



Review

Understanding the complexities of ethnic-racial socialization processes for both minority and majority groups: A 30-year systematic review



Naomi Priest^{a,b,*}, Jessica Walton^a, Fiona White^c, Emma Kowal^a,
Alison Baker^d, Yin Paradies^a

^a Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, VIC 3125, Australia

^b McCaughey VicHealth Centre for Community Wellbeing, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne, Level 5, 207 Bouverie Street, Carlton, VIC 3010, Australia

^c School of Psychology, Faculty of Science, University of Sydney, Room 426, Brennan MacCallum Building, Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia

^d Victoria Institute, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC 8001, Australia

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ABSTRACT

In order to promote positive intercultural relations, reduce racism and promote harmony in diverse societies, we must better understand the processes by which both minority and majority children and young people learn about and negotiate racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, processes known as ethnic-racial socialization. A critical gap within the field of ethnic-racial socialization is a systematic literature review that includes a diverse range of population groups. The primary goal of this paper is to systematically review research over the past 30 years that has examined ethnic-racial socialization processes for both minority and majority children and young people. Studies ($n=92$) that included implicit or explicit ethnic-racial socialization as a primary outcome variable along with examination of racism/discrimination, intergroup contact and/or cross-cultural interactions were reviewed. Our main findings highlight that the majority of studies continue to focus on the ethnic-racial socialization of African American children by parents. However, emerging studies involving different ethnic-racial and cultural groups demonstrate the need to consider how multiple social and environmental factors and multiple influential agents differentially impact on the types of messages used with children and young people. Implications for future research, in relation to the adoption of multi-level frameworks and understanding the contribution of multiple agents across a range of contexts, are discussed.

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* Corresponding author at: Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Hwy, Burwood, VIC 3125, Australia. Tel.: +61 392517076.

E-mail addresses: naomi.priest@deakin.edu.au, npriest@unimelb.edu.au (N. Priest).

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1. Introduction

Comprehending how people are socialized into understanding race and ethnicity is a challenging issue for scholars – one that is further complicated by the increasingly diverse cultural contexts in which we live. Throughout the world, factors such as globalization, natural disasters, political conflict, increasing urbanization and poverty have all resulted in expanding migration both within and between countries, permanently changing the social and cultural landscape. In recent years, the populations of many high-income countries have become increasingly ethnically, racially and culturally diverse through arrival of both humanitarian and refugee entrants as well as skilled migrants (United Nations, 2002). These population movements, combined with existing histories of marginalization and exclusion of minority groups such as indigenous populations and those from African and Caribbean backgrounds within many of these host countries, have resulted in complex intercultural contexts and challenges related to multiculturalism and social cohesion (Hage & Bennett, 2008).

In this global context, children and young people must acquire skills and capacities to negotiate multicultural contexts within their everyday lives (Hughes et al., 2006; Levy & Killen, 2008). In order to create and promote harmonious societies, children and young people need the skills and attitudes to think positively about racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. As attitudes and behaviours towards people who are different to oneself are learnt in childhood (Katz, 2003; Kelly et al., 2007; Ramsey, 2008), we must better understand the processes by which children and young people learn about and negotiate racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity (including issues of racism and prejudice) so that positive skills and attitudes might be promoted and negative ones can be countered. Parents, families, educators, and communities must also be able to successfully navigate these increasing levels of cultural diversity in order to foster supportive and nurturing environments for children and young people from both majority and minority racial and ethnic groups. This includes knowledge of effective ways to promote positive attitudes, counter negative attitudes and/or enable effective responses to racism when it occurs (Author et al., 2009; Neblett et al., 2008). Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to racism's harmful effects (Refugee Health Research Centre, 2007; Zubrick et al., 2005), with racism negatively impacting health and wellbeing, educational and social outcomes both in childhood and throughout life (Author et al., 2012; Pachter & Garcia Coll, 2009; Sanders-Phillips, Settles-Reaves, Walker, & Brownlow, 2009; Sanders-Phillips, 2009).

The processes by which children discuss and learn about racism and diversity are the focus of this review. These processes, known as ethnic-racial socialization, involve both verbal and non-verbal messages about the meaning and significance of race and ethnicity; racial and ethnic group membership and identity; racial and ethnic stratification; and intergroup and intragroup interactions (Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Neblett et al., 2008). Previously the terms 'racial socialization' and 'ethnic socialization' have been used to describe similar processes in different groups. Given the increasingly interchangeable use of race and ethnicity as concepts (Brubaker, 2009), the term ethnic-racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006) will be used in this review.

Research on ethnic-racial socialization emerged over twenty five years ago (Aboud, 1989; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Norheim & Asada, 2009; Peters, 1985), and has concentrated on four main themes: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism (see Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hughes et al., 2006 for the development of these constructs). Generally, cultural socialization refers mainly to promoting cultural pride, teaching cultural knowledge and practicing cultural traditions. Preparation for bias has been used predominantly with children from minority ethnic-racial groups and alerts children to the possibility that they may experience racism or other forms of prejudice because of their racial, ethnic or cultural background and focuses on developing appropriate coping strategies. Promotion of mistrust refers to practices that teach children to be cautious of people from different racial, ethnic or cultural backgrounds based on

perceived barriers to success or experiences of discrimination. Finally, egalitarianism refers to the promotion of values that focus on shared commonalities rather than racial, ethnic or cultural differences. It can also lead to colour-blindness, which promotes the view that race, ethnicity and culture do not matter and should not be discussed or highlighted as salient to intercultural relations. Alternative terminology has also been used for these four themes (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Brega & Coleman, 1999; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Smith, Jacobson, & Juarez, 2011; Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002), highlighting a need for consistency when referring to ethnic-racial socialization messages and behaviours to enhance understanding and comparison between both theoretical and empirical studies.

To date, ethnic-racial socialization research has predominantly focused on minority groups, such as African American (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Lesane-Brown, 2006) and immigrant Latino and Asian populations (Brown, Tanner-Smith, Lesane-Brown, & Ezell, 2007; Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-bey, 2009). More recently, the field has expanded to include other minority groups such as Asian American (Moua & Lamborn, 2010), Native American (Tynes, 2007), as well as American transracially adopted children (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008; DeBerry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1996; Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007; Mohanty, 2010). Very few studies have specifically examined ethnic-racial socialization among White Anglo/European children and their families (Author et al., 2006; Hamm, 2001; Hughes & Chen, 1999).

In addition to a primary focus on minority groups, studies have also largely focused on specific ethnic-racial socialization messages from one agent (e.g., preparation for bias messages from minority parents) rather than on ethnic-racial socialization processes as a whole, including various messages from multiple agents (Neblett et al., 2008). Furthermore, research has also almost exclusively focused on older children and adolescents rather than younger children under 12 years of age (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Hughes et al., 2006). Little is known about mechanisms and contextual processes that facilitate parenting practices that buffer children and young people against the negative effects of racism (Berkel et al., 2009). Given that ethnic-racial socialization research has predominantly focused on African Americans and adolescents, and on parents as sources of ethnic-racial socialization messages, there have been calls for research across diverse ethnic groups, with younger children, and on sources of ethnic-racial socialization messages beyond parents (Hughes et al., 2006).

Given the benefits of promoting positive intergroup relations, addressing racism and having a critical self-reflexive understanding of cultural diversity for all members of society, it is important to understand ethnic-racial socialization messages and behaviours for children from majority and minority groups. Importantly, minority children need to understand their own ethnic/racial identity (self-concept) as well as developing positive attitudes toward members of other racial/ethnic groups. Similarly, majority children also need to understand their own identity (e.g., whiteness) while also learning about other ethnic/racial groups. Thus, this up-to-date systematic review that includes literature across all population groups and contexts and is not restricted to particular ethnic-racial groups or sources of ethnic-racial socialization fills a critical gap in the literature. Two reviews using narrative, non-systematic methods have been conducted previously, although these are now over five years old and are somewhat limited in their focus and scope. Hughes and colleagues (2006) reviewed parents' practices of ethnic-racial socialization among African American populations in the United States. Lesane-Brown (2006) also conducted a review of the parental ethnic-racial socialization literature, specifically examining research within Black families.

