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The Effects of Racial Socialization on the Racial and Ethnic Identity Development of Latinas

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Extant research focusing primarily on non-Latina/o Blacks has shown that the racial socialization process has 2 dimensions—messages about ethnic pride, history, and heritage (cultural socialization), and messages about discrimination and racial bias (preparation for bias). Both dimensions are associated with academic achievement, high self-esteem, and positive racial and ethnic identities, all of which can contribute to mental well-being and resiliency. Yet, little attention has been given to the ways in which the racial socialization process may affect the racial and ethnic identity development of Latina/os. Considering that Latina/os are of varying phenotypes, it is important to understand the racial socialization process and the effects on the racial and ethnic identity development of Latina/os. Through the voices of 9 Latinas, this article explores the experiences of racial socialization, specifically cultural socialization and preparation for bias, and the multifaceted effects on racial and ethnic identity construction. Based on the findings, it appears that Latinas' racial socialization process is limited in regard to preparation for bias, which can be detrimental for dark-skinned Latinas who are likely to experience racial and ethnic discrimination. Research implications are discussed.

Keywords: racial socialization, Latinas, identity, skin color

The process of racial socialization—the pathways through which parents transmit information, values, and perspectives about ethnicity and race to their children—is associated with academic achievement, high self-esteem, and positive ethnic and racial identities (French & Chavez, 2010; Hughes, 2003; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Umaña-Taylor, Vargas-Chanes, Garcia, & Gonzales-Backen, 2008). The racial socialization process has two dimensions—messages about ethnic pride, history, and heritage (cultural socialization), and messages about discrimination and racial bias (preparation for bias) (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hughes, 2003; Marshall, 1995; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Cultural socialization consists of family members transmitting messages about ethnic pride and history through

language, food, music, and traditions, emphasizing that their culture is valuable and important (Hughes, 2003). In these instances, individuals may grow up with a strong sense of ethnicity, as certain aspects of their culture have been deliberately shared and passed on through generations. Preparation for bias consists of socializing children regarding their parents' own experiences of racism and discrimination in society (Hughes, 2003). While research confirms that the racial socialization process, both cultural socialization and preparation for bias, contributes to healthy outcomes, most of the literature focuses on non-Latina/o Blacks (Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, 2009; Murry, Berkel, Brody, Miller, & Chen, 2009; Rodriguez, Umaña-Taylor, Smith, & Johnson, 2009). Unfortunately, little is known about the role skin color plays in the racial socialization process and identity development among Latina/os.

While the existing literature supports the association between the racial socialization process and positive identity development of Latina/os (Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, & Sands, 2006; Rivas-Drake, 2011), most of these studies have overlooked the racial diver-

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sity among this ethnic group. For example, Latina/o skin color ranges from fair to dark, the direct results of the African, Spaniard, and indigenous ancestry of Latino/as, particularly among Caribbean Latina/os (Rodriguez, 2001). In addition to racial differences, Latina/os' conceptualization of race differs from the use of a binary racial category in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2004). Latin American countries such as the Dominican Republic utilize racial categories that consists of *indio/a*, *trigueño/a/a* and *moreno/a*, which accounts for various phenotypic categories such as skin color, facial features, and hair texture (Duany, 2012; Rodriguez, 2001; Roman & Flores, 2010; Torres-Saillant & Hernandez, 1999).

Because of Latina/os' conceptualization of race, they are less likely to identify racially as Black and more likely to refer to White, intermediate brown racial categories, or national identity (Hitlin, Brown & Elder, 2006; Duany, 2012; Rodriguez, 2001). Hitlin et al. (2006) found that 51% of Latina/os are more likely to choose "other" when asked to identify their race or choose either Hispanic/Latina/o, which demonstrates that Latina/os use race and ethnicity interchangeably, affecting how Latina/os identify (Duany, 2012; Hitlin et al., 2006). One survey found that 36% of Latina/os identified as White and 3% as Black (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011), whereas 51% of participants reported using national terms or their family origin to identify themselves (i.e., Dominican, Puerto Rican). Such diverse constructions or definitions of race may influence Latina/os' perceptions of race and the messages families communicate during the racial socialization process, which may affect racial/ethnic identity development. Therefore, this article explores the experiences of the racial socialization process among multiracial Latinas and its effect on their racial and ethnic identity development.

