measurement tools further enables researchers to capture the non-verbal aspects of racial socialization in addition to meaningful elements of the process (e.g., who initiates the conversation, how messages are conveyed and received, etc.).

MRB-SM component #3: The role of family and socio-ecological contexts

Finally, Teti and Fosco (2021) suggest that any conceptual model that outlines a family and developmental process, like racial socialization, should incorporate context as a key feature. The integration of context helps to “establish parameters around and set limits on the universality of theoretical predictions” (Teti & Fosco, 2021). Accordingly, the MRB-SM situates racial socialization within the micro-context of the Multiracial-Black nuclear family and the broader ecological environments that they exist within (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

The family as a micro-context

Families are composed of numerous people, structures, and relationships that differentially shape socialization processes (Minuchin, 1985; Parke & Buriel, 2007). The MRB-SM, therefore, anticipates racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families will vary based on the intersection of (a) parent characteristics, (b) child characteristics, and (c) interpersonal relationships across family subsystems (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005).

Parent characteristics

Rooted in the PMERS (Yasui, 2015), the MRB-SM proposes that racial socialization is shaped by parent demographics (e.g., racial-ethnic group and gender), experiences with racism, attitudes about race, and their perceived ability to socialize their children around race. For example, Black parents are more likely to discuss anti-Black racism with their Multiracial-Black children, whereas white parents frequently minimize the importance of race in their conversations or avoid the topic altogether (Green et al., 2021; Simon, 2021). This pattern is likely attributable to the fact that Black parents experience racism, unlike white parents, and will thus want to prepare their children for instances of it (Holloway & Varner, 2021a, 2021b). However, Black mothers and fathers can also adopt widely different approaches to racial socialization despite their shared racial background, so scholars should be careful to consider the role of parent race *and* gender (Green et al., 2022; McHale et al., 2006).

Beyond race and gender, parents may practice racial socialization differently because they hold divergent attitudes about race and racism (Holloway & Varner, 2021a, 2021b; Rowley et al., 2012; Yasui, 2015; Young et al., 2021; Zucker & Patterson, 2018). For instance, Black mothers who hold more negative attitudes about being Black are less likely to endorse Black racial pride in their children than mothers who feel positively about being Black (White-Johnson et al., 2010). Similarly, Latinx and Mexican American mothers who feel a strong connection to their cultural heritage are more likely to encourage their children to feel proud of their heritage than mothers who report less cultural connection (Knight et al., 1993; Kulish et al., 2019).

Finally, white parents who believe that racism exists are more likely to talk about racial matters with their children than white parents who do not (Zucker & Patterson, 2018). An interesting caveat, however, is that white parents can believe racism exists and want to prepare their Multiracial-Black children for it but fail to do so because they lack confidence in their socialization abilities (e.g., low socialization self-efficacy; Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). Taken together, this literature highlights how parent attitudes around race and self-efficacy impact their socialization behaviors beyond their racial-ethnic group alone.

One additional factor to consider when researching socialization in Multiracial-Black families is the role of *parental racialization* or how parents racially categorize their own children (Ortiz, 2017). More specifically, do parents perceive their children as solely Black, Multiracial, Black and Multiracial, or something else entirely? Do parents feel this categorization can or should change over time? The answers to these questions are usually rooted in parents' attitudes around racial essentialism. Black parents of Multiracial children, for example, are more likely than other parents to categorize their children as Black because of the social and historical significance of the hypodescent principle (Boyd, 2012; Ho et al., 2017). This trend in racialization may help explain why Black parents convey messages from the monoracial-Black domain more frequently than parents from other groups (Boyd, 2012). Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for parents to racialize their Multiracial-Black children differently (Boyd, 2012; Green et al., 2021; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005), and this can lead them to deliver potentially conflicting socialization messages (e.g., "You are Black" vs. "No, you are Multiracial"). Scholars investigating socialization in Multiracial-Black families should therefore assess the types of messages that youth receive from *each* parent.