This present review provides the first systematic review of research examining ethnic-racial socialization processes for children and young people from both minority and majority racial-ethnic groups. It does so using a socio-ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to understand ethnic-racial socialization processes for children aged 0–18 years in a variety of contexts including the family, schools, the community and/or neighbourhood and from wider societal influences such as the media, and examine key influences and predictors of such ethnic-racial socialization processes. As this is a large undertaking in its own right, in order to keep this current review focused on predictors, antecedents and factors influencing ethnic-racial socialization processes, it does not include studies focused on the effect of ethnic-racial socialization as a predictor, mediator or moderator of health, social and educational outcomes.

2. Methods

2.1. Inclusion criteria

Studies were included in this review if they met all of the following criteria:

- Primary outcome of (a) implicit or explicit ethnic-racial socialization of children and young people and/or (b) adults reporting on ethnic-racial socialization received as children; within a stated context of racism/discrimination, intergroup contact and/or cross-cultural interactions. Studies where ethnic-racial socialization was examined as a predictor variable for outcomes related to health, education, and psychosocial variables were excluded as were those that primarily analyzed ethnic-racial socialization as a mediator or moderator of outcomes that were not related to discrimination, intergroup contact, or the transmission of ethnic-racial messages (i.e., cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust and egalitarianism).
- Focused on ethnic-racial socialization processes during childhood (0–18 years) including both retrospective and current experiences reported by children and adults.

- Published and unpublished empirical studies.
- Descriptive and intervention studies using qualitative, quantitative and/or mixed methods.

2.2. Search strategy and data extraction

The following databases and electronic journal collections were searched in English from 1980 to present: Medline, PsychInfo, Sociological Abstracts, ERIC, Embase, CINAHL ProQuest (for dissertation/theses). Ethnic-racial socialization only began to be addressed in academic research in the 1980s and became more prevalent from the 1990s (Hughes et al., 2006). Reference lists of articles selected for full text review were hand-searched for relevant studies. In addition, searches of Google and key websites were conducted and key experts contacted to access additional literature (see Table A.1 in the Appendix for the full search strategy).

The initial search generated 8225 results that were screened for inclusion by one author (removed for author anonymity). After duplicates were removed, a 10% random selection of 4818 titles and abstracts were screened independently by a second author using Endnote X4 (removed for author anonymity). Where required, full text papers were obtained in order to assess inclusion. Any disputes were resolved by consensus. After screening, 92 studies met the inclusion criteria.

Quality of included studies was appraised using a tool adapted from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) (<http://hebw.cf.ac.uk/projectmethod/appendix5.htm#top>). This tool assesses key domains of study quality, including clarity of aims, appropriateness and rigour of design and analysis, including risk of bias, and relevance of results. Only studies of medium or high quality were included.

Data from studies meeting the inclusion criteria were entered into an Excel spreadsheet by all authors. Data extraction of a random 10% sample of included studies was conducted independently by a second author in order to ensure data quality. Basic descriptive statistics of study characteristics were conducted in Excel 2011 and study findings narratively synthesized. A formal meta-analysis was not conducted due to the heterogeneity of studies in terms of design, study populations, exposure and outcome measures.

3. Results

3.1. Overview of studies

Over half of included 92 studies were published in the last seven years ($n = 50$), and the vast majority were conducted in the United States ($n = 86$) and used a cross-sectional study design ($n = 86$). Despite this, many diverse ethnicities were included across the studies including people of African descent and primarily from the United States ($n = 61$), followed by White American ($n = 19$), Asian American ($n = 11$), Latino/a American ($n = 9$), transracial adoptive families ($n = 8$) and others ($n = 2$). Most studies were conducted with only adolescents and adults 13 years and older ($n = 50$) with some including children 7–12 years old ($n = 11$) and others only including children 7–12 years old ($n = 13$). Few only considered children six years of age and under ($n = 10$) and others included children under six years of age among other age groups ($n = 8$). All of the studies identified a primary measure of ethnic-racial socialization, though very few studies used the same measure (with 37 different measures and 22 study specific measures used). Most of these measures examined parent ethnic-racial socialization behaviours, experiences and attitudes. The largest group of studies ($n = 15$) used modifications of the Racial Socialization Scale originally developed by Hughes (1995). Finally, of the 86 studies that identified parents as primary ethnic-racial socialization agents, 14% specifically included mothers ($n = 13$) or fathers ($n = 1$) only.

3.2. Agents of ethnic-racial socialization

Studies predominantly considered parents/caregivers ($n = 86$) as the primary ethnic-racial socialization agent, followed by the wider family ($n = 2$), peers ($n = 2$), mentors ($n = 1$) and the home environment ($n = 1$). Of the 86 studies that focused on parents/caregivers, 18 also considered other ethnic-racial socialization agents such as family ($n = 7$), peers ($n = 5$), teachers ($n = 4$), religious members ($n = 1$), neighbourhood ($n = 6$), community ($n = 2$) and school contexts ($n = 1$).

For parents, ethnic-racial socialization messages used with their children were related to their ethnic-racial socialization beliefs and attitudes and personal experiences of ethnic-racial socialization and discrimination. Supporting Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological model, parent perceptions about broader societal factors also influenced ethnic-racial socialization behaviours such as the extent to which parents encouraged their children to establish out-group relationships. Non-parent caregivers/adults were also reported to be important sources of ethnic-racial socialization among African/Black Americans and Mexican Americans, thus highlighting the need for research that includes a broader socializing environment as well as examining the extent to which broader familial and non-familial socialization is important for other ethnic minority groups and majority groups.

3.2.1. Parents/caregivers

Parents are recognized to play a pivotal role in children's ethnic-racial socialization. Parents or caregivers were the primary ethnic-racial socialization agent in the majority of studies ($n = 86$). A number of parent-specific factors influenced or

predicted parents' ethnic-racial socialization behaviours, including the gender of the parents, parent beliefs and attitudes, and parents' own experiences of ethnic-racial socialization and discrimination.

3.2.1.1. Parents' ethnic-racial socialization beliefs. Parent beliefs about the importance of ethnic-racial socialization had a significant impact on their ethnic-racial socialization behaviours. In a study of White American adoptive parents of minority and White majority children from Asian, Latin American and Eastern European countries, parents that believed ethnic-racial socialization was important were 3.2 times more likely to talk to their children about racism and discrimination (Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, & Gunnar, 2006). Interestingly, relationships between ethnic-racial socialization and colour-blind ethnic-racial attitudes were complex. Adoptive parents of both minority and majority children that reported lower colour-blind ethnic-racial attitudes who also believed ethnic-racial socialization was important reported engaging in more ethnic-racial socialization behaviours and tended to have more discussions about racism and discrimination than parents with higher colour-blind ethnic-racial attitudes (Lee et al., 2006). However, this effect of colour-blind ethnic-racial attitudes decreased as the importance of ethnic-racialization beliefs increased. The influence of ethnic-racial socialization beliefs on ethnic-racial socialization behaviours has also been confirmed in other studies where parents' perceived importance of ethnic-racial socialization was a stronger predictor of ethnic-racial socialization behaviours than White racial identity status and parents' ethnic-racial socialization self-efficacy (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011).

