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Parental racial socialization profiles: Association with demographic factors, racial discrimination, childhood socialization, and racial identity

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Abstract

This study examines patterns of racial socialization practices in a sample of 212 African American mothers. We investigate the relation between parent profiles of racial socialization messages with child and parent demographic factors and race-related experiences, as well as parent racial identity attitudes. Using latent class analyses, we identified three patterns of parent-reported racial socialization experiences: Multifaceted, Low Race Salience, and Unengaged. In general, our findings indicate that mothers in the Multifaceted profile were more educated, experienced more racial discrimination, and talked about race during their childhood more than mothers in the Unengaged profile. The Multifaceted profile also differed from the Low Race Salience and Unengaged profiles on several racial identity dimensions. While the patterned approach used in this study lends itself to a more complex study of racial socialization in future research, it also highlights the associations between parent's race-relevant experiences and the messages they communicate to their children about race.

Adolescents are socialized to a myriad of social norms and practices in order to become well-adjusted and functioning adults in society. Whereas the task of socialization is shared between the school environment, neighborhood, extended family, and other social agents, the primary responsibility for socialization rests with parents. Parents are expected to manage identity development, puberty, peer conflict, and school difficulties. African American parents have an added responsibility: the task of socializing their children to function in a society where their racial status is devalued. As a result, many African American parents spend a significant amount of time and energy socializing their child to the role that race will play in their lives. In doing so, parents often convey messages about racial and individual pride, expectations of discrimination, and intergroup relations. These activities have been commonly termed racial socialization (Coard & Sellers, 2005; Hughes et al., 2006; Stevenson, 1997).

Research has documented associations among different racial socialization messages and a variety of important outcomes including more mature identity development (Barr & Neville, 2008), higher levels of self-esteem (Neblett, White, Ford, Philip, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2008), reduced problem behaviors (Bennett, 2007), better academic adjustment (Anglin & Wade, 2007), reduced acculturative stress (Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000), and increased resilience (Brown, 2008). Perhaps, most importantly, racial socialization messages buffer African American adolescents' mental health from the harmful effects of racial discrimination

(Neblett et al., 2008). These findings underscore racial socialization's central role in the promotion of healthy development for ethnic minority adolescents.

There can be no doubt that socializing African American children to an array of societal norms and practices is a shared process between both mothers and fathers. However, the ways in which mothers and fathers engage in socialization processes may differ (Parke et al., 2005). Further, because of their role as the primary caregiver for children, African American mothers often bear a significant amount of responsibility for socializing their children about race. Yet, there is significant variation in the ways in which mothers of African American adolescents engage in racial socialization. Specifically, mothers vary in both the content of the messages they convey and the modes in which they convey them. This variation may be the result of a number of factors. Because the socialization process involves interactions between the mother and the child, mothers from differing demographic backgrounds may provide different messages. Aspects of the child's personality and experiences may also shape the ways in which the child is socialized. In addition, mothers' current and past racial experiences may influence the socialization process. Finally, mothers with differing attitudes regarding the significance and meaning of race in their own lives are also likely to differ in their socializing behaviors. Using a profile approach to operationalize racial socialization, the present study investigates whether these various factors help explain a significant portion of the variation in the racial socialization practices of mothers of African American adolescents.

Predictors of Racial Socialization

Parent and child demographic background—Parental racial socialization is a highly contextual process in which both parental and child factors influence the frequency, nature, and mode of transmission of messages about race. A potential source of variation in parental racial socialization is the amount of emotional and material capital that the parent has available. Older parents may have more life experiences with respect to race to draw upon and consequently may have developed more nuanced constructions of the meaning of race than younger parents. As such, they may be more likely to view racial socialization as an important activity. Consistent with this idea, Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, and Allen (1990) found that older parents were more likely to report engaging in racial socialization than younger parents. In the case of mothers, the influence of age was even stronger for those with higher levels of education. Indicators of socioeconomic status also seem to be associated with differences in racial socialization strategies. Material and educational capital may increase the likelihood of certain racial socialization activities. For instance, engaging in certain racial socialization behaviors and activities (i.e., African American social clubs) often requires financial resources that may limit poorer parents' ability to engage in such forms of racial socialization. Other forms of racial socialization, such as teaching a child about African American history, may also be limited by the parents' level of education. There is some evidence that African American parents with higher levels of educational attainment and income report transmitting more racial pride and racial barrier messages than their less educated and poorer counterparts (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1997). Other research has suggested a curvilinear relationship between indicators of socioeconomic status and transmitting racial socialization (Thornton, 1997). In the case of parental education level, Thornton (1997) found that high school graduates were more likely to report giving more racial pride and racial barrier messages and less egalitarian messages to their children than both parents with less than a high school education and those with more than a high school education, respectively.

Children's demographic characteristics are another potential source of variation in racial socialization messages (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Caughy et al., 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1997, 1999). There is some evidence that parents tailor their messages according to the gender of the child (Bowman & Howard, 1985; McHale et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2008; Thomas &

Speight, 1999). In their sample of African American adolescents and early adults, Bowman and Howard (1985) found that girls were more likely to report receiving messages from their parents that emphasized racial pride, whereas boys were more likely to report receiving racial barrier and egalitarian messages. Thomas and Speight (1999) found similar gender differences when they asked African American parents about the themes of the racial socialization messages that they conveyed to their children. In this same study, parents also reported transmitting more negative racial messages to boys than girls (Thomas & Speight, 1999). The content of parents' racial socialization messages also seem to differ according to the child's age. This age difference is likely the result of developmental changes in both children's cognitive capacity for understanding of the concept of race and their social interactions with world around issues of race (Aboud, 1988; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Quintana, 1998). Hughes and Chen (1997) found that parents of adolescents were more likely to transmit messages associated with racial inequality than parents of younger children. Using a within family design, McHale and colleagues (2006) found that mothers reported transmitting more messages to prepare their older children for racial bias than they did for their younger children.

