P.R.I.D.E.: Positive Racial Identity Development in Early Education

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P.R.I.D.E.: POSITIVE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION

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Abstract: Racism negatively affects children of color in the United States, particularly Black children. Theirs is a history of marginalization since the slavery era, and the impacts are cognitive, social, and psychological. Additionally, Black children face unique challenges upon entering formal education, resulting in disturbing academic outcomes. Yet, adults can facilitate Black children's development of positive racial identity to help them handle the negative implications of experiencing racism across their lifespan. A description of the research related to positive racial identity is provided along with presentation of the P.R.I.D.E. program, a Pittsburgh-based effort that is designed to help adults build the knowledge and skills needed to support Black children with this aspect of healthy development, thereby interrupting the cycle of racial oppression. A developmental framework for exploring race and child development is introduced. Strategies for teacher growth and classroom application are described along with suggestions for future direction.

Race is a social and political concept, not a scientific one. It has been defined as a *social construct* - something fashioned by individuals at a specific time for an explicit purpose – and described as *not real*. Racism on the other hand is very real. Critical race theorists describe it as 'normal' (Delgado & Stefancic 2000), anti-racists activists describe it as 'racial prejudice plus power', (People's Institute for Survival and Beyond 2019), and still other scholars define it as 'the practice of a double standard based on ancestry' (Fields & Fields, 2014). Combined, these descriptions tell us that racism is everywhere and involves more than just thoughts and beliefs. In fact, very often it is directly tied to harmful discrimination, exclusion, and even violence.

Racism is also persistent. It has existed in America since the colonization of the United States (U.S.). and still negatively impacts society and the individuals within it, including young children. In the U.S., all children are affected negatively by racism (Clark & Clark, 1939; Janson & Hazler, 2004), but children of color experience racism differently than White children, or children who are perceived as 'White' – even in utero. For example, Rosenthal et al. (2018) observed that when African American and Latina mothers reported experiencing racism or discrimination during their pregnancies, they were more likely to have children with low birth weights and with difficulty achieving developmental milestones.

Because Black people have historically been assigned the lowest status in the American racial hierarchy, U.S. racism causes undue harm to Black children in particular. From physical health and nutrition (Pachter & Coll, 2009) to mental health (Trent, Dooley, & Dougé, 2019) and teacher expectations (Cherng, 2017), the research reveals the myriad ways racism harms Black children. As children continue to develop, racism can layer on additional adverse childhood experiences (ACES) which they are more likely to face, partially due to the economic impacts of racism on their families and communities. Personal racialized experiences along with negative incidents that might occur in neglected or distressed neighborhoods, can result in an accumulation of unfavorable encounters for some Black children (Cronholm et al., 2015). Not every child faces these experiences, but there is a host of rapidly changing racialized experiences that Black children do face, from negative portrayals of Black people in news stories, to racial bullying, to invisibility in their classroom curricula.

The onus is on all of us, particularly White people, to address racism because White people a) represent the majority of early educators, b) experience the systemic advantages that racism produces, and c) are better situated to promote an anti-racist agenda because of positionality and power. Throughout history, many Whites have acted as allies in combating racism. As racism morphs and changes, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of its history, to develop new methods to dismantle it, and to have everyone engaged in anti-racism.

Historical Context for the Impacts of Racism on Black Children

The long history of White supremacy in the U.S. laid the groundwork for a society in which every institution and policy was (and is) built around reinforcing racism. These institutions and policies were created by people who lacked both the will and the collective critical consciousness for seeing and addressing racism. The result has been racism that persists without active intentionality.

Understanding the history of racism in the U.S. is essential for understanding how it impacts everyone, particularly Black children, today. For instance, there is evidence to suggest that American slaves were small in stature compared with Caribbean slaves and that enslaved American children were also smaller than children in developing countries today, implying a unique form of neglect. If slave children survived their early years and entered the labor force, their health improved but only because of increased food allowances (King, 2011). Post-slavery, during the Jim Crow era, admonitions from adults taught Black children that they had to follow rules of racial behavior or face the consequences, which ranged from parental, peer, or community disapproval to verbal or physical abuse or even lynching (Ritterhouse, 2006). These tactics mimic, in many ways, the contemporary adultification of Black children. An examination of the education of Black children after the Brown v. Board of Education decision revealed that many school districts in the country used any variety of stalling tactics in an effort to evade implementing change called for in this significant Supreme Court ruling. The Court itself did not address the de facto segregation that existed for decades until it was presented with yet another legal case in 1973, nearly 20 years after the Brown decision (Gordon, 1994).