3.2.1.2. Relationship between parents' and children's ethnic-racial attitudes. Some of the reviewed studies analyzed associations between parent ethnic-racial attitudes and beliefs and children's ethnic-racial attitudes (Aboud & Doyle, 1996; Author et al., 2006; Castelli, Zogmaister, & Tomelleri, 2009; Hello, Scheepers, Vermulst, & Gerris, 2004; Sinclair, Dunn, & Lowrey, 2005). Although ethnic-racial socialization was not directly assessed in these studies, parent ethnic-racial attitudes and beliefs are clearly strong predictors of ethnic-racial socialization behaviours. The following studies demonstrate the need to consider the impact of both implicit and explicit ethnic-racial attitudes and behaviours on children's ethnic-racial attitudes.

Sinclair and colleagues (2005) used the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) among 89 pairs of mainly White American parents and children (Grades 4–5). The study found that the more children identified with parents, the more influence parents' ethnic-racial attitudes had on both children's implicit and explicit ethnic-racial attitudes (Sinclair et al., 2005). Castelli and colleagues (2009) also used the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald et al., 1998) with White Italian parents and an adapted explicit version for White Italian children (3–6 years old). They found a significant association between mothers' rather than fathers' implicit non-verbal ethnic-racial attitudes and the attitudes of children. Most children (67%) preferred a White playmate rather than a Black playmate and were significantly more likely to attribute positive traits to White children. The preference for a White playmate corresponded with mothers' implicit negative attitudes toward pictures of Black people. This finding was supported in part by another study in which young White children tended to have less biased ethnic-racial attitudes toward Black people if their mothers also held less stereotyped views and more differentiated perceptions of Black people (Aboud & Doyle, 1996). Similarly, among 18–27 year old White Dutch young adults, exposure to parent ethnic-racial prejudice as children was associated with young people's behavioural tendency to exclude people from other ethnic groups (Hello et al., 2004).

In a study that directly assessed the impact of parental ethnic-racial socialization on children's ethnic prejudice, Quintana and Vera (1999) found that while Mexican American children had a higher developmental understanding of ethnic prejudice and higher ethnic knowledge at Grade 6 compared to Grade 2, they surprisingly did not find any significant association between parent ethnic-racial socialization (e.g., preparation for bias) and the child's developmental understanding of ethnic prejudice. Instead, parent ethnic-racial socialization had a direct impact on the child's level of ethnic knowledge, which suggested an indirect impact on the child's understanding of ethnic prejudice (Quintana & Vera, 1999). Again, this could be partly explained by the above findings that parent implicit ethnic-racial attitudes had a more significant impact on children's ethnic-racial attitudes than parents' explicit ethnic-racial attitudes.

Other studies also found that parent gender had a differential impact on the extent to which parents' ethnic-racial attitudes influenced their children's ethnic-racial attitudes. Among White Australian first-year university students ($n = 80$) and their parents, parent and student ethnic-racial prejudice attitudes toward Indigenous and Asian Australians were significantly related, with correlations between students' and their mothers' ($r = .35$) and fathers' ($r = .29$) blatant prejudice scores, and correlations between students' and their father's subtle prejudice ($r = .36$) scores (Author et al., 2006). Similarly, O'Bryan, Fishbein, and Neil Ritchey (2004) found that mothers' and fathers' ethnic-racial attitudes impacted differently on their adolescent children's attitudes regardless of the adolescents' gender. Mothers' ethnic-racial prejudice resulted in an increase in their children's ethnic-racial prejudice while the fathers' prejudiced attitudes toward homosexuality and female stereotyping had a stronger impact on their children's attitudes towards homosexuals and women (O'Bryan et al., 2004). In the single study from this review that looked only at father/son ethnic-racial socialization ($n = 200$ dyads), compared to Black adolescents, White adolescents' ethnic-racial attitudes were more closely related to the perceived ethnic-racial attitudes of their fathers (Carlson & Iovini, 1985). Together, these findings highlight the fact that a significant relationship continues to exist between parents' and their children's ethnic-racial prejudice attitudes into late adolescence, and suggests that mothers and fathers may play a different socialization role in racial prejudice attitude transmission.

3.2.1.3. The impact of parents' experiences of ethnic-racial socialization and discrimination. Parents' own experiences of ethnic-racial socialization based on their ethnic-racial background had both actual and perceived impacts on ethnic-racial

socialization behaviours used with their children. White mothers of biracial families identified the importance of support from their husbands and interracial support groups in helping them discuss ethnic-racial socialization messages with their children (O'Donoghue, 2006). In a study of mainly White and Black English mothers and some fathers in interracial families, perceptions of ethnic-racial socialization parenting were captured using life history ethnographic interviews ($n=95$) (Twine, 1999). Black mothers and fathers perceived that White parents would not be able to prepare their children for racism because of the belief that they had not experienced it themselves, and if they did it would be more out of sympathy than empathy (Twine, 1999). This perception is supported in the findings from a qualitative study that looked at transracial adoptive families of 18–29 year old African American adoptees ($n=13$) and White adoptive parents ($n=10$) (Smith et al., 2011). The predominant themes that parents communicated to their children were “race lessons” (ethnic-racial socialization strategies and practices) including: cultural pride (cultural socialization), getting along with White people, and educating White people during experiences of racism or discrimination at the expense of their own needs (Smith et al., 2011). In response to their children's reports of racism and discrimination, parents focused on maintaining interracial harmony and encouraged adoptees to not be offended, to not display negative emotions, and to make sure the offending person is okay (Smith et al., 2011). Smith and colleagues (2011) point out that these ethnic-racial socialization strategies echo strategies used by African American parents in other studies regarding a focus on cultural pride and recognition of racism. However, they argue that a major difference is that the White adoptive parents' messages focus more on empathy with perpetrators of racism and encourage victims to minimize their responses to racism.

There were also a few studies that reported an association between parental experiences of discrimination and ethnic-racial socialization messages ($n=4$). For example, African American parents that experienced workplace discrimination were more likely to engage in preparation for bias with their children aged 10–19, and African American mothers in particular were also more likely to engage in cultural socialization practices if they reported higher levels of workplace discrimination (Crouter, Baril, Davis, & McHale, 2008). Similarly, Hughes and colleagues (2006) found an association between African American parents' perceptions of work discrimination and preparation for bias messages used with older children aged 9–12. Also parents were more likely to use racial socialization messages if they had personal experiences with discrimination or racism specifically. Similarly, among African American parents and their adolescent children, parents who experienced racial discrimination were more likely to use ethnic-racial pride and preparation for bias messages (Berkel et al., 2009). Finally, Hughes and Johnson (2001) identified a correlation between African American parent experiences with discrimination and higher levels of cultural socialization.

Ethnic-racial socialization is clearly a complex process involving a number of interrelated factors. As a result, studies have also looked at how different predictors interrelate and impact ethnic-racial socialization. For example, parents that had recently immigrated tended to focus on practicing cultural traditions than more settled parents while parents that had experienced discrimination were more likely to impart preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust with older children (Hughes et al., 2006). While Hughes (2003) found that parent experiences of discrimination was a stronger predictor of preparation for bias messages for older children aged 10–17 years than ethnic identity or perceived group disadvantage, Scottham and Smalls (2009) found that a combination of factors including a strong parent ethnic-racial identity, feeling positively about African Americans overall and feeling that the general public viewed African Americans less positively predicted a higher level of ethnic-racial socialization messages by African American female caregivers with their children (11–17 years) especially racial pride, racial barriers and cultural socialization.

This combination of predictive factors is also supported by the findings that socioeconomic indicators such as education level and income had an impact on the types of messages used (Caughy, O'Campo, et al., 2002; White-Johnson, Ford, & Sellers, 2010). African American mothers with a higher level of education tended to engage in more discussions on racial issues, and less on egalitarianism or negative racial messages, than mothers with a lower level of education (White-Johnson et al., 2010). Using an observational measure, the Africentric Home Inventory Scale, African American families with lower incomes tended to have less Africentric culturally relevant objects suggesting less opportunity for both implicit and explicit cultural socialization (Caughy, O'Campo, et al., 2002; Caughy, Randolph et al., 2002).

