Parental Racial Socialization Practices in White Families: Raising Racially Sensitive Children

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A growing body of research has examined the *racial socialization* practices of minority families, with a primary focus on African-American families. In stark contrast, a paucity of research has investigated the racial socialization practices of White families. In this paper aimed to review and synthesize the literature on White parental racial socialization practices, and operating within a framework of a dominating hegemonic Whiteness in North America, particular attention is given to how racial attitudes and biases are transmitted within the parent-child dyad and how parents contribute to children's intercultural awareness and sensitivity.The implications of adopting a *colour-blind* or *colour-conscious* parenting approach, and potential consequences of raising children in an ethnic-racially homogeneous vs. heterogeneous environment are discussed. Finally, potential ways in which parents can contribute to fostering culturally sensitive children and directions for future research are suggested.

Keywords: ethnic-racial socialization, colour-blind, colour-conscious, White privilege, racially heterogeneous and homogeneous environments

De plus en plus de recherches observent les *pratiques de socialisation raciale* des familles de minorités, et plus précisément des familles afro-américaines. À l'inverse, les études sur les pratiques de socialisation raciale des familles blanches font défaut. Cet article cherche à évaluer et synthétiser la documentation sur les pratiques de socialisation raciale des parents blancs à l'intérieur d'une société d'Amérique du Nord dominée par une majorité blanche. Une attention est portée à la manière dont les attitudes et les préjugés raciaux sont transmis dans la relation parent-enfant et à la manière dont les parents contribuent à leur conscientisation et leur sensibilisation. L'article traite aussi des implications de l'adoption d'un modèle parental indifférent de la couleur de la peau ou d'un modèle parental conscient de la couleur de la peau ainsi que des conséquences d'élever un enfant dans un environnement ethniquement homogène ou hétérogène. Enfin, des suggestions et des pistes de recherches futures seront présentées afin d'aider les parents à contribuer au développement de la sensibilité culturelle des enfants.

Mots-clés : socialisation ethnique et raciale, indifférence de la couleur de la peau, conscience de couleur, privilège blanc, environnements racialement hétérogènes ou homogènes

In our increasingly globalized, diverse, and interconnected societies, there are many opportunities for parents to talk to their children about race. Furthermore, with a growing diversification, "children of colour are expected to constitute 50% of the U.S. school population by 2035" (Hughes & al., 2006, p. 747) and 35.9% of the Canadian population is expected to consist of visible minorities by 2036 (Statistics Canada, 2017). It seems that parents (minority and majority) will increasingly have a need, and perhaps even a responsibility, to communicate race/ethnic related ideas, beliefs and values to their children (Hamm, 2001), especially when interracial interactions are nearly impossible to avoid (Hagerman, 2017). The practice of communicating race-related messages to children is termed *racial socialization.*

Hughes and Chen (1997), frontrunners in this field, define racial socialization as "a broad class of parental behaviours that transmit attitudes, values and information regarding their racial group's membership and intergroup relations to children" (p. 202).

Over the years, various models of parental racial socialization have been put forth (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Marshall, 1995), but the most widely adopted model was developed by Hughes et al. (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006). Their model proposed four broad categories of race-related messages that parents transmit to their children. The first and most frequent type of racial socialization message is *cultural socialization*. This refers to the parental practices of teaching children about their racial heritage, exposing them to cultural environments, and/or doing activities that promote any aspect of their culture, in order to instill a sense of racial pride. This practice can be as explicit as having a conversation about cultural heritage, or as implicit as serving cultural types of

food. The second major type of message is *preparation for bias,* which can be defined as any parental effort to make a child aware of discrimination, to prepare them for it, to prepare them to cope with it, and/or to make them aware of any racial barriers that they may face. The third type of message is the *promotion of mistrust.* These are messages that teach children to be wary of, or cautious about, interracial interactions, and to even distrust the other person or the authenticity of the interracial interaction. Finally, the fourth type of message communicated to children about race is *egalitarianism* or *silence about race,* which is particularly relevant to White parental racial socialization practices.

These last two messages (egalitarianism and silence about race) are fundamentally different although, in the literature, they often appear as interchangeable. Egalitarianism is a common and important message often communicated by both majority and minority parents. The essential idea relayed by this message is that everyone is equal and that minority parents should expose their children to popular culture, as opposed to their minority culture. Silence about race, synonymous with a *colour-blind orientation*, is a passive stance that parents take in discussing anything race-related. This orientation may communicate to children that speaking about race is taboo and may reflect a parent's discomfort in talking about race and/or their lack of appreciation of the importance thereof. Although Hughes' et al. (2006) model was primarily developed using a sample of Black (the term 'Black' in this paper will refer to both African-Americans and people outside of the United States who self-identify as Black) individuals and may therefore reflect their unique racial socialization practices, its widespread use and terminology are applicable to the studies discussed in this paper and will be used throughout.

