CHAPTER ONE

A Transactional/Ecological Perspective on Ethnic–Racial Identity, Socialization, and Discrimination

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Abstract

We first review current literature on three ethnic–racial dynamics that are considered to be resources and stressors in the lives of ethnic-minority youth: ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination. Next, we propose that a more contextualized view of these ethnic–racial dynamics reveals that they are interdependent, inseparable, and mutually defining and that an ecological/transactional perspective on these ethnic–racial dynamics shifts researchers’ gaze from studying them as individual-level processes to studying the features of settings that produce them. We describe what is known about how identity, socialization, and discrimination occur in four microsystems—families, peers, schools, and neighborhoods—and argue that focusing on specific characteristics of these microsystems in which particular types of identity, socialization, and discrimination processes cooccur would be informative.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Babies Jane, Janice, John, and Jamal are born in the same hospital, same day, same hour. Their parents have much in common as well. They could all be college educated or they could all be high school dropouts. They could be lawyers, or artists, or sanitation workers, or unemployed. They could live and love in any corner of the United States. But they will experience distinctly different realities. Why? Jane and John were born with pinkish skin tones, whereas Janice’s and Jamal’s are shades of brown. Other than family, few people will call attention to their skin color, although they will naturally notice it, as all of us do. The children will be told that it does not matter but they will see and feel that it does. Thus, all four will come to attach some level of meaning to their skin color. They will come to associate it with belonging to an “ethnic” or “racial” group. They will develop ideas about how connected they feel to others like them and will develop positive or negative feelings about their group as a whole. They will gain knowledge about how others view their group and about how societal rewards, penalties, stressors, resources, equity, and justice are distributed accordingly. In sum, as these babies grow, they will accumulate a wealth of “racial knowledge.”

Before proceeding further, it is important to clarify our terminology. We recognize that “race” only minimally identifies biologically or genetically distinct groups and is largely socially constructed. However, race continues to have powerful meaning in the United States, such that the processes of enacting and learning race remain relevant to many youth of color, especially those whom are subject to others’ ascriptive racial designations (Nagel, 1994; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). The concept of “ethnicity”—which is more often represented as chosen, malleable, and fluid (Nagel, 1994)—designates groups of people with shared and intergenerationally transmitted values, language, and traditions. Historically, the term “race” has primarily been used in studies of US-born Blacks and Whites, whereas the term “ethnic” has been used more broadly across multiple groups (Hughes et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor, O’Donnell, et al., 2014; Umaña-Taylor, Quintana, et al., 2014). We use the hyphenated term ethnic–racial, reflecting our belief that both are important in shaping youths’ identity processes, the messages they are given and receive, and their discrimination experiences.
However, for purposes of brevity, we use the term “racial knowledge” to refer to children’s understanding of themselves as ethnic–racial group members, their attitudes toward their own and other groups, and their understandings of racial hierarchies, systems of social stratification, as well as associated processes of prejudice and discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1999).

Developmental scientists and other scholars have studied children’s developing racial knowledge and the forces that shape it over the life course from multiple perspectives and across multiple stages of development. In the social cognition literature, for example, scholars have sought to identify cognitive precursors to race awareness among young children—including labeling, identification, and constancy (e.g., Katz, 2003). Research on children’s racial attitudes has examined the early underpinnings and manifestations of young children’s prejudice, particularly their in-group preference and out-group bias (Bigler & Liben, 2006). Studies of middle childhood have examined the dynamics of children’s peer relations including intergroup processes (McGuire, Rutland, & Nesdale, 2015; Palmer, Rutland, & Cameron, 2015), cross-race friendships (McGlothlin & Killen, 2010; Rowley, Burchinal, Roberts, & Zeisel, 2008), stereotype knowledge (McKown & Strambler, 2009; Verkuyten & Kinket, 2000), and children’s reasoning and moral judgments about race-based social inclusion and exclusion (Hitti, Mulvey, Rutland, Abrams, & Killen, 2014; Killen, Henning, Kelly, Crystal, & Ruck, 2007). Each of these literatures has contributed critical pieces of information about youth’s developing racial knowledge.

Although studies exist across multiple developmental stages, adolescence is a critical period during which youths’ racial knowledge becomes more complex and gains developmental import, due to cognitive advances as well as individual- and setting-level changes that occur during this developmental stage (Brown & Bigler, 2005). In particular, it is during adolescence that youth develop capacities for abstract and metacognitive thought. These capacities permit them to engage in social comparison processes in which they appraise their own experiences relative to others’ experiences and to recognize structures and regularities in larger systems. Thus, adolescents can evaluate the meaning of ethnicity–race and their own group membership in more sophisticated ways than can younger children. In addition, adolescents’ self-concept and identity become increasingly salient as they seek to define themselves as individuals and as members of social groups.
As adolescents spend more time with their peers, a new source of information becomes available for exploring what ethnicity–race means to them. At the level of settings, the combination of adolescents’ physical maturation and their increasing independence, especially during junior high school, may mean that they are more likely to encounter people who judge and interact with them based on predominant ethnic–racial stereotypes, which can include viewing them as threatening and menacing (Way, Hernández, Rogers, & Hughes, 2013). Thus, adolescence is a period during which racial knowledge becomes more intricate, due both to changes occurring within adolescents and to changes occurring in how others perceive and relate to them.

Empirical research on ethnic–racial dynamics during adolescence has focused primarily on three constructs: ethnic–racial identity, ethnic–racial socialization, and ethnic–racial discrimination. Ethnic–racial identity refers both to individuals’ beliefs and attitudes about their ethnic–racial group, including beliefs about others’ views, and to the processes by which these beliefs and attitudes develop (Umana-Taylor, O’Donnell, et al., 2014; Umana-Taylor, Quintana, et al., 2014). Ethnic–racial socialization consists of behaviors, practices, and social regularities that communicate information and worldviews about race and ethnicity to children (Hughes, Del Toro, Rarick, & Way, 2015). Ethnic–racial discrimination refers broadly to unfair or differential treatment on the basis of ethnicity–race (Brown & Bigler, 2005). Over the past decade and a half, the number of studies on ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination has increased exponentially due to the fact that these concepts are highly relevant to a US youth population that is more ethnically and racially diverse than at any prior point in US history. A search in PsycINFO using ethnic or racial as keywords combined with identity, socialization, or discrimination (peer-reviewed articles; children or adolescents as limits) indicated that of 720 of 926 empirical articles on ethnic–racial identity had been published since the year 2000, as had 250 of 282 total articles on ethnic–racial socialization, and 238 of 264 articles on ethnic–racial discrimination. Fortunately, growth in these research literatures has been accompanied by conceptual and methodological advances that have substantially deepened our understanding of how identity, socialization, and discrimination operate as well as for whom and under which conditions (see chapter “Racism, Racial Resilience, and African American Youth Development: Person-Centered Analysis as a Tool to Promote Equity and Justice” by Neblett et al., this volume). Despite this growth, there are two limitations of the existing literature that we
address in this chapter. First, scholars have, understandably, approached the concepts of identity, socialization, and discrimination as separate entities that can be studied independently. We propose, instead, that these phenomena are interdependent, cooccurring—indeed mutually defining—elements of a system of racial knowledge that youth configure, reconfigure, and act upon. Second, scholars have focused too narrowly on adolescents’ ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination as person-level processes, with insufficient attention to identifying characteristics of the contexts in which they are embedded. As a result of this person-level focus, empirical studies have produced limited information about setting-level levers for change that might more fully support and promote positive outcomes among youth. Recognizing the dynamic interdependence of identity, socialization, and discrimination across multiple ecological environments shifts researchers’ gaze toward setting-level, rather than individual-level, change to promote youths’ positive development.