Parent and Child Race-Related Experiences

Along with parent and child demographic factors, the racial experiences that the parent and child bring to their interactions are also likely to influence the racial socialization process. Conversations between parent and child about race often occur in response to specific events as opposed to preplanned strategies (Coard & Sellers, 2005). One such context in which racial socialization is likely to occur is in the aftermath of the child being treated unfairly because of their race. A growing body of research has documented the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in the lives of African American adolescents (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Recent research has found that African American children who report experiencing more racial discrimination also report receiving more racial socialization messages from their parents (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). Hughes and Johnson (2001) conducted one of the few studies linking African American children's reports of racial discrimination with their parents' reports of racial socialization. They found that children's reports of racial discrimination were associated with more parent-reported messages about barriers between racial groups.

Not surprisingly, African American parents' own racial experiences also seem to be associated with how they racially socialize their children. Parents' experiences with racial discrimination in both the workplace and the community have been linked to the transmission of more racial socialization messages warning their children about Whites and preparing their children to cope with racial discrimination (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997). In addition, parents' own childhood racial experiences may play an important role in how parents currently socialize their children (Hughes & Chen, 1997). Like other forms of parenting, parents may rely on their own experiences receiving racial socialization messages from their parents in determining how they socialize their own children. Unfortunately, little research has investigated this issue. In one of the few studies to examine the intergenerational nature of racial socialization, Hughes and Chen (1997) found that the messages parents reported receiving as children were predictive of the messages they transmitted to their own children.

Parental Racial Identity Attitudes

Parents' race related experiences often influence their attitudes and beliefs regarding the significance and meaning of race in their own lives. Thus, it is likely that parents' racial identity attitudes are also related to variation in their racial socialization practices. Thornton (1997) found that parents who felt more positively about their racial status were more likely to communicate messages endorsing racial pride to their children. Consistent with this finding,

Thomas and Speight (1999) found evidence that African American parents who identified strongly with their racial group were more likely to believe that racial socialization was an essential aspect of preparing their child to be successful. In contrast, parents for whom race was not a central identity and parents who held negative attitudes about their race were less likely to engage in racial socialization with their children (Thomas & Speight, 1999). Unfortunately, the few studies that have examined the relation between racial identity and racial socialization have examined only one or two dimensions of racial identity attitudes. Researchers have recently begun to acknowledge the complexity and multidimensionality of African American racial identity (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Worrell, Vandiver, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2004). It is thus important to assess the relationship between various dimensions of racial identity and parental racial socialization to get a more accurate picture of the intricacies of the process.

Profile Approach to Operationalizing Racial Socialization

A major limitation in the research literature on racial socialization is that almost all of the studies examining different racial socialization messages do so from a variable-centered approach (Coard & Sellers, 2005; Hughes et al., 2006). In so doing, these studies have overlooked the synergistic impact of the combination of individual racial socialization messages. Rarely do parents choose to convey a single racial socialization message to their child. Messages are often transmitted in combinations. Sometimes these combinations are intentional and complementary, other times these combinations are unintentional and contradictory. Individual racial socialization messages often convey significantly different meanings when they are conveyed in conjunction with other racial socialization messages. For instance, a mother who transmits messages about the obstacles that the child is likely to face because of his/her race without also transmitting messages that instill pride in the child's race is likely to convey a radically different overall message about the nature of the world to her child than a mother who transmits both racial pride and racial barrier messages. The former combination conveys an overall fatalistic feeling that the world is a place to be feared. In contrast, the latter set of messages may provide the child with both a healthy sense of vigilance regarding racism as well as tangible evidence that those racial obstacles can be overcome. The true nature of the racial socialization process is lost when one focuses only on specific racial socialization messages in isolation of the other messages transmitted.

Person-centered analytic strategies (such as cluster analyses) better capture the synergistic nature of the racial socialization process than traditional variable-centered analysis strategies by identifying profiles, or combinations, of different racial socialization messages within a parent, child, or family (Coard & Sellers, 2005). To date, only a few studies have used person-centered techniques to operationalize racial socialization (Neblett et al., 2008; Stevenson, 1997). Neblett and colleagues (2008) cluster analyzed African American adolescents' reports of the frequency of six types of racial socialization messages and behaviors that had been transmitted by their parents. Their analyses yielded four profiles of racial socialization: 1) a high positive profile; 2) a moderate positive profile; 3) low frequency profile; and 4) a moderate negative profile. The four clusters differed significantly from each other on their experiences with racial discrimination and their subsequent mental health status. In another study, Stevenson (1997) used cluster analysis to assess African American adolescents' perceptions of racial socialization messages. Stevenson's (1997) analysis yielded three clusters that he identified as protective, proactive, and adaptive. Unfortunately, the measure Stevenson used assessed adolescents' perceptions of what messages they thought should be conveyed by parents instead of the messages that were actually conveyed. We are unaware of any study that has used a person-centered approach to assess parents' reports of their racial socialization practices.

