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Unpacking school ethnic-racial socialization: A new conceptual model

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Abstract

Parents are the earliest transmitters of ethnic-racial socialization (ERS), but transmitters within the school context become more important as youth move into adolescence. Yet, the current literature has limited frameworks to describe the transmission of ERS in schools. We propose a conceptual model that outlines the transmitters, methods, and content of school ERS as well as how school ERS can influence adolescent outcomes. Although scholars have begun to understand dimensions of school ERS, no frameworks have outlined the process, content, and effects of school ERS. This paper builds upon the burgeoning literature to unpack this process at institutional and individual levels. The paper includes discussion of research and practice implications for utilizing school ERS to address racial disparities and increase healthy school racial climates in K-12 schools.

Despite the growth in the literature on ethnic-racial socialization (ERS), until recently very little research has focused on contexts outside the home (Hughes et al., 2016; Priest et al., 2014). ERS is a common and necessary practice within ethnic minority families to teach youth about race, ethnicity, and racial discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020), and parents are often the earliest transmitters. However, as youth move from childhood into adolescence, they must negotiate an increasingly complex world of socialization messages from multiple sources (e.g., Hughes et al., 2011). Theoretical and ecological models demand consideration of these multiple contexts, even in childhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Coll et al., 1996), but there is a need for research on ERS outside of the home context (Ruck et al., in press), given knowledge about how

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additional contexts influence parents' messages (e.g., Caughy et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2016; Saleem et al., 2016). One of the most salient contexts outside of the home for youth is school.

School is an important environment in which to understand the transmitters, content, and effects of ERS because adolescents spend a significant amount of time there and, historically, schools are expected to play a significant role in socializing youth into their adult roles in society (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Socialization within the school context becomes increasingly influential as youth move from childhood into adolescence, a time marked by increased autonomy (Eccles, 1999), evolving identity (Erikson, 1968), and salience of socialization agents beyond parents (Hill et al., 2007). During this time youth may begin to look to adults and peers in the school context for socioemotional support and opportunities for identity exploration.

Schools can also be a source of stress, particularly for youth of color. In fact, children and adolescents encounter, witness, process, and cope with racial stressors (e.g., bias academic tracking, racial teasing, threats of harm and injury) in school, while also grappling with the meaning of race for their personal identities (Dessel, 2010; Douglass et al., 2016; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011). For example, youth of color commonly report receiving harsher evaluations and lower grades from teachers (Assari & Caldwell, 2018; Fisher et al., 2000; Romero & Roberts, 1998). Many youth report racial discrimination (e.g., Benner et al., 2018), including racial teasing and bullying from peers (Douglass et al., 2016). School based racial discrimination from teachers and peers is linked to numerous negative academic, psychological, and social consequences such as, stress (e.g., Scott, 2003), psychological symptoms (e.g., Pieterse et al., 2010), behavioral problems (e.g., Wong et al., 2003), lower academic performance (e.g., Assari & Caldwell, 2018), lower self-esteem (e.g., Fisher et al., 2000), ethnic-racial identity development (e.g., Chavous et al., 2008), and lower school bonding (e.g., Dotterer et al., 2009). Similar to parental ERS messages, ERS received within the school context can influence how youth manage racial stressors and ultimately impact academic and psychosocial outcomes as well as ethnic-racial attitudes.

In the current paper we will explain a conceptual model of school ERS that identifies the process and content of ERS within the school context as well as the effects on students' academic success, psychosocial outcomes, and ethnic-racial attitudes. Although the model is applicable from childhood into emerging adulthood our review and examples are tailored towards the developmental period of adolescence, given the salience of extra-familial socialization agents and contexts, such as schools, during this period. Recently, scholars have begun to outline dimensions of school ERS within the literature on multicultural education and parental ERS (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Byrd, 2017). This paper builds upon that work to unpack the transmitters and effects of school ERS in addition to content and methods of socialization at both institutional and individual levels. We propose that school ERS can have implications for academic and mental health disparities for youth of color. As such we also discuss implications for and applications to social issues such as racial disparities. At present, our model is focused on the United States, but aspects may extend to other countries.

THE SCHOOL ERS TRANSMISSION MODEL

The School ERS Transmission Model (see Figure 1) has three main components: 1) transmitters, that is, those who convey ERS messages; 2) content and methods, that is, what messages are conveyed and how; and 3) outcomes, that is, the effects of school ERS. Before describing each section of the model, we will explain how we use terms relating to ERS.