The notion of *ethnic pluralism*, which is the co-existence of many racial and cultural groups in one society, is emerging in discussions at home (Williams, Banerjee, Lozada-Smith, Lambouths, & Rowley, 2017), in school (Vittrup, 2016) and in a larger societal context (Tuitt, Haynes, & Stewart, 2018*), for* both majority and minority families. However, most of the literature to date has only focused on minority racial socialization practices, with a particular focus on Black families (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hagerman, 2017; Hughes, Bachman, Ruble, & Fuligni, 2006; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Marshall, 1995). This focus on Black minority populations is reasonable given their long history of oppression (Searcy & Hines, 2017; Smith, 2016) and the challenge of raising mentally and physically healthy children despite the fact that people of colour continue to be marginalized and often have high social stress due to discrimination (Marshall, 1995).

On the other hand, White people have a history of oppressing people of colour, and their hegemonic status, and *White privilege* in North America (Hagerman, 2017) gives them the latitude to rarely, if ever, feel the need to discuss race with their children. *Hegemonic Whiteness* refers to the existence of White racial dominance and influence, and includes social, cultural, ideological and economic authority of the White majority culture in North American society (Hagerman, 2017). White privilege, which is a closely related concept, refers to the systemic and institutional advantages that White people have relative to people of colour. In other words, the mere colour of one's skin provides opportunities for, and endows unearned power and resources to, the White population (McIntosh, 2003). Therefore, hegemonic Whiteness refers to the systemic dominance of the White population, whereas White privilege refers to the unearned advantages of the White population.

Despite the widespread existence of hegemonic Whiteness and White privilege, research demonstrates that White parents often believe that racial discrimination is no longer an issue, or they mistakenly believe that their children are not aware of skin colour differences (i.e., seeing race; Vittrup, 2018). Nevertheless, children, including White children, do indeed see race at a young age (Bigler & Liben, 2007; Pauker, Williams, & Steele, 2016, 2017). Studies demonstrate that young children distinguish between Black and White individuals at a time in which they are highly impressionable and predisposed to developing essentialist beliefs.

Essentialism, which is "the belief that various social categories, such as gender or race, mark fundamentally distinct kinds of people" (Rhodes, Leslie, & Tworek, 2012, p. 13526; Segall, Birnbaum, Deeb, & Diesendruck, 2015), can have negative consequences and may contribute to the formation of *racial biases* (which refers to attitudes and/or stereotypes that affect an individual's understanding, decisions and actions towards other-raced individuals) and prejudices at a very young age (Pauker, Ambady, & Apfelbaum, 2010). Furthermore, racial biases, favouring White over Black racial groups, emerge from early childhood among White children, at both the explicit, self-report (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011) and implicit or automatic levels (Baron & Banaji, 2006; Williams & Steele, 2017). Therefore, through the use of racial socialization practices, White parents have an essential role to play in challenging these emerging biases and essentialist beliefs, and in helping their children to become aware of their own White privilege.

Objective

The goal of the current article is to review the literature on White parental racial socialization practices and to suggest directions for future research. The article strategically summarizes the existent literature within three streamlined topic areas: what, how, and where. First, the general colour-blind versus colour-conscious typology, which classifies the White parental approach to racial socialization (i.e., the what), will be discussed. Then, the implicit and explicit ways in which parents communicate these race-related messages to their children (i.e., the how) will be discussed. Subsequently, an analysis of *heterogeneous* versus *homogeneous environmental* exposure, and the effects this has on children's racial attitudes, will be reviewed (i.e., the where).

In this way, the findings of the current literature will be comprehensively covered and categorized, thereby exposing outstanding topic areas yet to be researched. This review will highlight the limitations of the current literature and will be followed by ways in which future research can enhance and better investigate the unique and impactful White parental racial socialization practices. The ultimate intent behind this synthesis of the literature is to provide researchers with an understanding of what has already been investigated regarding White parental racial socialization, as well as highlighting any perplexing or unexplained findings. In response, it will be possible to identify how future studies can address untapped areas in this body of literature and to attempt to explain why there is a lack of clarity with some of the findings discussed.

Colour-Blind vs. Colour-Conscious Parenting Practices

In this section, the colour-blind versus colour-conscious framework for classifying White parental racial socialization will be explained, followed by a review of the effects that these two orientations have on the development or prevention of children's racial biases. Lastly, parents' explanations as to why they chose to adopt a colour-blind versus colour-conscious socialization approach will be examined, followed by a study analyzing fathers' unique role in racially socializing their children. All of the studies in this section (apart from the subsection on fathers) will examine maternal racial socialization in particular. However, since fathers are often excluded from this body of literature, it seemed necessary to add a separate section on its own to review the scant literature on paternal racial socialization.