Accordingly, our goals in this chapter are twofold. First, we provide a broad overview of the literature on adolescents’ ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences, establishing the significance of these processes for adolescents. In particular, for each of these concepts, we highlight conceptual and empirical advances including inclusion of multiple ethnic–racial groups, multidimensional conceptualization and assessment of constructs, attention to developmental change, and examination of consequences across multiple developmental domains. We also discuss empirical findings regarding relationships between these ethnic–racial phenomena. Second, drawing on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) bioecological model, Altman and Rogoff’s (1987) transactional worldview, and sociocultural approaches to identity (Moje & Martinez, 2007; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995), we describe how ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination are mutually defining and inseparable processes deeply rooted in the microsystems in which youth operate—including family, peer group, school, and neighborhood. Notably, because racial knowledge is acquired and enacted at all levels of the ecological environment, our focus on microsystems is only a first step toward elaborating an ecological/transactional perspective. We suggest that, in order to more fully understand the interplay between these ethnic–racial dynamics and adolescents’ positive development, researchers need to move beyond individual-level frameworks to identify the characteristics of settings in which particular types of identities, socialization experiences, and discrimination experiences coexist to influence development.
2. ETHNIC–RACIAL IDENTITY

Among the most widely recognized tasks adolescents face is that of coming to terms with who they want to be and how they fit into existing social groups and settings. This identity seeking process involves trying on and discarding multiple identities while weighing values, goals, and behaviors in relation to the various roles they might adopt across life contexts. Identity development includes resolution of personal identities—representations of who the self is as distinct from others—and of social identities—representations of who the self is based on membership in social categories and groups. All people develop a portfolio of identities that emerge to greater or lesser extents in a given moment depending on the situation they are in and the audience they are facing (Nagel, 1994). Moreover, identities are subject to ascriptive processes in which others shape, reinforce, and sometimes constrain who one is permitted to be (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Both personal and social identities affect how individuals appraise their world and their social and psychological experiences across time and across settings.

Ethnic–racial identities are key components of adolescents’ social identities. They are especially salient for ethnic–racial minority youth who must reconcile their group membership with their awareness of stereotypes and expectations that others hold about their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Way et al., 2013). To date, the literature on ethnic–racial identity has been concerned with two primary components—one focused on how identities develop and a second focused on its evaluative components (Umana-Taylor, O’Donnell, et al., 2014; Umana-Taylor, Quintana, et al., 2014).

Drawing on ego-identity frameworks, scholars studying processes of ethnic–racial identity development contend that it is a stage-like phenomenon in which the meaning of ethnicity–race is initially unexamined (Phinney, 1993). Identity development involves an active search for information about the meaning of group membership followed by identity resolution, which ideally includes commitment to and affirmation of one’s ethnic–racial group. Some stage models incorporate a stimulus for identity exploration, termed an “encounter” in Cross’s Nigrescence model (Cross, 2005). Studies locate the period of intense exploration in late adolescence and early adulthood (French, Seidman, & Allen, 2006; Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006). For instance, Yip et al. (2006) compared the identity statuses of African American adolescents, college students, and adults, using cluster
profiles derived from Phinney’s (1993) proposed stages of identity development. In this study, 42% of adolescents were in the moratorium stage, characterized by active exploration of their ethnicity–race, compared to about 25% of college students or adults. Fewer than one in three adolescents were characterized as being in the achieved status, characterized by an active commitment to the meaning of their ethnicity–race based on intensive exploration, compared with about one-half of college students or adults. In a study of adolescent mothers, Umaña-Taylor and colleagues reported that identity exploration increased over 5 years among those who were 15 years of age or younger at the initial assessment but not among those who were older. Both younger and older adolescent mothers increased in identity resolution and affirmation over time (Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, Jahromi, & Zeiders, 2015).

Studies of the evaluative components of ethnic–racial identity are rooted in Sellers and colleagues’ widely adopted multidimensional conceptualization of identity (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) which distinguishes the importance of ethnicity–race to one’s self-definition (termed centrality), the importance of identity at a particular moment (termed salience); one’s own evaluations of one’s group (termed private regard); one’s evaluations of others’ views of one’s group (termed public regard); and the content of one’s beliefs about how one should behave as a group member (termed ideology). Distinguishing components of ethnic–racial identity has facilitated critical insights regarding how identities vary across groups and have developmental import. For example, although most studies report relatively high private regard among all adolescents, Chinese youth report lower private regard relative to youth from other ethnic–racial groups (Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008), whereas Latino youth (especially Puerto Rican youth) report high private regard relative to youth from other ethnic–racial groups (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2000; Rivas-Drake et al., 2008). Some comparative studies have found that ethnicity–race is more central to African American youths’ self-concepts, compared to those of Latino youth (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006). Finally, African American youth report lower public regard compared to youth from other ethnic–racial backgrounds (Altschul et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009b). As we shall describe, centrality, private regard, and public regard are also differentially associated with adolescents’ well-being.

Recent longitudinal studies have documented change over time in these identity components, underscoring that ethnic–racial identities are
configured and reconfigured in accordance with shifts in youths’ contexts and experiences. French et al. (2006), in a study of adolescents followed over the transitions from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school, found that increases in private regard were most pronounced immediately following school transitions. The authors suggested that, upon entering new environments, adolescents must learn to navigate new ethnic–racial dynamics. This navigation process provides additional information about the meaning of ethnicity–race and, thus, can result in shifts in adolescents’ identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences. Indeed, studies in which adolescents remain in the same setting have found stability in private regard over time (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Ho & Graham, 2008; Hughes, Way, & Rivas-Drake, 2011; Kiang, Witkow, & Champagne, 2013).

Adolescents’ ideas about others’ views of their ethnic–racial group (public regard) also change over time. Several studies suggest that Black and Latino adolescents become increasingly aware of others’ negative views about their group during middle and high school (Altschul et al., 2006; Ho & Graham, 2008; Hughes, McGill, Ford, & Tubbs, 2011; Hughes, Way, et al., 2011). As with private regard, decreases in public regard probably reflect shifts in racial knowledge that are based on adolescents’ experiences across settings. Consistent with this idea, Seaton, Yip, and Sellers (2009), in a 3-year longitudinal study among African American adolescents, found that public regard decreased only among those who had experienced discrimination. Moreover, in contrast to a decline in public regard among African American, Dominican, and Puerto Rican adolescents, Hughes, McGill, et al. (2011) and Hughes, Way, et al. (2011) found that public regard increased among Chinese adolescents. In light of youths’ astute awareness of ethnic–racial stereotypes (Way et al., 2013), Chinese youth may increasingly learn positive stereotypes about their group from teachers, peers, and other adults.

The past decade of studies has also documented relationships between components of ethnic–racial identity and a broad range of socioemotional, academic, and behavioral outcomes among adolescents. For instance, adolescents who report more attachment and belonging to their ethnic–racial group also report more positive self-concepts (Phinney, 1993; Umaña-Taylor, Vargas-Chanes, Garcia, & Gonzales-Backen, 2008) and more favorable academic adjustment (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2003). More identity exploration has been associated with higher self-esteem (Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004). More positive private regard has also been associated with higher self-esteem (Lee & Yoo, 2004), greater
psychological well-being (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003), higher academic efficacy and grades (Fuligni et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2003), and lower perceived stress (Sellers et al., 2006). Public regard, though studied less often, has been associated with more positive academic motivation (Chavous et al., 2003; Rivas-Drake, 2011), fewer depressive symptoms (Rivas-Drake et al., 2008), and fewer somatic symptoms (Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009a; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009b).

In sum, the growing literature on adolescents’ ethnic–racial identities provides substantial evidence that such identities are critical resources that can enhance adolescents’ development and well-being. Advances in conceptualization and methodology, including coverage of adolescents from multiple ethnic–racial groups, expansion of the dimensions of identity of interest, attention to change over time, and examination of adaptation in multiple developmental domains, have each contributed substantially to researchers’ understanding of how and under what conditions ethnic–racial identities operate.