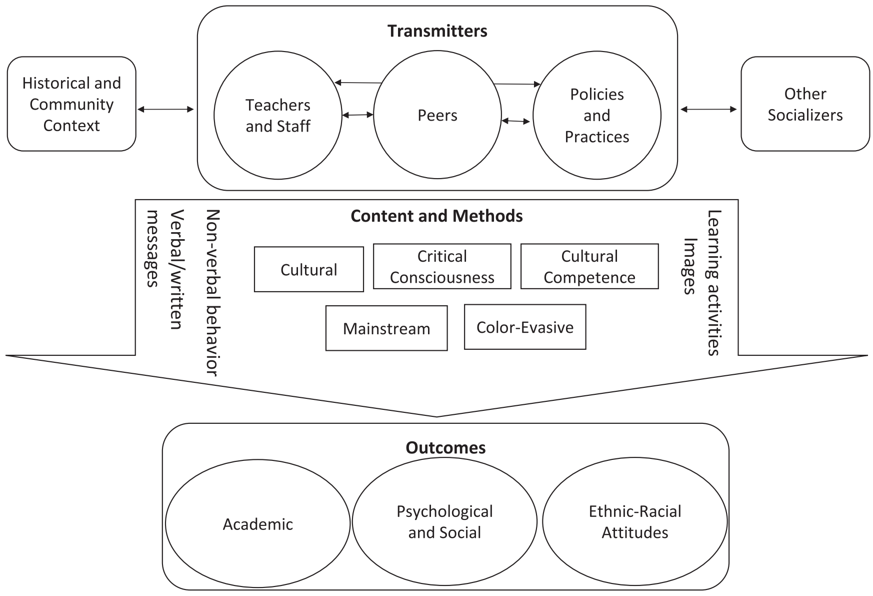

FIGURE 1 School ethnic-racial socialization transmission model

Defining race, ethnicity, and ethnic-racial socialization

Although definitions of "race" and "ethnicity" vary among scholars, in this paper we adopt the convention of the Ethnic and Racial Identity in the 21st Century working group (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014) of referring to "ethnic-racial" groups to encompass the processes that arise through group identification with racial, ethnic, and cultural communities in the United States. Although some have argued for historical and demographic differences between "ethnic" groups and "racial" groups, the psychological experience of such group memberships are complex and do not necessarily correspond to the easy categorization of scholars. Thus, the umbrella term focuses attention on the commonalities of experiences across groups without assuming the nature of such groups.

ERS is an overarching term that refers to the transmission of information about race, ethnicity, and preparing for and managing racial bias, which is traditionally thought of as being conveyed from adults to children. The term "ethnic-racial socialization" was developed from the unique experiences of immigrant families (e.g., Asian, Latino, African, Caribbean) within the United States, and these messages included topics such as assimilation, acculturation, and cultural retention. The term "racial socialization" was traditionally applied to African American families and focused on the unique socialization of African American parents within historical context. These messages include attention to race-relations between Blacks and Whites within the United States in order to promote a healthy ethnic-racial identity and prepare youth for racialized barriers within the United States. While "racial socialization" is still primarily used with African American families, "ethnic-racial socialization" is often applied in research that includes multiple ethnic groups, including African Americans. Given that this conceptual model is inclusive of all youth of color in schools, we will use the term "ethnic-racial socialization" to be comprehensive across multiple ethnic and racial groups.

Transmitters of school ERS

Transmitters are individuals or institutional agents that convey implicit and explicit information about the meaning and significance of ethnic-racial group membership to youth. We focus on three categories of transmitters: 1) teachers and staff, 2) peers, and 3) institutional practices and policies. First, teachers and staff can explicitly communicate beliefs and values about race through their speech and curriculum choices (e.g., Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Walton et al., 2014). They can also implicitly socialize, for example, by avoiding conversations about race or by only focusing on racism as a historical artifact (e.g., Byrd & Hope, 2020). In fact, research suggests that most schools take a color-evasive approach (e.g., avoiding racial topics and discussions) (Hazelbaker & Mistry, in press; Schofield, 2006; Walton, et al., 2014). Beyond teachers, there are many staff (e.g., principals, counselors, school aids, resource officers) who have differential access to youth yet still convey ERS and have the opportunity to foster a harmful or supportive racial climate. For example, African American and Latinx youth report disproportionate concerns about racially biased disciplinary practices from school staff resource officers (Sykes et al., 2017). Thus, explicit or not, teacher and staff behaviors can convey messages about race and ERS. Similarly, peers inform each other about race through their conversations and behavior (Wang & Benner, 2016). Both interracial and intra-racial friendships are significant for how youth think about their own ethnic-racial identity and the role of race in society (e.g., Wang & Atwal, 2015). In fact, peers' influence over friendship selection is a form of ERS. However, peer socialization differs from teachers or staff socialization because youth have more choices in selecting the peers that they spend time with and who they allow to influence them.

