



An Exploratory Study: Racial Socialization Practices and Dilemmas of Caregivers Nurturing Young BIPOC Children

Flóra Faragó ¹

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Abstract

This study on the racial socialization practices and dilemmas of caregivers of 0–8 year-old BIPOC children utilized an open-ended online survey, with a mixed-methods approach to data analysis. The study included 173 caregivers (i.e., 59% white; 41% BIPOC; 94.2% female) in the U.S. who held a variety of roles (e.g., 33.5% parents/relatives; 28.3% early childhood educators; 12.1% mental health/health professionals). Caregivers were prompted with a message about joy and resilience in BIPOC children. Analysis of open-ended data revealed practices such as the use of books, adult education, talking, preparation for bias or acknowledgment of racism, stereotyping, privilege, anti-bias/anti-racist education, art, music, dance, home language, and miscellaneous topics. Caregivers highlighted the following: (a) Nurturing a positive racial identity and pride in children's own heritage; (b) Nurturing love and knowledge about racial diversity; (c) Preparation for bias; and, (d) Racial socialization network: Adult-to-adult practices. Regarding racial socialization dilemmas, caregivers highlighted challenges with nurturing a positive racial identity/pride in children's heritage; nurturing love and knowledge about racial diversity; preparation for bias; and, adult education. Dilemmas were reported about nurturing self-love in a racist world, whiteness, others' biases, relationships, representation, multiracial families, own biases, age appropriateness, and colorism. Chi-square analyses confirmed that there were no statistically significant differences between white and BIPOC, and familial and non-familial, caregivers' racial socialization practices and dilemmas. Descriptive results revealed some differences in racial socialization dilemmas by race and role of caregivers.

Keywords Racial socialization · Early childhood · BIPOC children · Parents · Educators

Highlights

- 173 racially diverse familial and non-familial caregivers caring for BIPOC children reported racial socialization practices and dilemmas
- Examples of racial socialization practices include: use of books, adult education, talking, preparation for bias or acknowledgment of racism, stereotyping, privilege, anti-bias/anti-racist education, art, music, dance, and home language
- Racial socialization dilemmas were reported around nurturing self-love in a racist world, whiteness, others' biases, relationships, representation, multiracial families, own biases, age appropriateness, and colorism

BIPOC (i.e., Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) children experience racial discrimination (e.g., Assari et al., 2018) and the effects of systemic racism across various

contexts (e.g., Bañales et al., 2021). To buffer children from racism and to nurture children's positive racial identities, families of color engage in racial socialization (e.g., Hughes et al., 2006; Priest et al., 2014). Racial socialization refers to behaviors and practices that communicate information about race, ethnicity, and/or racism to children (Hughes et al., 2017). The most frequently researched aspects of racial socialization include *cultural socialization*, or teaching children about their racial heritage and instilling racial pride; *preparation for bias*, or teaching children about racism and discrimination; *promotion of mistrust*, or

✉ Flóra Faragó
florafarago300@gmail.com

¹ School of Human Sciences, Human Development and Family Studies, Stephen F. Austin State University, P. O. Box 13014SFA Station, Nacogdoches, TX 75962, USA

warning children about distance from other racial groups; and, *egalitarianism*, or emphasizing similarities and equality among races (e.g., Hughes, 2003; Priest et al., 2014; Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020).

The overwhelming majority of the racial socialization literature has focused on parents, especially on mothers, as the main socializing agents (Priest et al., 2014) and has primarily examined racial socialization in Black families (Priest et al., 2014) and in other mono-racial families of color (e.g., Contreras et al., 2021; Derlan et al., 2017). To date, the racial socialization literature has overwhelmingly focused on adolescents. To gain a holistic understanding of racial socialization, research is needed with caregivers of young children, specifically in non-familial contexts (Ruck et al., 2021), and in multi-racial settings. To this end, the current open-ended online survey study, with a mixed-methods data analysis approach, begins to fill these research gaps by examining racial socialization practices and dilemmas among 173 racially diverse caregivers (e.g., parents, educators, mental health professionals, librarians, volunteers) who primarily cared for BIPOC children ages 0–8.

Racial Socialization of Young Children

Most studies of racial socialization of young children have involved Black families (Blanchard et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2009; Caughy et al., 2011; Caughy et al., 2006; Caughy et al., 2002; Coard et al., 2004; Curenton et al., 2018; Doucet, 2008; Doucet et al., 2018; Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016; Howard et al., 2013; Suizzo et al., 2008). A few studies have examined racial socialization of children in multiple BIPOC racial groups such as in Latinx and Black families (Barbarin & Jean-Baptiste, 2013; Caughy & Owen, 2015; Contreras et al., 2021). Collectively, these studies indicate that Black children are more likely to receive racial socialization than Latinx children.

The benefits of racial socialization for cognitive and social development are evident (Barbarin & Jean-Baptiste, 2013; Brown et al., 2009; Caughy et al., 2011; Caughy et al., 2006; Caughy et al., 2002; Caughy & Owen, 2015). Studies have demonstrated benefits for children's academic skills (Barbarin & Jean-Baptiste, 2013; Brown et al., 2009; Caughy & Owen, 2015), cognitive skills (Caughy et al., 2011; Caughy et al., 2006; Caughy et al., 2002), and overall behavior (Caughy et al., 2011; Caughy et al., 2002; Caughy & Owen, 2015; Contreras et al., 2021). For example, children's vocabulary and math skills (Barbarin & Jean-Baptiste, 2013) as well as pre-academic skills and receptive language (Caughy & Owen, 2015) have been positively associated with parental racial socialization. Also, parental racial socialization has been linked to reduced behavior

problems in children, such as a reduction in internalizing (e.g., anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., aggression) behavior issues (Caughy et al., 2006; Caughy & Owen, 2015).

Mono-racial Racial Socialization in Families

Research with primarily Black families has shown that parents are most likely to discuss the positive aspects of racial socialization with young children (Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016; Howard et al., 2013). For instance, some parents proactively address race (Blanchard et al., 2019; Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016), foster racial pride (Howard et al., 2013; Suizzo et al., 2008), and teach children about cultural traditions, history, and ancestors (Blanchard et al., 2019; Coard et al., 2004; Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016; Howard et al., 2013; Suizzo et al., 2008). Others focus on children having positive interactions with and exposure to role models who are Black (Blanchard et al., 2019), and being surrounded by peers and community members who are Black and who affirm children's racial identities (Howard et al., 2013; Suizzo et al., 2008). Some studies find that parents seek representation of Black people in books, toys, and TV programming (Coard et al., 2004; Suizzo et al., 2008). Some parents discuss children's beauty (e.g., skin, hair) as African Americans (Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016; Suizzo et al., 2008) and praise their Black children for unique characteristics associated with being Black (Howard et al., 2013). Although less frequent, some parents of young children discuss more negative aspects of racial socialization such as racism, and discrimination (Blanchard et al., 2019; Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016).