3. ETHNIC–RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

In ethnically and racially stratified societies such as the United States, the socialization process inevitably includes messages to children about ethnicity–race. Adolescents’ learning about ethnicity–race—and their resulting racial knowledge—takes place in every segment of youths’ environment as their interactions and observations yield information about which ethnic–racial groups are valued, smart, beautiful, dangerous, disruptive, rich, and so forth—and which are not. Ethnic–racial socialization shapes the meaning adolescents ascribe to their ethnic–racial group membership, adolescents’ expectations about experiences they may have as group members, their knowledge of the history and values associated with being a group member, their sense of group belonging and pride, and their beliefs about how others view and treat various groups. Importantly, adolescents are not passive recipients of such messages, but instead initiate and select the messages they internalize (Hughes & Chen, 1999).

In conceptual and empirical work, researchers have focused primarily on the role that parents play in children’s ethnic–racial socialization (Priest et al., 2014). Exceptions include a handful of studies on how youth learn ethnicity–race in neighborhood contexts (Moje & Martinez, 2007; Winkler, 2012) and in schools (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Byrd, 2015;
Hurd, 2008; Kao, 2000; Lewis, 2003; Pollock, 2004). As the central node of young children’s lives, parents’ attitudes, values, and behaviors are especially salient in transmitting information and perspectives to youth about ethnicity—race. Until recently, the majority of this research and theoretical writing focused on African Americans—a group that historically has been at the bottom of the racial hierarchy in terms of access to privileges and economic resources (e.g., Peters & Massey, 1983; Spencer, 1983; Tatum, 1987). Growth in the ethnic–racial socialization literature within the past decade has involved expansion of the concept to multiple ethnic–racial minority and immigrant groups including Mexican (Derlan, Umana-Taylor, Updegraff, & Jahromi, 2015), Korean (Seol, Yoo, Lee, Park, & Kyeong, 2015), Chinese (Huynh & Fuligni, 2010), and White (Hagerman, 2014) parents or adolescents.

Recent studies of ethnic–racial socialization have also used a more differentiated conceptualization of the process relative to earlier studies in which ethnic–racial socialization was assessed in unidimensional terms. With this differentiation, researchers acknowledge that parents vary in what they choose to teach their children about ethnicity—race. Some parents teach group differences, discrimination, and disadvantage; others teach history, culture, and traditions; others emphasize the value of diversity and egalitarian perspectives; still others do some combination or all of these. In our work, we have utilized a fourfold conceptualization that distinguishes (a) messages that promote ethnic pride and transmit knowledge about cultural history and heritage (termed cultural socialization); (b) messages intended to prepare children to adapt to and operate within a racialized world, including exposure to prejudice and discrimination (termed preparation for bias); (c) messages emphasizing diversity and racial equality (termed egalitarianism); and (d) cautions and warnings to children about other ethnic groups (termed promotion of mistrust). Neblett and colleagues represent parents’ ethnic–racial socialization using person centered rather than variable centered approaches, distinguishing profiles such as “multifaceted,” “unengaged,” “high positive,” and “low salience” (see chapter “Racism, Racial Resilience, and African American Youth Development: Person-Centered Analysis as a Tool to Promote Equity and Justice” by Neblett et al., this volume; for alternative conceptualizations, see Bentley-Edwards & Stevenson, 2016; Stevenson, McNeil, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2005).

The advantage of a multidimensional assessment is that it yields more precise information about what is communicated and by whom, enabling researchers to ask more useful questions about its antecedents and consequences. In our studies across diverse samples, over 90% of participants report messages about egalitarianism (Hughes et al., 2015) and the
overwhelming majority report cultural socialization as well (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Few parents report promotion of mistrust, regardless of ethnicity (Hughes et al., 2006). However, preparation for bias is far more common among African American parents than among parents from other ethnic–racial minority groups, whereas ethnic–racial group differences in cultural socialization and egalitarianism are small and often nonsignificant (Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006). In addition, preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust are more sensitive than is cultural socialization to parents’ subjective experiences of ethnic–racial discrimination across multiple contexts (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997) and to their own and their children’s perceptions of children’s unfair treatment, especially from adults (Hughes & Johnson, 2001).

Scholars also increasingly recognize that ethnic–racial socialization is a dynamic process that varies across development. For example, parents tend not to engage in certain ethnic–racial socialization practices with young children, especially discussions about bias and intergroup relations, given that younger children have only a rudimentary understanding of the concept of ethnicity–race (Katz, 2003). In other words, parents’ guesses about children’s readiness to understand ethnic–racial issues are well synchronized with children’s actual racial knowledge. Consistent with this idea, our longitudinal data indicate linear increases in preparation for bias between 11 and 14 years of age, especially for boys, albeit stability over time in cultural socialization (Hughes, Hagelskamp, Del Toro, Shrout, & Way, 2010). Other studies suggest this pattern as well (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; McHale et al., 2006). As with other ethnic–racial identity processes, change in ethnic–racial socialization is unlikely to be organic. More likely, it is a function of changes in situations, experiences and interactions across time and contexts alongside shifts in parents’ understanding of children’s knowledge and children’s developmental readiness to hear ethnic–racial socialization messages. Research on what changes, when, and for whom is sorely needed.

Finally, a growing number of studies have examined the consequences of parents’ ethnic–racial socialization for youth. Most of these studies have focused on cultural socialization and preparation for bias. Cultural socialization has consistently been associated concurrently and longitudinally with more favorable adjustment including higher self-esteem (Mohanty, Keokse, & Sales, 2007; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009b), higher academic engagement and performance (Oyserman et al., 2003), fewer behavior problems (Caughey & Owen, 2014; Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, &
Petrill, 2007), and fewer depressive symptoms (Umana-Taylor, O’Donnell, et al., 2014; Umana-Taylor, Quintana, et al., 2014). Empirical findings regarding preparation for bias have been mixed, with some documenting that preparation for bias is associated with more favorable self-beliefs, behavioral adjustment, and academic adjustment and other studies documenting that it is associated with less favorable self-beliefs, behavioral, and academic outcomes (Hughes et al., 2006). In a recent study, we found that adolescents who reported moderate preparation for bias evidenced less steep declines in self-esteem and less steep increases in symptomatology compared to adolescents who reported very low or very high preparation for bias (Hughes, Del Toro, & Way, 2016).

A handful of studies have examined egalitarianism in relation to youth outcomes, although there are too few of them to draw integrative conclusions. For example, Neblett and colleagues found that egalitarianism was associated with African American adolescents’ academic curiosity, although not with their academic persistence or grades (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006) and with fewer problem behaviors and greater well-being (Neblett, Banks, Cooper, & Smalls-Glover, 2013). In our work, White adolescents who received more egalitarian messages—according to their own and their mothers’ reports—evidenced less socioemotional competence in their cross-race friendships as compared to their same-race friendships, consistent with findings in the literature on the limitations of color-blind ideologies (Hughes et al., 2015). Mandara (2006) found that boys whose parents instilled passive or race-less messages performed less well academically than did parents imparting cultural pride messages.

To summarize, studies of parents’ ethnic–racial socialization suggest that such socialization is a critical component of parenting, especially in ethnic–racial minority families. As with research on ethnic–racial identity, conceptual and methodological expansions and improvements have contributed substantially to researchers’ understanding of how such socialization operates. Studies indicate that the frequency and content of ethnic–racial socialization messages vary across ethnic–racial groups and across development. In addition, dimensions of ethnic–racial socialization differentially predict adolescents’ development and well-being.

4. ETHNIC–RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Exposure to ethnic–racial discrimination is a common part of many youths’ experiences, especially among youth of color. Indeed, studies find that most youth report exposure to discrimination when directly asked.
For example, in a daily diary study of African American youth, Seaton and Douglass (2014) found that 97% reported at least one experience of discrimination over a 2-week period. The 2-week average was 26 discriminatory events, or 2.5 events per day. Huynh and Fuligni (2010) reported that two-thirds of Latino, Asian American, and European American high school-aged adolescents reported having experienced discrimination from adults or peers. About 12% of this sample reported at least one incident of discrimination within a 14-day period. In the later study, even low levels of discrimination predicted a range of academic and psychosocial outcomes.