Findings from studies that focus on parents/caregivers as a primary ethnic-racial socialization agent are also discussed in Section 3.3 as it relates to child-specific predictors of ethnic-racial socialization including the child's age and developmental level, ethnic-racial identity and gender.

3.2.1.4. Parental perceived influence of broader societal factors. Another significant factor that influenced parents' ethnic-racial socialization with their children related to their perceptions of intergroup relations and societal achievement. Due to the group's dominant position of power and privilege in society, minority parents tended to espouse the importance of their children learning to get along with the majority group. As a result of these perceptions, minority parents socialized their children in different ways to majority parents through a stronger focus on intergroup relations. In terms of encouraging intergroup relations, a few studies found that African American parents were more likely to encourage their children to build relationships with children from other ethnic-racial groups compared to White American parents. This was seen as due to African Americans' minority status and a perceived necessity to form relationships with people from the White majority group in order to effectively participate and achieve in society (Hamm, 2001). They explicitly engaged in ethnic-racial socialization practices, which included “modelling of positive relationships with White adults” (Hamm, 2001, p. 79). Berkel and colleagues (2009) had similar findings wherein African American female adolescents reported that their mothers encouraged them to have positive relationships with their White peers as part of their academic achievement and promoted

positive representations of African Americans through self-aware public behaviour. White middle class parents were more ambivalent and indifferent about encouraging their children to have cross-ethnic peer relationships and tended to defer this kind of socialization to schools and ethnic minority peers (Hamm, 2001). Instead of explicitly promoting cross-ethnic peer relationships, another study compared African, Latino and White American adolescents and found that all adolescents were encouraged by their parents to 'get along' with other ethnic groups (Pernice-Duca & Owens, 2010).

3.2.2. *Other family members, teachers and community mentors*

Fourteen studies considered non-parent/caregiver adults as ethnic-racial socialization agents for children, with results indicating these are important sources of information. These studies reported the influence of non-primary caregivers (Scottham & Smalls, 2009), such as family members (Robbins et al., 2007; Sanders Thompson, 1994), peers (Lesane-Brown, Brown, Caldwell, & Sellers, 2005), teachers (Smith, Atkins, & Connell, 2003) and mentors (Nicholas, 2000).

Among studies of African American adults, other family members rather than just parents were found to be important agents of ethnic-racial socialization who not only used more ethnic-racial socialization messages but also were reported by participants to have been more influential for their ethnic-racial identification (Sanders Thompson, 1994). Similarly, among Mexican American adolescents, family ethnic-racial socialization was found to have a significant impact on ethnic identity (Reinhard, 2010). Significantly, one study found that despite 13 of 50 participants reporting no primary ethnic-racial socialization from parents, they still received some from other family members (Brega & Coleman, 1999). Likewise, when asked to identify ethnic-racial socialization agents, Black adolescents reported parents (72%) and other adults at least sometimes (61%) and Black college students reported parents (80%) and peers at least sometimes (74%) (Lesane-Brown et al., 2005). All identified multiple ethnic-racialization agents and most reported similar frequency levels of messages for each (Lesane-Brown et al., 2005). In a study with middle school-aged African American adolescents, Winkler (2010) found that adolescents identified multiple ethnic-racial socialization agents, with some reporting conflicting messages from family members especially in relation to cultural pride.

In a study examining the ethnic-racial socialization influence of both familial and non-familial mentors ($n = 60$) for African American female adolescents, Nicholas (2000) found that the majority of mentors were women ($n = 52$) and included family members such as grandmothers, aunts and older sisters ($n = 35$) and older friends ($n = 15$). Mentors were identified as people that could provide support and guidance and was someone the adolescents felt they could talk to about a range of issues such as ethnic-racial identity and race. Over half of African American adolescent females with mentors discussed race and personal experiences of racism and had higher levels of ethnic-racial socialization compared to those without a mentor (Nicholas, 2000).

Not only do family members and other significant adults act as influential ethnic-racial socialization agents, high kinship support from family members has also been associated with significantly higher spiritual and religious coping and cultural pride reinforcement than those with low to moderate kinship support (Stevenson, Reed, & Bodison, 1996). In developing the Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization (TERS) scale, Stevenson and colleagues (2002) considered a sample of African American adolescents ($n = 260$, $M = 14.3$ years old) and identified five family ethnic-racial socialization factors, which included cultural coping with antagonism (CCA) (equivalent to preparation for bias), cultural pride reinforcement (CPR) and cultural appreciation of legacy (CLA) (both similar to cultural socialization), cultural alertness to discrimination (CAD) (similar to promotion of mistrust) and cultural endorsement of the mainstream (CEM). They found that adolescents who reported low family discussions about race also tended to have lower scores for all of the family ethnic-racial socialization factors except for CAD, which was associated more with neighbourhood context and varied by the child's gender as discussed in Section 3.2.2. Additionally, among 161 African American adolescents, adolescents from single parent households reported twice as many experiences of racism but also reported higher levels of CCA and CLA compared to adolescents from dual parent households (Stevenson, McNeil, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2005).

Teachers were also identified as influential ethnic-racial socialization agents. Similar to the association between parents' and children's ethnic-racial attitudes, Smith and colleagues (2003) found that teachers' attitudes relating to racial barriers to opportunity and interracial trust/mistrust were associated with African American ($n = 98$) fourth-graders' attitudes relating to racial barriers to opportunity and interracial trust/mistrust. However unlike studies described earlier, parent attitudes were found to be unrelated to their children's attitudes. These findings are also supported by several studies in the education literature, which found teachers play an important role in teaching children about cultural and racial diversity (Aboud & Fenwick, 1999; Mickan, 2007; Paluck & Green, 2009).

Finally, one study focused on the home as a site for cultural socialization, assessing the Afrocentricity of African American families' home environment ($n = 200$) using an observational cultural artefact inventory. They found that the inventory score increased as family income and parent education level increased, although concluded that more research is needed to understand if the presence of cultural objects in the home has a positive effect on children's cultural socialization or if the family's approach and discussion of their culture was a more significant factor (Caughy, Randolph, & O'Campo, 2002).

3.2.3. *Peers*

Six studies considered the influence of peers as an ethnic-racial socialization agent (Aboud & Doyle, 1996; Ayres, 2008; Barr, 2010; Lesane-Brown et al., 2005; Reinhard, 2010; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009). Results regarding the contribution of peers to types and frequency of messages received varied by study population and setting.

While Black adolescents reported receiving the most ethnic-racial socialization messages from parents, Black college students received racial socialization messages fairly evenly from parents, family, other adults and peers (Lesane-Brown et al., 2005). Barr (2010) also found that parents and peers were key ethnic-racial socialization agents for Black college-aged students. Those with a higher percentage of Black peers tended to receive more ethnic-racial socialization messages from peers. Peer ethnic-racial socialization messages included cultural pride and preparation for bias (Barr, 2010). Adolescent girls (14–19 years old) of mainly White American and Latina backgrounds also identified friends as the primary agent and then parents and siblings as support agents to discuss experiences with discrimination (Ayres, 2008).