The Present Study

The present study utilizes a person-centered profile approach to investigate the racial socialization practices of African American mothers. In so doing, this study has two primary aims. First, using a cluster analytic technique, we identify patterns in mothers' reports of racial pride messages, racial barrier messages, egalitarian messages, self-worth messages, negative messages, and racial socialization behaviors. The second aim of this study is to examine whether these profiles of racial socialization practices differ in: 1) mother and child demographic background characteristics; 2) mother and child racial experiences; and 3) mother racial identity attitudes.

Method

Participants

The current study uses data from the first wave of a three-year cross-sequential study of race and psychosocial adjustment in African American adolescents and their primary care-givers in a Midwestern city. Of the 742 households contacted to participate in the study, 546 children (74% child response rate) and 366 primary caregivers (49% caregiver response rate) participated across the life of the study. Of the 287 children and caregiver dyads that completed the first wave of the study, only the 212 dyads in which the primary caregiver was both the child's mother and self-reported as an African American were included in the present analyses. The mothers' ages ranged from 29 to 57 years with a mean age of 40.45 years ($SD = 5.92$). A small minority of the mothers in the sample had less than a high school diploma (4.2%), 14% received a high school diploma, 61.3% attended or completed college, and 21.7% completed some graduate study (i.e., master's, Ph.D., J.D., M.D.). Forty percent of the sample was married, whereas 37% were single, 18% were divorced, and 5% were separated. Fifty-eight percent of the adolescents in the present sample were girls. The adolescents' ages ranged from 11 years to 17 years, with a mean age of 13.66 years ($SD = 1.18$). Adolescents' grade levels included 35.8% in 7th grade, 30.2% in 8th grade, 19.3% in 9th grade, and 14.2% in the 10th grade.

The small Midwestern city in which the study was conducted has a population of approximately 110,000 people. African Americans comprise roughly 7% of the city population. The city's median income of \$50,160 exceeds the national average of \$48,451 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Eighteen percent of the school district's students were eligible for free or reduced lunch. The student population was comprised primarily of White students (57%) followed by African American students (20.2%). The racial composition of the student body varied across the 11 schools in the study, with the percentage of African American students ranging from 7.2% to 64.9%. Although the median family income for African Americans in the city surpasses the national average for African Americans, there is significant variation across the income distribution within the sample. Within the present sample, parent-reported family incomes ranged from less than \$10,000 to more than \$130,000 with a median income of \$30,000-\$39,000.

Procedure

Initial contact information was obtained from the school district for African American students in grades 7 through 11. Letters were sent to students' legal guardians requesting permission for students and their primary caregiver to participate in a longitudinal study. One child per household was randomly chosen to participate in the study. Follow-up calls were made to parents to obtain informed consent and to confirm that the child identified was actually African American. Once informed consent was obtained, an appointment was scheduled for a data collection session after school with the child. A separate appointment was made to schedule a data collection session with the primary caregiver. These administrations took place in community settings (e.g., community centers, public library, and mall). Both primary

caregivers and adolescents completed a survey consisting of measures of racial identity, racial socialization, discrimination, and several indices of psychological adjustment in small groups administered by trained research assistants (primarily African American). Participants were informed that they would not be penalized for withdrawing from the study at any point, that they could skip any item to which they did not wish to respond, and that all responses were confidential. The questionnaire took approximately 60 to 90 minutes to complete. Adolescents received a \$20 gift certificate to a local mall and primary caregivers received monetary compensation of \$40 for their participation in the first wave of the study.

Measures

Mothers' Racial Socialization—Participants' scores on the Racial Socialization Questionnaire- Parent Version (RSQ-P) at wave 1 were used as the primary measure of racial socialization in the study. The RSQ-P was adapted from the Racial Socialization Questionnaire-Teen Version (RSQ-T) developed by Lesane-Brown and colleagues (Lesane-Brown, Scottham, Nguyen, & Sellers, under review). The RSQ-T is a theoretically-derived, 26-item measure that consists of six subscales. Five of the subscales measure the frequency in which the adolescent reported receiving each of different types of verbal messages about the significance and meaning of race from their parents over the past year. The sixth subscale measures the extent to which they engaged in racial socialization behaviors and activities with their parents in the past year. Lesane-Brown et al. (under review) utilized confirmatory factor analysis with data from a sample of African American middle school and high school students to investigate the construct validity of the RSQ-T. The results indicate a satisfactory fit to the data for a six-factor oblique solution. The subscales of the RSQ-T were also predictive of subsequent racial identity attitudes and intergroup relations in ways that were suggestive of the predictive validity of the measure with this sample.

The RSQ-P utilizes the same items as the RSQ-T but is worded from the perspective of the primary-caregiver instead of the child. Thus, the RSQ-P consists of 26 items that comprise 6 subscales that measure the extent to which a primary-caregiver has engaged in racial socialization activities with a child in the past year. The **Racial Pride** subscale consists of four items measuring the extent to which primary caregivers emphasize Black unity, teachings about heritage, and instilling positive feelings towards Blacks (e.g., “Told the target child that s/he should be proud to be Black”). The **Racial Barriers** subscale consists of four items measuring the extent to which an awareness of racial inequities and coping strategies are emphasized (e.g., “Told the target child that some people try to keep Black people from being successful”). The **Egalitarian** subscale consists of four items measuring the extent to which messages regarding interracial equality and coexistence are emphasized (e.g., “Told the target child that Blacks and Whites should try to understand each other so they can get along”). The **Self-Worth** subscale consists of four items measuring the extent to which messages emphasizing positive messages about the self are conveyed (e.g., “Told the target child that s/he is somebody special, no matter what anyone says”). The **Negative** subscale consists of five items measuring the extent to which messages are conveyed that disparage Black people (e.g., “Told the target child that learning about Black history is not that important”). The **Socialization Behaviors** subscale consists of five items measuring the frequency of various socialization activities or behaviors related to Black culture (e.g., “Bought the target child books about Black people”). Participants were asked to respond to each item using a three-point rating scale (0 = *never* to 2 = *more than twice*) indicating how often they had communicated each message or behavior to the target child in the study in the past year. We created subscales by averaging across each of the items such that higher scores indicated a greater frequency of the particular message or behavior.

