

**Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology (in press)**

Parental Experiences of Racial Discrimination and Youth Racial Socialization in Two-parent  
African American Families

Shardé McNeil Smith, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

Jamila E. Reynolds, *Florida State University*

Frank D. Fincham, *Florida State University*

Steven R. H. Beach, *University of Georgia*

**Keywords:** *African Americans, couples, discrimination, parenting, socialization*

This research was supported in part by grant #1021RR274307 from ACF awarded to Steven R. H. Beach.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Shardé McNeil Smith, Department of African American Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL 61801. E-mail: snssmith@illinois.edu

## Abstract

**Objectives:** Parents experiencing racial discrimination are likely to transmit racial socialization messages to their children to protect them from future injustices. This study was conducted to better understand the role of parents' racial discrimination in their racial socialization practices for two-parent African American families. **Method:** Using a sample from the Promoting Strong African American Families ( $N = 322$  couples) program, we examined the effects of experienced discrimination on one's own and one's partner's racial socialization practices with male ( $n = 154$ ) and female ( $n = 168$ ) offspring. **Results:** Multiple-group actor-partner interdependence models showed that racial discrimination was associated with racial socialization practices. In addition, maternal experiences of discrimination had stronger relations to socialization messages relayed to daughters and greater paternal experiences of discrimination had stronger relations to socialization messages given to sons. **Conclusions:** This study demonstrates variability in how male and female children in African American families are socialized as a result of their parents' experiences with racial discrimination.

Key words: *African Americans, couples, discrimination, parenting, socialization*

Racial socialization is a cultural practice used in minority families that can promote positive youth development in children of color (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, 2009); thus, it is important to understand the circumstances under which parents transmit racial socialization messages and which types of messages they use. Although researchers have documented the positive aspects of racial socialization practices, less is known about the impact of parent's personal experience of racial discrimination in their approach to racial socialization. Furthermore, most studies have focused on mothers as the primary source of race-based messages, and few have investigated how this process is enacted in two-parent contexts and how gender dynamics may influence the messages provided to boys and girls. Because we know that parenting practices are influenced by parents' experiences and stressors (Murry, Brody, Simons, Cutrona, & Gibbons, 2008), it seems likely that a pervasive stressor, such as racial discrimination, will have a substantial influence on parenting practices related to racial socialization.

Minority parents have the unique challenge of not only raising their children successfully but having to prepare them for life as a minority, which can consist of racial bias, prejudice, and discrimination (Garcia Coll, Lamberty, Jenkin, McAdoo, Crnic, Wasik, & Vazquez Garcia, 1996). As such, African American parents may teach their children to have a positive self-identity, prepare them for injustices, and suggest that it is not wise to trust everyone (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006). Studies have shown that African Americans report significantly more racial discrimination experiences and transmission of race-related messages to their children than other race or ethnic groups (e.g., Hughes, 2003; Thomas, Speight & Witherspoon, 2010; White-Johnson, Ford, & Sellers, 2010). When parents experience racial discrimination, it is likely that they simultaneously navigate the process by which they can

protect their children from race-based stress and instill the necessary beliefs and values needed to navigate injustice. The purpose of the current study is to understand how these factors interrelate in the couple context and to ascertain whether differences exist across parent and child gender.

## **Background**

### **Racial Socialization**

Racial socialization has been defined as the implicit and explicit messages that parents transmit to their children about their race/ethnicity (Hughes et al., 2009). This cultural process has become an essential part of understanding the development of children of color as it has been associated with positive outcomes, such as the development of ethnic identity, increased self-esteem, and greater academic and behavioral outcomes (Caughy, Nettles & Lima, 2011; Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009; McHale, Crouter, Kim, Burton, Davis, Dotterer, & Swanson, 2006). The three commonly used types of racial socialization messages transmitted to children are cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust (Hughes et al., 2006).

Cultural socialization refers to practices that teach children about their racial and ethnic heritage. These types of messages promote cultural traditions and the development of cultural, racial, and ethnic pride (Hughes et al., 2006). Examples of cultural socialization include celebrating cultural holidays, exposing children to art, books, music and events that celebrate their heritage, educating children about important historical figures, and eating ethnic food (Hughes et al., 2006). Several studies have found that parents are more likely to endorse these types of message and convey them more frequently than any other racial socialization message (Caughy et al., 2002; Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006). Thus it is evident that cultural socialization is an important component of racial socialization, in that African American parents

feel it is important to expose children to their culture and heritage.