Multi-racial Racial Socialization in Families

Some studies have examined racial socialization in multi-racial families to primarily understand dynamics among white parents and their BIPOC children (Csizmadia et al., 2014; Ferrari et al., 2015; Goar et al., 2017; Killian & Khanna, 2019; Samuels, 2009; Smith et al., 2011; see Green et al., 2021 for a review; Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017). Most of these studies, with the exception of two (i.e., Csizmadia et al., 2014; Killian & Khanna, 2019), did not include young children. Overall, some studies have found that some white parents engage in race- or color-conscious socialization (e.g., Csizmadia et al., 2014; Goar et al., 2017; Killian & Khanna, 2019), while other studies have found that some white parents engage in race- or color-evasive socialization (e.g., Goar et al., 2017; Killian & Khanna, 2019; Samuels, 2009). In general, racial socialization by white parents of BIPOC children does not neatly fit into a binary, as sometimes aspects of race-evasive and race-conscious socialization intermix within the same parents (Goar et al., 2017; Killian & Khanna, 2019). Additionally,

contextual factors, such as the presence of a Black parent, can impact whether white parents openly address issues of race and racism (Snyder, 2012).

Some white parents of BIPOC children who engage in color-conscious socialization (Csizmadia et al., 2014; Goar et al., 2017; Killian & Khanna, 2019; Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017) explicitly address the topics of race, racial heritage, and/or racism with their children. Some white parents look for other families to help them in the racial socialization of their BIPOC children and some intentionally select racially diverse neighborhoods to live in and diverse schools for their children to attend (Goar et al., 2017; Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017). Csizmadia et al. (2014) found that 80% of white mothers ($N = 239$) raising biracial Black-white kindergarteners engaged in racial socialization by discussing ethnic/racial heritage with their children. Similarly, Killian and Khanna (2019) found that 60% of primarily white adoptive parents of Black, Latinx, and Asian children engaged in some form of cultural socialization. Some parents attempted cultural socialization in “fun” ways that did not address race, whereas others engaged with cultural socialization on a deeper level that addressed race. Some white parents built intentional relationships with people who share their BIPOC children’s racial group, some taught about Black history, and some sought out consumer items reflecting their BIPOC child’s racial identity and race-related social groups (Killian & Khanna, 2019).

Non-Familial Racial Socialization of Young Children

Racial socialization research is lacking in non-familial contexts and has primarily been conducted in schools with adolescents (e.g., Byrd, 2019). Some scholars have been extending this work to early childhood settings (e.g., Farago et al., 2019; Farago et al., 2015). Although not traditionally categorized under racial socialization research, some researchers have examined early childhood teachers’ attitudes and behaviors around race. Researchers have found that early childhood teachers, especially white teachers, are not comfortable with addressing race or racism (Farago, 2017; Farago & Swadener, 2016; Vittrup, 2016) and often espouse colorblind or race-evasive ideologies (Daniel & Escayg, 2019; Farago, 2017; see Farago et al., 2019; Gaias et al., 2022; Husband, 2016; Vittrup, 2016). Some early childhood educators do go beyond discussing skin color and talk about topics of segregation, unfairness, discrimination, injustice, slavery, and other social justice topics, often using books (e.g., Holmes et al., 2017; Kim, 2014; Kimura et al., 2022; Sachdeva & Adair, 2019). In addition to educators, young children likely receive messages about race from a variety of adults. Hence, to capture a holistic understanding of racial socialization, it is important to extend racial socialization research to non-familial caregivers.

The Present Study

The current study extends the emerging literature on racial socialization of young children by examining racial socialization practices and dilemmas of racially diverse caregivers, including non-familial caregivers, caring for racially diverse BIPOC children. The unique contributions of this study are the inclusion of non-familial caregivers, along with familial caregivers, to allow for comparisons. Also, the current study included a large proportion of caregivers (72.8%; $n = 126$) who did not share the racial identities of all or some of the children in their care, including 59% ($n = 102$) white caregivers who were caring for BIPOC children. Responses were compared across caregivers’ racial identities as previous research indicates differences in racial socialization by race of caregivers (e.g., Barbarin & Jean-Baptiste, 2013; Caughy & Owen, 2015; Contreras et al., 2021). Responses were also compared across caregiver roles, as previous research has not yet examined this topic.

The following open-ended questions guided the study: (a) What practices do caregivers engage in to nourish resilient young BIPOC children? Are there differences in racial socialization practices between white and BIPOC caregivers?; (b) What dilemmas do caregivers encounter in nourishing resilient young BIPOC children? Are there differences in racial socialization dilemmas between white and BIPOC caregivers? Although assessing challenges has not traditionally been part of racial socialization research, this construct was included in the study to improve the study’s practical utility to caregivers.

The present study was part of a larger effort, initiated by an organization in the U.S. called EmbraceRace (www.embracerace.org), to understand the types of virtual resources and communities that caregivers of young BIPOC children need and have access to, to nurture resilient BIPOC children. EmbraceRace is dedicated to supporting caregivers and educators raising children who are brave and thoughtful about race. The study and survey questions served the dual purpose of informing EmbraceRace with practical information as well as expanding the literature on racial socialization. Participants were specifically asked about dilemmas they would bring to an online support community. Data collection proceeded in fall 2020 and lasted 1.5 months.

Methods

Participants

To capture a holistic view of messages that young children receive about race and racism, the researcher conducted a

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Caregivers

	<i>n</i>	%
Race		
white	102	59.0
Multiracial	22	12.7
Black	21	12.1
Latinx	19	11.0
Asian	7	4.0
Other	2	1.2
Gender		
Female	163	94.2
Male	6	3.5
Non-binary	4	2.3
Role		
Parents/Relatives	58	33.5
Educators	49	28.3
Mental Health/Health Professionals	21	12.1
Administrators/Teacher Educators	20	11.5
Librarians	10	5.8
Community Workers/Volunteers	15	8.7
Language		
English	170	98.2
Spanish	3	1.8
Previous EmbraceRace Engagement		
Yes	132	76.3
No	19	11.0
Missing	22	12.7
Race of Children Cared For		
BIPOC and some white ^a	79	45.7
BIPOC only	68	39.3
At least 50% BIPOC ^b	123	71.1
No kids	26	15.0
Age of Children		
Under 3	66	38.2
3–5	109	63.0
6–8	96	55.5
9 or older ^c	51	29.5
Number of Children		
1–20	96	55.5
More than 20	51	29.5
Unknown or none	26	15.0

^aCared for both BIPOC and white children (in any proportion)

^bCared for at least 50% BIPOC children

^cCould select multiple age groups and those who cared for some children above age 8, primarily cared for younger children overall

primarily open-ended online survey study of 173 caregivers (i.e., 59% white; 12.7% multiracial; 12.1% Black; 11.0% Latinx; 4.0% Asian; 1.2% other; 94.2% female; 3.5% male;

2.3% non-binary) (Table 1). Caregivers held a variety of roles (i.e., 33.5% parents/relatives; 28.3% early childhood educators; 12.1% mental health/health professionals; 11.5% administrators/teacher educators; 8.7% community workers/volunteers; 5.8% librarians). Caregivers primarily cared for BIPOC children ages 0–8 (i.e., 71.1% cared for at least 50% BIPOC children). Multiracial children were considered BIPOC children for the purposes of the study (12.7% of caregivers only cared for multiracial children). Over half (55.5%) of caregivers had between 1 to 20 children in their care. About 11.5% of participants only indirectly cared for children as they served in administrative or teacher educator roles. The majority (98.2%) of caregivers spoke English to children in their care. All participants were based in the U.S.