Mothers' Childhood Racial Socialization Experiences—Prior racial socialization messages were assessed using four items that asked mothers to reflect on the frequency of

racial socialization messages they received from parents, peers, and other adults during childhood and adolescence. The four items include: 1) How often did your parents or the people who raised you talk about race, racism or other groups; 2) Not including your parents or the people who raised you, how often did other close relatives such as your brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and grandparents talk with you about race, racism or other groups; 3) How often did your friends talk about race, racism or other groups; 4) How often did other adults such as church members, your teachers, or neighbors talk to you about race, racism or other groups? Participants responded to the items using a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Items were averaged together to develop a scale in which higher scores indicated a higher frequency of racial socialization messages.

Mothers' Racial Identity—The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Short (MIBI-S; Martin, Wout, Nguyen, Gonzalez & Sellers, under review) was used to assess parents' racial identity. The MIBI-S is a shortened form of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity consisting of the highest loading items of the original scale. Like the MIBI, the 27-item MIBI-S is comprised of three scales (centrality, regard, and ideology). Martin et al. used confirmatory factor analysis to examine the construct validity of the MIBI-S with a sample of over 1000 African American college students and a community sample of over 300 African American adults. The data from both the college and the community samples fit the proposed factor structure of the MIBI (Centrality scale, two Regard subscales, and four Ideology subscales), suggesting support for the construct validity for the MIBI-S in these samples.

Participants responded to the MIBI-S using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). Centrality ($\alpha = .83$) is a four-item subscale that refers to the extent to which one's racial identity is important to one's self-definition (e.g., "Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself."). Racial regard concerns how one feels others view one's racial group (public regard) or how one feels towards Blacks in general and how he/she feels about being Black (private regard). A sample question from the four-item Public Regard ($\alpha = .80$) subscale reads, "Overall, Blacks are considered good by others." A sample question from the three-item Private Regard subscale ($\alpha = .69$) reads, "I feel good about Black people." The Ideology scale is comprised of four subscales containing four subscales: Assimilation; Humanist; Minority; and Nationalist. The Assimilationist subscale ($\alpha = .66$) explores the view that African Americans should attempt to fit in with mainstream America (e.g., "A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before"). The Humanist subscale ($\alpha = .61$) assesses the extent to which the participant endorses the belief that people are the same, regardless of race (e.g., "People regardless of race have strengths and limitations"). The Minority subscale ($\alpha = .73$) explores views that connect the plight of African Americans with those of other oppressed minority groups (e.g., "The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups"). The Nationalist subscale ($\alpha = .66$) measures the extent to which the participant views the Black experience as unique (e.g., "A thorough knowledge of Black history is important for Blacks today.").

Mothers' and Adolescents' Experiences with Racial Discrimination—Both mothers and adolescents' experiences with discrimination were assessed using The Racism and Life Experience Scales (RaLES). The RaLES measures the frequency that an individual has experienced each of 17 racial hassles within the past year (Harrell, 1994). A sample item reads: "In the past year, how often have you been ignored, overlooked, or not given service (in a restaurant, store, etc.) because of your race?" Participants used a six-point scale to rate the frequency which they experienced each of the events within the past year (0 = never to 5 = once a week or more). Scores were averaged together across the 17 items. Higher scores correspond to more frequent experiences with discrimination.

Sociodemographic variables—Mothers estimated the combined family income in the past year using a 14-point rating scale that began with 1 (less than \$10,000) and escalated in \$10,000 increments up to 14 (more than \$130,000). Mothers also reported their age and level of educational attainment. Level of educational attainment was measured using an eight-point scale: 1 (*junior high or less*), 2 (*some high school*), 3 (*high school graduate*), 4 (*some college*), 5 (*college graduate*), 6 (*some graduate school*), 7 (*Master's degree*), and 8 (*doctoral degree*). Adolescents reported their own age and gender (male=1 and female=2).

Results

Descriptive Findings

On average, the racial socialization subscales were positively related to each other (see Table 1). For instance, Racial Pride messages were positively related to Racial Barrier messages ($r = .46, p < .01$), Egalitarian messages ($r = .43, p < .01$), Self-worth messages ($r = .30, p < .01$), and Racial Socialization Behaviors ($r = .64, p < .01$). Positive relationships were also present between Egalitarian messages and Self-worth messages ($r = .38, p < .01$). On the other hand, the Negative messages subscale was negatively related to Self-worth messages ($r = -.18, p < .01$).