Theoretical Framework

We use a social constructionist framework to understand the influence of the racial socialization process on the racial/ethnic identity development of Latina/os. This framework acknowledges diverse, subjective, and contextual definitions of identification and rejects any core features or proprieties that individuals from similar cultural and racial backgrounds may be

expected to possess within society (Cerulo, 1997). Through this lens, the diversity among racial and cultural groups that are otherwise treated as homogenous is recognized, and universality among individuals and groups is not assumed (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Additionally, based on the social constructionist perspective, racial and ethnic identities are socially constructed and influenced by the culturally available discourses (Burr, 2003). Available discourses among Latina/os that may inform racial and ethnic identity can possibly be both limiting and loaded with messages of a preference for whiteness, given the anti-Black sentiment and focus on ethnicity among Latina/os (Hunter, 2002). More specifically, Latina/os have been documented as having negative views of Blackness, including denigration of African hair and skin color, and the subsequent efforts to look more European. Additionally, light-skinned Latina/os experience White privilege in the forms of economic, educational, and general prestige (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Duany, 2012; Hunter, 2002). Therefore, Latina/os may immigrate with an adherence to a racial hierarchy that elevates whiteness and assigns power and privilege to those who are closer to looking white, which functions to stigmatize and marginalize individuals who are phenotypically closer to Black (Quiros & Araujo Dawson, 2013; Roman & Flores, 2010). As a result, there are social implications and psychological meanings attached to the way that Latina/os think about their racial group membership and construct their personal racial identification (Carter, 2007). For example, Latinas with dark skin may be less likely to assume a Black identity because they understand the way that Black people are stigmatized in the United States (Landale & Oropesa, 2002).

Racial and Ethnic Identity

Research on the racial socialization process has been linked to positive racial/ethnic identity (e.g., see Hughes et al., 2006 for a review). The traditional theories from developmental and counseling psychology on racial identity (such as William Cross' nigrescence models) has defined racial identity as the part of a person's self-concept that is related to membership within a racial group and the meaning they attach to being categorized in such a group

(Sellers & Shelton, 2003). The conception and construction of race on the macro level has implications for racial identification on the micro level (Helms, 1990; Omi & Winant, 1994). This means that there are social implications and psychological meanings attached to the way that Latina/os think about their racial group membership and construct their personal racial identification (Carter, 2007). This becomes problematic for Latina/os who have a history of anti-Black sentiment, and as a result may shy away from identifying as Black, and also because phenotypically Latina/os straddle the binary racial category in the United States (Hunter, 2002; Bonilla-Silva, 2004). For example, Latina/os who identify racially as Black may also have to confront the stereotypes, burdens, and systematic subordination of being a member of this category (Omi & Winant, 1994). Similarly, Latina/os who identify racially as White may experience the privileges and rights associated with whiteness in the United States. That is, White being perceived as more desirable and perhaps more "Latina." Research confirms that the process of identity formation differs for Whites and Blacks (Miller & Donner, 2000), yet little is known about how skin color impacts the racial/ethnic identity development of dark-skinned Latina/os.

Ethnic identity is a component of the more general definition of identity formation as described by Erikson (1968), but definitions of ethnicity vary throughout the literature (Phinney, 1990). Researchers cite psychologist Jean Phinney's conceptualization of ethnic identity as the most widely used definition (Trimble & Dickson, 2005). Phinney (1990) defines ethnic identity as a dynamic and multidimensional construct that refers to one's sense of self as a member of an ethnic group. She includes self-identification, subjective feelings of ethnic belonging, and positive and negative feelings toward one's ethnic grouping in this definition (Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Transmitted over generations by family, ethnicity can influence how a person acts, behaves, and what he or she believes (Phinney, 1990).

The psychological literature often merges race and ethnicity into a single category. For example, Phinney (1996) describes ethnicity as "broad groupings of Americans on the basis of both race and culture of origin" (p. 919). This conceptualization of race and ethnicity fits with

Latina/os construction of race and ethnicity given that Latina/os tend to use race and ethnicity interchangeably (Duany, 2012; Hitlin et al., 2006). However, race and ethnicity are fundamentally distinct because race varies among Latina/os, as evidenced by the varying ways Latina/os racially identify. Therefore the differences in race within an ethnic group can affect group identification and membership resulting in individuals identifying with an ethnic group although they may not be accepted or recognized as a member because of their perceived race (Wallace, 2001), as may be the case for dark-skinned Latina/os.

Literature Review

The existing studies on the racial socialization process among Latina/os highlight the various messages that Latino/a parents transmit to their children and how these messages in turn contribute to the development of a racial/ethnic identity among Latina/o children and adolescents (Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Quintana & Vera, 1999; Rivas-Drake, 2011; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). One study found that Latina/os are more likely to engage in cultural socialization and communicate positive attributes of their heritage rather than preparation for racial bias (Hughes et al., 2006). Hordge-Freeman (2013) did an ethnographic study with 15 Afro-Brazilian families and found that the racial socialization process included negative messages regarding skin color and racial features. Although explicit messages regarding discrimination are not included in the racial socialization process, Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) found that messages are communicated to children regarding appearance and racial features.