The school also transmits socialization messages through its policies and practices. Stated policies about diversity and discrimination can convey school norms about how race and culture should be valued and considered in interpersonal interactions. However, actual practices will have even clearer consequences for youths' understanding. For example, schools may have a policy that bans racial discrimination but may not enforce the policy against offensive, racially charged language because the language is considered free speech. Additionally, some schools have policies that are blatant in perpetuating racial bias, such as the banning of natural hair styles for African American youth (Edwards, 2020). Non-racial policies and practices can also convey information about race. For example, youth of color are more likely to face harsh discipline and to be tracked into lower level academic courses compared to White youth (Skiba et al., 2016). Adolescents use their observations about which students receive what rewards and punishments to inform their beliefs about their identities and society (Kuchirko & Nayfeld, in press). For example, Tyson (2006) found that adolescents who attended schools where most high-performing students were White tended to associate academic achievement with "acting White" compared to a school where high performers were more racially mixed.

Outside influences

Other socializers

All transmitters influence and interact with each other as well as with transmitters from outside the school (e.g., parents, communities, online experiences) and with the influence of historical and community contexts (Hughes et al., 2016; Ruck et al., in press). For example, as transmitters, parents react to youth's experiences at school, particularly when it comes to discrimination (e.g.,

Banerjee & Eccles, 2019). Neighborhood factors also influence parents' ERS messages (e.g., Lambert et al., 2020; Saleem et al., 2016; Witherspoon et al., 2019), so it is likely that both parents and neighborhoods influence the messages that schools provide and how youth interpret and internalize the messages across contexts. Thus, there is an interplay across contexts for the ERS messages youth receive outside and within schools.

Historical and community context

Across transmitters, ERS messages must be understood within a historical context of racism within the United States. The historical context influences the transmitters' social positions, experiences, and perspectives that shape values about the need for particular ERS messages, the policies and practices the transmitters put into place, and the way they transmit ERS. For example, discriminatory housing and lending policies shape racial segregation in neighborhoods that can lead to segregated schools. How school districts and schools choose to address segregation and racial legacies become part of adolescents' experience of ERS. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the socialization that youth receive across contexts will influence the School ERS Transmission Model.

Transmission of school ERS: content and methods

Content

The content of school ERS can be conceptualized within the construct of school climate, which are the "norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" of a school (Thapa et al., 2013). As a construct, school climate is broad and while some conceptualizations have included aspects of race and culture (e.g., Thapa et al., 2013), others have not. On the other hand, work focusing on racial climate in K-12 schools and universities has tended to focus on overt racial discrimination rather than socialization messages (Byrd, 2017). While experiences with racial discrimination inform youths' perceptions of the racial climate, students also come to understand their identities, race, and culture through other interpersonal interactions, school policies, and teaching and learning practices.

The parental ERS socialization literature has served as a foundation for understanding the content of school ERS. Aldana and Byrd (2015) and Byrd (2015; 2017) have identified several dimensions of school ERS content, some of which align with dimensions of parental socialization (i.e., Hughes et al., 2006), whereas others are unique to the school context and based on work on multicultural education and culturally relevant teaching. The content areas are cultural socialization, critical consciousness socialization, promotion of cultural competence, mainstream socialization, and colorblind socialization. Other content areas may exist outside of these five.

Cultural socialization refers to messages about what it means to be a member of one's ethnic-racial group, including messages about the importance of one's own culture and opportunities to learn about the tradition and history of one's group. For African American students, Black History Month activities could serve as cultural socialization. Ethnic studies and Afrocentric curricula in particular focus on the unique contributions of people of color (Ríos et al., 2016; Shockley & Frederick, 2010). Youth can also learn about culture through clubs and student organizations and from teachers in other subjects who work to incorporate culture into their teaching (e.g., Harper & Quaye, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, what students might perceive as relevant to their culture can depend on the individual and the context. For example, a Black adolescent whose

parents were born in the United States might not perceive information about Haitian revolutionary Toussaint L'Ouverture as cultural socialization whereas a Black adolescent of Haitian-born parents is more likely to.