Recruitment Procedures

Participants were recruited through email, in English and in Spanish, via professional contacts (e.g., email lists of early childhood educators, professional organization contacts serving parents and educators of young children), the EmbraceRace email list, and by participant referrals. Inclusion criteria included being a caregiver of primarily BIPOC children ages 0–8. Due to the nature of the recruitment process, participating caregivers were a select group who were interested in learning about issues surrounding children's racial socialization. About 76.3% ($n = 132$) of participants had previously engaged with the work of EmbraceRace (e.g., have participated in an EmbraceRace webinar). Although it is not possible to determine the exact proportion of participants recruited from the EmbraceRace email list, it can be determined with certainty that 10.9% ($n = 19$) of participants were not affiliated with EmbraceRace. It is unknown whether the remaining 12.7% ($n = 22$) of participants were affiliated with EmbraceRace or not. No identifying information was collected from participants and the university's Institutional Review Board approved all study protocols. Informed consent was collected prior to survey administration.

Author Positionality

The author of this paper worked as a consultant for EmbraceRace during the development and distribution of the survey. EmbraceRace employees were not involved in the data analyses and drafting of the paper. The author is a white cis-gender Jewish woman, a first-generation immigrant, whose scholarly interests center around anti-bias, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist teaching and parenting of young children. The author is the mother of a young white child and has extensive research experience with children and early childhood educators.

Table 2 Survey Questions about Racial Socialization

Practices	We envision an online community of learning and practice where parents, caregivers, and educators learn from and with each other to create spaces that nourish resilient and joyful children ages 0–8 who recognize their own and each other’s full humanity. While the community will welcome caregivers to White children, our focus will be on supporting adults in the lives of young Black and Indigenous children and children of color. Have you, yourself, engaged in specific activities or practices with young children that have these goals? (If so, name one or two).
Dilemmas	We’re in the process of designing an online community where parents, caregivers, and educators learn from and with each other to create spaces that nourish resilient and joyful children ages 0–8 who recognize each others’ full humanity. Our main focus will be on supporting adults in the lives of young Black and Indigenous children and children of color. Please share one or two specific questions or dilemmas you might bring to a community like this.

Measures

The open-ended survey (Table 2) used for the current study was not based on established survey instruments and was not piloted, but was guided by the literature on racial socialization and the racial learning of young children. The survey questions were developed in consultation with EmbraceRace staff and consultants. The questions were designed to assess what racial socialization practices caregivers currently engaged in and what challenges they found in engaging in racial socialization. Open-ended questions were used to allow caregivers to articulate their own thoughts and perceptions about racial socialization.

Data Analysis

Open-ended responses were coded in two stages. Initially, the author reviewed all responses for the practices question and a research assistant reviewed all responses for the dilemmas question, line by line. Each researcher grouped synonymous phrases together and came up with a list of common themes for each question. Next, the researchers traded questions and supplemented common themes with additional themes. Finally, the author reviewed all responses for both questions, identified additional themes using deductive thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and created a codebook. After themes were identified using deductive analyses, the major themes of the codebook were organized based on the common dimensions of parental racial socialization identified in the literature. Coding was pursued prior to applying existing racial socialization themes (from the literature) to the data to allow for the identification of novel or unusual themes.

In the second stage of coding, two research assistants reviewed responses and provided feedback on the codebook. The codebook was revised and finalized by the author. Responses from each participant could be coded as belonging to more than one code or theme. Next, the research assistants independently coded 100% of the responses. Initially, 30% of codes from each research assistant were reviewed by the author. The final inter-rater agreement for all responses ranged from 70 to 95%.

Discrepancies were resolved by the author. To address potential biases introduced during qualitative coding, the following precautions were taken: 1. Research assistants assisted with the coding of the data, and they did not share the racial and gender identities of the primary researcher; 2. A detailed codebook was developed and followed during the coding process; 3. The research assistants engaged in pilot coding before engaging in actual coding and had an opportunity to clarify codes and discrepancies in advance.

To compare caregivers’ responses by race and caregiver roles, chi-square analyses were conducted. Converting qualitative into quantitative data and using chi-square tests to analyze these data is a common research practice (for a review, see Fakis et al., 2014). First, caregivers were categorized into two racial groups: BIPOC and white. Multi-racial caregivers were categorized as BIPOC. Next, caregivers’ roles were categorized into two groups: Familial caregivers vs. non-familial caregivers. Next, based on the qualitative data, responses were coded into specific quantitative categories by the researchers. Caregiver racial socialization practices were categorized into the following eight independent groups (present vs. absent): representation, books, talking, adult education, TV/film/video, art, music, and preparation for bias. Caregivers’ dilemmas were categorized into the following four independent groups (present vs. absent): self-love, whiteness, others’ biases, and relationships/community. Chi-square analyses were run in SPSS to compare whether there was a significant association between caregivers’ race and roles with any of the eight racial socialization practices identified, and any of the four dilemmas identified.

Results

Racial Socialization Practices

In total, 160 participants answered the practices question. Only 151 responses were codable. Overall, 50.3% ($n = 76$) of caregivers mentioned practices around *representation*. Out of the 76 participants who mentioned representation, 76.3% ($n = 58$) referenced representation in *books*, 39.5%

($n = 30$) *talking*, 32.9% ($n = 25$) *adult education*, 11.8% ($n = 9$) *TV/film/video*, 7.9% ($n = 6$) *art*, and 7.9% ($n = 6$) *music*. Out of 151 participants, 47.7% ($n = 72$) mentioned practices involving *books*, 39.1% ($n = 59$) *adult education*, 27.8% ($n = 42$) *talking*, 22.5% ($n = 34$) *preparation for bias* or *acknowledgement of racism, stereotyping, privilege, or anti-bias/anti-racist education*. Additionally, 11.9% ($n = 18$) participants referenced *art, music, or dance*, 6.6% ($n = 10$) *home language*, and a few mentioned *miscellaneous topics* such as *TV/film/video, toys, and community events* (Table 3).

Race and Role Comparisons

Chi-square analyses indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between white and BIPOC, and familial and non-familial, caregivers' racial socialization practices. However, descriptive results revealed some differences in racial socialization practices by race and role of caregivers (Table 4).

Nurturing a Positive Racial Identity and Pride in Children's Own Racial and Cultural Heritage

White and BIPOC caregivers emphasized the importance of racial representation in BIPOC children's environments so that children can feel affirmed and see their own strength. Caregivers mentioned the importance of nurturing self-love via representation via various practices (Table 3), such as relying on books with BIPOC characters, written by BIPOC authors, as springboards for discussing Black leaders, BIPOC histories, and anti-racism. Self-love was also nurtured via TV shows and films representing children and families of color and by exposing children to art by BIPOC artists representing BIPOC people. Participants emphasized the importance of seeking out representation of BIPOC people (e.g., doctors, teachers) and in visuals in children's environments (e.g., holiday decorations, photos). Caregivers also reported listening to music by BIPOC artists and singing songs reflecting children's cultural heritage. Some caregivers sought representation of BIPOC people in children's toys and talked to children about the beauty of their skin and hair. Preparing cultural foods and attending community celebrations (e.g., Kwanza) were additional ways of nurturing self-love and racial or cultural pride.

Some caregivers spoke to the importance of bilingual preschools and nurturing children's home language. Professionals reported using "all about me" units for children to celebrate their own identities and some utilized Spanish, educational materials centering BIPOC people, and discussion of social justice issues (e.g., land acknowledgment). Nurturing positive racial and cultural identities via representation and self-love was an overarching theme reported

by white and BIPOC caregivers, including parents, educators, and other professionals.