Child characteristics

Racial socialization is also largely influenced by child demographics (e.g., gender, age, phenotype), attitudes about race, and youth racialized experiences (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2013). Regarding gender, a recent study demonstrated that Multiracial-Black adolescent boys receive more socialization around anti-Black racism than Multiracial-Black girls, but there were no gender differences in socialization around Multiracial bias or promotion of Multiracial pride (Stokes, 2021). This discrepancy may be because parents perceive their Multiracial-Black sons as more susceptible to racism than their Multiracial-Black daughters due to the negative stereotyping of Black masculinity (Newman, 2019).

A child's gender can also shift the nature of racial socialization messages in ways that are not captured in all quantitative measures. For instance, Berkel et al. (2009) found that Black mothers prepared their monoracial sons and daughters for racial bias but the type of bias differed by gender. Black boys were made aware of their vulnerability to police violence, and Black daughters were instructed not to behave in "stereotypical" ways in public (Berkel et al., 2009). Similarly, parents of Multiracial-Black youth might tailor messages to the gender of the children (Ortiz, 2017). Multiracial-Black girls, for instance, may hear more messages than boys about coping with social exclusion and hypersexualization due to the intersection of their race and gender (Curington, 2021; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Therefore, researchers should examine how child gender influences the racial socialization that youth receive and understand that messages from any domain can be gendered (Brown et al., 2017; Thomas & King, 2007).

Racial socialization can also vary by age. Priest et al. (2014), for instance, reviewed 92 studies and found that socialization around cultural pride and egalitarian beliefs begins at age 4 and occurs consistently throughout development. Comparatively, socialization around racism transpires during middle childhood and becomes more frequent as adolescents become more susceptible to discrimination (Priest et al., 2014). Racial socialization similarly shifts throughout adolescence as youth develop more nuanced attitudes about race and initiate conversations with their parents about their own beliefs (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2013; Young et al., 2021). In

this sense, racial socialization is very much a bidirectional process (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2013). These developmental patterns are likely generalizable to Multiracial-Black families and youth (Rollins, 2019), but unique discussions about race and racial differences may occur earlier.

Children learn to ascribe socially relevant meaning to race by age 4 (Olson et al., 2012). At this age, Multiracial-Black youth begin to (1) recognize phenotypical differences between them and their parents and (2) experience questions from peers that highlight their racial differences. For example, one white mother in Byrd and Garwick's (2006) study shared that her 4-year-old Multiracial-Black daughter asked her, "Why does my friend think that you are not my birth mom?" Thus, parents of Multiracial-Black children are forced to confront unique questions regarding family, race, and phenotype during early childhood. Parents will likely base their responses to these specific questions and their general approach to socialization on the phenotypes of their children (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). For instance, if a parent believes their daughter will be perceived as racially ambiguous because they have a medium skin tone and loosely coiled hair, they may transmit more messages from the Multiracial content domain than the monoracial-Black domain (Ortiz, 2017; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). However, additional research is needed to fully understand the association between child phenotype and racial socialization (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Green et al., 2022). This scholarship should also consider how other child characteristics intersect (e.g., age, gender) with parent characteristics (gender, race, phenotype) to shape racial socialization and related outcomes.

Family relationships

Drawing on Relational Communication Theory (Rogers, 2006), the MRB-SM views racial socialization as an intimate process of communication that is influenced by the quality of relationships between family members (Smith-Bynum et al., 2016). Thus, to fully understand racial socialization, we must consider what families *look* like demographically and what their relationships *feel* like internally. The MRB-SM concentrates on the relationship between biological co-parents and each parent-child relationship.

Co-parenting includes the "overlapping or shared responsibility for rearing children" and can exist within or outside a romantic relationship (Feinberg, 2003). Healthy co-parenting is rooted in co-orientation or a shared understanding of a child's best interests, which are profoundly impacted by each parents' cultural values (Arias & Punyanunt-Carter, 2017; Schrodtt & Shimkowski, 2017). Some co-parents of Multiracial-Black children easily achieve co-orientation as their racial perspectives naturally align. For instance, a participant from Nero's (2002) investigation explained that she and her husband raised their Multiracial-Black children to "see themselves as African American" because they both believed the world would see their children that way. A shared co-orientation like this likely leads to more consistent socialization messaging and less conflict between parents (Byrd & Garwick, 2006). However, many parents of Multiracial-Black children, especially those who are unmarried or divorced, hold opposing views on the best way to socialize their children around race (Green et al., 2021).