Promotion of cultural competence refers to opportunities to learn about other cultures and develop cross-cultural skills, which includes comfort with outgroup members, knowledge about outgroups, and an ability to interact positively with a wide range of people (e.g., Ponterotto, 2010). Aspects of this dimension are sometimes referred to as multiculturalism (Brown & Chu, 2012), support for cultural pluralism (Brand et al., 2003), pluralism, or sometimes egalitarianism (Hughes et al., 2006). As with cultural socialization, what is considered "other" is dependent on the individual and context.

Critical consciousness socialization refers to messages that encourage awareness, reflection, agency, and action about racial injustice. This dimension draws on preparation for bias (Hughes et al., 2006), and is extended to include promotion of critical consciousness in general. For example, students can be exposed to information about institutional oppression in addition to individual discrimination. Furthermore, students can be taught about successful social movements, helped to think about their roles within oppressive systems, and encouraged to develop their own approaches to addressing prejudice and oppression in their communities.

Mainstream socialization includes messages about mainstream US values and norms. This dimension draws on home-school dissonance and cultural mismatch frameworks (Arunkumar et al., 1999; Tyler et al., 2008) that highlight how the cultural values of students of color may be mismatched with school values of individualism and competition. For example, students might be encouraged to work in silence by themselves instead of collaborating with peers. Schools might also emphasize US centric holidays like President's Day over other types of celebrations. Although mainstream values are often observable in schools (e.g., Perry, 2001), it is not clear to what extent adolescents are explicitly aware of mainstream socialization messages; instead, youth may perceive the messages as not related to race or culture (Byrd & Hope, 2020).

Other scholars have conceptualized mainstream socialization in ways that vary from our model. In these other frameworks, the messages focus on the relative importance of mainstream values compared to minority values and the need of African Americans to fit in with mainstream institutions (e.g., Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Davis & Stevenson, 2006; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). Our conceptualization of mainstream socialization is focused on the content of mainstream values (i.e., individualism, competition) rather than an evaluation of them.

Finally, colorblind socialization is messages encouraging students to ignore the role of race in their lives and society. We use the term *color-evasive* within the School ERS Transmission Model to more accurately "capture ways that the ideology of refusing to acknowledge race functions in society" (Annamma et al., 2016). We distinguish between mainstream socialization messages that may be implicitly color-evasive (e.g., promoting the United States as a meritocracy) from explicit color-evasive messages such as telling youth that paying attention to race is racist or causes unnecessary tension (Neville et al., 2001). Both types of messages may be motivated by the transmitter's color-evasive attitudes. Color-evasive attitudes, particularly the more recently common "colorblind egalitarianism," is a perspective which claims that all people are equal or racial equality has been achieved while dismissing evidence of institutional and systemic racism (Gallagher, 2015).

The content of messages can be variable depending on the identities, beliefs, and values of the transmitters and receivers, as well as the relationship between the transmitter(s) and receiver. For example, a "multicultural festival" can provide cultural socialization to some youth, promotion of cultural competence to others, and even color-evasive socialization to students with a critical worldview or distinct racial ideology. The festival can socialize through the layout of the activities,

the presentation of food and information, and the ways participants talk about the event. Thus, the meaning of any particular practice must be contextualized.

Apart of contextualizing the School ERS Transmission Model requires consideration to individual differences, developmental considerations, and contextual factors (Coll et al., 1996). Individual differences, such as gender and cognitive abilities, can influence the way youth receive and interpret racial discrimination and concepts of race (e.g., Brown et al., 2010; Seaton, 2010) within the school context. Along these lines, scholars have noted that youth's perceptions and response to racial discrimination will vary based on development (Brown & Bigler, 2005). Thus, transmitters of ERS may utilize different methods and content based on youth's developmental abilities to understand ERS concepts. Further, as youth get older (e.g., high school) they have increased autonomy, such as the ability to choose classes, which may allow them to self-select into classroom settings with teachers that are more aligned with their beliefs or identity; thus allowing students the ability to impact transmitters. Additionally, it is important to consider how contextual factors (e.g., ethnic-racial composition, gender composition, representation at different staff) within and outside of the school context can influence the transmission and effects of school ERS. For example, school and neighborhood ethnic-racial composition can have an influence on youth's perceptions of school racial climate and school race-related experiences (Benner & Graham, 2013), all of which have implications for the transmission of school ERS. We acknowledge that other factors such as intersecting forms of oppression and the salience of one's ethnic-racial identity can influence the School ERS Transmission Model.