Recently, as in the identity and socialization literatures, studies of adolescents’ discrimination experiences have advanced from assessing discrimination as a unidimensional construct to distinguishing different types and sources of discrimination. Multidimensional assessment has enabled researchers to obtain a more nuanced perspective on who experiences discrimination and, in particular, on how its nature differs for boys vs girls and for youth of varied ethnic–racial backgrounds. The recent distinction between discrimination from adults vs peers has been especially informative in this regard. African American and Latino adolescents report more frequent discrimination from adults in the community (storeowners, police), whereas Asian youth report more frequent discrimination from peers (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Greene et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2008). Adult vs peer discrimination has also been associated with different sorts of developmental outcomes (Benner & Graham, 2013) as we shall discuss momentarily. Hughes, Del Toro, Harding, Way, and Rarick (2016) further distinguished discrimination from school vs nonschool adults, as well as implicit vs explicit types of peer discrimination, with significant ethnic–racial and gender differences in initial levels of discrimination and in trajectories of change over time. Thus, multidimensional assessment has provided more nuanced insights into the nature and frequency of youths’ discrimination experiences.

Recent studies have also examined how adolescents’ discrimination experiences change over repeated assessments, with the expectation that adolescents’ exposure to discrimination may become more frequent as adolescents get older because of increased awareness of discrimination, increased autonomy from parents, and increased mobility from their local environments. Generally, however, empirical findings have not always supported this expectation. Most studies report stability or declines over time in perceived discrimination from peers (Bellmore, Nishina, You, & Ma, 2012; Niwa, Way, & Hughes, 2014; White, Zeiders, Knight, Roosa, & Tein, 2014). Hughes et al. (2016) reported average linear increases in
discrimination from peers during middle school but average declines following the transition to high school. Among studies of discrimination from adults, Niwa et al. (2014) found stability in youths’ reports of discrimination from adults in middle school and Greene et al. (2006) reported an increase (at trend level) in perceived discrimination from adults in high school. A few studies have reported increases in discrimination, assessed unidimensionally, in middle and high school (Benner & Graham, 2011; Brody et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2011). Thus, further exploration is needed to determine the conditions under which increases or decreases in perceived discrimination are more likely.

As with other ethnic–racial constructs, adolescents’ perceptions of discrimination have been associated with an array of socioemotional, academic, and behavioral indicators. Across multiple ethnic–racial groups, perceived discrimination has been associated with less favorable academic motivation, engagement, and performance (e.g., Benner & Kim, 2009; Huynh & Fuligni, 2010); disidentification with school (Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001); higher anxiety and depression (Greene et al., 2006; Simons et al., 2002; Way, Muhkerjee, & Hughes, 2008); and lower quality of relationships with peers, adults, and the school community (Liang, Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2007; Osterman, 2000). Adam et al. (2015) recently finding that cumulative discrimination experiences assessed during adolescence contributed to differences in African American and White adults’ diurnal cortisol patterns more so than did contemporary discrimination experiences suggests long-term deleterious consequences of discrimination. Further, Benner and Graham’s (2013) study suggests specificity in relationships between varied sources of discrimination and youth adjustment. In their study, only peer discrimination predicted psychological adjustment, only school discrimination predicted academic performance, and only societal discrimination predicted public regard.

In sum, numerous studies over the past decade or so have contributed to researchers’ knowledge about the frequency with which adolescents experience discrimination, the nature and source of such discrimination, possible changes in exposure to discrimination over time (although findings across studies vary considerably here), and associations between discrimination and well-being across important developmental domains. It is apparent by now that ethnic–racial discrimination is a salient experience during adolescence, especially for ethnic–racial minority youth. More importantly, ethnic–racial discrimination is an important source of stress and distress that warrants further inquiry and further action.
5. INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG ETHNIC–RACIAL IDENTITY, SOCIALIZATION, AND DISCRIMINATION

As suggested already, scholars have recognized that identity, socialization, and discrimination are interrelated in complex ways. Studies documenting direct, mediated, moderated, and reciprocal relationships are numerous. Although most studies of these interrelationships have been cross-sectional, longitudinal studies have, in most cases, also supported researchers’ hypothesized causal pathways.

Among the clearest linkages is that between socialization and identity. Adolescents whose parents place a greater emphasis on socializing cultural knowledge and pride report that their ethnicity is more important to them and have more positive feelings about their ethnic group (Chavous, Rivas, Green, & Helaire, 2002; González, Umana-Taylor, & Bambia, 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009a, 2009b). Adolescents who report more preparation for bias from their parents also report lower public regard (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009a, 2009b).

Relationships between identity components and discrimination have been documented as well. Adolescents reporting more frequent discrimination experiences also report more identity exploration (Pahl & Way, 2006; Umana-Taylor & Guimond, 2012), higher ethnic–racial identity centrality (Umana-Taylor & Guimond, 2012), and lower private and public regard (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009a, 2009b). However, adolescents are also more likely to expect discrimination when race is more central to their self-concepts (Neblett, Shelton, & Sellers, 2004; Rowley et al., 2008) or when they are more active in exploring their ethnic–racial identity (Pahl & Way, 2006), suggesting bidirectional relationships between identity and discrimination.

Studies have also examined ethnic–racial socialization as both a predictor and an outcome of discrimination. Hughes and Johnson (2001) found that children’s reports of more frequent unfair treatment due to race predicted parents’ reports of their preparation for bias messages. In Hughes et al. (2010), using autoregressive latent trajectory analysis over three waves of data, there were bidirectional longitudinal relationships between youths’ discrimination and preparation for bias, suggesting that parents’ preparation for bias may occur in reaction to youths’ discrimination experiences but may also predispose youth to expect more discrimination.

Finally, studies have found that both identity and socialization enable youth to cope with discrimination. The negative relationships between
discrimination and indicators of poorer youth adjustment are attenuated in the presence of multiple identity components including centrality, private regard, and public regard (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2012; Sellers et al., 2006). Both cultural socialization and preparation for bias have been found to attenuate these relationships as well (Burt, Simons, & Gibbons, 2012; Wang & Huguley, 2012). Others have found that ethnic–racial socialization, assessed unidimensionally, is associated with reduced distress from discrimination (Leslie, Smith, Hrapczynski, & Riley, 2013) and strategies for coping with discrimination (Scott, 2003).

5.1 Summary

Thus far, we have provided a broad overview of current knowledge regarding ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination. Each is an important mechanism through which youth act upon, negotiate, acquire, and reconfigure racial knowledge. Deeper understanding of these phenomena has been facilitated by conceptual and methodological approaches including investigating multiple ethnic–racial groups, use of multidimensional conceptualizations and assessment tools, and longitudinal designs that permit investigation of temporal patterning. We also described literature on interrelationships between these concepts, of which there are many. The literature to date suggests that strong and positive ethnic–racial identities are assets for youth, facilitating positive self-beliefs and enhanced functioning across critical developmental domains. Ethnic–racial socialization can either promote or impede positive adaptation, depending on the nature of messages transmitted and received. Discrimination experiences challenge youths’ academic, psychological, socioemotional, and physical well-being.