Nurturing Love, Respect, and Knowledge about Racial and Cultural Diversity

White and BIPOC caregivers' practices to teach BIPOC children about others' racial identities and cultures often overlapped with practices used to teach children about their own racial identities. However, when teaching about others, there was a stronger emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism. Caregivers used books with diverse BIPOC characters and written by BIPOC authors to discuss diversity, race and racism, and similarities and differences among races. Participants displayed art from many cultures and exposed children to multicultural music.

White and BIPOC caregivers emphasized the importance of representing racial and cultural diversity in children's environment, via pictures, art, and toys, and exposing children to people of different cultural backgrounds. Caregivers engaged children in preparing cultural foods, storytelling featuring diverse people, dancing, and celebrating festivities of various cultures. Caregivers discussed similarities and differences among cultures and races with children, and taught children the importance of valuing diversity. Teachers reported using curricula to help children identify and discuss injustice. Further, some educators disclosed inviting families to the classroom so families could share information about their own cultural backgrounds. Professionals often mentioned how they used various aspects of education to nurture love and knowledge about racial and cultural diversity, such as relying on anti-bias and anti-racist curricula that reflect diverse races and cultures.

Preparation for Bias: Racism, Stereotypes, Privilege, Oppression

This theme, although less frequently reported than other themes, addressed "real talk" with children about racism, prejudice, and marginalization (Table 3). Both BIPOC and white caregivers discussed these topics. Some adults explicitly discussed anti-Blackness and racism as well as anti-racism. Caregivers taught children about historical figures like Rosa Parks and Nelson Mandela. Other topics of discussion included the unfair and biased education system, colorism, Black Lives Matter, and activism. At times, caregivers encouraged children to stand up for themselves and for others in the face of injustice, and to engage in activism to challenge white supremacy. Some caregivers described countering children's stereotypes and countering racist remarks by parents or colleagues. Challenges were often mentioned in the context of nurturing pride and resilience in BIPOC children in a society that is

Table 3 Examples of Common Practices Supporting Self-love in BIPOC Children via Representation

	Participants	Exemplars (Direct Quotes)
Use of Books	Black mother	We've focused on this with our 2 and 4 year olds by choosing books that feature diverse racial backgrounds and that celebrate their black skin! We believe representation is so important in fostering self-love and joy.
	white mother	I've gotten books with children who look like him (son) and celebrate his brown skin.
	white grandmother	Reading books with my grandson that represent the whole spectrum of Black, Indigenous and all other children of color.
	white teacher/child care provider	Yes, reading and discuss books and videos about being biracial, loving our hair and skin color, and reading other educational books that have kids of color as the main characters.
	white teacher/child care provider	I have a lot of books that show children being proud to be BIPOC. I also have books that are stories and many of the characters just happen to be BIPOC. I teach about diversity, inclusion, race, and racism.
	Black community worker/volunteer	Reading and providing Afrocentric books.
	white librarian	I have worked to include the topic of race in our story-times by using picture books. I am in the process of reviewing our bibliographies (book recommendation lists) to include books in which main characters are POC or otherwise marginalized kids.
	white mother	I also teach myself about the Black and Latinx experience in the US by learning from Black and/or Latinx folks on Instagram, reading books by Black and/or Latinx authors, and occasionally talking to my partner about his experiences as a Black man.
Adult Education	white mother	My husband and I have been trying to educate ourselves through videos, books, and conversations with friends about anti-racism, and Black hair and skin care.
	white administrator/teacher educator	I work in the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights department at my school board. Our work is to increase the critical consciousness of our staff so that our students have an educational experience that validates, celebrates and honors their full humanity.
	Latinx community worker/volunteer	Parent cafes and other parent leadership, support groups.
	Black father	Talking honestly about race and race matters.
Talking	Black mother	Positive talk about skin tone skin color-positive talk about hair-curly coily afros.
	Asian teacher/child care provider	Conversations about what is fair and unfair.
	white teacher/child care provider	I read books with children and adults that are BIPOC, I have art work made by and depicting different races, and I have conversations about why our skin is different colors from one another.
	Black community worker/volunteer	Discussing great figures in Black history as well as local leaders/heroes; prideful conversations about being Black, Black culture, Black beauty; other reading and sharing Afrocentric books; participating in community diversity themed events.
Preparation for Bias	Multiracial, Afro-Latinx, mental health/health professional	Conversations with parents, children and teachers about race, equity, justice.
	Black father	Yes, I have two sons who are 6 and 4 and my focus is helping them and teaching them how to live authentically, confidentiality and boldly in a time where those characteristics from a Black person is seen as defiant, cocky and or fake.
	Multiracial, Black-Latinx father	Working with our daughter to expose her to a range of people from different backgrounds and to address and counteract anti-Black messages and images we see them and are increasingly aware of their influence.

Table 3 (continued)

Participants	Exemplars (Direct Quotes)
Latinx mother	I began weaving racial literacy into my children's lives. I have often spoken about our culture and what their identity is in terms of our culture. This past summer much of our discussion included government, Black Lives Matter, and read the book, "Antracist Baby" to introduce the term "antiracism".
white mother	Development of strong and positive Black identity, liberatory education principles that challenge supremacist narratives.
white teacher/child care provider	I strive to make implement anti-bias & anti-racist education practices in my classroom. We celebrate diversity and deliberately identify and discuss injustice and unfairness.
white mother	We listen to music by Black artists and actively seek out Black representation in our doctors, school system.
Multiracial, Native-white teacher/child care provider	Yes. Reading books that illustrate the strengths of BIPOC children/families. Talking about our Land Acknowledgment and what that means. Doing many self/family portraits using mirrors and skin tone paints/markers/oil pastels.
white teacher/child care provider	Yes, we work to be sure there are authentic images (books, art, pictures in the classroom, family books) that make BIPOC visible.
Latix administrator/teacher educator	I develop curriculum and activities inclusive of children. This includes race, belief, and cultural background. I have a great variety of books that includes topics such as multiracial families and children, children and adults with different abilities, different type of families, and languages. The music I incorporate in my practice is also multicultural and inclusive.
Home Language Multiracial, Black-Native American-Scottish-French Canadian teacher/child care provider	Yes, I always use the native language in addition to English when possible. Cultural traditions of the families are honored in the classroom
Latinx teacher/child care provider	En proceso, educación a distancia en escuela de inmersión al Español, vemos algunas fiestas y tradiciones de países que hablan español, nuestro currículo está basado en Descubre el Español que conecta con la diversidad cultural del habla hispana. Ponemos canciones y rimas de países de habla hispana para reflejar esa diversidad. (As part of distance education in a Spanish immersion school, we see some festivals and traditions of Spanish-speaking countries, our curriculum is based on Discover Spanish that connects with the cultural diversity of Spanish speaking. We play songs and rhymes from Spanish-speaking countries to reflect that diversity.)
white teacher/child care provider	I work in my local Head Start with a diverse population, but at least half of my class tends to be from Latino backgrounds. I try to learn Spanish phrases so I can help my students through their day and will try to translate as much information as I can for families.
Miscellaneous	Ensure children have visual representations of people of color and Multiracial families.
white mother	I focus a lot on representation - what do my daughter's dolls look like, who is she watching on tv....
Asian father	We tell family stories, cook family recipes together, and promote a cultural twist on mainstream American holidays.
Multiracial, Black-Latinx mother	Attend Black Lives Matter protests: watch shows, visit exhibits about Black and Latinx cultures