Methods

Scholars suggest that the content of ERS messages can be transmitted in several ways (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Paasch-Anderson et al., 2019; Watford et al., in press; Yasui, 2015). Two common dimensions discussed within the parental literature that can be applied within schools include *expression*, the way in which the messages are transmitted, and *intent*, the goal or purpose of the message (e.g., Lesane-Brown, 2006; Yasui, 2015). Other important aspects of transmission include *frequency and integration*. Accounting for each helps to provide a more nuanced understanding of the school ERS process.

Expression (also called modes of transmission) can further be divided into verbal and non-verbal (Paasch-Anderson et al., 2019). Verbal messages are the most commonly examined form of ERS and include conversations regarding any ERS content. For example, telling a Black child "Black is beautiful" (i.e., cultural socialization) or "Race does not determine your success in life" (i.e., color-evasive socialization) are examples of verbal messages that could be conveyed directly to or overheard by youth. The content of verbal messages is generally more explicit and clear compared to non-verbal messages, although context can also modify the meaning of the message. Non-verbal ERS messages are studied less often compared to verbal messages but could include visual items such as a bulletin boards showing information about a foreign country (i.e., promotion of cultural socialization) or displaying an American flag (i.e., mainstream socialization).

Along with expression, the intent of the transmitter is another consideration for ERS messages. Some scholars consider the messages to be either deliberate (i.e., active messaging with a purpose) or unintended (i.e., passive messaging with an unintended purpose) (e.g., Lesane-Brown, 2006), while others conceptualize the messages as proactive (i.e., in anticipation of racial stressors) or reactive (i.e., in response to racial stressors) (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1999). For the purpose of this article, we will merge these two perspectives to consider three dimensions of intent:

passive, proactive, and reactive. Passive messages are unintentional but still convey ERS content. For example, if a Latinx student overhears another Latinx student being racially bullied, they understand something about how Latinx students are regarded at that school. If the school chooses not to address racial bullying that can also convey passive ERS messages. In comparison, proactive messages are intentional and may be given, for example, to promote ethnic-racial pride or in preparation for encounters with racial stressors. In other words, proactive messages are seen as important and useful for students' development or preparation. Reactive messages are also intentional, but are in response to an event, such as racial discrimination. For example, a school principal may talk with students about how to deal with a racially targeted incident that occurred within the community. Within the category of reactive messages, we might also consider the catalyst for the messaging. For example, whether the student was seeking information or the transmitter saw a need. Youth may be more likely to positively evaluate and integrate socialization messages that respond to a stated or unstated interest.

Another important factor for how ERS messages are transmitted is how frequently youth hear each message. The majority of ERS measures include some frequency component (Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006) because we would expect that messages heard more often are more impactful and likely to be internalized. For example, adolescents who learn about Latinx figures from history every month might have a better appreciation for Latinx culture than those who only learn about Latinx people during Hispanic Heritage Month.

In addition to frequency, depth and integration is another dimension to consider. An adolescent who learns about Dolores Huerta every year during Hispanic Heritage Month or Martin Luther King Jr. every year during Black History Month would have a narrower appreciation of Latinx and Black accomplishments than if they learned about more figures.

Multicultural education scholars have criticized teaching that focuses on a few notable heroes (e.g., Banks & Banks, 2019). Furthermore, messages that are more fully integrated into the curriculum and/or school life are more influential than socialization that occurs only on "special days" or in response to an incident. For example, messages about American values of freedom and democracy tend to be integrated into history and civics courses (i.e., mainstream socialization) whereas discussion of racism might be limited to a history lesson about the Civil War or Civil Rights Movements. Another aspect of integration is when multiple transmitters give consistent messages (e.g., Wang & Benner, 2016; Wang et al., 2015). For example, in a study of African American and Latinx eighth grade students, family cultural socialization was most beneficial for youth's socioemotional and academic outcomes when peer cultural socialization messages were similarly high (Wang & Benner, 2016). In line with this study, the congruence between the ERS messages that youth receive at home and school may have important implications for adjustment as well as interpretation and internalization of these messages.