Preparation for bias refers to messages that promote children's awareness of discrimination and prepares them to cope with it (Hughes et al., 2006). Hughes and colleagues (2006) noted that studies have found that very few parents actually mention the use of preparation for bias messages when asked about their racial socialization practices. Although African American parents have been found to report more preparation for bias messages than other ethnic and racial groups, including Puerto Rican and Dominican parents (Hughes, 2003), the percentage of African American parents reporting preparation for bias messages is lower than the percentage of African American parents who use cultural socialization messages (Hughes, 2003). Nevertheless, studies have shown that parents do report discussing issues of discrimination with their children. For example, Frabutt, Walker, and MacKinnon-Lewis (2002) found that only 5% of the African American parents in their sample reported never talking about discrimination with their children. Although preparation for bias messages may appear to be less salient than cultural socialization messages, African American parents do report transmitting messages about racial discrimination which may serve a similar purpose.

Finally, promotion of mistrust refers to practices that emphasize wariness and distrust of people from a different race or ethnicity (Hughes et al., 2006). Parents who transmit these types of messages communicate to their children warnings about other racial groups, and their concerns about potential barriers to success. It is important to note that promotion of mistrust messages are different from preparation for bias messages in that promotion of mistrust does not teach about coping with discrimination. Hughes and colleagues (2006) noted that in the studies reviewed, parents rarely reported transmitting these types of messages. Although it appears these promotion of mistrust messages are less salient among African American families, a

qualitative study by Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, and Brotman (2004) found that about 1/3 of their sample emphasized social distance and mistrust, suggesting that these messages are still being transmitted.

### **Racial Discrimination and Racial Socialization**

Discrimination is related to racial socialization, in that parents who experience discrimination are more likely to transmit racial socialization messages to their children (Benner & Kim, 2009; Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al. 2010). African American parents report more discrimination experiences than other ethnic and racial groups and these discrimination experiences are positively associated with the use of race-based socialization messages (Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2009; White-Johnson et al, 2010). An implication of these findings is that African American parents may be more inclined to discuss discrimination because they themselves have experienced it. As such, parents who experience racial discrimination may want to protect their children from the negative consequences by preparing them for its occurrence.

Although it seems reasonable that parents' experience with racial discrimination is related to African American parents' racial socialization practices, only a few studies have tested this notion empirically and the findings appear to be mixed. Specifically, in a sample of 474 African Americans, Thomas and colleagues (2010) found a significant correlation between parents' racism experiences and racial socialization practices. Hughes and Johnson (2001) also found support for the link between racial discrimination and the use of cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages, but not for promotion of mistrust. A further study noted that the age of the child may be an important factor and found that the more African American parents experienced racial discrimination, the greater the frequency of preparation for bias messages

transmitted to their older children (aged 10 – 17) compared to their Puerto Rican counterparts (Hughes, 2003). Nonetheless, this was not the case for cultural socialization. Finally, when considering the context in which racial discrimination occurs, Hughes and Chen (1997) found that parents of older children with more experiences of racial discrimination from work reported sending preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust messages to their children but not cultural socialization messages.

These studies provide some insight into the influence of racial discrimination on racial socialization practices in African American families, but to our knowledge there is no understanding of how this process operates in the couple context. Experiences of stress in a family system can be a shared experience. Qualitative studies have shown that when one partner experiences racial discrimination, the other partner is affected (Cowdery, Scarborough, Knudson-Martin, Seshadri, Lewis, & Mahoney, 2009; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that when one partner experiences racial discrimination the other partner may increase their race-related messages to their children. In essence, parents' socialization practices may be directly associated with their own or their partner's experiences with racial discrimination, but little research has tested this notion empirically.

### **Gender Considerations**

Interestingly, there are differences in racial socialization practices depending on the gender of both the parent and the child. When examining parent gender, studies have consistently found that mothers are the primary source of racial socialization messages (e.g. Brown, Linver, & Evans, 2010; McHale et al. 2006). This is not to say that fathers do not transmit racial socialization messages. However, fathers are more likely to engage in racial socialization with sons, while mothers engage equally with both genders (McHale et al. 2006).

In terms of child gender, parents transmit different themes to boys versus girls. Girls receive more racial and ethnic socialization messages than boys in general (Brown et al., 2010). When mothers transmitted messages to girls they were significantly more likely to use coping messages and messages emphasizing self-pride to prepare them for experiences of racism and discrimination (Brown et al, 2010; Thomas & King, 2007). Mothers were also more likely to deliver more cultural socialization messages, emphasizing cultural heritage, and exposure to African American history (Brown et al., 2010; Caughy et al. 2011). For boys, racial socialization tended to be more balanced, focusing on promotion of mistrust, coping with discrimination, and cultural socialization (McHale et al. 2006; Caughy et al. 2011; Howard, Rose, & Barbarin, 2013).