Exemplars could be coded with multiple themes

Table 4 Comparison of Racial Socialization Practices and Dilemmas by Caregiver Race and Role

	White %(n)	BIPOC %(n)	Familial %(n)	Non-familial %(n)
<i>Practices^a</i>				
Books	51.6 (48) ^b	41.4 (24) ^c	60.0 (30) ^d	41.6 (42) ^e
Adult education	41.9 (39)	34.5 (20)	42.0 (21)	37.6 (38)
Talking	23.7 (22)	34.5 (20)	32.0 (16)	25.7 (26)
Preparation for bias	23.7 (22)	20.7 (12)	32.0 (16)	17.8 (18)
<i>Dilemmas^f</i>				
Self-love in a racist world	30.9 (25) ^g	21.7 (13) ^h	46.7 (21) ⁱ	18.10 (17) ^j
Whiteness	33.3 (27)	15.0 (9)	28.9 (13)	24.5 (23)
Others' biases	17.2 (14)	35.0 (21)	28.9 (13)	23.4 (22)
Relationships and community	22.2 (918)	15.0 (9)	17.8 (8)	20.2 (19)

^aResponses about art, music, dance, home language, and miscellaneous topics were too few to make meaningful comparisons

^bOut of 93 participants

^cOut of 58 participants

^dOut of 50 participants

^eOut of 101 participants

^fResponses about representation (i.e., multiracial families, own biases, miscellaneous topics) were too few to make meaningful comparisons

^gOut of 81 participants

^hOut of 60 participants

ⁱOut of 45 participants

^jOut of 94 participants

inherently racist. Caregivers expressed concerns about making BIPOC children feel respected and loved in a biased education system and world.

Racial Socialization Network: Adult-to-Adult Practices

Caregivers engaged in practices with one another and in professional development to better serve young BIPOC children (Table 3). For example, parents participated in parent support groups, and some attended trainings on race and racism. Professionals participated in workshops on anti-racism, anti-bias, and diversity. Some caregivers shared resources about race with others working with BIPOC children and supported other adults with perspective taking and empathy to change misperceptions of BIPOC children. Clinicians reported engaging in trauma informed care and prevention work. Professionals mentioned educating parents about equity and justice issues and organizing parent-teacher learning groups. Across all groups, self-reflection and self-growth were salient. Adults emphasized continuously reflecting on their practices with young BIPOC children.

Common Dilemmas about Racial Socialization

Overall, 141 participants answered the dilemmas question but only 139 were codable responses. In sum, 27.3%

($n = 38$) mentioned *self-love in a racist world*, 25.9% ($n = 36$) mentioned *whiteness*, 25.2% ($n = 35$) mentioned *others' biases*, 19.4% ($n = 27$) mentioned *relationships and community*, 12.2% ($n = 17$) mentioned *representation*, 10.8% ($n = 15$) mentioned *multiracial families*, and 6.5% ($n = 9$) mentioned *own biases*. A few participants reported *miscellaneous issues*, such as age appropriateness, colorism, and advocacy. All themes about dilemmas were related to the overall concept of racial socialization, and were identified by the research team (see data analysis section) because racial socialization challenges were not previously investigated in the literature.

Race and Role Comparisons

Chi-square analyses indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between white and BIPOC, and familial and non-familial, caregivers' responses about dilemmas about racial socialization. However, descriptive results revealed some differences in racial socialization dilemmas by race and role of caregivers (see Table 4).

Themes: Common Dilemmas about Racial Socialization

The theme of "self-love in a racist world" reflected challenges that both white and BIPOC caregivers disclosed about nurturing confidence in BIPOC children in a world that rejects their full humanity (Table 5). One participant

Table 5 Examples of Common Dilemmas about Nourishing Resilient BIPOC Children

Theme(s)	Participants	Exemplars (Direct Quotes)
Self-love: Racist World	Latinx mother	How do I support my child in becoming their full self while growing up in a world that rejects their humanity?
	Black mother	My husband and I wish to infuse and mirror to our Black children self-love, confidence, joy, play, and activism AND support their being children, innocent-we want to answer their questions age appropriately. In our experience children of color are adultized in books, media and conversations. We wish to allow them to reveal themselves to us as joyful full humans-we wish them to have a full childhood experience-well informed and always asking why-and to cherish we adults wish to cherish their development and not adultize their spirits.
	Black mother	How to help your child appreciate and love their skin color, hair, and everything about themselves? How and when to start talking about racism?
	white mental health/health professional	Preparing kids to be able to protect themselves from racism but without creating an image of a world that is so scary that it is immobilizing.
	Asian teacher/child care provider	How to engage parents and help them understand that raising an anti-racist child starts with young children especially in a white privileged setting & requires parents to engage in a personal journey.
	white teacher/child care provider	A group of children on the playground (4 and 5 year-olds) announced that they would only play with children who look like them. How do you facilitate a safe and productive conversation without doing harm? As a white person, I worry that I will say something that will make things worse.
	white teacher/child care provider	How to not single out families of color when working in a predominantly white space and at the same time acknowledging/celebrating differences? Engaging parents of the global majority when they may have distrust of the education system.
	white teacher/child care provider	How do I as a white woman support BIPOC children to their full potential without having the same experiences as they or their families have had? I want to be the one to learn and grow so I can help BIPOC children have positive self-image and self-esteem to be whoever they want to be.
	Black administrator/teacher educator	What must we do to stop raising complacent, bystander children when we insist on "protecting" them with our silence and our inability to talk about race? How do we talk about the fact that Black, Brown, and Indigenous children do not have the luxury of that "protection"? How do we stop "protecting" white children from the harsh realities of the lives of their peers of color and stop allowing the "discomfort" of white adults to take priority (and, therefore, superiority) over the realities and real lives of people of color?
	Others' Biases	Black mother
white mother		How to persuade school administrators to stop and see their biases/systems and the perpetuation of systemic racism? Teachers need videos/explicit instruction on how to handle race conversations in their classrooms and to be aware that those conversations continue on the playground.
white teacher/child care provider		What do you say when a 3.y.o. white child, puts their arms out and blocks a 3.y.o black child from entering the space saying, "You can't come in because you're different!"
Relationships & Community	Black community worker/volunteer	Dealing with racism in predominantly White school environments including dealing with teachers who hold stereotypes about race and social class and make certain assumptions about children of color and their families and view them pejoratively and all the same. Strategies for dealing with school personal toward creating an anti-racist environment, and for addressing specific racial incidents as they occur.
	Latinx mental health/health professional	How do I bring up the topic of race with early childhood education teachers? What do I do if they don't see racism as a problem?
	white mother	As a white parent, how to appropriately engage with other races in our community outside of a vendor relationship. We have changed all of our doctors, hair stylists, mechanics, etc to include diverse races. We're still looking to find social connections with more diversity. As our oldest turned 2 at the start of the Pandemic, we hadn't quite gotten to play activities with other children in our area before we're now all at home.
	white mother	Coaching on how to respond when my child makes a racist statement (even in the context of "playing" - i.e., acting out a book that tells the story of how black people were segregated and taking on the role of the oppressor). Would love to engage in activities with my child where the focus is teaching about race, racism, celebrating difference, building self-esteem, etc. This could be with "live" groups of other parents and kids led by a facilitator...or could be a video (my preference is for live).
	white mother	As a single white mother, to a biracial black/white child, how can we/she seek acceptance and belonging in the black community? What resources are available to engage us/her in volunteer activities and activism? This week her friend (who is also biracial) asked her where she was "really" from. Her poor heart. She connected that comment to her skin color. I lean into