Today, a contemporary exploration of American schools reveals resegregation that negatively impacts Black and Latinx students (Orfield & Yun, 1999). This, combined with disproportionate discipline in school settings (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010) represents new ways to achieve the same goal—the exclusion of Black children. In addition, there are language challenges many Black children face upon entering the school system which are also the result of historical racism. According to Perry and Delpit (1998), when teachers' assessments of competence were influenced by the language children speak, and their students used African American Vernacular English (AAVE), teachers developed low expectations and were more likely to teach those students less. While linguists have long recognized AAVE as a legitimate language created by Blacks in southern states during and after the slavery era, little has been done to address negative teacher attitudes, behaviors, and assessments of students speaking the language or for that matter negative teacher attitudes towards those Black students who *do* speak Academic English in the classroom.

These examples demonstrate clearly that Black children are impacted by racism throughout history and throughout their lives, by being a) harmed personally through racialized experiences, b) affected as a result of living in a highly racialized society and absorbing racial messages and attitudes, and c) impacted by the socioeconomic influences of racism within their environment. These vulnerabilities and threats have existed for centuries, just as racism has manifested in our society for centuries. The likelihood that racism will continue to affect Black children socially, emotionally, psychologically, and cognitively makes it clear that adults should bolster Black children's ability to withstand and counter the harm or invisibility they may encounter. While we work to dismantle racism, we must at the same time prepare Black children for life in a racist society. Black children have to develop resilience if they are to thrive in such an environment. Research suggests that one way to do this is to cultivate Black children's positive racial identity development from their earliest years. Some adults who care for and teach Black children have known this and worked to support positive racial identity for as long as racism has existed.

Positive Racial Identity Development in Early Education

The P.R.I.D.E. Program, located in the Office of Child Development at the University of Pittsburgh, is an early childhood effort designed to help the important adults in children's lives—parents, caregivers, teachers, and community members—build the knowledge and skills needed to support children's positive racial identity development. Both the acronym and the concept aim to draw attention to the need for greater focus through community programs and increased research on racial identity as it relates to children 0 to 8 years old.

The program engages teachers through multiple strategies including the P.R.I.D.E. speaker series, where they learn from experts in the field about the ways children learn about race; the P.R.I.D.E. teacher cohort program which entails monthly learning sessions in addition to the speaker series events; the P.R.I.D.E. Professional

Development component which provides fee-for-service in-depth racial awareness training for professionals working with young children; and the P.R.I.D.E. Pop Up mini art festivals, which pair teachers with artists to create and implement affirming arts activities offered during one-day festivals. Both groups of teachers (cohort and Pop Up) are selected from a pool of applicants solicited throughout the city of Pittsburgh. Professional development is offered at a cost to any organization interested in hiring the P.R.I.D.E. team for those services. P.R.I.D.E. supports parents both at the art festival events and through its Parent Village program which entails 6 weekly meetings with parents during which they learn ways to support their children's positive racial identity related to their appearance (skin color and hair) and their history (learning about Africa, the diaspora and Africana culture). Parents are recruited through the program's partnership with Family Support Centers.

Children's Understanding of Race in the Early Years

As many children are entering early schooling, they are also beginning to notice race, develop beliefs related to race, form their own racial identity, and make decisions based on race (Quintana & McKown, 2008). Young children in the U.S. are being raised in a society that conveys racist messages at every turn. Even if no one is directly talking to them about race, children learn about race by being exposed to segregated neighborhoods, books and television shows that are more likely to have White characters in leading roles, adults that often choose to spend more personal time with people of the same race, and other signals that a person's race has implications for the power and meaning they are afforded. Although there are aspects of children's cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional development that may impact the way they take in and make sense of racial messages, attending to these aspects of development alone is not sufficient for fully understanding how children's racial identity development occurs.

Development is shaped by contextual factors, and different ways of making meaning about one's race may unfold and be differentially adaptive based on the context a child is growing up in (Quintana & McKown, 2008). Therefore, racial identity development must be understood in conjunction with understanding essential dynamics that create the context in which Black children are raised, including how power is distributed, the history of race in the U.S., and the policies and practices that perpetuate racial inequities. Within this context, Black children's racial identity begins developing from the earliest years and continues throughout their lives. The research findings described below outline how this process emerges in early childhood.