### **Present Study**

Ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Garcia Coll et al., 1996) suggest that cultural processes occurring in social settings external to the family can impinge on internal family dynamics. This suggests that parents' experiences with racial discrimination can affect not only themselves but those in their immediate microsystem (i.e., children and romantic partners). As a result, child racial socialization can be influenced by their own and their partners' experience with racial discrimination. Thus, the present study examined the role of mother and father's experiences of racial discrimination in their own and their partner's racial socialization practices using the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kenny & Lederman, 2012). Each racial socialization practice was examined separately (i.e., cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust) and child gender was used as a grouping variable for each analysis. Racial socialization practices may differ based on the age of the child, therefore, child age was controlled for (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1999). Also, racial socialization practices are

more prevalent among those who are socioeconomically advantaged (Hughes & Chen, 1999), therefore subjective economic pressure was entered as a covariate in all analyses. Drawing from previous literature on racial discrimination and racial socialization practices, we hypothesized that (1) there will be a positive relationship between one's perceived racial discrimination and one's own racial socialization practices; (2) there will be a positive relationship between one's perceived racial discrimination and partner's racial socialization practices; and (3) gender would moderate the association between racial discrimination and racial socialization practices of mothers and fathers, such that the relationship between racial discrimination and racial socialization practices would be stronger for parents and children of the same gender (i.e., mothers and daughters; fathers and son) compared to parents and children of different gender (i.e., mothers and sons; fathers and daughters).

## **Method**

### **Sample and Procedure**

Data for the current study is from the baseline assessment of the Promoting Strong African American Families (ProSAAF) project, prior to any intervention experience. ProSAAF was designed to enhance couple relationship processes as a means of facilitating competence-promoting parenting practices among African American couples raising pre-adolescent or adolescent youth and to reduce ineffective conflict occurring in front of youth. Couples were recruited to the project through referrals and advertisements distributed in a variety of outlets (e.g., churches, community fairs, radio shows, newspapers, local businesses). A total of 397 families inquired about participating in the study and were assessed for eligibility. To be eligible, individuals had to be an African American adult at least 21 years of age with a mate (of any age or any race) also willing to participate. The couple must have been married or planning to marry with a definite date in mind, living together, and residing with a child 9- to 17-years of age. The

9- to 17-year old child also had to be willing to answer questions about his or her experiences (analyses of youth data will be presented in subsequent studies; see Beach et al., 2014 for additional detail on sample). A total of 331 couples completed the survey assessments. For the current study, 322 couples providing reports on their children's gender (52% girls;  $M$  age = 12.59,  $SD = 1.98$ ) were examined. The study was completed in compliance with the university Institutional Review Board.

### Measures

**Parental racial socialization.** Parental racial socialization was measured using the Racial Socialization Scale (RSS; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). RSS is a 15-item measure that assesses the number of times the parent independently engaged in a specified socialization behavior during the past month. The responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 3 = *three to five times*. The measure assessed three racial socialization dimensions: Cultural socialization (teaching about one's culture and history; e.g., "how often in the past month have you celebrated cultural holidays of your race group?"), Preparation for Bias (teaching about prejudice and discrimination; e.g., "how often in the past month have you talked to your child about discrimination or prejudice against your racial group?"), and Promotion of mistrust (teaching to be cautious or weary of other groups; e.g., "how often in the past month have you told your child to not trust kids from other racial or ethnic groups?"). Each dimension was summed to create a composite score and exhibited good internal consistency: Cultural socialization (6 items;  $\alpha = .78$  for mothers;  $\alpha = .80$  for fathers); Preparation for Bias (5 items;  $\alpha = .83$  for mothers;  $\alpha = .78$  for fathers); and Promotion of mistrust (4 items;  $\alpha = .60$  for mothers;  $\alpha = .68$  for fathers).

**Perceived racial discrimination.** Perceived racial discrimination was measured using the Perceived Racial Discrimination scale (PRD; Murry, Brown, Brody, Cutrona, & Simons, 2001). The PRD is a 13-item measure that assesses the level of perceived discrimination in

African Americans. The couples were asked to independently rate how often they and their partner experience racial discrimination (1 = *never*, 2 = *once or twice*, 3 = *a few times*, 4 = *several times*). Sample items include “How often has someone said something derogatory or insulting to you or your partner just because you are African American or are a part of an African American family?” and “How often have you or your partner been treated unfairly because you are African-American or are a part of an African American family instead of white?” Scores for the measures were created by summing across the 13 items; higher scores indicated higher levels of perceived couple racial discrimination. The scale exhibited good internal consistency for the current sample ( $\alpha = .94$  for fathers;  $\alpha = .94$  for mothers).

**Control variable.** Child age (in years reported by mothers) and perceived economic pressure were examined as controls in the analysis. Economic pressure was a composite measure of couple’s perceived economic strain. The couple was asked the single item “How adequate do you feel your income is in meeting your needs?” Responses ranged from 1 = *much less than adequate to meet even our basic needs* to 5 = *more than adequate to meet all of our needs and wants*.