A study by Rivas-Drake (2011) supported the idea that Latina/o parents engage in cultural and ethnic socialization and that it has a positive effect on components of identity development (ethnic centrality beliefs) among Latina/o college students. The results of another study among 187 Latina/o adolescents also supported the relationship between ethnic socialization and affirmation, which refers to having positive feelings about one's group (Supple et al., 2006). Additional studies found a relationship between parental cultural socialization and the development of ethnic identity among Latina/o children

(Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). Quintana and Vera (1999) conducted a study with Latina/o second and sixth graders, and the results indicate that an association between parent ethnic socialization influenced children's understanding of prejudice. Although most of the research on racial socialization and ethnic/racial identity development is mostly positive, less attention has been given to skin color differences and its effect on the racial socialization and racial/ethnic identity development of Latina/os.

The few studies linking skin color to the racial socialization process and racial/ethnic identity development support the importance of considering skin color. Gonzales-Backen and Umaña-Taylor (2011) found that skin color and physical appearance affected ethnic identity development among Latina/o adolescents. Another study found that darker-skinned Mexicans had stronger Mexican identities than their lighter-skinned counterparts (Ono, 2002). Results from a qualitative study indicated that skin color differences in the perceptions of college students resulted in lighter-skinned Latina/os demonstrating less awareness of racism than darker-skinned Latina/os (Morrison, 2010). Lastly, skin color can influence the racial and ethnic identification of Latina/os, with darker-skinned Latina/os being more likely to identify as black and reporting greater experiences of discrimination than lighter-skinned Latina/os (Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008).

Method

Design

The unit of analysis for the larger study was women who identify as women of color and as having more than one race or ethnicity. Qualitative research methodology in the tradition of grounded theory, as well as intensive interviews, were used to explore the construction of racial and ethnic identity among women of color of mixed heritage. Additionally, self-definitions of racial and ethnic identity and different experiences that affected women's personal construction of a mixed racial and ethnic identity within their family, community, and larger society were explored. The present study

focused only on the racial socialization experiences within participants' families.

Recruitment Strategy

The data consists of in-depth interviews with 31 self-identified women of color between the ages of 30 and 40 years old in the New York City area. Participants had at least a bachelor's degree, were U.S.-born, and were residing in the New York metropolitan area. Initial recruitment began by posting flyers in common areas in New York City universities, including graduate schools, because women enrolled in higher education in urban universities were likely to meet the study criteria. In addition, the recruitment flyer was sent to the office of the New York City chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and the Puerto Rican Family Institute, and posted on the Women of Color Policy Network website. Contact was also made with the facilitators of the RACE project at the Liberty Science Center in Newark, New Jersey. The initial recruitment strategy expanded when women who had been interviewed generated additional informants by sending out an electronic copy of the flyer to their network of friends and family. Women were invited to participate if they were interested in the study and if they believed they met the criteria indicated on the flyer: self-identified women of color from a mixed ethnic background, between the ages of 30 and 40, with a bachelor's degree, who were born in the United States. Women of color were defined as women who have at least one parent from African, Caribbean, Asian, Latin American, South American, or Native American heritage. Participants answered questions based on their skin color and personal and family of origin experiences in the United States.

Questions related to racial socialization were not answered in one specific question but peppered throughout the interviews. The women were asked about how they define their racial and ethnic identity, the ways they first became aware of their racial and ethnic identification, and racial and ethnic dissimilarity among family members. The women were prompted to share stories of their past and how messages and lessons regarding race and ethnicity were transmitted within the family.

Analytic Plan

In the tradition of grounded theory methods, data collection and data analysis occurred concurrently (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This dialogical relationship aided in the explication of new concepts and categories. In line with grounded theory, themes and concepts were derived inductively from the women's stories. Themes that captured the essence of racial and ethnic identity construction and racial socialization inductively emerged from the data, and analytic concepts, categories, and subcategories were created from open and axial coding. These categories were constructed by constantly comparing the emerging categories. Furthermore, consistent with grounded theory methods, the literature review continued throughout data collection and analysis.

This study involved two levels of analysis. First, the women were analyzed as a group to explore the construction of identity within their familial context. The second level of analysis involved organizing the women in three separate groups based on ancestry to compare the similarities and differences of being racially and ethnically mixed women of color within the United States.