3.2.4. Neighbourhood and community

Neighbourhood and community contexts were considered by relatively few studies ($n = 8$). However, across these studies, there were mixed findings according to neighbourhood racial and ethnic composition. In terms of neighbourhood diversity and neighbourhood experiences of racism, African American male adolescents who had more experiences of racism and lived in more culturally diverse neighbourhoods were more likely than female adolescents living in neighbourhoods with either low or high levels of cultural diversity to report receiving higher levels of cultural coping with antagonism messages (preparation for bias messages, including coping with experiences of racism and alertness to neighbourhood dangers) (Stevenson et al., 2005). Similarly, for younger children, another study found that in neighbourhoods with higher levels of racial discrimination, parents tended to have more discussions about race and used more cultural socialization messages and coping with discrimination messages (Caughy, O'Campo, et al., 2002; Caughy, Randolph et al., 2002). Overall, African American parents had more discussions with their children about racism (Waddell-Pratt, 1999) and used preparation for bias or promotion of mistrust messages (Caughy, Nettles, O'Campo, & Lohrfink, 2006) in neighbourhoods with a higher proportion of African Americans or neighbourhoods characterized by social disadvantage with a negative social climate, which included higher levels of crime and delinquency. However, for college age students (18–32 years old), Barr (2010) found that a higher proportion of African American neighbours was not associated with "alertness to discrimination" (preparation for bias) or internalized racism messages, although it was associated with more cultural pride messages. Instead, having a higher number of African American peers rather than neighbourhood composition was associated with receiving messages about "alertness to discrimination" (2010, p. 55) This is somewhat surprising given an earlier national study of African American parents ($n = 2107$), which identified a stronger likelihood that parents, particularly mothers, would discuss race matters with their children in neighbourhoods with approximately equal proportions of White and African American residents compared to parents living in all-African American neighbourhoods (Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990).

There have not been many studies focused on how multiple ethnic-racial socialization agents interact and this gap in the literature could account for these mixed findings. Additionally, as ethnic-racial socialization is a complex process, it is clear that other multi-level factors need to be taken into account such as indicators of socioeconomic status. For example, Stevenson and colleagues (2002) found that African American girls were likely to receive preparation for bias messages if their family lived in more diverse neighbourhoods whereas boys were more likely to receive promotion of mistrust messages living in predominantly African American neighbourhoods. Additionally, using an ecological model, Smith and colleagues (2003) examined the level of education and wealth in the wider community as a factor that might influence children's racial and ethnic attitudes. The study found that living in a community with a large proportion of college-educated neighbours resulted in children perceiving less racial barriers to academic achievement and a community's higher socioeconomic status resulted in less racial and ethnic distrust. Overall, these disparate findings across multiple studies demonstrate the multi-faceted complexity of ethnic-racial socialization across a number of demographic and situational factors.

Schools as sites of ethnic-racial socialization were also considered by only a few studies. One study considered the impact of perceived parental attitudes and school context on racial attitudes toward African Americans among 147 White undergraduate students (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2001). This study found self-reported positive experiences with African Americans across school levels were associated with more positive racial attitudes, and that recall of fewer interactions with African Americans in elementary and middle school was associated with recall of greater perceived parental prejudice (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2001). Hamm (2001) explored parental attitudes toward school, finding that White parents were more likely to defer socialization focused on cross-ethnic relationships to the school while African American parents were more likely to feel that parents should be the primary agent for teaching children about cross-ethnic relationships.

3.3. Child-specific predictors of ethnic-racial socialization

As has been previously noted, evidence from an existing review mainly focused on African American populations suggest that key predictors of ethnic-racial socialization include demographic factors such as children's age and gender, parents' socioeconomic and immigration statuses, experiential factors such as parents' ethnic-racial identity and discrimination experiences as well as the broader social context (Hughes et al., 2006). More recent studies continue to support these findings (Berkel et al., 2009; Lalonde, Jones, & Stroink, 2008; Shelton, 2008; Thomas, Speight, & Witherspoon, 2010). Earlier, in Section 3.2.1, parent-specific predictors of ethnic-racial socialization were discussed. This section discusses child-specific predictors of parent ethnic-racial socialization, including child's age and developmental level, the gender of the child, and ethnic-racial identity of both children and parents. Overall, age was a significant factor with parents tending to discuss preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust only as the child matured whereas cultural socialization was used across

all age groups, but especially with younger children. However, there are inconsistencies in terms of frequency of cultural socialization messages with older children and adolescents.

3.3.1. Age and ethnic-racial socialization

Overall, the child's age was a significant predictive factor for parent ethnic-racial socialization messages and behaviours. Consistent with previous studies, [Hughes and Chen \(1997\)](#) found that most parents reported using cultural socialization messages at a wide range of ages (4–14 years old). Conversely, parents were more likely to engage in preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust messages relating to race and prejudice as their children mature (9–14 years old). Specifically, preparation for bias increased with age across the 4–14 year age group whereas promotion of mistrust increased only across the 9–14 year age group ([Hughes & Chen, 1997](#)). Interestingly, [Brown and colleagues \(2007\)](#) found that age was not a factor in the frequency of parent ethnic-racial socialization messages for kindergarten children. However, as indicated by the studies above, they suggest that “child's age becomes an important correlate in later developmental stages and that more variation in age is necessary to observe an effect” ([Brown et al., 2007, p. 22](#)).

3.3.1.1. Ethnic-racial socialization of children 6 years and under. There were ten studies that focused only on the ethnic-racial socialization of young children aged 3–6 years old ([Castelli et al., 2009](#); [Caughy, Nettles, & Lima, 2010](#); [Caughy, Randolph et al., 2002](#); [Chen, 1998](#); [Coard, Foy-Watson, Zimmer, & Wallace, 2007](#); [Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004](#); [Katz, 2003](#); [Pahlke, Bigler, & Suizzo, 2012](#); [Spencer, 1983](#); [Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008](#)). A further seven studies focused on 3–6 year olds as well as older age groups ([Brown et al., 2007](#); [Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008](#); [Hill & Tyson, 2008](#); [Hughes & Chen, 1997](#); [Hughes, 2003](#); [Johnston et al., 2007](#); [Lee et al., 2006](#)). There were only four studies that considered the ethnic-racial socialization of very young children under 3 years old ([Berbery & O'Brien, 2011](#); [Castelli et al., 2009](#); [Katz, 2003](#); [Peters, 1985](#)).

As described earlier in Section 3.2.1.2, children's ethnic-racial attitudes are influenced by the ethnic-racial attitudes of socializing agents such as parents. Similar to the finding that White children's positive associations toward White people related to their White mothers' implicit negative attitudes toward Black people ([Castelli et al., 2009](#)), [Spencer \(1983\)](#) found that African American pre-school aged children also demonstrated Eurocentric ethnic-racial preferences. However, they also found that as they got older from age seven, children's preferences and attitudes became more Afrocentric or neutral as a result of explicit parent ethnic-racial socialization through direct discussions about race. These studies demonstrate that influential socializing agents such as parents have a significant impact on children's ethnic-racial attitudes from a young age and as they get older.

In terms of types of ethnic-racial socialization messages by children's age, African American parents tended to use cultural socialization messages with young children. Among children ages 3–6 years, [Suizzo and colleagues \(2008\)](#) found that even though most African American parents felt it was important to teach about African American history, educate their children to overcome racism through academic achievement and stress the importance of family, they felt it was more developmentally appropriate to discuss these issues as the child gets older rather than at age three. These parents were more inclined to start with cultural socialization at an early age such as having African American dolls, attending cultural events and reading books about African American culture ([Suizzo et al., 2008](#)).

3.3.1.2. Ethnic-racial socialization of children aged 7–17 years. There were sixty-one studies that considered the ethnic-racial socialization of children and adolescents aged 7–17 years. Compared to younger children, the relationship between age and cultural socialization messages is less clear for older children. [Hughes and Johnson \(2001\)](#) found African American parents of Grade 5 students used fewer cultural socialization messages than the parents of Grades 3 and 4 students. Conversely, [McHale et al. \(2006\)](#) found that among African American parents and their children (approx. aged 9–15 years), mothers engaged in more cultural socialization messages as the children grew older. Similarly, in a study of American adoptive families, including mostly White American parents, [Lee and colleagues \(2006\)](#) also found that the frequency of cultural socialization behaviours increased with age from when the child was 7–8 years old to 9–10 years old.