Table 5 (continued)

Theme(s)	Participants	Exemplars (Direct Quotes)
Representation	white community worker/volunteer Latinx mother white-Indigenous-Mexican American father white grandmother Black mother Afro-Irish-Korean-Latinx community worker/volunteer	these experiences she has, as opportunities to talk about colourism, etc., but I am white. Finding and forming strong black relationships, where she sees herself reflected has been a huge challenge. How do you bridge a gap in segregated school or local children community, and what kind of activities can one promote to build trust and friendship between children of different color? How can we nurture our children's culture, race, language in a homogenous white school or environment? What are good ways to talk about racial differences and representation in the government and rules of "white" society? How to instill pride and confidence in children who don't have daily examples of people who look like them as parents or in community. Ideas for how to find a more diverse community for my children outside of our neighborhood and school. My indigenous grandson is very joyful but he has not started school. My daughter was a joyful child but she is a depressed, angry adult. How can I help him maintain his joy growing up in a colonial community far from his homelands and people? How to provide a framework for bias and discrimination that doesn't make my biracial kids resent their Black side? How to help prepare my children for the idea that they might not feel like they fit in (or may be rejected) by members of either community? How to support and insulate my children from implicit biases in the school system? Any support around multi-ethnic and racial co-parenting, particularly with Caucasian parents who tend to believe racism will not be as bad for their non-white children support for white parents to come to terms/accept their child's challenges; its more than going to ethnic fairs/celebrations a couple times a year how does the white parent talk about racism to their kids how to address covert -isms in school policies.
Own Biases	white mother white teacher/child care provider	As the White parent of a multiracial Black daughter, how do I unpack my blind spots to best support my daughter's development? How do I help my daughter understand the complexities of being multiracial when this is not an identity or experience that I have personally? While I work to educate myself and surround my daughter with other multiracial people, I do not want to unintentionally reinforce my own biases. Professionally, I want to be more aware on my biases and how I can help any child to feel more comfortable in their own skin. Any suggestions for either situation is worth pursuing.
Miscellaneous	Multiracial, Hispanic-Asian mother white mother Asian administrator/teacher educator white administrator/teacher educator	I'm interested in addressing the experiences of children who are multiracial, as well as colorism. Best practices/discussions about how to navigate tricky questions (i.e., my 4 year old white daughter asking if the police are going to hurt my 1 year old multiracial son). How to decrease preschool expulsion of BIPOC children, particularly boys? How to engage families of BIPOC children in advocacy with schools? Developmentally appropriate language for talking about racism with children 0-5 (White administrator).

Exemplars could be coded with multiple themes

disclosed that children of color are adultized in books and media, hence it can be challenging to nurture pride in BIPOC children. Primarily white, along with some BIPOC, caregivers were concerned about how to balance nurturing pride in BIPOC children and at the same time discuss racism without causing harm. Under the theme of “whiteness,” white caregivers were anxious about saying “the wrong thing,” tokenizing BIPOC families, and their ability to support BIPOC children when they do not share the racialized experiences of children. Regarding “whiteness,” primarily BIPOC caregivers expressed concerns around white fragility (i.e., discomfort and defensiveness of white people around the topics of race and racism) (Table 5). BIPOC caregivers disclosed that some white parents fail to acknowledge their own racial biases and privilege and reported that white families may be uncomfortable with addressing racism to protect their white children, however, BIPOC children experiencing racism do not have the privilege of this type of protection.

The theme of “others’ biases” reflected both white and BIPOC caregivers’ concerns about BIPOC children encountering racial bias from family members, educators, and peers (Table 5). Caregivers disclosed children facing microaggressions from school staff and peers who perpetuate racial stereotypes. Many caregivers wondered about how to help other adults acknowledge their own biases. The theme of “relationships and community” reflected caregivers’ concerns about developing relationships with others of different races (Table 5). Some caregivers were worried about developing relationships across racial lines, in the context of segregation. There were those who desired to engage with other families around race, racism, and diversity but found it challenging to connect with other caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theme of “representation” reflected white and BIPOC caregivers’ concerns around nurturing BIPOC children’s racial, cultural, and linguistic heritage when children are not surrounded by others who share their backgrounds (Table 5). One caregiver expressed concerns about nurturing pride in her indigenous grandson when he is raised in a “colonial community.” Both white and BIPOC caregivers expressed anxiety around nurturing pride and resilience in BIPOC children when they as adults do not share the children’s heritage. Concerns were reported about balancing representation while avoiding tokenizing and homogenizing communities of color. The theme of “multiracial families” reflected caregivers’ questions around how to help multiracial children feel comfortable with their identities when these children do not fit traditional “boxes” of racial categories (Table 5). One caregiver raised the importance of working with white parents of multiracial children so these parents can recognize how racism will impact their BIPOC children.

The theme of “own biases” reflected primarily white caregivers’ acknowledgment of the need to reflect on their own racial biases (Table 5). White caregivers reported on the importance of unpacking their own biases but also acknowledged their concerns about causing harm to BIPOC children. “Miscellaneous” themes covered a range of topics, such as age appropriateness and colorism (Table 5). Some caregivers reported needing more support around developmentally appropriate ways of addressing race and racism with BIPOC children. Others needed support in addressing colorism among children of color. The theme of advocacy surfaced, specifically about how caregivers can support families and schools in advocating for issues such as the reduction of preschool expulsions and suspensions of BIPOC children.

Discussion

Racial socialization practices consisted of the following: (a) Nurturing a positive racial identity and pride in children’s own racial and cultural heritage; (b) Nurturing love, respect, and knowledge about racial and cultural diversity; (c) Preparation for bias: racism, stereotypes, privilege, and oppression; and, (d) Racial socialization network. Dilemmas were reported around nurturing self-love in a racist world, whiteness, others’ biases, relationships, representation, multiracial families, own biases, age appropriateness, colorism, and advocacy. Although there were no statistically significant differences in responses among white and BIPOC caregivers, and familial and non-familial, caregivers, there were some descriptive trends indicating some potential differences in racial socialization among caregivers based on racial identities and roles.

Racial Socialization Practices

Racial socialization practices were reflective of themes of parental racial socialization in the literature. The theme of nurturing a positive racial identity and racial pride in young BIPOC children was similar to the theme of cultural socialization reported by parents of color (e.g., Blanchard et al., 2019; Caughy & Owen, 2015). The theme of nurturing love and respect for racial and cultural diversity was similar to the theme of egalitarianism reported by Black familial caregivers (e.g., Blanchard et al., 2019; Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016). The theme of preparation for bias and racism was similar to the theme of preparation for bias reported by Black familial caregivers (e.g., Blanchard et al., 2019; Doucet et al., 2018). Specific practices and themes used to teach BIPOC children about their own racial identities often overlapped with practices and themes used to teach children about others’ racial identities and heritage.