The trustworthiness of this study, as discussed below, was scrutinized throughout the analytic process, beginning with data collection and ending with dissemination of the findings. A single biracial (Jewish and Puerto Rican) researcher was involved with the coding and identification of themes. Reflexivity, that is, thoughtful and continual self-reflection throughout the research process (Patton, 2002), assisted in the analysis, collection of the data, and was one strategy this researcher used to achieve trustworthiness. Reflexivity minimized the threat of researcher bias (Drisko, 1997). More specifically, the researcher kept a journal during the interviews and the analysis where she recorded her reactions to the material presented by the participants. Reflexivity allowed for a more complex and robust analysis and from this came a deeper level of self-knowledge and self-awareness as it related to the research process, the role of the researcher and most important, helped in achieving credibility (Lietz & Zayas, 2010; Patton, 2002). In addition, the researcher included a statement of self-disclosure at the end of the study. It was in this statement that the

researcher acknowledged her intimate connection to the research topic and her potential bias and influence on the findings.

The researcher's perspective and prior assumptions regarding race and ethnicity helped shape the conceptual framework of the inquiry and gave the researcher ideas on what kinds of questions to ask, and sensitizing concepts gave the researcher a loose framework to begin exploring and questioning the topic at hand (Charmaz, 2006). Such concepts were "points of departure" that assisted in the formation and the development of interview questions, as well as served as a guide in the analysis of data. Taking notes during the interview and constant memo-writing allowed the researcher to return to key points and follow up on certain statements. Memos assisted in capturing and developing the rich diversity of racial and ethnic identity and also contributed to minimizing researcher bias.

The interview guide was refined and questions were trimmed as the interviews progressed in order to gather specific data for thematic and theoretical development. The intensive interview approach used to gather data offered the flexibility to probe when appropriate and to pose new questions that were not originally anticipated in the original design of the instrument. The interviews were filled with deep accounts of the participants' constructions of racial and ethnic identity and of racial socialization in their families of origin. The researcher kept a running list of questions the participants were receptive to and tried to maintain a balance between taking notes and just listening. At the end of the interview women often said that they felt understood. As stated by one woman in the study, "Our discussion felt cathartic, discussing issues that I have harbored deep inside that will always be a part of me. I am so used to internalizing these issues that our discussion made me rethink how important it is to let my story out." At the end of the interview the women were given the opportunity for follow-up via e-mails or phone calls. Many women wrote e-mails days, weeks, or months later with additional thoughts and stories that they had forgotten to share or that were prompted by the interview. Finally, the researcher participated in peer debriefing with colleagues experienced in qualitative research, who were also women of color from mixed racial and ethnic back-

grounds. Reflexivity, memo-writing, thick description, and peer debriefing assisted in ensuring that the data collected represented the perspectives of the research participants. In other words, these strategies were employed to ensure trustworthiness (Lietz & Zayas, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Sample Description

The first grouping consisted of nine women (29%) whose parent(s) were from a Spanish-speaking country. These women had family from two different Spanish-speaking countries or from different parts of the same country. This group has been studied in the literature under the ethnic label of “Latina” or “Hispanic,” generally referring to their ethnic identity.

Short sketches abstracted from the taped and transcribed interviews are presented to introduce the women. These portraits help to contextualize the stories abstracted from the data analysis. The biographies include the women’s self-identifying labels, their parents’ racial and ethnic identity and birthplace, physical descriptors, their current residency, and their employment. Some of the women chose not to discuss their fathers’ ancestry. Fictitious names were assigned to the women.

Elanie identifies as “Black, Hispanic, and Native American.” Her mother was born in Queens, New York, and is Black and Native American, and her father was born in Puerto Rico. Elanie grew up in Queens with her mother, father, and brother. Physically, she has dark curly hair and identifies her skin color as “medium brown.” Elanie currently resides in New York City and is an artist.

April identifies by stating her parents’ nationalities and her racial makeup, which is Puerto Rican, Caribbean, and biracial. Both of her parents are from New York City. Her mother is biracial and Puerto Rican and her father is African American and Caribbean. April was born and raised by her mother in New York City. Physically, she has dark wavy hair and describes her skin color as “somewhere in the middle.” April currently resides in New York City and is a film director and photographer.

Cory identifies as either “Latina” or by stating her nationalities, which are Dominican and Ecuadorian. She was born and raised in the Washington Heights section of New York City.

Cory grew up with both of her biological parents and five siblings. Physically, she describes herself as having “Latina” features and “pretty light skin.” She currently resides in New York City and works in the public education sector. Cory is bilingual in English and Spanish.

Anna identifies as “Mexican American” but prefers to be called “Chicana.” She was born in Denver, Colorado. Her mother is from Denver and her father is from Mexico. Physically, she has straight brown hair and describes her skin color as “very light.” She currently resides in New York City and is working on her PhD in environmental toxicology. Anna is not fluent in Spanish.