While there were mixed findings by children's age for cultural socialization messages, preparation for bias messages and other race-related discussions were used more often with older children. Consistent with aforementioned studies (e.g., [Hughes, 2003](#); [Lalonde et al., 2008](#)), [Johnston and colleagues \(2007\)](#) found that while cultural socialization messages were concentrated between ages 10–12 and were more prevalent than preparation for bias messages, the frequency of preparation for bias messages tended to increase until age 14 whereas cultural socialization messages maintained higher consistent levels. Likewise, age was also a factor in a study that found Black Canadian parents were more likely to believe their children had experienced discrimination as they got older and were therefore more likely to engage in ethnic-racial socialization behaviours such as preparation for bias for older children ([Lalonde et al., 2008](#)). Regarding types of family ethnic-racial socialization, findings from a longitudinal study of transracial adoptive families involving 88 pairs of White parents and Black or biracial children found that when children were around seven years old, families took a more bicultural family ethnic-racial socialization approach by including both Afrocentric and Eurocentric reference group orientations, becoming more Eurocentric as they became adolescents and young adults ([DeBerry et al., 1996](#)). They argue that this turn to a Eurocentric ethnic-racial socialization focus could be due to the predominantly White ethnic-racial composition of not only their family but also the school and community in which they are socialized.

In addition to the age of the child, other predictors such as parents' ethnic identity, parental perceived group disadvantage and discrimination experiences were associated with preparation for bias messages used with older minority children (10–17 years) but not with cultural socialization messages used with younger minority children (6–9 years) (Hughes, 2003). For example, the association between ethnic identity and cultural socialization was stronger for older children and minimal for younger children (Hughes, 2003).

3.3.1.3. Retrospective recall of ethnic-racial socialization by adults aged 18+ years. There were thirty-two studies that considered the ethnic-racial socialization of young people 18 years and over as well as adults recalling ethnic-racial socialization messages they received as children and adolescents. There were varied findings across the studies, although for college-aged adults there tended to be more emphasis on messages such as ethnic-racial pride and egalitarianism (in terms of equal status) and less promotion of mistrust messages or preparation for bias. For young Black American college-aged adults, Lesane-Brown and colleagues (2005) found students were more likely to report receiving messages including ethnic-racial pride and achievement regardless of race. Very few college students reported receiving promotion of mistrust messages as children (Lesane-Brown et al., 2005). Similarly, in a racially diverse sample of 18–30 year old American college students ($n = 227$), students reported recalling receiving more cultural socialization than preparation for bias from parents (Rivas-Drake, 2011). Again, fostering ethnic-racial pride was the primary message in a national study of 14–24 year old African American young people ($n = 337$) (Bowman & Howard, 1985). The main parent ethnic-racial socialization messages included ethnic-racial pride (23%), self-development/achievement (14%), racial barriers/preparation for bias (13%) and egalitarianism (12%) (Bowman & Howard, 1985).

Where study findings varied, the broader social context was considered to be a significant factor. In a study measuring ethnic-racial socialization over time, participants aged 18–85 ($M = 32$ years) were asked to report ethnic-racial socialization messages they remember receiving from parents and other family members during childhood and adolescence (Sanders Thompson, 1994). Compared to the findings from Bowman and Howard (1985), Barr and Neville (2008) found that among 18–22 year old African American students at a predominantly White university, students reported parents using more protective than proactive ethnic-racial socialization messages. The main protective messages included racial barriers (preparation for bias), promotion of mistrust and providing counter-stereotypes of Black people and the main proactive messages included egalitarian status, egalitarian values, ethnic-racial pride and self-development (Barr & Neville, 2008). Furthermore, those students that reported receiving more protective messages also tended to reject colour-blind racial attitudes (Barr & Neville, 2008). A focus on protective messages, especially racial barriers, could be due to age and the predominantly White university setting (Barr & Neville, 2008). Drawing on Bowman and Howard's (1985) ethnic-racial socialization categories, Sanders Thompson (1994) found that younger participants (18–35 years old) reported receiving more messages about ethnic-racial pride and coping with racial barriers (e.g., preparation for bias) whereas older participants (36–85 years old) reported receiving more messages about egalitarianism/humanitarianism and self-development, which could be due to the different socio-political milieu when participants recalled receiving ethnic-racial socialization messages.

3.4. Parent and child identity and ethnic-racial socialization

In considering the relationship between ethnic identity and ethnic-racial socialization practices, the ethnic-racial background of parents and children was a significant factor. Although there was significant variability across study findings, African Americans tended to receive more preparation for bias messages whereas Asian and Latina/o Americans tended to receive more cultural socialization messages. All ethnic minority groups received more ethnic-racial socialization messages than the White majority group.

Overall, African American adolescents (Huynh & Fuligni, 2008) and older children (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009) tended to receive more preparation for bias messages than other ethnic groups. However, all non-White groups received more ethnic-racial socialization messages overall than their White peers (Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Yasui, 2008). For example, Chinese American adolescents (Huynh & Fuligni, 2008) and African American and Native American adolescents (Yasui, 2008) reported receiving more promotion of mistrust messages than White Americans. Finally, while Asian Americans tended to not report receiving preparation for bias messages, in a study of Asian American college students (17–23 years), Hmong students reported receiving more preparation for bias messages than other Asian American groups in the past year (Tran & Lee, 2010).

In terms of cultural socialization messages, compared to African Americans, Latina/o and Asian American children (Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Phinney & Nakayama, 1991) and adolescents (Huynh & Fuligni, 2008) tended to receive more cultural socialization messages including practicing cultural traditions. Asian Americans also reported receiving more cultural socialization messages around achievement and societal adaptation than preparation for bias messages for both younger children (Chen, 1998) and older children (Phinney & Chavira, 1995). An exception to this is a study involving an ethnically diverse sample of Grade 6 students, with Black American and Puerto Rican American students (11–12 years old) receiving more parent cultural socialization than other groups such as Dominican and Chinese American students (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). The importance of parents' ethnic identity also influenced the use of cultural socialization messages. For instance, Puerto Rican and Dominican parents of 10–17 year old children who reported stronger ethnic identity predicted more frequent cultural socialization messages (Hughes, 2003).

Among biracial families with White American mothers ($n = 11$) and African American fathers, O'Donoghue (2006) explored mothers' approaches to racial socialization for children aged 2–29 years old ($M = 15.5$). Most respondents ($n = 10$) emphasized the importance of cultural socialization especially regarding African American culture. Seven respondents also felt that discussing ethnic-racial pride and preparation for bias (discussing racial issues) were important (O'Donoghue, 2006).

The majority of studies of White parents focused on White adoptive mothers of ethnic minority children. There were a number of factors that complicated White adoptive parents' ethnic-racial socialization behaviours. Importantly, while cultural socialization messages were more common than preparation for bias messages, adoptive parents, especially those with ethnic minority children still sometimes discussed race or discrimination (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Johnston et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2006). Lee and colleagues (2006) explain that the adoptive parents in their study were more likely to engage in cultural socialization practices with younger children due in part to increased access to cultural resources of their child's birth country and post-adoption support compared to previous generations. Additionally, they point out that parents with White children from Russian and Eastern European countries that are less visibly marked as 'other' are less likely to talk to their children about racism than parents with children from Asian and Latin American countries. Supporting this last point is an observational study of White mothers reading race-related books to their pre-school aged White children (Pahlke et al., 2012). Mothers took a 'colour-blind' approach even when children made comments about race by either ignoring or redirecting the conversation. During the book readings, none of the parent/child dyads made comments about discrimination, diversity or intergroup relations (Pahlke et al., 2012).