Based on existing findings, researchers could conceivably generate infinite additional questions regarding the conditions under which and for whom the aforementioned relationships hold and the mechanisms through which they operate. Continued growth in these literatures would undoubtedly reinforce researchers’ current understandings. In our view, however, inquiries that extend what we already know to a broader range of outcomes and conditions would only yield incremental gains in the field’s comprehension of ethnic–racial phenomena. To more fully understand their role in adolescents’ lives, we need to know more about how they unfold in day-to-day settings and social interactions, as these are where racialized structures, ideologies, and social regularities reside. New theoretical and methodological approaches that shift our gaze from the adolescent to the setting are needed to complement existing approaches.
6. CONCEPTUALIZING ECOLOGICAL/TRANSACTIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTHS’ RACIAL KNOWLEDGE

The late Urie Bronfenbrenner’s proposal that development takes place in the context of increasingly complex nested structures is by now one of the most widely embraced ideas in developmental science. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that approaches that have overlapping and embedded settings at the forefront enable us to represent individuals’ lives in the way they actually live them, rather than as parsed into what Barker (1968) calls “behavioral tesserae,” or “fragments of behavior that are created or selected by the investigator ... in accordance with his scientific aims” (pp. 4 and 5). Accordingly, increased attention to identifying setting characteristics that accompany particular types of ethnic—racial identity, socialization, and discrimination may enable researchers to identify adaptive and troublesome features of settings, rather than of individuals, to support youths’ positive development. An ecological/transactional perspective points toward settings as the fundamental unit of analysis.

What is a setting? Perhaps the simplest and most common conception is a distinctive, physically and temporally bounded environment, such as a classroom or an afterschool program (Livert et al., 2002). However, settings may also be situations or networks such as families, peer groups, or mutual help organizations that have no physical or spatial location but nevertheless exist as entities within which individuals are embedded. In Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) bioecological model, settings most proximal to the child are those in which the child participates directly and are called “micromsystems.” Among the most salient micromsystems for adolescents are family, peers, schools, and neighborhoods. As noted earlier, elaborating how ethnic—racial identity, socialization, and discrimination unfold in these micromsystems is only an initial step toward an ecological/transactional perspective, as processes at the more distal levels of the ecological environment (exosystem, mesosystem, chronosystem, and macrosystem) are likely operative as well.

The usefulness of an ecological/transactional framework for pursuing further understanding of adolescents’ ethnic—racial knowledge is based, first and foremost, on recognition that ethnic—racial dynamics are operative in every setting within racialized social systems (Lewis, 2003). Family events, school hallways, cafeteria lunch tables, neighborhood playgrounds, basketball courts, peer networks, churches, and parks all function—to greater or lesser extents—as racial spaces in which specific norms, regularities, rules,
behavior patterns, and associated meaning structures reside. Youth act upon and acquire racial knowledge in each of these spaces. Identities—rather than being constituted solely by internal beliefs, attitudes, and orientations that reside within the person—are performed or produced in time- and space-bound situations that include other social actors and audiences (Moje & Martinez, 2007). Others’ reflections, observations, and judgments are integral to these enactments, as identities require validation from and can be constrained by members of a cultural community (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Adolescents’ ethnic–racial socialization occurs in these settings through the explicit, implicit, deliberate, unintended, verbal, and nonverbal processes in which socializing agents engage (Hughes & Chen, 1999), including episodes of discrimination. Such socialization also occurs through more elusive mechanisms in which socializers transfer an “interpretive logic” about ethnicity–race, or a “generalized orientation that guides children’s assessment and management of situations” (Applegate, Burleson, & Delia, 1992, p. 8). To quote Omi and Winant (1994): “Everybody learns some combination, some version, of the rules of racial classification and of her own racial identity, often without teaching or conscious inculcation” (p. 30). Thus, adolescents’ ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences are enveloped in settings.

To which features of settings should we attend? Drawing from Bronfenbrenner (1979), settings have role relationships and interpersonal structures, alongside physical and structural features, that function as demands and affordances for behavioral, psychological, and social processes. In Moos and Lemke’s (1983) framework, policies and programs, physical and architectural features, aggregate characteristics or attitudes of setting participants (termed suprapersonal characteristics) and features of the social climate, including social relationships and social interactions, each communicate setting demands and affordances. Sarason’s (1982) concept of behavioral regularities—patterns of behavior that are repeated across time and settings—and Seidman’s (1988) concept of social regularities—social roles, social interactions, and social relationships that are repeated across time and settings—each describes extra-individual-level setting dynamics that are consequential for setting participants. In accordance with transactional worldviews (Altman & Rogoff, 1987), these extra-individual-level characteristics and psychological/social processes coexist as intrinsic and inseparable parts of the whole that are defined by and define one another. Importantly, transactional representations of phenomena stand in contrast to worldviews that Altman and Rogoff identify as being...
interactional—emphasizing cause–effect and typically linear relationships between phenomena—or organismic—emphasizing holistic units but viewing unit parts as separable, albeit intricately connected. Thus, the key contribution of such a transactional worldview is the idea that the ethnic–racial dynamics of focus here—identity, socialization, and discrimination—are often overlapping and indistinguishable components of ethnic–racial dynamics that occur at the extra-individual level.

In the remainder of this chapter, we suggest ways in which identity, socialization, and discrimination are mutually defining and inseparable in the context of four relevant microsystems: families, peer groups, schools, and neighborhoods. We provide examples of studies in which setting characteristics or situations have been the focal unit of analysis. The study of holistic units provides a different lens for constructing ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination as inherently inseparable and may allow for new ideas and principles pertaining to adolescents’ experiences across contexts.

6.1 Families

The family is a primary context for adolescents’ identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences. Adolescents explore, construct, display, and reconstruct their ethnic–racial identities within family settings (Awokoya, 2012; Tatum, 2004). They receive a multitude of ethnic–racial socialization messages from family members and through family practices (Hughes et al., 2006). They observe, hear about, talk about, and try to make sense of the dynamics of discrimination within family contexts (Juang & Syed, 2014). To date, because most of our knowledge about these processes comes from survey based cross-sectional studies, researchers have limited insight into how socialization processes unfold naturally in the course of families’ daily activities or about extra-individual-level family characteristics that shape them.

In line with a transactional worldview, the conceptual boundaries that researchers draw between identity, socialization, and discrimination become especially blurred within the family context. The sense of “we-ness” that constitutes identification with a family also includes identification with a cultural, ethnic, and racial heritage. Moreover, the family settings in which ethnicity–race is salient—those in which identities are explored and affirmed and in which centrality, private regard, and public regard emerge—are also crucial instances of ethnic–racial socialization. Family gatherings,
celebrations, and cultural holidays, for example, can serve as identity triggers, providing clues as to what it “means” to be an ethnic–racial group member (Hughes et al., 2008). However, these family situations also serve as instan-
tiations of youths’ ethnic–racial identity (Phinney, 1993). Practices that are deeply rooted in families’ daily routines, for example, cooking ethnic food, listening to ethnic music, and arranging artifacts in the home (Hughes et al., 2008), are components of cultural socialization but are also situations in which youth construct ethnicity–race as central to their self-
definitions and in which they develop positive ethnic–racial regard. Situations in which adolescents discuss or are exposed to discrimination within family contexts are also situations in which adolescents construct their sense of public regard for their group. In fact, for some researchers, ethnic–racial identity includes awareness of discrimination as a defining identity component (Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007). Instances of discrimination, as relived in fam-
ilies, also constitute a significant source of youths’ ethnic–racial socialization. Thus, not only are identity, socialization, and discrimination interrelated within family contexts but they are inseparable and mutually defining.

Notably, existing empirical studies have rarely captured the many types of family transactions that are relevant to adolescents’ ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences. For instance, much of what adolescents learn occurs through what Boykin and Toms (1985) refer to as “cultural motifs” that are largely invisible to parents and other family members but are displayed in a “consistent, persistent, and enduring fashion” (p. 42) unaccompanied by directives or imperatives to learn them. A grandmother is driving with her granddaughter through an urban poor predominantly Black and Latino neighborhood and utters a snide remark about the residents’ lifestyles. A Mexican parent warns his teenage son to “be careful” as he is leaving to run an errand in a White neighborhood. A family is having a large catered dinner party, and all of the other guests are the same race as the family. Adolescents enact and acquire ethnic–racial knowledge in each of these situations, such that identity, socialization, and discrimination processes are simultaneously manifest.