Lucia identifies as “Latina and Puerto Rican.” She was born and raised in the Bronx section of New York City. Her mother was born in Yauco, Puerto Rico, and her father was born in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. Physically, she has brown wavy hair and describes her skin color as “tan and beige.” She currently resides in the Bronx and works in the corporate sector and is pursuing a master’s degree in business. Lucia is trilingual in English, Spanish, and French.

Yesenia identifies as “Dominican and Hispanic.” She was born and raised in the Washington Heights section of New York City. Both of her parents are from the Dominican Republic. She grew up with both of her biological parents, a brother, and a sister. Physically, she has straight brown hair and describes her skin color as “fair.” She is in graduate school for social work and currently resides in New York City. Yesenia is bilingual in English and Spanish.

Susan identifies by stating, “My parents are from the Dominican Republic.” She was born and raised in the Washington Heights section of New York City. Physically, she has wavy hair and describes her skin color as “tan.” She grew up with both of her biological parents, a brother, and a sister. She is a social worker and currently resides in New York City. Susan is bilingual in English and Spanish.

Maribel identifies as “Puerto Rican.” Her mother and father are from Puerto Rico. She was born and raised in the Bronx section of New York City. Physically, she has dark curly hair and describes herself as “short with brown skin.” She grew up with both of her biological parents, a brother, and a sister. She currently resides in the Bronx and is a photographer. Maribel is bilingual in English and Spanish.

Rachel identifies as “American Hispanic,” or “Cuban and Ecuadorian” depending on the situation. Her mother is from Cuba and her father is from Ecuador. She was born and raised in New York City and grew up with her biological parents and her sister and brother. Physically, she has straight brown hair and describes her skin color as “white.” She currently resides in NYC and works in the social service field. Rachel is trilingual in English, Spanish, and French.

Jo identifies as “Latina.” Her mother is Puerto Rican. She has curly hair and describes her appearance as “petite and fair skinned.” She was born in Connecticut and grew up with her mother. She currently resides in Connecticut and is returning to school to pursue a master’s in education. Jo is bilingual in English and Spanish.

Findings

This study was conducted to explore the collective experiences of a subset of Latinas, beginning as children and continuing through adulthood. Within the family setting, three categories of messages emerged: (1) appearance (2) cultural connection, and (3) racial and ethnic identity construction.

Women who participated in this study shared the subtle and overt messages they received at home about what it means to be a Latina in the United States. Consistent with social construction theories on identity, the social cultural messages that the women received from their daily interactions with mothers, fathers, aunts, godmothers, siblings, and grandparents were influenced by how their families defined race. Furthermore these experiences appear to have played a role in the development of their racial and ethnic identities. Some messages were crushing and painful, while others were uplifting and supportive. The following section presents the categories and themes derived from the data analysis of the narratives that captures the interactional process of racial and ethnic identity construction for these women.

Racial Socialization, Skin Color, and Racial Features

In response to questions related to racial socialization that were distributed throughout the interviews, the women were asked about how they define their racial and ethnic identity, the

ways they first became aware of their racial and ethnic identification, and racial and ethnic dissimilarity among family members.

Elanie, whose mother is Native American and African American and father is a native-born Puerto Rican with dark skin, painfully described the influence that her father’s struggles as a Puerto Rican man with dark skin in the United States had on her identity. Although Elanie’s mother is not of Latin origin, her narrative was included because of the heavy influence her Puerto Rican father had on her ethnic and racial identity. She explained that her father felt a strong need to assimilate to American culture in order to be “good enough.” The intensity around assimilation correlated with a feeling and experience that embracing a Puerto Rican identity, signified by his dark complexion, Afrocentric features, and Spanish language, was a detriment to his identity as an American. That is, being dark and speaking Spanish “othered” Elanie’s father from feeling a part of the majority and emphasized the message that such “Puerto Rican” markers of identity translated to “not being good enough.” From the perspective of her father, his dark complexion and native Spanish language resulted in discrimination. As for Elanie, these race-related messages and experiences of discrimination shared by her father were passed down intergenerationally, and as she stated, served as the foundation for her identification as a Latina.

In addition, Elanie embarrassingly shared her struggle as a Black Hispanic woman who was never taught to speak Spanish by her first-generation Puerto Rican father:

I don’t speak Spanish so that brings up a lot; Spanish people don’t really connect with me because I do not speak the language.