Failure to establish co-orientation around racial socialization can cause tensions and disrupt cohesion within the co-parenting relationship (Kil et al., 2021). This dissolution increases the probability that Multiracial-Black youth receive contradictory messages about race, complicating the already complex process of racial identity development. In addition, interracial co-parenting conflicts can make Multiracial-Black children feel the need to "side" with one parent and reject the other parent, including that parent's race (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). A Multiracial-Black woman in Porrow's (2014) study, for instance, said her Black father often spoke negatively towards her mother and herself, which made her question if all Black men behaved that way. This example further illuminates how parent-child relationships can become racialized and impact socialization in Multiracial-Black families.

In their integrative model, Darling and Steinberg (1993) posit that the emotional climate of parent–child relationships particularly impacts the efficacy of socialization by transforming how willing youth are to be socialized by that parent. Thus, youth who feel closer to their parents are more likely to internalize their implicit and explicit messages about race than youth who do not (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020; Williams & Smalls-Glover, 2014). One participant in Waring and Bordoloi's (2019) study explained, “Since I'm really good friends with my mom, she has a huge influence on me. My [Black] dad doesn't have such a deep influence on me, and I think that contributes to the fact that I have more of an association with white people” (p. 159). Similarly, Multiracial-Black youth who grow up in a single-parent home report a stronger attachment to the racial group and values of their residential parent, especially if they have little contact with their other biological parent (Green et al., 2021). This association is attributable, in part, to the fact that single parents typically socialize their Multiracial-Black children around their monorace without exposing them to other racial contexts (Harris et al., 2013; Porow, 2014).

Taken together, relationships within the nuclear family significantly impact racial socialization patterns and efficacy. Scholars should, therefore, interrogate how co-parenting dynamics (e.g., co-orientation, communication, relationship status) and parent–child relationships (e.g., closeness, perceived warmth, visitation frequency) impact racialized communication. These variables are especially crucial to consider in Multiracial-Black families because the parents of Multiracial-Black youth are significantly less likely to be married or stay married than parents of monoracial children (Amato, 2010; Brown et al., 2019). Thus, Multiracial-Black youth are very likely to grow up in a home without one of their biological parents, which can drastically affect their racial socialization. Researchers should also expand the scope of this scholarship to evaluate how broader socio-ecological factors impact Multiracial-Black families, their relationships, and their subsequent conversations about race.

Socio-ecological considerations

Families are embedded in and influenced by overlapping factors throughout their ecological environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Thus, to holistically understand the family practice of racial socialization, researchers must “consider components of ethnic-racial dynamics that occur at the extra-individual [and familial] level” (Hughes et al., 2016, p. 19). This includes micro-level factors like extended family relationships, peer networks, school climate, and community support (Orbe, 1999; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Rollins, 2019). Within these microsystems, youth acquire racial knowledge through norms, rules, cultural practices, and exposure to discrimination that subsequently informs socialization at home (Hughes et al., 2016). A mother from Rautkis and a colleague's (2016) investigation, for example, shared that her young Multiracial-Black son was avoiding going out in public with both of his parents because “kids at school were calling him half-breed, zebra” (p. 9). In this case, the child experienced racial teasing at school, and then his parents tried to help him better understand and cope with it at home through a reactive form of socialization.

Micro-level factors further intersect with macro-level demographics like class, geographic region, and political climate to inform socialization patterns (Williams & Hughes, 2016). For example, parents of Multiracial-Black children practice more frequent racial socialization if they live in large urban, racially diverse towns in the Western, Midwestern, and Northeastern parts of the United States (Csizmadia et al., 2014). Similarly, Multiracial-Black people who have access to racially diverse social contexts (e.g., churches, schools) report more instances of socialization than those who reside in rural and racially homogenous areas (Green et al., 2021). However, macro-systems like privilege (e.g., proximity to whiteness) and oppression (e.g., racism) can differentially

impact Multiracial-Black youth, influencing how they internalize racial socialization messages. Youth who present phenotypically as Black, for example, are more susceptible to anti-Black discrimination, which could make them more receptive to Monoracial Black forms of socialization than youth who are racially ambiguous or white presenting. Thus, it is critical to examine individual (e.g., phenotype, gender), micro (e.g., extended family relationships, school racial climate), and macro (e.g., social stratification, racism, Multiracial bias) level factors to fully comprehend racial socialization in Multiracial Black families (Williams & Deutsch, 2016).