Only a handful of studies focus either conceptually or analytically on family–level characteristics or situations as the unit of analysis for understanding adolescents’ ethnic–racial experiences. Illustratively, Tatum (2004), based on interviews with African American adolescents attending predominantly White schools, categorized families as being race–conscious, race–neutral, or class conscious/race avoidant. Adolescent interviews were analyzed in terms of varied ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and
discrimination processes that were emergent in these distinct family types. For instance, adolescents who described race-conscious family contexts also manifested a clear sense of their ethnic-racial identity, including ethnic-racial pride and a keen awareness of discrimination. Adolescents in class conscious/race avoidant family contexts described numerous struggles and feelings of alienation from family and peers in establishing ethnic-racial identity, especially as these pertained to situations in which they felt ethnically racially distinctive or discriminated against. Notably, although adolescents served as informants, the focal unit for analysis was the family as a whole. The conceptualization of relevant family-level characteristics included history of contact with other African Americans, neighborhood, and school ethnic composition, embeddedness in African American networks, organizations, and institutions, and physical/architectural features of the home including art, music, and artifacts, as well as family members’ racial attitudes. Adolescents’ ethnic-racial identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences were inseparable from the larger family context in which they were embedded.

As another example, we used parents’ and adolescents’ stories about situations in which ethnic-racial socialization occurred as the unit of analyses for learning about adolescents’ identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences across multiple contexts. Based on interviews with ethnically diverse adolescents and caregivers at three assessment points (6th, 8th, and 11th grade), stories were defined as narrative accounts of specific situations in which coders identified a beginning, middle, and end. We coded story features such as the stimulus for discussion, the physical location (e.g., home, family celebration, car, grocery store, hospital), who was present, who initiated the conversation, adolescents’ roles, and length of episode alongside indicators of emergent identity, socialization, and discrimination processes. These analyses made clear that ethnic-racial socialization episodes were quite often about identity as well, and often initiated in response to a discrimination experience. In particular, cultural socialization and favorable private regard and exploration tended to cooccur in descriptions of holiday, religious and birthday celebrations. Evidence of low public regard, preparation for bias, and discrimination experiences often cooccurred in these situations as well.

In sum, a focus on family-level characteristics or situations as the unit of analysis for understanding ethnic-racial dynamics in adolescents’ lives provides a perspective within which viewers are better able to see the interrelated and mutually defining interdependence of adolescents’ identity,
socialization, and discrimination experiences. Descriptively, a focus on situations or settings provides an up close view of characteristics of family contexts in which particular types of ethnic–racial dynamics are most likely to emerge.

6.2 Peers

As children approach adolescence, they spend less time with their families and more time with their friends and classmates (Brown, 2004). Consequently, peer groups are important contexts for adolescents’ ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences. As within families, adolescents explore, construct, and enact their ethnic–racial identities in the course of their everyday interactions with their peers (Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009). Peers are also key agents of ethnic–racial socialization (Hughes, McGill, et al., 2011; Wang, Benner, & Kim, 2015) and, as described earlier, are frequently the perpetrators of adolescents’ ethnic–racial discrimination experiences (Fisher et al., 2000; Greene et al., 2006; Pahl & Way, 2006; Wong et al., 2003). Among peers, as in other contexts, identity formation and enactment, socialization, and discrimination are intimately linked and mutually defining. For instance, situations involving ethnic–racial discrimination or teasing are also situations in which adolescents’ peers socialize ethnicity–race. In the context of discrimination, an adolescent’s identity is made salient and becomes more central to self-definition whereas their conceptions of others’ views of their group (public regard) are internalized and possibly reconfigured (Douglass, Mirpuri, English, & Yip, 2015).

The dynamic interrelatedness of identity, socialization, and discrimination is especially evident in the few studies in which peer groups have been the unit of analysis. For instance, in a 2-year ethnography, Kromidas (2012) analyzed “linguistic crossings”—situations in which youth appropriate the language and behavioral styles of an ethnic–racial group of which they are not a member—as the unit of analysis. In navigating the goals, rules, normative expectations, and behaviors that were emergent in such crossings, youth were regularly enacting particular identities, learning the boundaries of ethnic–racial groupings, and navigating the rules of and protocols for social inclusion and exclusion in the course of these everyday interactions with peers. In Douglass et al. (2015), stories of racial teasing and discrimination were the unit of analysis. The authors coded contextual features such as the relational context of youths’ ethnic–racial experiences
(18% involved nonfriends or strangers; 82% involved close peers or friends), whether reference to humor, joking, or teasing was evident (76% of the time), and whether the interaction invoked explicit ethnic–racial stereotypes (present in 55% of situations). Findings indicated that discrimination stories were rarely only about discrimination, per se, but were about identity performances and ethnic–racial learning as well.

These examples aside, researchers currently know less about characteristics of peer contexts in which dynamics of ethnicity–race emerge than about identity, socialization, and discrimination as person-level processes. In quantitative studies, the most commonly examined characteristic, to date, has been ethnic–racial heterogeneity of peer groups, typically operationalized as same-race vs intergroup contact. For example, contact with same-ethnic peers has been associated with increased exploration and belonging (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001), increased private regard (Yip, Douglass, & Shelton, 2013), and with change in identity status over time (Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2010). Moreover, perceived peer support for ethnic–racial identity has been associated with more favorable ethnic identity processes in studies using quantitative (Kiang, Harter, & Whitesell, 2007) and qualitative (DeCuir-Gunby, Martin, & Cooper, 2012) methods. In this regard, DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2012) described how African American students attending a predominantly White school relied on each other to recognize, make meaning of, and respond to discrimination experiences and to affirm their identities as they transitioned from school to neighborhood contexts. Thus, as measured at the individual level, same-race peer interactions serve an important role in the development of positive ethnic–racial identities, but these developmental processes are also tightly interwoven with adolescents’ ethnic–racial learning and their discrimination experiences.

Peer contexts not only support adolescents’ ethnic–racial experiences but also inform and constrain them, based largely on images about ethnic–racial groups that peer group members collectively hold. Kao (2000), in a focus group study of students in two ethnically racially mixed Chicago high schools, documented that Black, Asian, and Latino adolescents articulated clear stereotypes that linked ethnicity–race to academic ability and other skills and preferences. These stereotypes resulted in segregated peer groups, segregated extracurricular activity participation and racially distinct ideas about possible selves. Qualitative studies have also described the prevalence of ethnic–racial stereotypes within peer groups as well as adolescents’ resistance to such stereotypes as critical components of racialization processes and
ethnic–racial identity making during adolescence (Awokoya, 2012; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012; Kromidas, 2012; Lewis, 2003; Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 2004; Way et al., 2013). Thus, the mutually defining coexistence of identity, socialization, and discrimination is especially evident in shared stereotypes and preconceived notions of ethnic–racial authenticity that are emergent within peer contexts.

Peer contexts are also characterized by descriptive and injunctive norms—both setting-level constructs—that take form as standards for behavior that peers expect of other peer group members. In some peer contexts “race talk” and ethnic–racial teasing are accepted and expected (Douglass et al., 2015; Kromidas, 2012), whereas in other peer contexts youth have learned to avoid any mention of ethnicity–race. In some peer contexts, negative attitudes regarding out-groups are prevalent and made explicit whereas in others such attitudes are noticeably absent. Adolescents’ ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences are embedded in peer contexts that operate according to these varied norms. For instance, adolescents may be reluctant to associate with other-race peers not because of their own ethnic–racial preferences but because of peers’ expectations. In both DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2012) and Tatum’s (2004) interviews, African American adolescents noted that their African American peers directed racial epithets and accusations of nonauthenticity at them when they did not sit at the “Black table” in the lunchroom. Peer norms also shape youths’ ethnic–racial attitudes. Increases in same-race peers’ positive and negative attitudes toward other groups’ predict increases in adolescents’ own positive and negative views (van Zalk, Kerr, Van Zalk, & Stattin, 2013). Peer intergroup contact affects youths’ attitudes toward out-groups by way of changing youths’ perceptions of in-group norms (De Tezanos-Pinto, Bratt, & Brown, 2010).