For many Latinas, Spanish is a strong cultural marker of Latin identity (Campbell & Rogalin, 2006). Speaking Spanish at home is an indicator of connection to the Latino/a community and influential in the choice of racial and ethnic identification an individual adopts. Yet, when one is repeatedly told to “speak English,” there is less of a chance that the Spanish native tongue will be passed down to future generations. The foundational messages Elanie received from her father, regarding his perceived discrimination, may have added a level of complexity to the development of her racial and

ethnic consciousness. For Elanie the racial socialization process may have influenced both her views about race and ethnicity and, ultimately, her racial and ethnic identity. The process of racial socialization for her was filled with messages regarding the stigma of Puerto Rican culture, signified by the markers of dark skin and the Spanish language. As a result of Elanie's father's strong need to assimilate and subsequent perceived experiences of racism and discrimination growing up as a Puerto Rican man with dark skin, the message of "not being good enough" and "speak English" was correlated with his Puerto Rican ethnicity, specifically, language and phenotype. Elanie's perspective of her father's experience, as it was conveyed in the home environment, highlights the social character of ethnic classifications. In her story, identifying as Puerto Rican signified struggle and "othering."

In order to illustrate how skin color affected the racial socialization process, participants were asked about their perceptions of their racial identity. More specifically, questions focused on appearance and the different colors within their family of origin. This resulted in responses regarding their skin color and racial features and how it shaped the development of their racial/ethnic identity. Anna, who identifies as Mexican American and describes her skin color as "very light," irritably shared the comments she received from strangers regarding the difference in skin color between her and her sister.

People would say that must be your fake sister, and I'm like, no that's my sister. She's short and thicker, I'm taller and very light, she is very, very dark. My father is very dark and my mother is very fair. She is of Spanish descent so she has light skin. You say the word sun and she burns.

Anna's narrative highlights the monolithic understanding of racial identity about regarding Latina/os, as well as the lack of preparation for bias and prejudice as the parents did not respond to these experiences. Susan's experience, illustrated in the next quote, also speaks to the complexity of color gradations within the Dominican community that cause confusion to outsiders. Susan's parents are both from the Dominican Republic yet her family ranges from very fair to what she describes as "tan." As Susan shared:

My family is from mainly my color to very fair skinned and light hair. Sometimes people are like "how are you family?" because we look so different. You have to almost discover it on your own that it's okay to come in different colors.

The women in this study reported the various messages they encountered regarding race. For example, based on the physical dissimilarities found among siblings, participants described hearing messages loaded with skin color advantage, with White being perceived as more desirable and perhaps more "Latina." Elanie reported that she remembers noticing how her mother's brother "received the worst treatment because he was the darkest." Women from Latin ancestry with dark skin were given nicknames such as "Negrita" and "La India" in reference to their skin tones. Lucia, who identifies as Puerto Rican, spoke about her experience growing up as the "darker" one in her family:

It's really weird because growing up you see the color divide in the family, so my younger brother thought that I was "Negrita," or people in my family would call me "La India."

Maribel showed her pain when she recited her childhood nicknames and recalled memories of her mothers' rejection of her curly hair. She vividly described missing out on playtime to endure her mothers' use of chemicals and hard-toothed combs in an effort to look Whiter:

I always felt like the brown one, my sister is light skinned and we are really close. My father is my complexion, my brother is my complexion, my sister is light skinned, they would call her "Leche" and she has a Spanish nose and I came out like this so my mom will call me "La India." I wondered why do you have to buy these chemicals and endure this and my mom would give me Tylenol after she would wash my hair and then she would start combing my hair, and my brother and sister would be playing outside and they said that they could hear my screaming.

Yesenia, a light-skinned Dominican, recalled the accolades she received as a child in contrast to her darker-skinned sister:

My sister always got "oh you are darker than the other two." I always got the "oh you are so fair." It was always, "you're Dominican, you are so fair." My building was pretty much Cuban and they were all very fair skinned, they would always tell my mom, "your daughter is so pretty, look at her, how white she is." My mom was like, "Yeah, Susan is a little darker."

The same woman who suffered through the arduous task of her mother's grooming in an effort to straighten her hair, Maribel, reflected on the ridicule she tolerated as a child because of her brown skin tone and her parents' response to such events:

In my building this older woman, my parents always said she never meant any harm by it, but one day she would say "hi" to me and she would say "*hola fea*" (hello ugly). As a kid you just swallow it because you feel *fea*, they are calling you *fea* and your parents are walking with you and they are not saying a word. Every time I would see her I would say, "oh no, I have to endure her saying this." And I was brought up to be respectful so I don't talk back, so it's all of this, you are fighting with all these things. Your parents are enduring it and you have to shut up because you have to be quiet and submissive and you are supposed to be raised this way.

Single experiences of racial discrimination based on skin color "othered" these women from feeling a part of both the dominant White society and, perhaps more crucial, the Latin community. More importantly, this narrative is a powerful illustration of how these women seemed to not be prepared to cope with racial stigma and therefore internalized messages that to be dark meant "ugly" or "dirty" or "not good enough," and essentially, not Latina. Within these narratives lurks anti-Black sentiment, messages equating Latin ethnic pride with light skin and whiteness, and, ultimately, a denial of the complexity of Latina/os.