Table 1 shows the bivariate relationships between child and mother racial socialization and key study variables. Child discrimination was positively associated with Racial Barrier and Egalitarian messages. With the exception of self-worth messages, mothers' racial discrimination experiences were positively associated with each of the racial socialization subscales. Mothers' childhood socialization experiences were positively associated with most of the verbal racial socialization messages (i.e., Racial Pride, Racial Barriers, and Egalitarian) and racial socialization behaviors. Generally, mothers' racial identity beliefs were related to the racial socialization messages they reported transmitting to their children. Specifically, racial centrality and private regard were positively associated with Racial Pride messages and Racial Barrier messages scales, as well as the Racial Socialization Behaviors scale. Private regard was also negatively correlated with Negative Messages. Public regard was negatively correlated with Racial Barrier messages, whereas assimilation ideology was positively related to Egalitarian messages. With regard to the other ideology subscales, humanist ideology was associated with Egalitarian, Self-worth, and Negative Messages; minority ideology was related to Racial Barrier and Egalitarian messages, and Socialization Behaviors; and nationalist ideology was correlated with Racial Pride, Racial Barrier, and Negative Messages, as well as Socialization Behaviors.

Racial Socialization Profiles

Latent class analysis (LCA) implemented by the Latent Gold program (Vermunt & Magidson, 2005) was used to determine racial socialization clusters from the adolescent sample. Latent class analysis is a model-based cluster analysis that provides statistical criteria for selecting a plausible cluster solution among alternatives (Magidson & Vermunt, 2004). Unlike a variable-centered approach, this approach clusters individuals based on the patterning of various racial socialization messages across the entire sample. (For more information on latent class analysis refer to Neblett et al., 2008). Using the means from the six subscales of the RSQ-P, six latent class models (ranging from 1 to 6 clusters) were estimated. Of the six models estimated, the three-cluster model appeared to be the most appropriate solution. It had the lowest BIC (1043.2), a non-significant bootstrap p -value (.09), and a substantial reduction in L^2 (24.7%) compared to the baseline model.

Next, the standardized means of each racial socialization variables were used to characterize and label the clusters (see Table 2). The largest cluster was labeled **Multifaceted** ($n=124, 58.5\%$

of sample). This cluster is characterized by scores above the sample mean on the Racial Pride, Racial Barriers, Egalitarian, Self-Worth, and Behavioral Socialization subscales. The second largest cluster was labeled **Low Race Salience** ($n = 61, 28.8\%$). Mothers in this cluster had scores above the sample mean on Egalitarian and Self-Worth messages, and scores below the mean on Racial Pride, Racial Barriers, characterize this cluster and Behavioral Socialization subscales. The smallest cluster ($n = 27, 12.7\%$), **Unengaged**, had scores below the mean on five of the six the racial socialization domains. The Unengaged cluster scored above the mean on Negative messages.

Profile Differences in Socialization Messages and Behavior

We ran a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) models to investigate profile differences in Racial Pride [$F(2,211) = 283.30, p < .05$], Racial Barrier [$F(2,211) = 44.39, p < .05$], Egalitarian [$F(2,211) = 48.95, p < .05$], Self-Worth [$F(2,211) = 10.03, p < .05$], Negative Messages [$F(2,211) = 1.96, p = ns$], and Racial Behavior [$F(2,211) = 44.39, p < .05$] subscales. We then used Tamhane's T2 tests to investigate between-profile differences in each of the racial socialization domains.¹ See Table 2 for means and standard deviations of the racial socialization subscales by racial socialization profile. For the most part, mothers in the Multifaceted profile reported the most messages and the most Racial Socialization Behaviors, mothers in the Low Race Salience profile reported the second most, and mothers in the Unengaged profile reported the least number of messages. Mothers in the Low Race Salience profile reported more self-worth messages than mothers in the Unengaged profile. There were no significant differences between the Multifaceted profile and the other two profiles on self-worth messages. There were no significant profile differences on Negative messages.

Profile Differences in Demographic Variables

We next explored profile differences in demographic variables using a series of one-way ANOVAs. We examined profile differences in mothers' educational attainment, family income, mothers' age, children's age, and children's gender. Omnibus F -tests did not indicate any profile differences in income [$F(2, 211) = 2.92, ns$], mothers' age [$F(2, 211) = 2.92, ns$], child age [$F(2, 211) = 1.40, ns$], or child gender [$F(2, 211) = 0.56, ns$]. However, the omnibus test did indicate a difference in education between the profiles, $F(2, 211) = 4.12, p < .02$. Tamhane's T2 tests showed that those in the Multifaceted profile ($M = 5.38, SD = 1.83$) had significantly more years of education than those in the Low Race Salience profile ($M = 4.57, SD = 1.77$).

Profile Differences in Discrimination and Prior Racial Socialization Experiences

The next set of analyses explored profile differences in mothers' discrimination experiences, children's discrimination experiences, and mothers' prior exposure to racial socialization. The omnibus F -tests indicated profile differences in mothers' experiences of discrimination [$F(2, 211) = 5.75, p < .01$] and mothers' prior exposure to racial socialization [$F(2,173) = 5.22, p < .01$], but no differences in their children's discrimination experiences [$F(2, 166) = 0.25, ns$]. Tamhane's T2 tests showed that mothers in the Multifaceted profile reported more experiences of discrimination ($M = 1.12, SD = .87$) and more frequent prior socialization experiences ($M = 3.65, SD = .83$) than mothers in the Unengaged profile ($M = .53, SD = .45$ and $M = 2.93, SD = .93$, respectively). No other significant profile differences emerged.

Profile Differences in MIBI Variables

Our last set of ANOVA models explored profile differences in the seven racial identity variables. Omnibus F -tests indicated profile differences in centrality [$F(2, 168) = 10.11, p < .$

¹Tamhane's T2 is a post-hoc test for examining differences in groups with unequal sample sizes and unequal variances (Tamhane, 1979). It was chosen for these analyses because the three clusters differ greatly in size (ranging from 27 to 124).