Additionally, the themes of racial socialization reflected parental racial socialization reported by some white parents raising biracial and/or BIPOC children (e.g., Killian & Khanna, 2019; Rollins & Hunter, 2013).

Reflecting findings of previous studies (e.g., Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016; Howard et al., 2013), caregivers were most likely to discuss positive aspects of racial socialization. The measures of the current study likely favored the reporting of more positive aspects of racial socialization as the questions asked for practices that nurtured *joy* and *resilience* in young BIPOC children. A small number of caregivers mentioned practices around the preparation of bias or acknowledgment of racism and stereotyping. Some caregivers may be worried about traumatizing young children with “heavier topics”. Others, such as teachers, may be worried about backlash from supervisors or families when addressing topics such as racism, especially in the current socio-political climate in which teaching topics around race, racism, and social justice, are deemed controversial and, in some U.S. states, “harmful” and illegal.

Caregivers’ Race and Roles: Racial Socialization Practices

Interestingly, there were no significant differences among white and BIPOC, and familial vs. non-familial, caregivers regarding racial socialization practices. This could mean that adults who are committed to nurturing pride and resilience in young BIPOC children engage in similar practices to achieve these goals, regardless of their racial identities and professional positions. It is also possible that the current study was unable to detect potential differences based on caregivers’ race and roles, given that participants were largely recruited from an organization’s contact list that specifically works with adults committed to nurturing racial learning in children.

Descriptive results did reveal some potential differences in racial socialization practices based on caregivers’ race. A slightly larger proportion of white caregivers reported themes of books, adult education, and preparation for bias compared to BIPOC caregivers. It is plausible that white caregivers caring for BIPOC children were more likely to live and work in white dominant neighborhoods or contexts than BIPOC caregivers, explaining these results. White caregivers may have felt especially motivated to expose BIPOC children to BIPOC characters via books in potentially white dominant contexts where BIPOC children may not be represented. In terms of adult education, white caregivers may have recognized their own shortcomings regarding experiences of racial marginalization and the lived experiences of BIPOC people, and therefore may have felt an overwhelming need to educate themselves and seek out resources about racial socialization. Additionally, white caregivers in potentially white neighborhoods may have felt

an overwhelming need to prepare BIPOC children for bias or discrimination, especially at the hands of white peers, teachers, neighbors, and others.

A slightly larger proportion of BIPOC caregivers, compared to white caregivers, mentioned talking as a strategy. BIPOC caregivers are generally more likely to explicitly talk about issues of race with children, as these caregivers likely reflect on and have discussed experiences around their own racial identities more so than their white counterparts. However, overall, a little less than a third of all caregivers reported talking as a strategy for racial socialization. This is a concern, as a lack of conversation about race and racism can leave children feeling unprepared to deal with racial incidents (Snyder, 2012). In terms of roles, all themes about racial socialization practices were reported by a higher proportion of familial, compared to non-familial, caregivers, reflecting the research literature. Non-familial caregivers may be hesitant to discuss race and racism with young children, unless they have support from their employers and from children’s families.

Nurturing Racial Pride and Respect for Racial and Cultural Diversity

Like previous studies (e.g., Howard et al., 2013; Suizzo et al., 2008), findings suggest that caregivers fostered racial pride in young BIPOC children. Also, reflecting previous studies (e.g., Blanchard et al., 2019; Edwards & Few-Demo, 2016), caregivers were motivated to seek out representation of BIPOC people in children’s surroundings. Coard and colleagues (2004) labeled these types of practices as “exposure practices,” which ensure that young BIPOC children see themselves represented in their surroundings.

Caregivers reported racial socialization practices that have been identified in previous studies, such as using books (e.g., Coard et al., 2004; Suizzo et al., 2008), using toys (e.g., Caughy et al., 2002; Suizzo et al., 2008), talking (e.g., Coard et al., 2004; Suizzo et al., 2008), and engaging in art, music, dance, home language, TV/film/video (e.g., Caughy et al., 2002), as well as participating in holidays and community celebrations (e.g., Blanchard et al., 2019; Suizzo et al., 2008). Findings reflect that the racial socialization practices of diverse familial and non-familial caregivers of young BIPOC children mirror the parental racial socialization practices identified in the literature.

Results demonstrate that teachers, librarians, health professionals, and community workers engage in racial socialization practices that nurture racial identity and pride, and respect for racial diversity, in young BIPOC children. Professionals reported using “all about me” units and educational materials reflecting BIPOC people to allow children to celebrate their own identities and to learn about others’ heritage. Professionals discussed topics such as race

and racism, equity and justice, and similarities and differences among racial groups with children. Some educators reported using anti-bias and anti-racist curricula to help children identify injustices. A note about these findings is that data collection proceeded in fall of 2020, and starting around 2020 in the U.S., public attacks on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and other movements advocating for the honest discussion of race, racism, anti-racism, and whiteness with children have been on the rise. Although public discourse around the teaching of race and racism has primarily been limited to K-12 settings, it is plausible that these discussions and controversies impact caregivers serving young children. It is difficult to surmise how this socio-political climate may have impacted findings of the study; some caregivers may buckle down and show an increased commitment to discussing race and racism with young children, while others may back off these discussions to avoid compromising their jobs.

Preparation for Bias

Although preparation for bias was only reported by a small number of caregivers, this theme reflected research with Black families and some white families, indicating that some caregivers do explicitly discuss racism, discrimination, and prejudice with young BIPOC children (Blanchard et al., 2019; Killian & Khanna, 2019; Suizzo et al., 2008). Discussing topics around racism and prejudice may stem from a desire to protect children of color (e.g., Curenton et al., 2018) and prepare BIPOC children for some of the harsh realities they will face in a (racist) world. Some of the topics discussed by caregivers included anti-Black messaging, current and historical racism, bias in the education system, colorism, white supremacy, and racial stereotypes.

Racial Socialization Network: Adult-to-Adult Practices

Findings illustrate the importance of socialization practices among adults themselves. The racial socialization literature has generally focused on how adults socialize children. However, findings show that caregivers engaged with each other. Caregivers participated in a variety of workshops around race and racism in early childhood with their peers, and some shared resources with others to ensure that BIPOC children feel respected and seen. However, it is likely that adult-to-adult practices were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted the health and education of young BIPOC children and their families. The study commenced during the height of the pandemic, when childcare facilities and childcare arrangements were deeply disrupted. It is therefore plausible that caregivers engaging with each other was

deeply disrupted and temporarily reduced during the timeframe of this study.

Racial Socialization Dilemmas

The theme of “self-love in a racist world” relayed caregivers’ concerns around nurturing self-confidence in young BIPOC children in contexts that do not honor their full humanity. Caregivers were concerned about discussing race and racism with children in ways that do not impart trauma on children. This theme reflected a combination of earlier themes of “nurturing racial pride” and “preparation for bias.” As previous studies reflect (e.g., Curenton et al., 2018), caregivers are aware of how racism impacts BIPOC children’s lives and are concerned with protecting children from the impacts of racism. Although the findings do not directly address this, caregivers, including families and professionals, need support and resources for nurturing self-esteem and self-love in young BIPOC children. At the same time, caregivers caring for young BIPOC children should not bear the burden of protecting children from racism; as a society, everyone working and living with children, especially white caregivers, policy makers, administrators, politicians, and others need to ultimately work towards reducing racism and engaging in anti-racism.