3.5. *The gender of the child and ethnic-racial socialization*

There was also considerable variability across studies according to the child's gender. However, generally African American and biracial boys tended to receive more preparation for bias messages than girls, which reflects gendered patterns of racism in society. Among studies focused on African American parents, ethnic-racial socialization messages overall were more frequently used with girls than boys (Brown et al., 2007; Caughy, Randolph, et al., 2002; Sanders Thompson, 1994). However, a few studies found there were certain types of messages, such as preparation for bias, which parents tended to use more with boys than girls (Berkel et al., 2009; Bowman & Howard, 1985; O'Donoghue, 2006; Stevenson et al., 2002; Thomas, 1999). For example, Thomas (1999) found boys received more messages around overcoming racism compared to girls and Stevenson and colleagues (2002) reported that African American adolescent males receiving more cultural alertness to discrimination than adolescent females. In biracial families of White American mothers and African American fathers, preparation for bias messages were used mainly with biracial males, especially regarding societal perceptions and potential biased interactions with police whereas biracial females mainly received messages to support their self-esteem (O'Donoghue, 2006).

One study found that African American mothers used preparation for bias messages as well as emphasizing the importance of perseverance despite discrimination for both male and female adolescents (Berkel et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the focus of the messages was different according to the child's gender with a stronger focus on preparation for community bias (e.g., from the police) for male adolescents and a stronger focus on respecting others and self-aware behaviours for female adolescents (Berkel et al., 2009). Across other ethnic groups, another study found that while female adolescents tended to receive more cultural socialization than male adolescents, there was no significant difference by gender for other types of ethnic-racial socialization (Huynh & Fuligni, 2008). Overall, while there were clearer differences by gender for African American children and young people than other ethnic-racial groups, with boys tending to receive more preparation for bias messages than girls, inconsistency across the studies indicate a need for further work in this area.

4. Discussion

This 30-year review identifies a growing body of literature that has examined ethnic-racial socialization processes within various intercultural contexts and relationships, with over half of the reviewed studies published in the last seven years. This review also identified heterogeneous findings across a number of categories including age, ethnic-racial socialization agents, social-environmental contexts and different ethnic and cultural groups. As the following discussion demonstrates, there is a need for research that considers the impact of diverse social and environmental factors on the ethnic-racial socialization of children and young people in different geographical and social contexts and across diverse populations. As new research emerges, there is also a need for consistency in terminology used to refer to different types of ethnic-racial socialization messages and behaviours.

4.1. *Inconsistent terminology referring to ethnic-racial socialization messages and behaviours*

Overall, studies primarily described ethnic-racial socialization using messages focused on cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, ethnic-racial pride and to a lesser extent, egalitarianism. Studies tended to define cultural socialization as practices that teach children cultural traditions and promote cultural pride whereas racial socialization was defined in terms of intercultural relations using messages such as preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust. Nevertheless, some inconsistencies in terminology used to describe ethnic-racial socialization and types of messages and behaviours remain (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Brega & Coleman, 1999; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Smith et al., 2011; Stevenson et al.,

2002). In particular, different types of messages were introduced predominantly in studies focusing on emerging ethnic-racial groups including ethnic minority children of White adoptive parents, White, Asian and Latina/o groups. For instance, terms used by [Smith and colleagues \(2011\)](#) included messages from a White majority perspective such as getting along with White people and educating White people. Regarding Asian Americans, other types of ethnic-racial socialization messages included societal adaptation and achievement ([Chen, 1998](#)). While proactive messages such as achievement regardless of race ([Lesane-Brown et al., 2005](#)) are not particularly 'new', they still need to be understood in relation to their social and cultural significance as well as how they are used by different ethnic and cultural groups, including differences within groups based on factors such as immigration status.

In addition to considering new types of messages, there is also a need to consider whether ethnic-racial socialization messages are used proactively or reactively as well as whether messages were received as they were intended to be imparted ([Hughes et al., 2006](#)). Finally, as this review identified, it would be useful to consider not only types of ethnic-racial socialization messages but also the impact of other factors such as beliefs about the importance of ethnic-racial socialization for different ethnic and cultural groups.

4.2. *Studies mainly located in the United States*

Consistent with an earlier review ([Hughes et al., 2006](#)), this systematic review also found literature on ethnic-racial socialization has predominantly been conducted in the United States (94%). Consequently, there remains an ongoing need for ethnic-racial socialization research to examine the appropriateness and transferability of current research findings to countries outside the US. Furthermore, this review demonstrated that it is important to consider different ethnic-racial socialization processes by ethnic-racial group within multiethnic countries such as the US. Such international research across multiple ethnic-racial groups would expand our understandings of the ways in which context (including historical, social, political and environmental factors – see [Bronfenbrenner, 1979](#)) influences ethnic-racial socialization, intergroup relations, constructions and expressions of race and ethnicity, and children's developmental processes, as well as interactions between all of these domains.

4.3. *Few studies considered multiple agents other than parents*

While this review clearly highlights the importance of parents/caregivers as agents of ethnic-racial socialization messages, given the increasing recognition of the ecological and multi-level nature of development, a limitation of this field of research is the lack of studies considering ethnic-racial socialization from other sources. However, the majority of studies with parents as the primary agent mainly involved mothers with only one study focused solely on fathers ([Carlson & Iovini, 1985](#)) compared to 13 studies that included only mothers. Further research is needed to understand the ethnic-racial socialization role of fathers as well as other family members.

This review found very few studies examining the influence of neighbourhood, school and community factors on ethnic-racial socialization processes. While family members other than primary caregivers, peers, and the home environment are considered in some recent studies as agents of ethnic-racial socialization, this remains an underdeveloped area of scholarship. Consistent with socio-ecological frameworks that recognize multi-level influences on child development ([Bronfenbrenner, 1979](#)), studies that do exist suggest that neighbourhood and community factors such as ethnic-racial diversity, socioeconomic status, and levels of racism have a significant impact on frequency and type of messages transmitted as well as outcomes of these messages ([Smith & Polanyi, 2003](#); [Waddell-Pratt, 1999](#)). As an example, schools are also primary sites of ethnic-racial socialization. As [Smith and colleagues \(2003\)](#) identified, teachers' attitudes had a greater impact on children's attitudes than parents' attitudes, which had no significant effect. It should also be noted that findings from studies located in education rather than ethnic-racial socialization specifically have also suggested that teachers play a role in transmitting ethnic-racial attitudes to children, which should not be ignored ([Aboud & Fenwick, 1999](#); [Mickan, 2007](#); [Paluck & Green, 2009](#)). Overall, these studies demonstrate the need to consider the role other adults, family members and peers play in children and young people's ethnic-racial socialization as well as the types of messages that are used and in what context.

4.4. *Few studies considered ethnic-racial socialization in early childhood*

As most studies in this field have focused on school-aged children and adolescents, less is known regarding ethnic-racial socialization processes for children aged under six years of age. Those studies that have explored these processes among younger children show variable findings. Some studies identify that most parents do engage in at least one dimension of ethnic-racial socialization ([Caughy, Randolph, et al., 2002](#); [Hughes & Chen, 1997](#)) while earlier studies report that parents show little engagement ([Peters, 1985](#); [Spencer, 1983](#)). In addition to changes over time, this inconsistency may also be explained by different measurement tools used in studies, as well as the different aspects of ethnic-racial socialization examined. Nevertheless, there appears to be some agreement that it is important for parents to engage in at least some ethnic-racial socialization discussion from an early age. Based on findings which demonstrated children's attitudes toward cultural and racial diversity are strongly associated with the attitudes of adults that have a socializing influence ([Castelli et al., 2009](#); [Spencer, 1983](#)), it is critical that children are socialized from an early age to develop positive attitudes toward

cultural and racial difference. This is supported by several studies showing that if children's observations about difference are not addressed, negative attitudes can be reinforced (Pahlke et al., 2012; Quintana & McKown, 2007).