01], private regard [$F(2, 168) = 7.91, p < .01$], and nationalist ideology [$F(2, 168) = 7.47, p < .01$]. Tamhane's T2 tests showed that mothers in the Multifaceted profile had significantly higher ratings of centrality ($M = 5.03, SD = 1.16$) and nationalist ideology ($M = 4.33, SD = .85$) than those in the Unengaged profile ($M = 3.77, SD = 1.11$ and $M = 3.38, SD = 1.02$, respectively). Mothers in the Multifaceted profile ($M = 6.58, SD = .44$) also had higher mean private regard scores than those in the Low Race Salience profile ($M = 6.31, SD = .73$).

Discussion

Profiles of Racial Socialization Messages

The primary aim of this paper was to examine patterns of African American mothers' racial socialization messages and to distinguish between the resulting profiles on demographic and race-related factors. Using latent class analyses, we concluded that there were three racial socialization profiles among our sample of African American mothers: the Multifaceted, Low Race Salience, and the Unengaged profiles. The frequency and content of racial socialization messages and racial socialization behaviors differed among the profiles. The Multifaceted profile, the largest of the three, transmitted the highest number of socialization messages overall, with the exception of self-worth and negative messages. Mothers in the Multifaceted profile reported racial socialization activities that conveyed a positive view of African American culture and history while at the same time identifying obstacles their children would face as a result of their racial status. Such a pattern of racial socialization is consistent with those identified by Boykin and Toms (1985) as being necessary for raising a healthy African American child in an environment that devalues them. The fact that the majority of mothers fell into this profile is encouraging. Only a person-centered approach to operationalizing racial socialization would provide information about the prevalence of such an overall strategy.

Egalitarian and Self-worth messages were the most common socialization themes communicated by respondents in the Low Race Salience profile. Consequently, mothers in this profile utilized a racial socialization strategy that de-emphasized the importance of race in the lives of their children and instead focused on the individual worth of the child. This profile is consistent with the mainstream orientation articulated by Boykin and Toms (1985). Parents in the smallest profile, Unengaged, communicated few racial socialization messages to their children relative to mothers in the other two profiles. One exception is the relatively high number of Negative messages. Few studies have examined the transmission of negative racial messages to African American youth. One of the few studies to examine negative messages, Neblett and colleagues (2008), found that child reported patterns of racial socialization also included a profile where negative racial messages were prevalent and other racial socialization messages were less frequent. Adolescents in this profile reported the most negative functioning outcomes in the study (Neblett et al., 2008). It is quite possible that the lack of engagement around race may just be symptomatic of poor family functioning, in general. Frabutt and colleagues (2002) found that mothers who moderately socialized their children around race were more communicative with their children, demonstrated more warmth, and were more involved with their children than mothers who reported little engagement in racial socialization practices (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002). Unfortunately, we do not have measures of family functioning in the present study.

The qualitative differences between these profiles raise several questions with regard to child outcomes. First, what is the cost of not receiving race salient socialization messages? Are children of mothers in the Low Race Salience and Unengaged profiles at greater risk than the children of mothers in the Multifaceted profile because they have not received messages instilling racial pride or messages making them aware of Racial Barriers? Similarly, what are discrepancies in child outcomes when parents communicate self-worth and egalitarian messages (Low Race Salience profile) versus little to no socialization messages at all

(Unengaged profile)? Surprisingly, there has been little research investigating racial socialization messages and associated child outcomes. The research that has been conducted suggests that more positive racial socialization messages instilling racial pride and engagement in racial socialization behaviors are associated with more prosocial child outcomes (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Neblett et al., 2008; Spencer, 1983). Yet only one of these studies used a profile approach (Neblett et al., 2008). Thus, it is unclear as yet how various combinations of messages and activities work together to influence youth outcomes.

Profile Associations with Demographic Factors

We found no significant differences in child age or gender across the Multifaceted, Low Race Salience, or Unengaged profiles conflicting with findings from several other studies (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Peters & Massey, 1983; Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002; Stevenson, McNeil, Taylor, & Davis, 2005; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000). There are a number of possible explanations for this discrepancy. First, much of the previous research has focused on child reports of racial socialization, whereas the present study focused on mothers' reports. It is quite likely that there is significant incongruence between parent and child reports of racial socialization (Coard & Sellers, 2005; Hughes et al., 2006). What a parent may see as the most important part of a message about race is likely to be interpreted quite differently by a child. Whereas both parent and child observations are valid sources of information about the racial socialization process, they are not always congruent. A second possible explanation for the discrepancy in findings is that the present study used a person-centered profile approach to operationalize racial socialization whereas other studies have primarily used a variable-centered approach. Although a person-centered approach may be more appropriate approach for viewing differences in the patterning of numerous racial socialization messages across people, it is less sensitive than a variable centered approach in detecting a relationship between a single type of racial socialization message and some other variable. For instance, an examination of bivariate correlations indicates significant relationships between child age and three of the racial socialization variables (Racial Pride, Negative messages, and Socialization Behaviors).

Although there were no child demographic differences between the profiles, we did find profile differences in mothers' level of educational attainment. Specifically, our results indicate that mothers in the Multifaceted profile reported higher levels of education than mothers in the Low Race Salience and Unengaged profiles. This finding is consistent with those reported by Bowman and Howard (1985) and Thornton and colleagues (1990) who found that more frequent and positive racial socialization messages were associated with higher levels of parental educational attainment. It is possible that more highly educated parents may have greater access to intellectual, social, and monetary capital to impart strong feelings of racial pride and warn their child about the racial obstacles that they may face. It is also possible that the context in which more highly educated mothers live may elicit challenges to their children than less-educated mothers. African Americans with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to live in predominately White settings than those with lower levels of educational attainment. Some predominantly White neighborhoods may be hostile towards African Americans. Caughy and colleagues found that African American parents in settings that they perceived as more racially-hostile transmitted more messages about racial barriers to their children (Caughy, Nettles, O'Campo, & Lohrfink, 2005).