Thus, adolescents operate in peer contexts in which they enact particular types of identities, learn particular types of lessons about ethnicity–race, and have particular types of ethnic–racial experiences—some of which involve discrimination. Relevant extra-individual-level characteristics of peer contexts include ethnic–racial homogeneity vs heterogeneity, aggregate attitudes about what it means to be a particular ethnic–racial group member, shared stereotypes, aggregate identity attitudes, norms around intergroup vs intragroup contact, and the prevalence of and appropriateness of “race talk,” each of which are closely interwoven with adolescents’ ethnic–racial identities, ethnic–racial learning, and ethnic–racial discrimination experiences.
6.3 Schools

In a 2004 article, Pollock noted the following: “U.S. schools are particular places where people both distribute opportunities along racial lines and form identities in racial terms. Indeed, schools are key sites where U.S. young people and adults—in a striking institutional choreography—actually make each other racial” (p. 32). In accordance with this perspective, countless ethnographies and quantitative studies in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education have examined ethnic–racial dynamics within school contexts, including processes of identity construction (e.g., Hurd, 2008; Maslak, 2008; Nasir et al., 2009), the nature of “race talk” among teachers, administrators, and students (e.g., Anagnostopoulos, Everett, & Carey, 2013; Pollock, 2004), boundary crossing, inclusion, and exclusion (Lewis, 2003), and the implications of multicultural curricular materials and school programming for youths’ self-beliefs, ethnic–racial identities, and intergroup relations (Gonzalez, Eades, & Supple, 2014; Maslak, 2008). Studies within psychology and education have also examined differential student–teacher relationships, teacher’s expectations, and school disciplinary practices favoring White and Asian students relative to Black and Latino students (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). The literature in each of these areas is quite large, underscoring researchers’ awareness that schools and classrooms serve as primary settings for youths’ identity construction and enactment (Lewis, 2003), their ethnic–racial socialization experiences (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Hughes, McGill, et al., 2011; Hughes, Way, et al., 2011), and their discrimination experiences (Benner & Graham, 2013).

As in the family context, the boundaries between ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination become especially blurred within school contexts. For instance, “social regularities” (Seidman, 1988) at the school level such as race differentials in ability group placement (Kearns, Ford, & Linney, 2005) or school disciplinary practices (Skiba et al., 2002) elicit particular types of ethnic–racial identities, send important messages about ethnicity–race, and involve differential treatment and discrimination. In Ferguson’s (2000) ethnography of school disciplinary practices, the author illustrates how the confluence of school physical, social, and spatial features converged to promote African American boys’ tendency to take up identities as “trouble makers” and to be vastly over represented in “the punishing room.” Specifically, Ferguson recorded the location and physical layout of “the punishing room” where disciplinary consequences were enacted alongside teachers’, parents’, peers’, and counselors’ acceptance of and expectations for disruptive behaviors among African American boys. She also
examined school policy and programming in addition to student–teacher and student–student interactions. Nasir et al. (2009) similarly illustrated how school-level characteristics served as demands and affordances for two distinct types of African American identities among students in a predominantly African American low achieving high school. For some students, being Black meant holding deep knowledge of and respect for Black history and culture. These students held “race-conscious and socially aware” identities. The school provided them with higher than average academic standards; programming, resources, and spaces in the library and college counseling office to support college attainment; and leadership roles in the school. Race-conscious and socially aware students gave and received support for academic success from their peers and occupied school spaces such as the library and the guidance office. For other students, being Black meant being a “gangsta” or a “thug.” The school offered them little in the way of academic content, held low expectations for their academic work, and provided them with no information about college or requirements for graduation. These students enacted and received reinforcement for “street savvy” Black identities in unmonitored school hallways and gyms where they gambled and smoked marijuana during school hours with little adult intervention.

School social regularities such as those identified in Ferguson (2000) and Nasir et al. (2009) occur in accordance with multiple setting demands and affordances that emanate from structural and physical features of the context, school policies, programs, and curricular materials and goals, as well as interpersonal transactions. In turn, setting participants draw meaning from such regularities and, in Pollock’s (2004) words, “make each other racial.” Racial group differences that are evident in these regularities come to be seen as natural and expected, and as stemming from inherent racial differences in academic ability, effort, or importance.

Researchers investigating ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination have not completely ignored school-level characteristics, of course. However, the school-level characteristics that have been examined the most are school or classroom ethnic–racial composition and diversity. This is a “suprapersonal” setting feature within Moos and Lemke’s (1983) framework, operationalized primarily through school record data. Scholars have emphasized that school-level ethnic–racial composition of settings determines adolescents’ opportunity to interact with same- vs cross–race peers as well as the nature of demands students face in navigating stereotypes and intergroup relations (Yip et al., 2010). In schools in which the student
body is more ethnically racially diverse, students perceive more discrimination and a less positive school racial climate overall (Benner & Graham, 2013; Seaton & Yip, 2009). Where the teaching staff is more ethnically racially diverse; however, students report less discrimination (Seaton & Yip, 2009). School diversity has also been associated specifically with ethnic–racial identity processes in several studies. In Umana–Taylor and Fine (2004), Latino students in schools with fewer Latinos reported more positive ethnic identities. In French et al. (2000), adolescents who transitioned into high schools that were more ethnically diverse than were the middle schools they had attended reported changes in private regard and identity exploration.

More proximal than aggregate student and staff demographic characteristics, a handful of studies have assessed the overall racial climate of schools. The few measures of school racial climate that exist include items regarding student voice, equitable treatment from teachers and staff, and inclusive curricular materials (Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns, & Bolton, 2008; Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003; Mattison & Aber, 2007). Ethnic–racial minority students in schools that teachers and other students rate as having a more favorable racial climate report significantly better academic, behavioral, and socioemotional adjustment (Brand et al., 2003, 2008). Benner, Crosnoe, and Eccles (2015) reported that adolescents attending schools in which the average student perceived more prejudice in the school had lower grades but not less attachment to school. Byrd and Chavous (2011) found that students’ perceptions of the teacher and peer racial climate, as well as their perceptions of teacher and peer discrimination, were related to students’ centrality, private regard, and public regard, albeit in complex ways.

In sum, schools are settings in which adolescents construct and reconstruct their identities, receive implicit, and explicit messages about ethnicity–race, and experience discrimination of varied types from varied sources. These ethnic–racial dynamics are also manifest through a confluence of setting demands and affordances. The latter are evident in multiple aspects of the school context including student–student and student–teacher relationships, disciplinary policies and practices, curricula, and ability tracking, each of which contribute to the overall racial climate of the school. These aspects of the school often create qualitatively different academic spaces for students of varied ethnic–racial backgrounds. Although school officials rarely discuss these qualitative differences in school experiences with students, students nevertheless perceive and make meaning of them, with important consequences for students’ academic and psychosocial outcomes.
6.4 Neighborhoods

Families, peer groups, and schools are nested within neighborhoods, which are more distal than the former but nevertheless constitute a critical context for youths’ ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination. In ways similar to schools and peer groups, neighborhoods provide a local site at which adolescents navigate the constantly shifting terrain of race in everyday life (Kromidas, 2012). Youth construct and enact their identities based on their day-to-day interactions in the physical spaces of neighborhoods such as stores, gas stations, parks, street corners, and front stoops. Especially in ethnic enclaves, community resources and cultural spaces within neighborhoods also provide youth with opportunities to interact with others of their same ethnic group in positive contexts and to learn about their history, language, and culture in ways that influence positive constructions of their ethnic identity. Youth also acquire racial knowledge through interpersonal transactions that take place in neighborhood settings, including both those they observe and those they experience. They also acquire it as they gain exposure to highly visible and racialized sociostructural patterns in the United States, including poverty and segregation. Indeed, both Moje and Martinez (2007) and Winkler (2012) argue that youth learn ethnicity–race the most when they travel to other neighborhoods, seeing the wider world beyond their own. As with other contexts, identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences are simultaneously manifest in varied neighborhood contexts.