There might be occasions where a socialization message is powerful even when it is infrequent or not well integrated. For example, a student might wear a Confederate flag shirt to school, leading other students to protest and the principal to hold an assembly. What the principal says at that assembly could drastically affect how the students perceive the school and their place in it. In sum, there are various factors related to how socialization messages are transmitted. There might be other indicators of quality of a message that are also important. As with content, the influence of particular method dimensions will depend on the individual and the context. For a student with an awareness of racism at school, the assembly about the Confederate flag could be a signature moment, but a student who reflects little on the nature of identity or racism may barely remember the event. It is important to note that expression and intent are multidimensional and interconnected. For example, complementary or conflicting ERS messages can be sent through multiple

methods of expression simultaneously. For example, a teacher may say “All lives matter” while holding up a raised fist, which is a common non-verbal expression of support and strength for Black culture. The teacher may have the intention to promote a form of cultural competence or socialization, but the message may be perceived differently by students (e.g., color-evasive socialization). As another example, if a student teases a peer about “acting White” and the teacher does not intervene, the teacher’s behavior could send several messages. A student might understand that the teacher finds Whiteness and associated behaviors desirable (i.e., mainstream socialization) or that race talk should be explicitly ignored (i.e., color-evasive socialization).

Outcomes of school ERS transmission

In line with the parental literature documenting the effects of ERS from the home context, ERS messages received in the school context can influence youth’s outcomes. For example, ERS studies considering aspects and outcomes within or related to the school context indicate that specific dimensions of parental ERS are linked to psychological (e.g., Hughes et al., 2009), academic (e.g., Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Neblett et al., 2006), and socioemotional outcomes (e.g., Dunbar et al., 2017; Tran & Lee, 2010). Parental ERS can also protect against the deleterious effect of racial discrimination on youth’s psychological health (e.g., Saleem & Lambert, 2015) and academic achievement (e.g., Banerjee et al., 2018). For example, Wang and Huguley (2012) found that parental cultural socialization mitigated the effect of teacher racial discrimination on the educational aspirations and GPA of African American adolescents. We propose that school ERS is an important contributor to youth’s adjustment and well-being, such that school ERS can influence whether and how racial stressors impact youth academically, psychologically, socially, and shape their ethnic-racial attitudes.

School ERS and academic outcomes

Evidence of the link between school ERS and academics is limited primarily to multiculturalist messages, most similar to promotion of cultural competence in the current framework. For example, both Tan (1999) and Chang and Le (2010) found that perceived multiculturalism was linked to school achievement for Latinx youth; Tan also found a link with interest in school. In German secondary students, Schachner et al. (2019) found that multiculturalism predicted higher school belonging and through belonging better academic self-concept and achievement. Additionally, other work has shown a negative link between stereotyping and academic outcomes in Black (Dotterer et al., 2009; Golden et al., 2018) and Latinx (Rivas-Drake, 2011) high school students.

Byrd (2015, 2017) has conducted several studies linking other dimensions of school ERS with academic outcomes. For example, in a sample of predominantly Black middle and high school students, Byrd (2015) showed direct links between color-evasive socialization and school belonging and academic competence, and indirect links with intrinsic motivation through belonging and competence, such that perceptions of more color-evasive socialization were associated with worse outcomes. Furthermore, support for cultural competence was positively related to belonging and intrinsic motivation. Stereotyping also showed negative links with belonging and intrinsic motivation. In a sample of African American, Latinx, Asian American, and White secondary students, bivariate correlations linked school ERS with academic outcomes such as interest, belonging, utility value, importance, and academic self-concept (Byrd, 2017). In another study, cultural

socialization was associated with increased academic engagement and belonging for African American and Latinx adolescents (Saleem et al., in press).

School ERS and psychosocial outcomes

To date, there are limited studies focused specifically on school ERS and psychological symptoms, social interactions, and positive adjustment (e.g., self-esteem, life satisfaction). There is preliminary evidence that school ERS is associated with college students' happiness and stress (Byrd, 2019). In general, positive relationships at school are linked with better psychological health and well-being (Loukas & Robinson, 2004; Way et al., 2007; Way & Robinson, 2003), so we might expect that positive school ERS might also promote such outcomes through students' relationships with teachers and peers who value and support their cultural backgrounds. Additionally, there is also evidence that racialized experiences (e.g., racial climate, racial discrimination) within the school context are associated psychological consequences, such as trauma related symptoms (e.g., Pieterse et al., 2010), and school ERS could influence these associations. However, more research is needed that focuses specifically on school ERS and psychological outcomes.

School ERS and ethnic-racial attitudes

There is a well established literature liking ERS to ethnic-racial identity development (e.g., Bennett, 2006; Hughes, et al., 2009; Huguley et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2009), and this process can extend to the school context. School ERS is likely to influence youth's ethnic-racial identity and their intercultural competency, given that it is a context where youth relate to and interact with peers as they are forming their sense of identity (e.g., Pellebon, 2000). ERS content and dialogs within the school context are linked with racial identity development (i.e., identification with and attachment to one's ethnic-racial group) (e.g., Aldana et al., 2012; Tatum, 2004), particularly in the context of school-based interventions (e.g., Godina, 2003; Luna et al., 2015; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2018). ERS is integrated into different aspects of the school climate (e.g., pedagogical practices, interpersonal interactions), which in turn can influence how youth perceive and identify with their race (Sheets, 1999).