Colour-Blind vs. Colour-Conscious

A *colour-blind* ideology (i.e., the general idea behind a colour-blind approach to racial socialization),

which was first coined in the 1896 United States Supreme Court decision in Plessy *v.* Ferguson, endorses the notion that "recognizing race is a precondition to racism, and thus failing to recognize race reduces racism" (Pahlke, Bigler, & Suizzo, 2012, p. 1165). The core idea is that people should not pay attention to, or judge others based on their race. Rather, they should characterize others by whom they are as a person, regardless of their group membership. Proponents of this ideology believe that seeing colour itself is a form of labelling and can potentially be racist and, therefore, racism can be eliminated if we adopt a colour-blind approach. On the other hand, a *colour-conscious* orientation acknowledges and appreciates different cultural viewpoints and actively embraces diversity. The rationale behind this orientation is that educating and exposing children to racial diversity will foster an appreciation for other cultures and therefore prevent the development of biased beliefs.

Implications of Adopting a Colour-Blind vs. Colour-Conscious Racial Socialization Approach

Harding, Hughes and Way (2017) sought to identify the similarities/differences between racial socialization practices of White, Black, Chinese and Latino mothers (Pauker, Apfelbaum, & Spitzer, 2015) with respect to their adolescent children, and whether a colour-blind parenting approach is the prevailing orientation among White families. They found that White mothers predominantly stressed the notion of egalitarianism, while minority mothers mainly stressed cultural socialization messages. The authors suggest that an egalitarian emphasis, which is the idea that everyone is equal, often downplays the importance of ethnicity/race in modern society and, furthermore, propagates a colour-blind ideology. Additionally, White mothers' colour-blind socialization practices may reflect an individualistic cultural orientation whereby the individual's interests and achievements are emphasized over that of the group. In contrast, a collectivistic cultural orientation, which emphasizes interdependence, cooperation and the welfare of the group over that of the individual, is prevalent among Black (and other minority) families. While this study demonstrates that a colour-blind orientation is particularly predominant among White families, and that this orientation may be deeply rooted in an individualistic cultural orientation, it lacks an exploration as to whether a colour-blind approach fosters racial biases in White children.

Pahlke et al. (2012) sought to identify the racial socialization strategies of European American mothers, paying specific attention to the utilization of a colour-blind approach and whether or not it is effective for preventing racial biases in their children (Marshall, 2002; Norton, Sommers, Apfelbaum, Pura,

& Ariely, 2006). Using a sample of 84 mothers and their children, the researchers obtained behavioural measures to assess whether a colour-blind or colour-conscious racial socialization approach was used, and posed explicit open-ended questions to assess both mothers' and their children's racial attitudes. The researchers found that the mothers in their sample were colour-mute, meaning that they were unwilling to talk to their children about race, and thus held a colour-blind socialization orientation, which is similar to Harding's et al. (2017) findings. However, this study also demonstrated a strong correlation between mothers' colour-blind socialization orientation and their children's racial biases. Therefore, it provided confirmatory evidence to the trending scientific notion that children raised with a colour-blind orientation display racial biases, even if their parents do not explicitly endorse these biases. Mothers did not initiate conversations with their children about race, and were therefore unaware of their children's outgroup biases, lending support to the proponents of an anti-colour-blind socialization orientation, emphasizing that "mothers cannot address biases they are unaware of" (Pahlke et al., 2012, p. 1176). The mothers in this sample implied that they literally thought their children didn't see skin colour and were shocked when informed of their children's racial biases. In response, they sought advice as to how to reduce their children's biases.

It is worth mentioning that mothers not only failed to initiate conversations about race with their children, but they also ignored their children's race-related comments. While this reflects the proactive versus reactive socialization orientation addressed in the literature, this study does not make explicit mention of this important distinction. A proactive socialization orientation refers to parents' attempts to pre-emptively and accurately convey their values, goals, and agendas to their children (Abell, Clawson, Washington, Bost, & Vaughn, 1996), whereas a reactive orientation is an elicited response to specific comments that children make. Therefore, the mothers in this sample failed to initiate conversations about race and respond to their children's race-related comments, thereby lacking both a proactive and a reactive socialization pattern.