THE MRB-SM: STRENGTHS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

To our knowledge, the MRB-SM is the first conceptual model of racial socialization that was intentionally designed for Multiracial-Black families. Grounded in over 40 years of research and a myriad of family and developmental theories, the MRB-SM outlines three interrelated meta-components of racial socialization: content, process, and context. Collectively, this new model provides scholars with a roadmap for better examining *what* Multiracial-Black youth learn about race and *how* they learn it with respect to the moderating role of family characteristics and environmental processes (Jaakkola, 2020). Pairing the MRB-SM with robust research designs (longitudinal investigations, observational studies, dyadic research, etc.) will undoubtedly advance the empirical understanding of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families.

Future research should be careful to examine each meta-component of the MRB-SM and their sub-dimensions in tandem. Scholars can do so through numerous mechanisms, but one way is to (1) assess socialization that youth receive from each content domain, not just one or two, (2) assess socialization that youth receive from each biological parent, (3) assess how that socialization is conveyed, and (4) collect extensive demographic data (Green et al., 2022; Nishina & Witkow, 2019; Winchester et al., 2023). Gathering this information allows for a richer and more contextual analysis that can produce a more robust representation of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families. However, this will also require scholars to expand and improve psychometric measures around the unique forms of racial socialization portrayed in the MRB-SM. There is a growing collection of Multiracial socialization scales for adolescents and young adults (Atkin et al., 2021; Stokes, 2021), but these have not been tested among younger children or across Multiracial-Black subgroups for measurement invariance. There are also no standardized tools for assessing parent reports of Multiracial socialization or related processes like parental racialization. The expansion of measurement is urgently needed as it will drastically improve the validity of the empirical scholarship conducted with Multiracial-Black families.

Despite the contributions, strengths, and implications of the MRB-SM, it is not without limitations. The MRS-BM presents a fairly expansive model of racial socialization based on the shared attributes and experiences of Multiracial-Black families. While this broad focus is beneficial, it does not fully capture within-group differences based on the race of the non-Black parent, developmental periods, and diverse family structures. Thus, we recommend integrating the MRB-SM with other socialization models (Hughes & Chen, 1999; Mistry et al., 2016). We also incorporated context as a meta-component in the MRB-SM to ensure that Multiracial-Black families and youth aren't viewed as monolithic. An inherent assumption of the model is that racial socialization will look differently in many families based on member characteristics (e.g., age, parent race, etc.). However, we also acknowledge that the context component may not fully capture intricacies in racial socialization across family structures.

Multiracial families consist of many different structures ranging from married couples, cohabitating couples, single-parent families, blended families, multigenerational families, and

families formed via adoption (Harris et al., 2013). However, the MRB-SM is most applicable to families where a Multiracial-Black child lives with at least one of their biological parents. The model can be strategically adapted to fit other structures if necessary. For example, a Multiracial-Black child might live in a home with their Asian mother and Asian stepfather for half of the week and spend the other half of the week with their Black father. In this scenario, the best option would be to collect data about the mother, stepfather, and father as they likely all play a role in the child's racial socialization. Similarly, the MRB-SM focuses primarily on parents. This model could be adapted in the future to more accurately capture the role of non-parental figures in the racial socialization of Multiracial-Black youth.

CONCLUSION

Racial socialization is an essential family practice that can drastically impact familial relationships and child well-being in Multiracial-Black families. Our current understanding of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families is limited due to an overreliance on conceptual frameworks that were designed for monoracial families. To push the field forward, we present the Multiracial Black Socialization Model. Our hope is that scholars will use and expand upon the MRB-SM to cultivate a richer empirical and practical understanding of the antecedents and consequences of racial socialization in Multiracial-Black families moving forward.

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