Researchers have documented that children as young as six months old notice skin color differences and are able to categorize people by race (Katz & Kofkin, 1997). It is possible that this awareness may begin even earlier. By the time children are two years old, they begin to use those racial categories to make sense of other people's behaviors (Hirschfeld, 2008) and are favoring children with the same race as themselves (Patterson & Bigler, 2006). There is quite a significant shift, however, from 2 ½ to 3 years old. At 2 ½ years, researchers have found that when asked to select who they would like to play with from a set of unfamiliar children's photos, children typically select same race peers, indicating an in-group bias. But children at 3 years old began to shift to a pro-White bias, selecting the photo of a White child when asked to choose a playmate, regardless of their own race (Katz & Kofkin, 1997). It appears that early positive views of one's own race shift to a pro-White bias.

Because many children enter preschool between the ages of three and five, research findings often describe children's experiences in that context. For example, in an extensive observational study, Van Ausdale & Feagin (2001) found that children made choices about who to play with and who to exclude in the classroom based on race. The pro-White biases researchers found among both White children and children of color (MacNevin & Berman, 2017) are present whether the adults in their lives have similar racial biases or not (Aboud, 2008; Hirschfeld, 2008; Katz, 2003; Katz & Kofkin, 1997; Patterson & Bigler, 2006; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). As children enter formal schooling, pro-White biases may lessen somewhat (Katz & Kofkin, 1997), negative biases against children of color may weaken toward 2nd and 3rd grade (Aboud, 2008, 2003) and Black children's pro-Black attitudes may increase (Aboud & Doyle, 1995). In other words, over time, Black children's positive racial identity may re-emerge. The question then becomes, should we anticipate that they will 'bounce back' or should we intervene with positive messages at every stage of development?

In the context of Black children's emerging understanding about how race has meaning in their society, there are certain key developmental issues that arise and help to situate these research findings in the specific developmental tasks of the early years. It is important to note, however, that there have been many instances in which models of child development, parenting, and teaching are derived from White and European samples and inappropriately applied to Black children (Quintana et al., 2006). In the present analysis, we offer Table 1 with a list

of developmental issues and how they manifest for learning about race, with this consideration in mind. One key takeaway from this table is that the work of racial identity development does not need to be an add-on to the child development work that parents and teachers are already doing. Racial identity development is woven into every interaction and milestone that children engage in. It is the adult's job to see how race is present and where there are opportunities for it to be affirmed and spoken up for throughout early experiences. Further research is needed to carefully critique each developmental process across races.

Table 1.
Race and Young Children: A Developmental Framework

Developmental Issue *Children Need To…*	**What Children Often Learn About Race** *Society Teaches Black Children…*	**What Children Should Learn** *Adults Must Teach Black Children…*
Establish a sense of trust and safety	Being a certain race is sometimes not safe. Adults can't always be trusted to protect them from racial bias.	Racial bias is wrong and will be addressed fairly and openly by the adults in their lives who will protect them.
Develop a sense of autonomy with connectedness	Individuality and independence are more desirable than connectedness. Learning about being connected to one's race does not have a place in school. One's family and communal connections may be viewed as lesser than the mainstream population.	A wide range of models of independence within meaningful relationships exist. Connecting with one's racial group through family culture and community activities is good, healthy. Having a broader familial makeup (i.e., extended family) is different, not deficient.
Develop a sense of empowerment and efficacy	One's efficacy or ability can be questioned because of race, making empowerment more difficult to achieve.	All people can have a positive effect on the world regardless of race or ethnicity. Having a different way of seeing and approaching the world is a good thing.
Establish racial and gender identity	The dominant race is 'best' and perceiving one's own race as 'not as good' is accepted. Being a male of African descent carries peril.	All aspects of their identity, including race, ethnicity, and gender are valued.
Develop an appreciation of diversity among people	Instances of racial and ethnic stereotyping or prejudice are uncomfortable, should not be discussed, and may not be dealt with by adults.	There are diverse peoples in the world with varied talents, skills, and needs, who can treat each other with respect. Stereotyping and prejudice are hurtful, and adults will intervene when needed.
Construct the foundations of morality and social responsibility	Conversations, books, and activities about morality and social responsibility often overlook or avoid addressing racial issues.	How to engage with stories and activities that help them develop critical thinking skills and give opportunities to make positive change, including changing racial attitudes & behavior.
Have opportunities for meaningful play	Excluding other children or being excluded from play because of race will not be addressed by adults. Talking about and playing out feelings about race is taboo.	Teachers and parents will respond in developmentally appropriate ways to acts of race-based exclusion which is wrong and hurtful to others. Adults will help them understand and work out feelings about race through play and other learning methods.