Another indicator of racial attitudes is intercultural interaction and competence, learning about and interacting respectively across ethnically, racially, and diverse groups. In a study focused on immigrant adolescents in Germany, findings revealed that several aspects of intercultural interactions including, contact, cooperation, and engagement were associated with increased intercultural competence (i.e., "awareness and knowledge of different world views as well as the behavioral flexibility to deal with these") (Schwarzenthal et al., 2019). Emphasizing a common humanity was also associated with increased intercultural competence within the sample. Similarly, positive inter-racial interactions are associated with greater belonging in school, whereas color-evasive messages are associated with lower competence (e.g., Byrd, 2015). Positive cross-group contact can reduce prejudice and foster healthy racial attitudes among youth across ethnic-racial groups (Pica-Smith & Poynton, 2014). Learning about other groups, building intercultural competence, and developing a positive ethnic-racial identity are developmental skills that can be fostered by healthy school ERS.

Implications for and applications to social issues

While school ERS can help foster a healthy school climate and promote positive outcomes across domains for youth of color, it is important to acknowledge that certain messages (e.g., color-evasive, mainstream) and/or a negative school racial climate can have consequences for youth. Unaddressed encounters with racial stress and bias can perpetuate racial disparities in the school context (e.g., Kuchirko & Nayfeld, in press). For example, a lack of awareness from teachers and school staff regarding racial discrimination, and race more generally, can lead to erroneous labeling, bias academic tracking, and isolation for students (Jernigan & Daniel, 2011). Similarly, symptoms from racially stressful or traumatizing encounters within or outside of the school context can be misinterpreted or misdiagnosed as other mental health disorders (e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or behavioral problems (oppositional defiant disorder) (Saleem et al., 2021). This is concerning given that youth of color, particularly African American and Latinx students, are more likely to be labeled as having emotional, behavioral, or learning problem in school compared to White students (e.g., De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Mandell et al., 2008; Spencer & Oatts, 1999). Furthermore, youth report experiencing racial discrimination from school staff and peers within the school context at alarming rates, and these experiences are linked to negative mental health outcomes (e.g., Wong, et al., 2003) that can foster a racially hostile, bias, and invisible environment for youth of color at school. Such inequitable practices shape the school racial climate, youth's perceptions of safety, feelings of acceptance (Voight et al., 2015), and may perpetuate existing racial disparities in mental health, behavioral outcomes, and achievement across racial groups (e.g., De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Gudiño et al., 2009; Mandell et al., 2008; Mattison & Aber, 2007; Spencer & Oatts, 1999; Watkins & Aber, 2009). In fact, studies show that a negative school racial climate is linked with youth's perceptions that schools are unfair, and these differences vary across racial groups (Mattison & Aber, 2007). However, if schools acknowledge and put practices in place that address racial bias and promote a healthy racial climate, this can serve as a point of support or intervention (e.g., Anderson et al., 2019; Grapin et al., 2019; Saleem et al., 2021). For example, given that teachers have frequent interactions with students, if unequipped, they could provide healthy ERS to help combat racial discrimination, which may in turn reduce race-based disparities for youth. Given empirical findings thus far, school ERS may play an important role in reducing racial bias, addressing racial stressors, and promoting healthy outcomes for youth in schools.

Future directions

As scholars have an increased understanding of school ERS, future empirical research is needed to unpack this new this conceptual model. An initial first step is to examine similarities and differences in the content, frequency, and method of school ERS across transmitters. Future studies should also empirically examine how these messages are linked with outcomes across multiple domains of functioning for youth (e.g., academic, psychological, ethnic-racial attitudes). Given that this line of research is still in formative stages, it would be beneficial to refine measurement across transmitters, content, and methods of school ERS. For example, regarding methods we propose that the intentionality of ERS messages can be understood as passive (i.e., unintentional), proactive (i.e., intentional in the absence of a racialized encounter), and reactive (i.e., intentional and in response to a racialized encounter), and ERS messages can be expressed verbally and nonverbally. It is possible that the frequency and impact of school ERS messages on youth's outcomes

varies based on intent and/or expression of the messages. Further, in addition to students' individual perceptions of school ERS, understanding ERS across specific school-based settings (e.g., classroom, school, district) could have implications for school policies, school practices, and student outcomes. Thus, these are empirical questions worth examining that may help to clarify the process of ERS in schools.