Profile Associations and Race-Related Experiences

Unlike previous research that has found a link between child's experiences with racial discrimination and racial socialization (Hughes & Johnson, 2001), we found no profile

differences in child racial discrimination experiences. This lack of profile differences does not mean, however, that there were no associations between mothers' reports of racial socialization behavior and children's reports of experiences with racial discrimination in our study. As noted above, the lack of a significant profile difference in child racial discrimination may be an artifact of the person-centered approach to operationalizing racial socialization. In fact, our bivariate analyses indicate that mothers who reported conveying more racial barrier messages had children who also reported more frequent experiences of racial discrimination. It is unclear as to whether mothers' conveying more racial barrier messages result in the children being more vigilant toward racial hassles or whether the children's experiences with racial discrimination result in the mothers talking to them more about the existence of racism. Unfortunately, it is impossible, in the present study, to disentangle the direction of causality between child racial discrimination and mothers' reports of racial barrier messages.

We found significant racial socialization profile differences in mothers' experiences with discrimination. Mothers in the Multifaceted profile experienced significantly more racial discrimination than those in the Unengaged profile. Given that one of the primary aims of racial socialization is to provide children with the skills to combat racial discrimination, it is not surprising that mothers who experienced more discrimination also communicated more positive, race salient messages. Mothers' own experiences with racial discrimination may serve as a cue for such conversations (Hughes & Chen, 1997). Conversely, mothers in the Unengaged profile may not view racial socialization as a necessary tool for African American children because they report experiencing fewer incidents of racial discrimination. It is not clear whether there are consequences for mothers in the Unengaged group providing fewer racial socialization messages. To our knowledge, there have been no studies linking parents' reports of racial socialization to the impact of racial discrimination on child outcomes. A few studies of children's reports of racial socialization indicate that receiving racial socialization messages consistent with those reported by the Multifaceted profile may help to buffer children from the deleterious impact of experiencing racial discrimination (Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Neblett et al., 2006, 2008).

This study also underscores the multigenerational impact of racial socialization. Specifically, mothers who transmitted more racial socialization messages to their children overall (Multifaceted profile) reported more racial socialization during their own childhood, whereas individuals who received less racial socialization as children were disconnected from the racial socialization process (Unengaged profile) with their own children. Thus, childhood racial socialization messages may have a long-lasting influence on mothers' racial beliefs and behaviors. Some theorists have argued that race-related experiences can shape individuals' racial identity attitudes and beliefs throughout the lifespan (e.g., Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). On the other hand, it is also possible that mother's recollection of childhood socialization is associated with their current race-related beliefs and practices. Specifically, respondents in the Multifaceted profile may be better at recalling race salient events from their past, whereas individuals in the Unengaged profile are less likely to remember such instances because race is less of a salient factor in their lives. A life-span longitudinal study examining individuals' racial socialization experiences from childhood to motherhood would address this concern; however, such a study is quite expensive and somewhat unfeasible.

Profile Associations and Racial Identity

Mothers in the Multifaceted profile held racial identity attitudes that were consistent with the messages that they conveyed to their children. They felt that race was a highly central identity. They felt positive towards other African Americans and felt that other groups held less positive attitudes toward them. The Low Race Salient mothers held similar attitudes as the Multifaceted mothers except that they felt less positive toward African Americans. Yet, the Low Race Salient

mothers provided their children with significantly fewer racial pride and racial barrier messages and engaged in fewer racial socialization behaviors than the Multifaceted mothers. It is possible that this small, but significant, difference in private regard beliefs is enough to lead to different racial socialization practices. For instance, the less positive private regard beliefs may be indicative of Low Race Salient mothers having less material to draw upon than Multifaceted mothers in conveying an overall positive message of African Americans overcoming obstacles. Whereas it must also be noted that these mothers still reported overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward African Americans when their responses are viewed in the context of the response scale (6.31 out of 7), previous research has found that small differences in private regard have been predictive of a variety of outcomes (e.g., Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998; Sellers et al., 2006).

Mothers in the Multifaceted profile also differed significantly from mothers in the Unengaged profile in their racial identity beliefs. Mothers in the Unengaged profile reported lower levels of racial centrality and greater endorsement of the nationalist ideology as compared to mothers in the Multifaceted profile. Relative to the other two profiles, mothers in the Unengaged profile provide their children with little guidance about the significance and meaning of race. It is possible that this lack of guidance represents a less developed racial schema on the part of the mothers. Many of the mothers in the Unengaged profile may not have successfully developed their own coherent identity around the meaning of race. Without such a schema for understanding the meaning of race in the world, a mother would have a difficult time transmitting a coherent set of racial socialization messages to her child. Thus, a mother's lack of racial identity development can greatly constrain the racial socialization possibilities of the child. Although lower levels of racial centrality attitudes and avoidance of race-related subjects have been associated with lower levels of racial identity development (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006), racial identity content and development should be measured separately. As a result, future research is needed that explores not only the content of parents' racial identity, but also their level of racial identity development.