Note. Race and Young Children: A Developmental Framework, by Dr. Aisha White, University of Pittsburgh, Office of Child Development. (© 2016)

Racial Socialization

Children have the capacity to interpret societal assumptions, biases, and ideas about what it means to be African American, male or female, or overweight. But research has demonstrated the undifferentiated cognitive processing of preschool children that is subsequently not integrated into their concept of the self. With cognitive maturation, however, children's capacity to internalize biases increases unless there is active (and consistent) intervention to minimize the influence (Swanson, Cunningham, Youngblood, & Spencer, 2009). Adults can interrupt that internalization through racial socialization.

Parents serve as the primary socializing agent for children. That is, they prepare children to accept adult roles and responsibilities through teaching beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior. On top of these basic responsibilities, African American parents face the task of raising their children to have a positive self-concept, racial identity, and personal identity in the face of racism. Parents work to accomplish this task through racial socialization, which involves conveying messages to their children that focus on racial pride, African heritage, and familial and cultural history (Thomas & Speight, 1999), as well as the importance of education, achievement and hard work (Edwards 2017). Parents actively utilize processes (conversations, readings) and identify content (events, books, films) that will be useful in communicating these positive messages. Parents who employ racial socialization are countering societal prejudices by raising their children to be physically and emotionally healthy and to cope with racism despite living in an oppressive environment. At the same time, they are facilitating children's more advanced cognitive interpretations of race and color in the United States. Through these practices, parents are helping their children grow to have positive feelings about membership in their family, extended family, and the larger African diaspora.

Having a positive racial identity has been shown to build resilience to racism (Marcelo & Yates, 2019). Depending on their experiences, children may be aware very early in life of power differences that exist between racial groups. That one particular race is more highly valued and privileged than another is a condition all people of color must grapple with. How one develops and maintains a healthy sense of self in the face of this knowledge is a critical developmental issue for Black children (Lin, n.d.), and one that is the focus of positive racial socialization practices.

The need for P.R.I.D.E. in the School Setting

Child care or early schooling is often the first institution that children experience outside of the home, and it includes multiple pathways for racism to impact the child's development either directly or via interactions with their family (Gee, Walsemann, & Brondolo, 2012). At school, Black children may be treated negatively due to the ways others perceive them because they rarely, if ever, share the same race as their teachers (Downer, Goble, Meyers, & Pianta, 2016). They also encounter teachers who rarely acknowledge race and overwhelmingly endorse a colorblind[1] (or color-evasive) approach (Briggs, 2019; Husband, 2012). Their treatment could also be the result of implicit racial biases that surface in day-to-day discipline as well as over-referral of Black children for suspensions and expulsions from school (Giliam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti, & Shic, 2016; Zinsser & Wanless, 2019). Finally, Black children rarely see their race reflected in the curriculum, and even the way that knowledge is created and valued stems from a Eurocentric lens (Banks, 1991) that rarely encourages children to take a critical view of this perspective and challenge it (Dei., 1999).

Most adults who care for and teach young children are not aware of or skilled in the anti-racism work that is needed to combat racism in the classroom. A number of factors could contribute to this. *Inexperience*, for instance, can get in the way of practice. According to Boutte et. al. (2011), teachers' reluctance to discuss issues of race, color, and racism does not stem from their unwillingness, but rather from unfamiliarity with the knowledge base and available resources. Teacher *beliefs* about child development could also result in inaction. According to Husband (2010), many early childhood educators genuinely believe that children are "too young" to engage in critical discussions of race. The inactivity could also have to do with teacher *contentment* and a need to exist comfortably within the environment. According to Castagno (2008), most White educators are reluctant to name things that are perceived as uncomfortable or threatening to the established social order. They possess a strong

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[1] Here we use the term colorblind as it is the term most familiar to scholars and laypersons. However, we agree that 'color evasive' is a more appropriate term for the reasons laid out in the interrogation of colorblind racial ideology by Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, (2017).

desire for comfort and ideological safety within their classrooms and tend to hold a shared allegiance to the status quo, presumably because it generally works for them and they have rarely experienced spaces that operate in any other way. The sum total of these patterns is that race is not part of the accepted or expected discourse within schools.