Parents' Explanation for Adopting a Colour-Blind Approach to Racial Socialization

As a follow up to Pahlke's et al. (2012) study, Vittrup (2018) sought to identify not only if, but also *why* parents chose to adopt a colour-blind or colour-conscious socialization pattern, and which racial topics parents discussed with their children. Vittrup found that most of her sample of White mothers indicated that they did believe that talking about race was important but, contrarily, most of them were not able to identify a single occurrence of this type of conversation. The small minority of mothers who did in fact have a conversation about race indicated that the conversation was inexplicit and very vague. Also, 70% of Vittrup's sample took a colour-blind approach to parenting and were unwilling to talk to their children about race. Their reasons included: 1) they didn't believe that race was an issue (57%); 2) they thought that it was sufficient to simply communicate that their children should treat everyone in the same manner, regardless of race (33%; similar to egalitarianism of Hughes et al., 2006); 3) they believed their child was already colour-blind (29%); 4) they actually wanted their child to be colour-blind (27%); 5) they would only talk to their children about race if their child initiated the conversation (27%; reactive parenting style of Hughes et al., 2006); 6) they thought their children were too young to talk about race (7%).

On the other hand, 30% of Vittrup's (2018) sample took a colour-conscious parenting approach indicating that they were willing to talk to their children about race, because either: 1) they believed that the discussion would eliminate bias and discrimination (53%); 2) they wanted to speak about physical differences such as skin colour (34%); or 3) they encouraged their children to be exposed to other cultures because they believed this would help eliminate bias (22%).

Although most of the sample indicated that they thought it was important to talk to their children about race, the majority took a colour-blind approach. They did not talk to their children about race, reportedly, because they believed that race is no longer an important topic or because they chose to communicate vague but egalitarian ideologies. The mothers who *did* talk to their children about race, and hence had a colour-conscious racial socialization approach, stressed that the primary impetus to do so was to reduce biases and potential discrimination in their children. Finally, Vittrup (2018) suggested that, at a young age, White children are conscious of race and concurrently receive a significant amount of race-related information through the media, their school and other sources, but they do not have the cognitive faculties to make sense of the messages and/or thoughts that they are having. Therefore, it may be imperative for parents to step in and act as a filter and a moulder of their children's racial attitudes (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Sue, 2015).

Paternal Racial Socialization

The studies mentioned thus far have only focused on maternal racial socialization practices, but fathers also play an essential role in racially socializing their children (Hagerman, 2017; McHale et al., 2006). Therefore, in an ethnographic qualitative study,

Hagerman (2017) sought to identify White, *affluent* fathers' racial socialization practices using a sample of fathers who identify as *progressive*. Affluent was defined as "families who owned a home in which at least one parent had a professional-managerial career and held a graduate or professional degree" (Hagerman, 2017, p. 63), and progressive was a self-identified label, but generally meant that fathers had interracial friendships and tried to promote racially diverse experiences for their children. By conducting in-depth interviews, Hagerman explored the fathers' notions of what it meant to raise *antiracist* children, their implicit and explicit practices in light of their understanding, and the dualistic propagation and concurrent repression of White privilege within these progressive paternal socialization practices.

The findings suggest that the fathers in this sample participated in racial socialization and strongly believed that their parenting practices influenced their children's racial attitudes. The colour-conscious fathers' understanding of what it meant to raise antiracist children was centred around implicitly creating interracial contact (evident through their ideas about classroom diversity), cross-racial friendships and volunteer and travel experiences, as opposed to explicit conversations about racial minorities, or White privilege. Implicit parental practices are either verbal or non-verbal in nature, and include language, behaviours or structuring various types of environments that do not directly convey racial messages to children. Rather, the child could infer that a race-related message is being implied, or the racial message may insidiously influence the child's attitudes outside of his/her awareness. On the other hand, explicit practices refer to the direct conversations or messages that parents transmit to their children, whereby the child is able to clearly and unambiguously detect that his/her parent is communicating a race-related message (Hughes et al., 2006; Segall et al., 2015). Therefore, the fathers mentioned above believed that their endorsement of outgroup contact, an implicit practice, would enable their children to "appreciate their unearned privilege" (Hagerman, 2017, p. 72).

However, Hagerman (2017) discovered a paradoxical finding such that the noble attempts made by these fathers to counter White privilege, concurrently promoted that very privilege. When the fathers believed that their children witnessed explicit forms of racism, they drew upon their White privilege and "insulated their children from these moments, thereby reinforcing the very privilege they sought to undermine" (Hagerman, 2017, p. 72). This likely communicated to their children a dualistic message of being aware of racism, but only to do so when there is a desirable outcome (i.e., when there are no personal repercussions). This propagates White privilege because it allows children to pick and choose the valence of their interracial exposure and to avoid acknowledging the painful realities faced by people of colour. Therefore, this study described common colour-conscious practices, and the role that fathers play in racially socializing their children. It also shed light on the fact that, even though parents may have the best intentions, they may inadvertently convey colour-conscious and White privilege messages concomitantly. Therefore, there is likely a special nuance required for White parents to successfully raise colour-conscious children which should be explored in future research.

