Context

- Racial/Ethnic Identity development in childhood and adolescence, like all identity development, is a complex and important process.
- The Resistance Structure shapes the agency of children and adolescents as they receive cultural, generational, and interpersonal messages and integrate them into their own identities.
- Whiteness occupies a unique place in the cultural milieu as the dominant race in a social structure predicated on White Supremacy and Devaluation of People of Color.
- Colorblind Racism is the newest iteration of this White Supremacist Stance, with cultural dictates around suppressing egalitarianism and silence around racial difference while maintaining implicit racism.
- Racism and Discrimination continue to be experienced and reported by People of Color, while White individuals are more likely to claim that it is a thing of the past and/or something else do.
- Racism and Discrimination continue to present dangers to the health and wellness of People of Color, and as such society as a whole.

Objectives

1) To review and synthesize the current literature around White Racial Identity and Identity Development more generally in White children in the United States of America.
2) To propose new directions in developmental psychology research informed by the White Racial Identity Literature, in particular, previous qualitative inquiries utilizing the Resistance framework.

Study Description

Utilizing research called from the following literatures, among others:

- Developmental Psychology
- Counseling Psychology
- Sociology
- Critical Whiteness Studies
- Cultural Anthropology
- Feminist Studies

to explore, quantify, and synthesize current understandings of White Racial Identity in order to identify potential points of resistance to and/or interruptions of White Privilege and Racism.

Scans were conducted in PsychINFO (1990 – 2016), EBSCO Discovery Service (1990 – 2017), NYU’s BobCat (Book Catalog, Complete), and Google Scholar. Search terms included the following in various combinations:
- White (r. Privilege, + Race, + Racial, + Racial Identity, + Development)
- Various authors associated with the literature (e.g. Jane Helin, Beverly Daniel-Troxel, Edward Bonilla-Silva)
- Resistance (+ to Racial, + to Racial Norms, + in White)

All searches were completed by March, 2016.

Evaluation

Racial / Ethnic Identity Development:

A context – person interaction process with roots in early childhood
- Influenced by parental / caregiver socialization
- Exerted with understandings of cultural norms and values in the form of stereotypes
- Contained with several psychosocial factors, including academic engagement and self-esteem
- Mainly studied in African American children

White Racial Identity:

- Mainly studied in adults
- Linked in the literature with racism and its components (e.g. support or endorsement of affirmative action policies, interracial relationships, and stereotyping)
- Largely unexplored in children and adolescents

Interesting Exceptions:

- Apfelbaum et al., 2008 – Quantitative study showing 10-11 year old White children’s awareness of race labels.
- Goodman, 1952 – Ethnography of White and Black 4-year-olds in a mixed-race daycare demonstrating evaluations of self and others based on race.

Conclusions

- A dearth of literature exists around White Racial Identity characteristics, correlates, and development in middle childhood and adolescence, despite evidence showing its likely relevance to the lives of White children.
- Racist messages and racial hierarchies are being communicated to, and likely contended with by, White children in the United States.
- Further research must investigate if, how, and when White children resist racial socialization, neutralized through messages on both personal and societal levels.

Acknowledgements

This work was inspired by the critique of Ethnics/Racial Identity research as presented in Boggs, Scott, and Way, 2014 in addition to the seminal work of myriad Critical Race and Critical White Studies theorists.

Special thanks to Dr. Niobe Way, Dr. Jennifer Aber, and Dr. Sandee McClure for their guidance, support, and understanding throughout this thesis process. Additionally, thanks to Dr. Selcuk Sirin for his thoughtful input during the proposal process.

Citations


Contact
MaryBeth Grove New York University mgb446@nyu.edu

Mary Beth Grove and Niobe Way
New York University