Practices to Support P.R.I.D.E. in Classrooms

Our research and experiences working with artists, educators, and parents in the P.R.I.D.E. program have produced core messages adults can and should be imparting to children to strengthen their positive racial identity. Across all of the ways to build "pride," a few cross-cutting themes stand out, comprising teaching children that (1) there is a wide range of ways to be a valued member of this society, including ways that are identified with being Black, (2) adults can be trusted to talk with you about race, and to notice and stand up against instances of racial stereotyping, prejudice, and exclusion, and (3) it is important to think critically about and challenge messages you get from the world that counter positive racial identity development (see Table 1). Overall, helping children see how central race is to their experiences in U.S. society, including its intersections with their other social identities, is a critical part of current conceptualizations of early childhood anti-racist education (Escayg, 2018), and relates to positive conceptualizations of being Black. When children are exposed to anti-racist teaching and see the centrality of race, they will also see that its influence goes beyond interpersonal interactions, and also impacts them through institutions that reinforce power and oppression based on race. This includes recognizing White privilege and the advantages that it brings. More engagement from scholars and practitioners in the early childhood education field, however, would help to further interrogate and clarify how anti-racist education can be applied in the early years. It is important to emphasize that all of the ways of supporting racial identity development for Black children require that the adult has developed a certain level of racial literacy (Wanless, White, Spear, Cross, & Jackson, 2019), or at least that they see and recognize the impact of race on young children's lives.

Although it is still a common practice, not directly acknowledging the centrality of race, institutional racism, and White privilege leaves no room for adults to promote positive racial identity. If you claim you cannot see color, then it is not possible to celebrate it. As one teacher said, "it's really detrimental to tell children they don't see what they're seeing and they're not feeling what they just felt—that they can't trust their eyes and they can't trust their gut" (Cole & Verwayne, 2018, p. 90). To promote positive racial identity, we must tell children that we see the racial dynamics in our society, we know the history that has led us to this point, and that we are here—as their important adults—to help them figure out how to make sense of and react to what they notice. In other words, ignoring race and racism is harmful because it ignores what children are seeing with their own eyes, and at the same time reinforces and perpetuates power imbalances and White privilege.

There are specific ways to approach our role in children's racial identity development that fit their developmental stage, but across all stages, how we choose 'to be' can be either harmful or helpful. For instance, it is harmful to ignore race (to be Color Evasive), it is helpful to teach about and affirm Black children's race (to be Color Aware), and it is ideal to take it one step further and instill a sense of agency to act against discrimination and racism (to be for Social Justice) (Wanless & Crawford, 2016, p. 10). In early childhood classrooms, educators can be color aware and social justice oriented in the way they weave anti-racism into their conversations with children, into their classroom environment, and into the opportunities they offer children to practice using their voice to speak up against individual and institutional oppression (see Table 2).

Table 2.
Race-Related Teaching and Caregiving Practices (RRTCP)

Social Justice	This approach is ideal because it empowers children to stand against discrimination. Adults help children learn how to actively recognize and act on race-related injustices. Taking a social justice approach means seeking out teachable moments that specifically have to do with unfairness or discrimination as well as intentionally creating these learning opportunities.
Color-Aware	To be color-aware is to intentionally teach children about race and tell them that we see and value their race because it is an important part of who they are. Adults bring up race in direct and positive ways, take advantage of teachable moments and created moments, and respond to children's race-related questions and interactions with books and activities to advance the conversation.

Colorblind or Color-Evasive	This is a common, yet ineffective and harmful approach, in which adults do not directly talk about race with children, yet the absence of an intentional message about race sends a powerful message in itself. Children are left to develop their own understandings about race, and if they ask questions, they may be met with adults declining to talk about race. This approach is damaging to children's emerging racial identity.

Note. Adapted from Wanless & Crawford (2016).