Regarding the theme of “whiteness,” some white caregivers were worried about causing harm and questioned their own ability to fully support BIPOC children. White parents, even those with anti-racist intentions, often fall short of getting “race and racism right” (Hagerman, 2017; Heberle et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2011). For instance, some white adoptive parents of Black children overemphasize white comfort and trivialize the racism that their Black children experience (Smith et al., 2011). These findings affirm the anxiety that some white caregivers reported in the current study, namely that without sufficient self-reflection and resources, white caregivers may miss out on opportunities to nurture a positive racial identity in young BIPOC children. It is important to note that the current study took place a few months after the murder of George Floyd, an innocent Black man, who was killed by a white police officer, Derek Chauvin. As a result, there was a renewed attention to issues of white privilege, white supremacy, police brutality, and anti-Black racism. It is therefore plausible that in the current study white caregivers were more in tune with and engaged with these issues than usual. Future longitudinal studies could examine caregivers’ trajectories of commitment to anti-racism and racial justice work in the long run.

The theme of “relationship and community” reflected caregivers’ concerns (and desires) about building authentic relationships with people from different racial communities in a segregated world. Concerns were raised about

developing relationships with others while facing constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic led to isolation and social distancing, and limited opportunities for caregivers to engage with each other, including for caregivers in the study. Thus, caregivers expressed concerns around not sharing children's racial and cultural identities and questioned how they can best serve children who do not look like them, especially at a time when opportunities to socialize outside the home were limited.

The theme of "multiracial families" reflected caregivers' questions about how to best support multiracial children. More research is needed in this area as most racial socialization literature focuses on mono-racial families (Atkin & Yoo, 2019).

Finally, the theme of "own biases" was in line with some of the themes that surfaced under practices. Primarily white caregivers expressed the importance of self-reflection and coming to terms with their own biases. Research with teachers indicates that self-reflection is a crucial component to improved teaching practices (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2012), and this is presumably the case for beliefs as deep-seated as assumptions held about race. Self-reflection is likely an important practice to engage in for caregivers, and especially for white caregivers, as racial socialization and anti-racist caregiving starts with the self, including being aware of one's own beliefs, biases, identities, and racialized experiences.

Caregivers' Race and Roles: Racial Socialization Dilemmas

A slightly larger proportion of white caregivers, compared to BIPOC caregivers, reported the themes of self-love in a racist world, whiteness, and relationships and community. Possibly, white caregivers caring for BIPOC children are keenly aware of the racism these children will face in white settings, and are aware of how their own and others' whiteness can perpetuate white privilege and white supremacy. Some white caregivers may also be aware of the need to surround themselves with families and community members of color, so that BIPOC children in their care have opportunities to see BIPOC excellence. Conversely, a slightly larger proportion of BIPOC caregivers, compared to white caregivers, mentioned others' biases as a theme. BIPOC caregivers may have experienced on their own skin the stinging impact of bias and prejudice, and may be especially concerned about peers', teachers', and others' biases impacting BIPOC children.

In terms of roles, a larger proportion of familial caregivers, compared to non-familial caregivers, reported the themes of self-love in a racist world, whiteness, and others' biases, whereas a larger proportion of non-familial caregivers mentioned relationships and community. This is to be

expected as generally familial caregivers are more likely to engage in racial socialization, which also means that they would have more questions and concerns regarding racial socialization dynamics. Also, familial caregivers may be less likely to shy away from addressing more challenging topics (e.g., racism, whiteness, biases) due to not having their job on the line, whereas non-familial caregivers may be especially in need of support in the form of community to better be able to engage in racial socialization.

Limitations and Future Directions

Participants were likely a select group who were more conscious of how race and racism impact the lives of young children compared to other caregivers, given the primary recruitment method of utilizing an organization that engages with the racial socialization of children. This may mean that fewer participants, even white participants, reported practices around colorblindness or other aspects of racial socialization than what would be found in a more representative sample. Further, the mission of EmbraceRace was provided to the participants upfront, which could have pressured participants to respond in a way that aligned with this mission. Also, converting qualitative into quantitative data and relying on basic statistical tests, like chi-square tests, can lead to a loss in the meaning and complexity of results (Fakis et al., 2014). Therefore, more nuanced methods of converting qualitative data into quantitative data are needed than what was used in the current study (see Halevi Hochwald et al., 2023) and more advanced statistical methods are needed to explore complex relationships among variables (Fakis et al., 2014).

In addition, each of the individual racial socialization themes were reported by half, and often less, of caregivers. The actual number of participants who reported any themes that were broken down by race and roles ranged from 27 to 72 participants, or from 15.6 to 41.6% of the sample, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. This likely means that even among caregivers who are conscious about issues of race and racism, some of the practices and dilemmas reported are fairly infrequent occurrences. An explanation for this may be that the study commenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when caregivers had many other demands and worries on their mind, as childcare facilities were limited or closed and as children's and caregivers' health and lives were at stake.

Relatedly, results of racial and role differences in responses should be interpreted with caution as chance may account for some of the differences, especially given that statistically significant differences were not detected. Future studies could explore with more nuance how and why racial socialization practices may differ among caregivers who are for instance parents or grandparents taking care of just a few children, versus educators who may be caring for many

children at a time. Also, the nature of the relationship that familial vs. non-familial caregivers have with children likely impacts approaches and reasons for engaging in racial socialization, something that could be explored in future work.

Another caveat is that the questions used to assess racial socialization were not traditional measures. Asking caregivers about their practices and dilemmas surrounding nurturing joy and resilience in young BIPOC children may not translate to assessing how, what, and why caregivers communicate messages around race and racism to BIPOC children (i.e., racial socialization). It is conceivable that participants were not aware that racial socialization is what was assessed, weakening the validity of the study. Also, participants could have over-reported positive aspects of racial socialization and under-reported negative aspects due to the nature of the questions asking about joy and resilience. Further, the survey instrument used specifically asked about racial socialization in the context of an online community. This is very different from asking about this topic generally, outside of the confines of online platforms, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Also, participants were asked to keep their responses brief. Thus, it is possible that the study missed some important ways in which caregivers racially socialize young BIPOC children.

Future research should incorporate interviews and observations to gain an in-depth understanding of how racial socialization manifests across various contexts. Some research with Black parents (e.g., Caughy et al., 2011; Howard et al., 2013) has relied on both interview and observational methodologies to assess racial socialization. There is a need to incorporate interviews and observations with non-familial caregivers to capture how racial socialization plays out in real-life contexts where children are located. Additionally, the current study did not allow for the examination of developmental trends in racial socialization, which is important to assess, as most caregivers cared for an age range of children. Future studies could explore age-related patterns in racial socialization among caregivers with various racial identities and caregiving roles. Finally, future studies may examine how racial socialization may differ based on children's racial identities. There is some indication that the racial identities of children impact racial socialization (Csizmadia et al., 2014; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Importantly, future research could capture young children's experiences with racial socialization to better understand how adults' racial socialization intentions and practices impact children themselves. Children's perceptions, voices, and interpretations are much needed in the racial socialization literature.

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Data availability

The data, methods used in the analysis, and materials used to conduct the research are available to any researcher wishing to replicate the study via contacting the author. Findings have not been previously published in part or in whole.

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