Overall, a colour-blind approach appears to be the prevailing ideology within North America as a whole, especially in White families (Hagerman, 2014, 2017; Hughes et al., 2006; Pahlke et al., 2012; Vittrup, 2018), though some studies suggest that a colour-blind approach is more characteristic of the United States, whereas a colour-conscious orientation is more prevalent in Canada (Greenberg, Schmader, Arndt, & Landau, 2018). Although colour-blindness may be well-intentioned (Vittrup, 2018), others suggest that, in the literal sense, it is impossible for humans to ignore the colour of one's skin (Gil-White, 2001) and therefore adopting a colour-blind approach is an impractical and impossible feat. Furthermore, a colour-blind ideology ignores the unique oppression and cultural heritages of minority groups and this ignorance could actually propagate racism through an absence of sensitivity to, or cognizance of, the reality that racism continues to exist. Parents who are not openly discussing race with their children, or assessing their children's views about race, will likely fail to detect their children's racial biases (which research shows may inevitably develop; Bigler & Liben, 2007). They are therefore inadvertently permitting the development of racial biases in their children by failing to challenge their children's essentialist beliefs (Vittrup, 2018).

On the other hand, some research suggests that promoting diversity may highlight racial group differences and subsequently promote the development of unwarranted essentialist beliefs (Greenberg et al., 2018). Furthermore, noble attempts to teach children to recognize their White privilege may ultimately backfire (Hagerman, 2017). These mixed findings may be explained by the method in which parents communicate these messages and the extent to which they expose their children to heterogeneous environments.

Explicit vs. Implicit Racial Attitudes and Children's Perception of Parents' Racial Attitudes

In an early study of parental socialization of racial attitudes, Carlson and Iovini (1985) conducted a study looking at the differences between White and Black male adolescents' perceptions of their father's racial attitudes. They obtained data on the fathers' actual racial attitudes, the children's perceptions of their fathers' attitudes, and the children's own racial attitudes. They found that White children perceived their parents to be more prejudiced than parents' own self-reports and, generally, children's attitudes were correlated with their perceptions of their fathers' racial attitudes. Thus, this initial study comparing Black and White families demonstrated that children's perceptions of their parents' attitudes are more influential than the parents' self-reported attitudes in shaping children's racial attitudes, and more generally in the racial socialization process as a whole (Vittrup & Holden, 2011). A similar study found that there is a high degree of congruence between parents' racial messages and children's reports of receiving those messages, but only for certain racial socialization variables (e.g., egalitarianism and racial pride; Marshall, 1995). Lastly, one study demonstrated that both parents and their children inaccurately estimate the valence of each other's racial attitudes (Pahlke et al., 2012).

Naturally, this leads to the dilemma of whether the racial socialization messages that parents intend to communicate to their children, are actually being received in the same way that the parent(s) anticipated. Castelli, Zogmaister, and Tomelleri (2009) attempted to identify an underlying mechanism to explain this very phenomenon. Their study found that White mothers transmit their racial attitudes to their children via their implicit behaviours, and that behavioural and environmental parental practices are essential in fostering children's racial attitudes. Thus, racially biased attitudes can be transmitted implicitly via the parent-child dyad, although parents may not even realize that this is occurring (Castelli et al., 2009).

Unlike Castelli et al. (2009), Hagerman (2017) noted that explicit verbal communications are in fact an important aspect of socialization practices, but she did not investigate this further. Nevertheless, Hagerman differentiated between large and small-scale implicit parental socialization practices. Examples of small-scale, every day implicit behaviours could include locking the car door in a specific neighbourhood and encouraging or discouraging certain friendships. On the other hand, examples of large-scale implicit socialization behaviours could include the school to which the parents send their child, the neighbourhood in which they raise them, and the media that they pay particular attention to. Both kinds of implicit parental behaviours are important in shaping children's racial attitudes (Hagerman, 2017).

These studies therefore suggest that parents' racial attitudes may have a significant influence on their children's racial attitudes and can vary from small scale to large scale in nature, and hence in influence. Furthermore, these parental attitudes are most often transmitted implicitly and therefore can have an insidious impact on children's attitudes. Finally, children's perceptions of their parents' racial attitudes, as oppose to parents' self-reported racial attitudes, have been shown to be more influential in shaping children's race-related schema. Therefore, it is important to note that congruence exists between children's racial attitudes and their perception of their parents' attitudes, in contrast to children's racial attitudes and their parents' actual or self-reported racial attitudes. The discrepancy between parents' implicit and explicit racial attitudes may either be attributable to social desirability concerns, or because parents are unaware of their implicit attitudes and the degree to which their children pick up on them.