Because they were not prepared for bias, racial identity was an elusive and confusing topic of discussion. For Yesenia, her identification as Hispanic is void of race. Yet, as she explained during the interview, she is ascribed a White racial identity because she has "fair skin."

I never identify myself by a color, I identify myself as a Hispanic. When I say I am Dominican, that's when the color issue comes up but I never say that I am White. I don't know why this is difficult. Growing up and hearing "Oh, you are so fair skinned," and comparing myself to my sister or my cousins, I guess that's why I would check off White. I think when I say Hispanic, I would put that into colored woman, just the term Hispanic even though again, my skin is fair, I don't consider myself White, it is so weird to say that. I don't consider myself White, I am just the pale one.

Similarly, Susan and Anna openly discussed their confusion about racial identity and the meaning of race in different contexts. All of the women are from different Latin backgrounds

and all face the same ambivalence over their racial identity.

That I find tricky because sometimes you will just see Black or White. I do not think I am either. I mean, I think I have influence from both so I find that confusing. There is a lot of confusion, not so much confusion but it depends who you ask because every country has their own feelings about what race and ethnicity means. It's not a clear-cut area. I have always said I am tan. Growing up I was like "why isn't there tan on the census?" I am not Black or White, why not tan? That was my word I used as a little kid and it continued as I got older (Susan).

If DNA tests were done on all Latinas to determine racial makeup the vast majority of us would be considered mixed race (Kate).

At the end of the interview, Anna thoughtfully reflected out loud on the questions that were asked.

The race question really stuck with me. It is essentially because there is no racial term to identify Latinos. If your skin is white, then they—government applications, and so forth—call you Hispanic of White heritage, if your skin is black . . . well then you're Black with Hispanic heritage. There is no, "Latino with Hispanic heritage" or something of that nature. Further, I do not identify as White or Anglo. I don't consider myself White and I know Mexican isn't a racial group. I am *brown* (Anna).

For Jo, racial awareness is most present when she is asked to complete forms.

I am aware of my race whenever I have to fill out a government form. I always check off Latino or Hispanic descent. I am not Black, it's not who I am. Yes, there is African and Taino in me but that was years ago. I don't have African American features, I am a Puerto Rican woman.

The aforementioned experiences of the participants reflect the confusion and apprehension that many Latina/os experience when discussing race and their identities. Such confusion appears to be indicative of the lack of knowledge regarding race in their upbringing.

Ethnic Socialization

Latina/os families have been found to engage in the ethnic socialization process (Hughes et al., 2006), as evidenced by Yesenia's upbringing where her Dominican heritage has featured prominently in her life. For Yesenia, cultural socialization served as a cultural connector to a "Latina" identity.

My parents made it a part of us, we went there (Dominican Republic) every year, every Christmas we were there, so the music, the food, the language, were a part of us.

Susan's narrative highlights both the fluid and contextual nature of identity. In addition, for Susan, language shapes and reflects identity.

The voices of these women illustrate racial socialization within the family and how the complex beliefs and values about what it means to be Latina can shape the development of racial and ethnic identity.

Discussion

The present study was conducted to explore the racial socialization process among Latinas of varying phenotypes and its effect on their racial/ethnic identity. The findings indicate that the racial socialization process among Latinas reflects exposure to themes of anti-Black sentiment, marginalization of racial features, elevation of whiteness, and a focus on ethnic socialization and lack of messages regarding bias preparation. The women in this study were well into adulthood at the time of the interview, yet the messages they received at home regarding race and ethnicity had a lasting effect on their racial and ethnic identity development (Hughes, 2003). More specifically, the racial socialization process included some messages of ethnic pride and cultural history that reinforced ethnic identification and may have contributed to the development of a positive ethnic identity. Influencing the women's connection to their ethnicity were the messages they received regarding the importance and value of their nationalities. For example, women recalled distinct messages that their mother, father, or grandparents passed on regarding the cultivation of ethnicity in the home. Those who felt a connection to their ethnic identity and for whom ethnic identity was relevant reported that this connection evolved internally as it was nurtured in the home environment.

In line with the social constructionist framework, views regarding race and racial features appeared to inform the messages communicated during the racial socialization process. Regarding skin color and racial features, the racial socialization process also included anti-Black sentiment and messages saturated with efforts to look White and criticism of phenotypically Af-

rican features such as dark skin and curly hair. Parents made negative references about hair texture and skin color, as well as comparisons between lighter- and darker-skinned siblings. Parents did not protect their children from outsiders who made comments about racial features and skin color. Such messages conveyed an acceptance of the degradation of dark skin, marginalization of racial features, and elevation of whiteness, contributing to a lack of preparation for bias. These experiences have been supported in the current literature, which found that Latina/os anti-Black sentiments are communicated during the racial socialization process and that Latina/o parents are less likely to engage in preparation for bias than other minority groups (Hughes et al., 2006; Quiros & Araujo Dawson, 2013; Telzer & Vazquez Garcia, 2009).