Certainly, scholars have recognized the importance of neighborhood features in shaping youths’ ethnic–racial identities, what they learn about ethnicity–race, and their discrimination experiences. In a study of African American families of mixed SES, Smith, Atkins, and Connell (2003) found that having more college-educated neighbors was linked to children’s diminished perceptions of racial barriers, whereas more residential stability predicted greater interracial distrust. In Oyserman and Yoon (2009), adolescents who lived in more segregated census tracts evidenced lower racial–ethnic connectedness, awareness of racism, and embedded achievement. Similarly, Bennett (2006) and Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, and Sands (2006) found that youth who perceived greater neighborhood risk reported less racial pride and belonging. In several studies, parents in ethnically racially mixed neighborhoods have been found to express more concern about possible discrimination for their children and, in turn, offer more ethnic–racial socialization that is focused on discrimination (Stevenson et al., 2005; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990) compared to their
counterparts in less diverse neighborhoods. Caughy, Nettles, O’Campo, and Lohrfink (2006) found that parents living in predominantly African American neighborhoods, which were characterized by greater physical/social disorder and greater fear of retaliation or victimization, were more likely to transmit preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust of messages than were parents residing in mixed neighborhoods. Parents in neighborhoods high in collective efficacy and cohesion were more likely to report ethnic–racial pride messages. In Benner and Graham (2013), youth living in neighborhoods with more ethnic–racial minorities reported more signs of racism in the neighborhoods, which in turn predicted more frequent reports of societal racism and greater racial awareness. Thus, the literature suggests linkages between structural and social process features of neighborhoods and ethnic–racial stressors and supports in adolescents’ lives.

Two ethnographies highlight the importance of specific features of adolescents’ neighborhoods and of contrasts between features of their own neighborhoods and other neighborhoods to which they travel, pointing scholars toward macrostructural influences on adolescents’ ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination experiences. Although consideration of macrostructural influences is beyond our scope, it seems worthwhile to mention these findings briefly. Moje and Martinez (2007) introduced the concepts of “home fronts” and “contact zones” to mark the contrast between Latino adolescents’ experiences in their own vs other neighborhoods. Home fronts were physical and cultural spaces that shaped and promoted adolescents’ positive ethnic–racial identities. They provided opportunities for Latino youth to engage intergenerationally with older ethnic–racial group members and provided youth with ethnic–racial identity tool kits that included Spanish language abilities, knowledge of traditions, music, history, and cultural values. Contact zones were spaces youth encountered as they traversed surrounding communities. Youths’ awareness of how racism and discrimination work was often generated in these contact zones as youth noticed how others in the world responded to them based on their social class, race, and language. Moje and Martinez (2007) argued that neighborhoods are not only racialized and racially coded; they also shape racial ascriptions that take place within them. Illustratively, youth often felt that others made assumptions about their worthiness or behaviors (based on their ethnicity–race and social class) in outside neighborhoods that others in their own neighborhood did not make. Thus, neighborhood contexts can operate to support youths’ ethnic–racial identities, sending positive messages about their group and providing safe spaces but can also operate to undermine youths’ identities,
transmitting clear messages that promote low public regard by way of extant stereotypes and discrimination experiences.

Winkler (2010), in a study of African American youth, similarly found that youth most palpably recognized how their neighborhoods shaped their experiences when they moved from one place to another. In particular, youth became aware of limits on how they were permitted to act and behave in neighborhoods outside of their own. Travel to other communities and cities shed light on structural racism as youth noted differences in resources, poverty, crime, drugs, and physical neglect across neighborhoods. Thus, Winkler (2010) argued that “place” communicates influential and enduring messages about ethnicity–race, influencing youths’ ideas about ethnically or racially ascribed behaviors, racial boundaries, racial hostility, and ultimately, about racial equity and justice.

In sum, then, ethnic–racial dynamics in neighborhoods—as in other contexts—contain demands and affordances through which youth learn and enact their identities, receive numerous messages about ethnicity–race, and experience and observe ethnic–racial stereotypes and discrimination. Although structural neighborhood features have been examined—most notably neighborhood ethnic–racial composition—scholars need more information about the mechanisms through which ethnic–racial dynamics within neighborhoods shape youths’ understanding ethnicity–race and of themselves as ethnic–racial group members as well as how these dynamics support or undermine youths’ well-being.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we focused on three ethnic–racial dynamics that are resources and stressors in the lives of youth: ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination. Over the past two decades, the literature examining these phenomena has increased exponentially. Thus, there is substantial empirical information about ethnic–racial group differences in these stressors and supports, about their multidimensionality, and about their consequences for youths’ well-being and development. Indeed, in each area, the literature theoretically and methodologically has become much more sophisticated.

Although researchers’ knowledge has increased substantially, studies have overwhelmingly examined ethnic–racial identity, socialization, and discrimination as individual-level constructs. When context has been studied, researchers have paid more attention to what Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls “social address” concepts such as ethnic composition of peer groups,
neighborhoods, and schools. Social address approaches inform us about aggregate or suprapersonal features of settings but fail to provide an up close view of the processes in these settings that are consequential for youth.

We proposed that a more contextualized view of these ethnic–racial dynamics underscores the fact that they are interdependent, inseparable, and mutually defining, consistent with Altman and Rogoff’s (1987) transac-tional world view. For instance, private regard cooccurs with socialization messages that communicate heritage and ethnic pride and positive inter-group relationships. Low public regard tends to emerge in situations where there is intergroup conflict or anxiety about being with nonethnic group members and in situations where there is discrimination or regularities that suggest that one group is better than the other. Ethnicity becomes central and salient to youth in situations where either there is an emphasis on cultural history and heritage and in situations characterized by discrimination—that is, in situations in which youth receive messages about positive or negative aspects of their group.

An ecological/transactional perspective on ethnic–racial identity, social-ization, and discrimination shifts researchers’ gaze from studying these ethnic–racial dynamics as individual-level processes to studying the fea-tures of settings that produce them. Ultimately, support for the positive development of youth requires change in setting-level features, rather than in individual-level phenomena. Although youths’ identities, their socialization experiences, and their discrimination experiences clearly have import, researchers need to know much more than we currently do about characteristics of families, peer groups, school and classroom environments, and neighborhoods that produce them.

As a start, we have sought to provide initial thoughts about setting-level characteristics that are likely to matter and to describe studies that have incorporated setting-level constructs.

Within families, such characteristics include participation in identity-relevant activities, cultural motifs (Boykin & Toms, 1985) relevant to ethnicity–race, family friendship networks, the ethnic–racial composition of friendship networks, and physical/architectural features of the home. Within peer groups, extra-individual characteristics obviously include ethnic–racial heterogeneity vs homogeneity, as has been studied already, but also include peer descriptive and injunctive norms around intergroup relationships, shared stereotypes, aggregate identity attitudes, and the prevalence and nature of “race talk.” School-level ethnic–racial compo-sition and school racial climate—constituted by ethnic–racial dynamics
emanating from student–student and student–teacher dynamics, school pol-
icies and programming, ethnically or racially charged social regularities, and
physical/architectural support for diversity—are setting-level features that
produce certain types of identity, socialization, and discrimination experi-
ences as well. Finally, at the neighborhood level, dynamics such as the
availability of intergenerational and programmatic supports for identity;
aggregate ethnic–racial attitudes, and contrasts between structural and social
features of one’s residential neighborhood and other neighborhoods to
which one travels matter for what youth learn about ethnicity–race and
how they experience it.

To conclude, we have argued that the existing literature has reached the
point where continued focus on adolescents’ identity, socialization, and
discrimination experiences at the individual level will yield only incremental
usable knowledge. Researchers need to move toward analyses of the
coproduction of these ethnic–racial dynamics at the level of the settings
in which adolescents participate.

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