4.5. Emerging research considering ethnic-racial socialization for diverse ethnic and cultural groups

While African American children and families remain the focus of most studies in this field, this review also identified an increasing number of studies with other minority groups, and majority groups including a few with White European populations. In this context, ethnic-racial socialization has primarily been examined as a set of practices minority parents use to prepare their children to navigate White mainstream society. However, it is also important to recognize that children from all ethnic and racial groups, including the White majority, receive messages in some form about issues of race and ethnicity, including cultural heritage, group social status, prevalence of stereotypes, racism and discrimination, language and other group characteristics (Hughes et al., 2006).

The findings of these studies indicate that minority children tend to receive more ethnic-racial socialization messages overall than children from White backgrounds or those adopted into White families. While ethnic minority children adopted into White families were more likely to receive cultural socialization than other types of messages such as preparation for bias, minority children still tended to receive more ethnic-socialization messages particularly regarding cultural socialization, ethnic-racial pride and to a lesser extent depending on the minority group, preparation for bias and the importance of intergroup contact. Conversely, research among White majority children has largely focused on development of racial and ethnic attitudes, including prejudice, towards minority groups (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011). As a few studies identified, many White parents of young children preferred not to talk to their children about race (Pahlke et al., 2012) or only did so with children who showed the least bias and were at least six years old (Katz, 2003).

Despite recognition that the developmental pathways for prejudice are different and intertwined with social status, little scholarship has focused on how minority children develop prejudicial attitudes and beliefs toward both majority and other minority groups (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011). It could be argued that this dichotomy in the literature is reflective of researcher bias (Sawrikar & Katz, 2009) especially as the majority of studies are conducted in the U.S. in which there is a strong White-Black dichotomy influencing perspectives on race. The current review has clearly demonstrated the need to conceptualize and examine ethnic-racial socialization processes including dimensions related to cultural socialization and identity formation, development of racial and ethnic attitudes and prejudice, preparation for bias and coping with discrimination, among *both* majority and minority population groups in a range of settings and contexts. Furthermore, as well as exploring processes by which attitudes to cultural diversity and anti-racism develop in children, such work should also consider how these attitudes translate into skills and behaviours. Importantly, how attitudes are translated into actual behaviours are key elements of an individual's multicultural competence (Author et al., 2013; Pieterse & Collins, 2007). Deeper exploration of intersections between ethnic-racial socialization, and closely connected topics such as acculturation, intergroup perceptions, contact and interactions, promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding, via theoretical and empirical research will also be required to extend and consolidate this field.

4.6. Future directions

Several key recommendations for future research emerged from the findings of this review, which include: (1) establishing more consistent terminology; (2) examining multiple ethnic-racial socialization agents; (3) considering how multiple socio-environmental factors intersect to influence ethnic-racial socialization beliefs and behaviours; (4) focusing on ethnic-racial socialization in early childhood as well as longitudinal studies across key developmental stages; and (5) studying the ethnic-racial socialization of White children.

- (1) Overall, new types of ethnic-racial socialization messages need to be understood in terms of how these are similar and different to existing messages in the literature as well as how the messages differentially impact on children and young people's ethnic-racial socialization beliefs and behaviours (Barr & Neville, 2008).
- (2) Future research should adopt multi-level frameworks and methods to investigate the relative contribution and outcomes of multiple agents of ethnic-racial socialization in order to understand the complexities of ethnic-racial socialization processes amongst both minority and majority groups across a range of settings, contexts and countries. Doing so requires larger population representative samples that allow for detailed sensitivity analyses and differentiation of effects and pathways and processes by which they occur within different groups and contexts over time. Building greater understanding of ethnic-racial socialization processes as a critical aspect of the development of children and young people is vital within the context of increasing global racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.
- (3) In addition to including geographical locations outside of the United States, other ethnic-racial socialization environments such as neighbourhoods, schools and the broader family social and cultural environment also need to be considered. As studies examining multiple sources across diverse ethnic groups (e.g., Lesane-Brown et al., 2005; Pernice-Duca & Owens, 2010; Reinhard, 2010; Yasui, 2008) have demonstrated, it is important that future studies consider (1) the influence of familial as well as non-familial ethnic-racial socialization agents, rather than only parents, in different socio-ecological contexts; (2) the influence of demographic composition and intercultural relationships in multiple ethnic-racial socialization settings relevant for different age groups such as school, university and workplace

environments; and (3) the influence of cultural background on the perceived importance of ethnic-racial socialization and decisions around types of messages used for a more holistic understanding of ethnic-racial socialization processes.

Furthermore, based on disparate findings across studies in this review that considered demographic factors such as socioeconomic status and gender, additional research is needed before conclusions can be drawn about the impact of these on the influence of ethnic-racial socialization. Finally, broader social contextual factors should also be considered such as the influence of media including the amount and type of television children watch, indirect ethnic-racial attitudes and non-verbal behaviours from multiple sources, and friends with whom children and young people interact (Katz, 2003).

- (4) This review has also identified an ongoing need for longitudinal and experimental studies in this field, with the literature almost solely reliant on cross-sectional methods. This is despite similar findings in earlier reviews that also recommended the use of longitudinal and experimental designs to examine causal and dynamic processes of ethnic-racial socialization over time, including how the prevalence, content and outcomes of ethnic-racial socialization vary by age (Suizzo et al., 2008) as well as timing of transmission of ethnic-racial socialization messages (Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006). Thus, research in this area would benefit from longitudinal studies examining ethnic-racial socialization from early childhood to early adulthood.
- (5) Finally, there remains an ongoing need for further research examining ethnic-racial socialization processes within different ethnic-racial groups, including White mainstream populations, as well as a need to compare these processes, and their domains, correlates, and outcomes across populations and contexts.

Several key recommendations for parents, educators, and policy-makers also emerged from this review. These include the need for parents and educators to consider the explicit and implicit ethnic-racial socialization messages they are giving to children of all ages, and from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. In particular, promoting reflection on cultural identity and cultural socialization among majority children that recognizes whiteness and white privilege, as well as promoting identity and belonging among minority children; promoting messages of egalitarianism that move beyond silence about race or colour blindness but rather promote egalitarian views of equality without ignoring or perpetuating racial/ethnic inequalities; and continuing to both proactively and reactively prepare minority children for experiences of bias and supporting them when such experiences do occur. Action is required among policy and decision makers at a systemic level to build the capacity of educational institutions and of individual educators to support and promote appropriate racial/ethnic socialization messages within their local contexts and communities. Such action would include policies and practices within systems and organizations, as well as resources and strategies to support both educators and parents as key sources of ethnic-racial socialization.

Appendix.

Table A.1

Medline search strategy.

1	Child*.tw
2	Youth.tw
3	Teen*.tw
4	Adolescen*.tw
5	Student*.tw
6	Parent*.tw
7	Mother*.tw
8	Father*.tw
9	Famil*.tw
10	Kin*.tw
11	Teacher*.tw
12	School*.tw
13	Child (MESH)
14	Adolescent (MESH)
15	Family (MESH)
16	Schools (MESH)
17	1–16/OR
18	Socialis*
19	Socializ*
20	Socialization(MESH)
21	28–20/OR
22	Rac*
23	Ethnic*
24	Cultur*
25	Race Relations (MESH)
26	Ethnic Groups (MESH)

Table A.1 (Continued)

27	Culture (MESH)
28	25–27/OR
29	17 AND 21 AND 29

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