Therefore, studies should increasingly measure both parents' and children's explicit and implicit racial attitudes and behaviours, as well as their perceptions of each other's racial attitudes. Lastly, Marshall (1995) found that congruence does exist between some of parents' explicit relayed messages and children's perception thereof, but only for specific domains. For example, there was a high degree of congruence related to the importance of equality and racial pride, but significantly less congruence regarding the existence of racial barriers in Marshall's sample. Future studies should explore why congruence exists for certain types of racial socialization messages and not others. This can shed light on how children receive and make sense of their parents' explicit communications about race.

Heterogeneous vs. Homogeneous Ecologies and The Effect on White Parental Racial Socialization

In the previous section, we observe that parents' implicit and explicit racial attitudes and behaviours seem to have varying effects on their children's racial attitudes. Alternatively, in this section, the effects of raising children in a racially homogeneous environment, which is defined as a primarily White school, neighbourhood and home atmosphere, versus a heterogeneous (i.e., multiracial) environment is explored, in order to introduce the notion that the environment in which parents raise their children can

also have a significant influence on their children's racial attitudes and perceptions.

Hagerman (2014) conducted a qualitative ethnographic study examining White upper and middle-class families' racial socialization process. Hagerman noted that, similar to Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph and Nickerson (2002), the racial environment and the parental racial socialization behavioural patterns with which children are raised, strongly influences children's conceptions of race. This study looked at the environment (i.e., the demographics of the school that the children in this sample attended, as well as the neighbourhood that the children lived in, which was a particular town in the United States called Sheridan, both of which were 99% White), and related this to a colour-blind or colour-conscious approach. Overall, the study found that parents and children living in a homogeneously White neighbourhood and school frequently adopted a colour-blind approach (Hamm, 2001). The parents in this sample indicated their belief that racism no longer exists and therefore that it was not important for them to talk to their children about race. Additionally, when the children were probed about whether they believed that being White gave them an advantage in society, they unanimously answered that it did not, indicating that they had no self-awareness of their White privilege.

On the other hand, this study found that White parents and children living and going to school in a heterogeneous environment, generally adopted a colour-conscious approach to race, although the causal nexus between a colour-blind/colour-conscious approach and children's environments is difficult to determine (Hagerman, 2014). These color-conscious parents actively discussed race with their children, brought them to visit different countries, frequently exposed them to cultural diversity and had family friends who were Black. Their children saw race and easily identified acts of racism in their school, they acknowledged the privilege associated with being White, contemplated their own behaviour in racialized terms and conveyed that racism and racial inequality are ongoing societal issues. The sample of participants in these homogeneous and heterogeneous environments were matched in terms of White privilege, but despite their socioeconomic similarities, they fostered vastly different racial ideologies in their children (Hagerman, 2014).

These findings suggest that the disparity in White racial socialization parental practices are associated with the racial context with which parents raise their children, and this is manifested by the transmission of diversification and celebration of race versus the alternative approach of colour-blindness. This study demonstrates the importance of behavioural and ecological racial socialization practices which subsequently influence the White racial ideologies with which parents are raising their children (i.e., colour-blind vs. colour-conscious). Hagerman (2014) engrossed herself in the families that she interviewed by babysitting and attending many of the children's activities, thereby allowing her to observe the families' behaviours. It may be that ethnography is particularly beneficial for studying how racial socialization in White families occurs, given that it allows one to gain insight into the casual conversations and behaviours in which families engage, which may not otherwise be captured by alternative methodologies.

Another study addressing the ecological effects on White racial socialization, looked at how racial segregation, which is defined as residential areas that are primarily White and segregated from minority residential areas, affects perceptions of and prejudice towards Blacks (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2007). The authors suggest that racial segregation of Whites and Blacks creates a "White habitus, a racialized uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates Whites' racial taste, perceptions, feelings, emotions and views on racial matters" (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2007, p. 324-325). A White habitus creates in-group favoritism and outgroup biases. Furthermore, Whites are unaware of their White habitus and its effects on their racial socialization practices, and thus are unaware of their biases against Blacks. Firstly, these findings show that Whites do, in fact, experience high levels of racial segregation and that this segregation likely continues over their development, even in the presence of more Black people. Secondly, Whites do not see their segregation as a racial implication. Therefore, this study demonstrated that racial segregation, and the resulting White habitus formation, promoted homogeneous racial attitudes and blindness regarding the racial ecological gap that exists in society, which thereby promoted outgroup biases (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2007).