Given that ERS is a dynamic process and it occurs across contexts, it is necessary to examine the role of other influential school factors on the school ERS process, one is school ethnic-racial composition. Studies show that school racial composition has implications for students' interpersonal interactions (e.g., Kurlaender & Yun, 2007; Quillian & Campbell, 2003) and outcomes (e.g., Hanushek et al., 2009; Hopson et al., 2014). In heterogeneous schools, scholars must understand how the transmission and effects of school ERS may differ for youth of different ethnic-racial groups within the same school context, and if this varies based on the race of the transmitters of the ERS. Additionally, it is important to understand how these messages align with other ERS messages across contexts, which may have a different racial composition than the youth's school context. For example, a Black student who attends a multiracial school may develop cross-cultural skills (i.e., promotion of cultural competence) and learn about mainstream US values (i.e., mainstream socialization). However, the student may live within a predominantly Black neighborhood and family that primarily conveys messages warning about encounters with racial discrimination (i.e., preparation for bias, critical consciousness) and providing messages about the importance and value of one's own culture (i.e., cultural socialization). Hughes et al. (2016) called for scholars to shift their "gaze from studying these ethnic-racial dynamics as individual level processes to studying the features of the [specific] setting[s] that produce them" because to foster positive development there have to be "changes at the level of the settings in which [youth] participate" (p.31). Understanding and promoting positive school ERS can help to increase healthy school racial climates. As such, scholars must unpack process and effects, along with other important aspects that shape the school racial climate and school ERS. This new model seeks to address our understanding of ERS, and encourage positive change, in the salient context of schools while acknowledging the influence of other important ecologies for socialization.

There is also a need for this work to be applied within the school context to address the aforementioned social issues and utilize ERS. The application can come in many forms. For example, scholars have created trainings and curriculum focused on addressing racial bias and utilizing culturally responsive practices (e.g., Bigler, 1999; Engberg, 2004). There are also school focused programs and trainings designed to reduce prejudice and promote racial literacy (e.g., Aboud et al., 2012; Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Grapin et al., 2019; Stevenson, 2014). Other scholars have called for revamping teacher-training programs to ensure that prior to teachers entering the classroom context, they have received training on topics related to racial bias in schools and culturally responsive teaching practices (Gay & Howard, 2000; Howard, 2020; Howard & del Rosario, 2000). Several studies show that teachers report receiving little to no training or feel unequip to address racial topics within the classroom (Young, 2003). In fact, recent research suggests that many schools and teachers choose to take a color-evasive approach to race relations (Schofield, 2006; Hazelbaker & Mistry, in press). Additionally, teachers report several barriers to having conversations about race, including discomfort, burnout, and uncertainty about how parents will perceive their messages about race. In a study by Delale-O'Connor and Graham (2019), teachers reported that their perceptions of caregiver support was influential to their conversations about race within the classroom. Therefore, if schools create a space to help facilitate conversations both among staff and between caregivers and teachers, this may increase teachers' understanding of parental concerns and messaging, while increasing teachers' comfort in integrating healthy ERS

in school. Furthermore, we propose that support, advocacy, and training on this topic should come on multiple levels (e.g., personal, school, formal education, community) in order to address racial bias and stressors in schools, through utilizing culturally responsive strategies such as ERS.

Finally, our model has been discussed in relation to youth of color, but the constructs may also apply to White youth. Existing research shows similar relations between school ERS and outcomes for White youth (Byrd, 2017; 2019), but greater research is needed on the ways that White youth experience ERS and its impact. For example, White youth tend to be less identified with their ethnic-racial identity (Syed & Juang, 2014), so might pay less attention to ERS messages, making school ERS have a weaker relation to identity beliefs. However, there is evidence that parental ERS matters for intergroup attitudes (Pahlke et al., 2020), so school ERS may also be important.

CONCLUSION

There is currently a limited understanding of the conceptualization, process, and investigation of ERS within the school context. This new conceptual model provides a framework for unpacking ERS in schools with the goal to stimulate future basic and applied research on the topic. This framework also sheds light on how school racial climate and ERS can contribute to the perpetuation or eradication racial disparities in mental health, academic, and disciplinary practices. We propose several future directions for research and applied practice that integrate ERS to increase healthy school racial climates in K-12 education and may contribute to eradicating the effects for racial stressors, bias, and discrimination within the school context.

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