Have Conversations about Race

Whether talking about race is something that is uncomfortable for educators or not, learning to discuss it by participating in trainings and dialogue with other teachers and with children's families is an important first step to being able to talk with children. Once educators feel equipped to engage in these conversations about race, they can begin to gradually have open, honest, and frequent conversations with children about racial differences, heritage, inequities, and racism. It is important for children to know that they can trust adults not to judge them because of their comments or because of adults' unwillingness to engage in their questions about race. Instead, adults can let children know they are interested in knowing what they are seeing, hearing, and feeling about their race. These conversations could begin with something as simple as using interesting ways to describe each child's skin tone— whipped cream, vanilla, coffee, chocolate, ginger, caramel. No matter the conversation, it will be most effective if it is grounded in being present and listening to the child, showing racial humility, modeling an awareness of positionality, and a genuine willingness to admit, if needed, to not knowing how to answer a question. Instead, show commitment to work with the child to use books and other people to find answers. Ideally, that kind of interaction will lead to an ongoing conversation rather than a one-time exchange.

Another way to cultivate trust is by practicing non-verbal communication methods, tone of voice, and body language that help children understand that talking about race is not different from other conversations. Without practice, biases and discomfort often come across in subtle communication cues that children use to interpret underlying meaning (Lewis, 2003). Practicing speaking about race has been shown to be important for adolescents building social justice skills (Richards-Schuster & Aldana, 2013), and when young children do the same, this may set the stage for a child to be able to speak up against racism in the future.

Once educators build children's trust, they should feel more open to talk about race-based incidents that are problematic, such as if they feel they have been excluded because of their race. Research suggests that children often hide these experiences from adults (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). These interpersonal experiences are common in the early childhood classroom and are important opportunities for noticing, naming, and disrupting racial power imbalances. It will likely require planned conversations, however, to begin to have meaningful conversations with children about institutional racism and how it may impact Black children's P.R.I.D.E. Although more work is needed in the field to imagine how abstract concepts like institutional racism can be taught in concrete ways that make sense to children, they are essential for giving racism and racial identity development contextual grounding (Escayg, 2018). Research with elementary children suggests that reading non-fiction picture books may be one effective way to make discussion of structural racism more accessible to children, and teachers are better equipped to read and discuss picture books about racism when they have prior training on the themes of the books (Husband, 2019; Lazar & Offenberg, 2011; Souto-Manning, 2009).

Create an Environment that Reflects and Affirms the Child's Race

Creating a classroom environment that counters society's centering of Whiteness and negativity of Blackness requires attention to materials such as music and family photos, and intentionality about the use of space. In fact, research suggests that when children use photos to bring stories of their families to school, there is an opportunity for educators to directly connect with and affirm children's experiences, background, and culture (Strickland, Keat, & Marinak, 2010). Rather than generic images of Black families, these educators got to know what stories children wanted to share about their families and could give positive and authentic feedback to show that these stories and experiences were valuable and to be celebrated. It is possible that these photos and stories will lead to more family visits to the classroom, which creates another opportunity to affirm children's race and their identities as members of their family.

It is important that children see their race woven throughout their experiences. Think about other learning moments (storytime, meals, walks around the neighborhood) and how children may see their race and others represented in positive and real ways. For example, adults can use books about racially-diverse people, people who

are young and old, and of different ethnicities as a way to broaden children's awareness of the world's diverse populace (e.g., Lee & Low Books, nd.). By weaving in these examples of racially diverse people, children can also come to see that people have multiple characteristics, even if they have the same race. Moreover, the ability to distinguish people across races, through increased exposure to a wide range of people and images, has been shown to relate to a decrease in children's implicit racial bias (Xiao et al., 2015). This nuanced understanding of people helps children build complex thinking, and counters stereotypes.

Other materials throughout the classroom can be strategically placed to elicit conversations and extend picture book discussions. For example, having skin tone markers in the art area allows children to wonder about their own skin color and differences/similarities with others' skin colors and express pride in who they are. To support and encourage this expression, adults can introduce books which specifically discuss different skin colors such as *Shades of Black* (Pinkney & Pinkney, 2006), or *All the Colors We Are: The Story of How We Get Our Skin Color* (Kissinger, 2014). Also, having puzzles, games (e.g., matching games with photographs of diverse children) and dolls with a wide range of races represented also can provide conversation starters and exposure for children in more homogeneous neighborhoods. Providing dramatic play areas that represent a range of neighborhood props, foods, magazines, and other materials can also invite children to use race-related themes in their pretend play (Lee, Ramsey, & Sweeney, 2008).