Lastly, Pahlke's et al. (2012) study sought to identify if, in the face of a colour-blind orientation, mothers' outgroup friendships and practices served as a predictor of their children's racial attitudes. It was found that this was in fact the case. This study demonstrated a negative correlation between mothers' interracial friendships and children's racial biases. Therefore, Pahlke et al. suggested that White parents should deliberately expand and endorse culturally diverse friend groups for children, so as to reduce racial biases. Other research suggests that the mere exposure of White children to positive Black exemplars can reduce implicit racial biases (Gonzalez, Steele, & Baron, 2017), therefore also suggesting that

parents should adopt practices to expose children to positive outgroup interactions.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While there is a growing body of literature examining White parental racial socialization, there are several key limitations and gaps in the literature which should be explored in future studies. Firstly, there is an inconsistent use of terminology which can lead to conceptual confusion, fragmented findings and can hinder the opportunity to build on the current findings. For example, *colour-mute*, *silence about race*, *colour-blind*, *egalitarianism*, etc., are all terms which have been used to describe a similar idea in the literature, yet they are all slightly different constructs. It is important to use consistent terminology when trying to build a sound theoretical construct. The ensuing sections will discuss the various limitations in the literature as well as directions for future research.

Proactive vs. Reactive Racial Socialization

Although one study alluded to the distinction between a proactive versus a reactive socialization pattern (Pahlke et al., 2012), there is a dearth of studies addressing this distinction. A proactive orientation is pre-emptive and accurately reflects the values, goals and agendas (Abell et al., 1996) that parents intend to transmit to their children, whereas a reactive orientation is elicited, or is a response to specific racial comments that children make. There is an appreciable amount of findings on this very phenomenon in the Black racial socialization literature, which demonstrates that both types of socialization patterns (i.e., reactive and proactive) are important for conveying consistent values to children (Abell et al., 1996; Hughes et al., 2006). This distinction may be particularly important for White parents, who should convey a consistent set of values about race to their children, especially given children's predisposition to developing essentialist beliefs and their ability to perceive the subtle and implicit behaviours that their parents inadvertently communicate to them. While there may be methodological challenges to measuring proactive versus reactive socialization, a greater use of ethnographic and longitudinal studies may provide more insight into this socialization pattern. Alternatively, a qualitative study may ask parents, "Do you believe that the messages you proactively/intentionally communicate to your children are consistent with how you react to your children's race-related comments in casual conversations?" This may yield notable findings which can assist both researchers and, importantly, parents in aligning the values that they plan to communicate to their children with the messages that they actually communicate to them.

Maternal and Paternal Racial Socialization

Next, studies demonstrate that both maternal and paternal racial socialization practices are important. Mothers and fathers play their own unique role in teaching their children about race. Although there is a relative paucity of research examining paternal socialization practices, some studies have begun to include fathers. However, to the author's knowledge, there have been no studies on White parental racial socialization that examines whether there is congruence between mothers' and fathers' reports of racial socialization. Previous studies have shown that parents may communicate inconsistent beliefs to their children, and the consequences may be that children have difficulty developing a uniform value system with regard to race. Therefore, future research should measure both maternal and paternal racial socialization practices, as well as the congruence between them, in order to see how this relates to the development of their children's racial attitudes.

Lack of Experimental Methodology

Generally, there is a lack of controlled experimental research with respect to racial socialization. While there are obvious challenges in designing an experiment to analyze socialization (which is a lifelong process of teaching and learning), it is possible to create a methodologically valid experimental design. For example, a pre-post experimental design can measure children's implicit racial attitudes before and after a parent has an explicit conversation with their child about: the meaning and definition of racism, what White privilege means, and how racial sensitivity is important. Alternatively, a longitudinal study which asks parents to periodically have explicit conversations with their children about race, while also intermittently measuring children's racial attitudes throughout that same timeframe, can show how explicit racial conversations influence children's racial attitudes. The lack of experimental research, and hence researchers' lacking ability to make causal claims about racial socialization, poses a significant limitation to the current findings on this topic.