Contributions and Future Directions

We believe that this study makes several valuable contributions to the larger racial socialization literature. The most notable contribution is the profile approach utilized to study racial socialization. This approach to operationalize racial socialization allows for a more holistic view of the way in which mothers' use multiple specific messages about race to communicate a larger synergistic message. We believe that such an approach is more descriptive of the racial socialization process. A second strength of the present study is that it is also one of the few studies to use both parent and child reports. Although our focus was primarily on mothers' reports of their racial socialization behavior, the addition of child reported measures of racial discrimination provides some guard against the problems of single source method bias. A third contribution of the present study is that it is one of the few studies that has focused on mothers' childhood racial socialization experiences as influential in their current racial socialization practices. As such, our findings provide some initial evidence of the multi-generational transmission of racial attitudes and beliefs within the African American family.

In spite of the many contributions made by the present paper, there are also significant issues that need to be addressed by future research in this field. First, as noted throughout the paper, more longitudinal research is needed in order to tease out the causal direction of the findings found in the present study. Second, future research is needed to assess both mothers' and children's racial socialization simultaneously. Such an assessment will provide us with a better understanding of the congruence between the two sources of information. Until we have a clear understanding of the level of congruence, it is important that we view studies using parent assessments as being distinct from studies utilizing child assessments. Doing so may clarify

seemingly contradictory findings across multiple studies. Third, future research should explore how racial socialization profiles are related to other family processes. Though racial socialization takes place within the family unit, there is a dearth of research examining how this socialization process is associated with parenting styles, parental monitoring, parental involvement, family conflict, and family support. Finally, further research is needed to expand the focus of present study to other individuals (fathers, siblings, peers, and teachers) who serve an important racial socialization function in the lives of African American adolescents.

Conclusion

In summary, this study employed a unique methodological approach to further investigate how parental racial socialization messages were associated with demographic factors, racial discrimination experiences, childhood racial socialization, and racial identity attitudes. In developing these racial socialization profiles, it was evident that there is great heterogeneity in the frequency and content of racial socialization messages communicated in African American families. In spite of this heterogeneity, we were able to identify several thematic patterns of parental racial socialization messages. Development of these racial socialization profiles contributes to the growing call for synergistic examinations of socialization as they likely function in African American families and underscore the complexity of the racial socialization process and the factors that are associated with socialization.

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Table 1
Zero-Order Correlations between Racial Socialization Variables and Other Study Variables.

	Racial Pride	Racial Barriers	Egalitarian	Self- Worth	Negative	Soc. Behaviors
Racial Pride	—					
Racial Barriers	0.46**	—				
Egalitarian	0.43**	0.41**	—			
Self-Worth	0.30**	0.36**	0.38**	—		
Negative	-0.13	0.08	0.09	-0.18**	—	
Soc. Behaviors	0.64**	0.35**	0.25**	0.13	-0.02	—
Family Income	0.15*	0.02	-0.05	0.02	-0.18**	0.19**
Mother Age	0.16*	0.02	-0.01	-0.03	-0.07	0.17**
Mother Education	0.14*	0.00	-0.06	-0.04	-0.21**	0.22**
Child Age	0.15*	0.02	-0.05	0.02	-0.18**	0.19**
Child Gender	0.07	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.06
Child Discrimination	-0.05	0.16**	0.14*	0.12	-0.05	0.11
Mother Discrimination	0.17*	0.22**	0.17*	0.06	0.19**	0.20**
Mother Prior Social.	0.27**	0.18*	0.15*	0.07	0.06	0.18*
Mother Centrality	0.30**	0.24**	0.12	-0.07	-0.04	0.37**
Mother Private Regard	0.32**	0.15*	0.13	0.02	-0.20**	0.29**
Mother Public Regard	-0.07	-0.18*	0.07	0.04	-0.06	-0.08
Mother Assimilation	0.00	-0.06	0.20**	0.00	0.13	0.03
Mother Humanist	-0.06	-0.06	0.16*	0.14*	-0.15*	-0.10
Mother Minority	0.09	0.19**	0.27**	-0.03	0.06	0.14*
Mother Nationalist	0.31**	0.37**	0.08	-0.06	0.14*	0.25**

Note:

* p < .05

** p < .01. All correlations were conducted pairwise

Table 2

Raw Mean, Standard Deviation, and Standardized Mean by Racial Socialization Profile.

	<u>Multifaceted (M)</u>		<u>Low Race Salience (L)</u>		<u>Unengaged (U)</u>		<i>Mean Differences</i>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Z</i>	
Racial Pride	1.97 (0.09)	0.61	1.60 (0.19)	-0.38	1.04 (0.42)	-1.92	<i>M, L > U*</i> ; <i>M > L*</i>
Racial Barriers	1.60 (0.47)	0.34	1.34 (0.49)	-0.11	0.65 (0.49)	-1.33	<i>M, L > U*</i> ; <i>M > L*</i>
Egalitarian	1.65 (0.40)	0.22	1.64 (0.36)	0.2	0.85 (0.41)	-1.47	<i>M, L > U*</i>
Self-Worth	1.90 (0.40)	0.07	1.93 (0.19)	0.2	1.71 (0.39)	-0.76	<i>L > U*</i>
Negative	0.08 (0.15)	-0.09	0.11 (0.27)	0.05	0.16 (0.22)	0.32	<i>ns</i>
Soc. Behaviors	1.72 (0.25)	0.59	1.13 (0.41)	-0.63	0.81 (0.46)	-1.28	<i>M, L > U*</i> ; <i>M > L*</i>

Note:

* Tamhane's T2 mean difference $p < .05$.