Provide Opportunities for Children to Practice Using Their Voice

For Black children to develop a positive racial identity, they need to get repeated messages that their ideas are valued. This begins to happen during conversations, but can be further developed when educators offer opportunities for Black children to make choices about independent versus group activities, which area in the classroom to play in, and for free self-expression via language, art, and other media. Choices can also be more formal in offering regular opportunities to vote on classroom activities and decisions, and allowing children with dissenting opinions to practice speaking up and explaining their thinking to others. This may include role playing, modeling language for disagreement, and reading books that show characters speaking up against the majority. This skill can move beyond the classroom as educators can help children to challenge racism and inequities in their neighborhoods.

By learning to challenge and think differently than the majority, children are developing skills that will help them eventually to question White privilege and power and the assumption that racism and oppression must be the normal way of life in U.S. society. Further, exposing children to community role models, such as people who openly challenge racism, may help them develop a sense that they can use their voice for this struggle too (Ellis-Williams, 2007).

Taking an Ecological Approach: Moving Beyond the Early Education Classroom

In many ways, having continuity in race-related practices across the environments that children are in (e.g., home, school, childcare, afterschool, extended family homes) is ideal because it is easier for children to adjust when they transition across settings and to understand the consistent messages they are getting from their important adults. The benefits of positive racial identity, however, are so important, that it is better for one setting to promote "pride" than for none. If this one setting is not the child's home, though, it is critical that the teacher or other caregiver begins communicating with the child's family about their approach so that families are aware of what their children are learning.

The P.R.I.D.E. Program at the University of Pittsburgh's Office of Child Development (www.racepride.pitt.edu) does in fact take an ecological approach to promoting positive racial identity for young Black children. Through its *Professional Development* sessions, the program presents concrete and relatable examples of historical racism that has impacted the participants' specific institutions, from museums to libraries. The *Parent Village* program informs parents of the ways that racism evolved in the U.S. as well as the internalized racial oppression practices the African American community engaged in, from the Brown Paper bag test to the hair "ruler" test. The *Pop-Up Mini Art Festivals* use the arts to create a Black centered space for children and families, and the *Speaker Series* offers information and dialogue opportunities to the broader community. By using a wide array of components, this program is able to create a community that gives racially affirming messages to Black children through many different pathways.

Conclusion

It is important to note again that most adults, particularly teachers, are not well-prepared to talk to young children about race. There is some research that examines this issue in family racial socialization (Howard et al., 2013; Hughes et al., 2006; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thornton et al., 1990), pre-service teacher belief changes during university coursework (Demoiny, 2017; Briggs, 2019) and in-service teacher experiences in classrooms (Utt & Tochluk, 2016). Although more research is needed, it is clear that there is internal work to be done for adults to become comfortable, knowledgeable, and effective when talking with children about race. This likely includes examining one's own biases and positionality, learning about race in the U.S. both historically and contemporaneously, and working with other adults in the child's life to share ideas and determine how to best support the child, together.

The P.R.I.D.E. program does this work by reaching parents and in-service educators. Our efforts have shown that by taking in-depth and comprehensive approaches to race, we can help adults gain the skills and knowledge necessary to support children in ways that build positive feelings about themselves, their heritage, and their history. In additional to being one of few programs in the city that work intentionally to build Black children's positive racial identity, the P.R.I.D.E. program is unique in its multifaceted approach that 1) offers several entryways to experience P.R.I.D.E., 2) involves partnerships with various community organizations, and 3) is solidly grounded in the literature. This approach offers a distinctive model for engaging in and studying programming around race and young children. Future research is needed to determine how higher education programs, professional development programs, home visiting programs, and parent education classes can be most effective when preparing adults to support their children's positive racial identity. Meanwhile, future P.R.I.D.E. programming will likely entail exploration of other issues such as race-based language discrimination, longer term engagement with parents and educators, and work with parents of children aged 0-3.

It is clear from the literature that young children notice race. The research also shows that Black children can develop a positive racial identity as a way to counter negative messages they receive about who they are. Although parents and family members may support Black children's racial socialization, work is needed to help early childhood educators embrace the significance of race in their profession, conceptualize anti-racist teaching practices, and push their teaching to include an opportunity for children to engage in social justice. These practices must aim to help children see how race and its intersections with other social identities is central to how they experience life in U.S. society. None of these education strategies can be effective, however, if educators do not prioritize their own learning and development of racial competence. By deeply engaging in their own internal work, educators can develop a level of skill and authenticity that can affirm and facilitate Black children's positive racial identity development.

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