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity as a Theoretical Framework

Another limitation to the current research is the lack of a unifying theoretical framework to explain why children often have an exclusive ingroup orientation and, conversely, how they develop a *multicultural worldview*, whereby they can contemplate and understand a worldview that is racially/ethnically different from their own. This unifying construct would be critical for White parental racial socialization, since White parents often raise

colour-blind children in a racially homogeneous environment. Therefore, a potential framework to accomplish this goal, is Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, which provides a framework for the various ways in which people can react to cultural differences. The general idea of this model is that children who receive *monocultural socialization*, which is almost exclusive interaction with one's racial/ethnic/cultural ingroup members, "only have access to their own cultural worldview and so they are unable to experience that of people who are culturally different" (Bennett, 2004, p. 10). By contrast, developing an *intercultural worldview* involves developing the "ability to create an alternative experience that more or less matches that of people in another culture" (Bennett, 2004, p. 11). Bennett (1993) proposes two distinct and overarching stages in the development of intercultural sensitivity. The first main stage is the *ethnocentric* stage, in which one experiences one's own culture and denies, defends or minimizes the importance of other cultures. The second stage is the *ethnorelative* stage, in which people acknowledge that their beliefs and culture are a small part of a relatively massive set of cultures. This process is consecutively manifest through accepting, adapting and integrating cultural differences. Although the literature discussed in this article does not specifically mention the use of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, this model may be nevertheless essential to understand how parents can potentially influence children's racial biases and, contrarily, work to foster a modality of intercultural sensitivity in their children. Future research should consider whether using this model would be adept at unifying the White parental racial socialization literature, given that it could explain how and why children's cultural beliefs and biases develop.

Conclusion

This paper examined the sparse literature on White parental racial socialization practices. The literature suggests that White parents transmit their racial attitudes to their children via implicit behavioural and ecological practices, and that children's perceptions about their parents' racial attitudes, as opposed to their parents' actual attitudes, more significantly predict their child's racial attitudes. The findings also suggest that White parents tend to adopt a colour-blind racial socialization approach, because they believe that this parenting methodology will potentially reduce racism. However, research suggests that although there is benevolent intent behind colour-blind parenting practices, the outcomes of these practices are adversely consequential. This colour-blind approach permits the development of children's outgroup biases, because parents fail to challenge the multiplicity of confusing racial messages that children are receiving from external sources, such as in school and over social media (Vittrup, 2018). Additionally, ethnographic research that specifically focuses on the environments that parents create for their children, suggests that a heterogeneous environment is essential for mitigating children's racial biases. On the other hand, White homogeneous environments contribute to parents' adoption of a colour-blind ideology which, as noted above, perpetuates children's racial biases, and is therefore the antithesis of what the parents' colour-blind ideology hopes to eliminate.

With respect to the societal importance of racial socialization research, recent shootings of unarmed Black men in the United States (e.g., Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, & Eric Garner) have sparked a public outcry about the continued existence of racism. For example, in 2012, a police officer, George Zimmerman, began following 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in a gated community in Florida, as he was suspicious of Martin's behaviours. Zimmerman was explicitly told by 911 dispatchers to not confront Martin, but the incident ended with Martin being fatally shot. While the nature of this incident is still debated, many African Americans perceive the shooting and delayed arrest of Zimmerman to be acts of racism. After this episode, popular press media including parenting blogs, newspaper articles, television shows and mini-documentary series, have drawn the public's attention to the importance of teaching children about race. Furthermore, research suggests that parental racial socialization practices have actually changed in response to the extraordinary attention given to the tragic shootings of these unarmed Black men (Thomas & Blackmon, 2015). It would be beneficial if future research continued to explore how families react to publicized acts of racism within the context of racial socialization.

Whether at school or at work, nearly all children will likely have interracial interactions, and it is incumbent on parents to educate and sensitize their children to cultural diversity. To do this, parents could educate themselves by reading books, parenting blogs or attending seminars on the topic. Additionally, several parenting blogs suggest that parents shouldn't hesitate to bring up race-related conversations with their children. However, if parents do feel uncomfortable explicitly discussing race, they could look for teaching moments whereby they provide children with an appreciation for racial differences. For example, parents may present children with ideas which lead to an appreciation for people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, such as with certain types of food and/or art. Lastly, parents should tailor their race-related messages in an age-appropriate manner so that their children can intellectually make sense of the ideas that they are trying to convey.

Furthermore, parents could approach racial socialization practices with a proactive orientation, as research indicates that a proactive approach effectively and consistently conveys the types of racial messages that parents intend to communicate (Hughes et al., 2006). Parents could also provide heterogeneous experiences for their children, consider sending them to multicultural schools, and encourage them to have interracial friendships, as recent qualitative studies have found that this could potentially reduce racial biases and increase sensitivity towards cultural differences (Hagerman, 2017). Finally, given the concurrent arduous responsibility of being a parent, the lack of requisite training thereon, and the growing multicultural society in which we live, it is incumbent on parents to develop a sense of generativity and a commitment to self-education on racial socialization so as to contribute to fostering a society which upholds cultural sensitivity and racial pride as quintessential ideologies. "Racial socialization is not what we do once a year - it is what we do consistently, persistently and in an enduring fashion" (Boykin & Toms, 1985).

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