Although participants shared having racialized experiences, their responses regarding the racial socialization process were void of explicit discussions pertaining to preparation for bias, even after being stigmatized based on racial features. This is an important finding, given the pivotal role that preparation for bias has played for African Americans and other non-Latino Blacks in contributing to high self-esteem and the protective nature of racial identity (Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Ngyuen, & Sellers, 2009). Given that ethnic and racial identity is purported to provide individuals with a unique set of strategies with which to deal with discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003), the process by which Latina/os of varying phenotypes develop a positive racial identity still remains unclear. Although it appears evident that racial socialization among Latino/parents contributes to a positive ethnic identity, racial identity is of equal importance, given the salience of race in the United States (Uhlmann, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwald, & Swanson, 2002).

Limitations

While the findings of the present study make important contributions to the present literature, there are several limitations that need to be highlighted. The sample size could be considered a limitation given that some researchers argue that it is often difficult to draw meaningful generalizations because of the large degree of variance among small sample sizes (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001). Furthermore, as in the

case with this study, a larger sample size that included participants from varying Latin American countries would have added to the depth of this analysis and provided more insight regarding the racial socialization process among Latina/o families. However, given that this is a small sample drawn from a larger group, saturation was not possible.

Another important limitation of this research is that it did not account for experiences and events that may shape racial identity development outside of the family context. We recognize that this is a major limitation given that those experiences can equally influence racial identity development. Lastly, within this discussion we chose not to explore the intersectionality of class and education in order to focus on the power of racial socialization within the families of origin. Future research would do well to explore how identity is influenced by multiple systems of oppression and discrimination. Another important limitation of the present study is that these women represent a unique population of middle-aged adult Latinas, based on their high level of academic achievement. Future research in this area should examine the racial socialization experiences of a broader age group, as well as include diversity in educational background and gender.

Research Implications

The present study provided us with insight regarding the messages that Latina/os are exposed to in their families regarding racial features and added to the existing research on the home as the primary context in which the construction of identity begins (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Hughes, 2003). More empirical studies exploring the racial socialization process among Latina/os of varying skin color would help researchers further understand the role of phenotype in shaping the identity formation of Latina/os. Based on the limited literature focusing on the role of skin color and racial features in regards to the racial socialization there is a lack of understanding of the multiracial phenotypes among Latina/os. Research continues to separate Black from Latino/a and fails to capture the multiracial richness of the Latino/a community. Given the important protective role racial identity and the potential role phenotype can play for Latina/os (Telzer & Vazquez Garcia, 2009), additional research in this area is needed.

Conclusion

This article explored the racial socialization process among multiracial Latino/a families and found that Latinas' racial socialization process is limited when it comes to preparation for bias. It is evident that Latinas from varying racial backgrounds have to negotiate messages of anti-blackness and preference for whiteness they receive at home in order to develop a racial identity. Additional research that takes a critical look at the social construction of race among Latino/families, and its impact on the racial socialization process is needed. Given the important role that a positive racial identity can play in contributing to positive outcomes such as well-being, it is imperative that researchers and practitioners have an understanding of the racial socialization process among Latino/a families and the role of skin color.

Abstracto

El proceso de socialización racial ha sido asociado con el desarrollo de una identidad étnica y racial positiva entre los Afro-Americanos y los/as Latinos/as en los Estados Unidos. Dado que los Latinos tienen diferentes colores de piel, es importante entender el proceso de socialización racial y la influencia en el desarrollo de la identidad racial en los latinos de diferentes colores de piel. Los investigadores han estudiado a los/as Latinos/as como un grupo homogéneo. Hasta ahora, poca atención se le ha dado a la forma en que el proceso de socialización racial impacta de manera diferente al desarrollo de la identidad racial y étnica en Latinos de piel clara y oscura. A través de las experiencias de nueve Latinas, este estudio ilustra las experiencias de socialización racial y el efecto multifacético en la construcción de la identidad étnica y racial. De acuerdo con las conclusiones de este estudio, el proceso de socialización racial de las Latinas no las prepara para la discriminación. Esto puede ser perjudicial para los/as Latinos/as de piel oscura, ya que ellos pueden ser discriminados. Además, aunque se las prepare, las Latinas de piel oscura no se benefician necesariamente del proceso de socialización racial debido a las experiencias raciales y los estereotipos étnicos que existen fuera del entorno familiar, en el contexto de la sociedad de los Estados Unidos.

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