### **Analytic Strategy**

First, missing data patterns were assessed using SPSS. Among the 283 couples, 38.4% had at least one item missing. No participant had more than 8% missing within any given scale. Multiple imputation (Young & Johnson, 2013) was used to impute missing data at the item level prior to constructing scale scores. Next, preliminary analyses included examining mean differences on parental racial socialization practices between mothers and fathers. Correlations between study variables were also modeled to obtain the bivariate relationship within and between parents. The APIM model within a multiple group framework was used to test all

hypotheses. APIM is ideal when researchers aim to understand the effects of a construct on their own and their partner's outcome (see Kenny & Ledermann, 2010). In the current study, mother and father's perceived racial discrimination was used as a predictor variable for both their own and their partner's racial socialization practice. To examine the moderating effects of child gender, a multiple group framework was used which compares parents reporting on their daughters with parents reporting on their sons. To assess model fit, the chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ), root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) were used. Using Hu and Bentler's (1999) criteria, a non-significant  $\chi^2$ , RMSEA less than .06, and TLI and CFI greater than .95 suggested good model fit. Finally, chi-square difference testing was used to examine whether parallel pathways were significantly different across child gender when comparing a model with constrained pathways with a model with unconstrained pathways. SPSS version 22 (IBM Corp, 2013) was used to analyze missing data patterns and Mplus 7.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998 - 2012) was used to conduct the remainder of the analyses.

## Results

### Preliminary Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables. Mother's perceived couple racial discrimination was positively associated with her use of cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust. Father's perceived couple racial discrimination was positively associated with his use of preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust but not with his use of cultural socialization. Partner's experiences of racial discrimination were positively correlated with each other. Each of the three racial socialization strategies was positively associated with one another for mothers and fathers, respectively.

Interestingly, none of the paired t-tests examining study variables across gender were significant, indicating that on average, fathers and mothers perceived similar rates of couple racial discrimination and used comparable amounts of each of the racial socialization strategies.

[Insert Table 1 here]

### **Tests of Distinguishability**

Although heterosexual couples are considered theoretically distinguishable (i.e., male and female), it is important to test for empirical distinguishability when analyzing dyadic data (see Kenny & Lederman, 2010). To do this, equality constraints were placed on the intercepts, means, variances, and residual variances between mothers and fathers. The omnibus test for distinguishability with these constraints revealed non-significant chi-square difference results for cultural socialization,  $\chi^2(8) = 7.23, p > .05$  and preparation for bias,  $\chi^2(8) = 7.13, p > .05$ . The omnibus test of distinguishability for promotion of mistrust was significant,  $\chi^2(8) = 24.31, p \leq .01$ , therefore the residual variances were freed which led to non-significant chi-square difference findings,  $\chi^2(6) = 7.69, p > .05$ . Overall, these results suggest that although mothers and fathers are theoretically distinguishable, they may not be empirically distinguishable as it relates to these constructs. The aforementioned equality constraints remained for subsequent analyses.

### **APIM Results**

APIM models were fit separately for cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust racial socialization parenting practices.

**Cultural socialization.** Figure 1 shows the actor and partner effects of perceived couple racial discrimination on cultural socialization practices across parents of female and male children. Results revealed a significant actor effect for mothers of female children indicating

that the more mothers of female children perceived experiences of couple racial discrimination, the more they used cultural socialization as a parenting technique. No other actor or partner effects were present for the multiple group analysis.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

**Preparation for bias.** Figure 2 provides the APIM results of the perceived couple racial discrimination and preparation for bias relationship across child gender. Parents' experience of racial discrimination influenced their preparation for bias in their offspring in a gender specific manner. Mothers' experience of discrimination was strongly and significantly associated with preparation for bias for their daughters and somewhat less strongly associated with preparation for bias for their sons. Fathers' experience of discrimination was strongly and significantly associated with preparation for bias for their sons, but non-significantly associated for preparation for bias with their daughters. Partner effects indicated mothers' experience of racial discrimination influenced father preparation for bias with their daughters by increasing fathers' preparation for bias.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

**Promotion of mistrust.** Figure 3 demonstrates the APIM results of the association between parents' perceived couple racial discrimination and promotion of mistrust across child gender. Parents' experience of racial discrimination also correlated with their promotion of mistrust in their offspring in highly gender specific manner. Mothers' experience of discrimination was strongly and significantly associated with promotion of mistrust for their daughters and fathers' experience of discrimination was strongly and significantly associated with promotion of mistrust for their sons. Partner effects indicated mothers' experience of discrimination influenced fathers' promotion of mistrust by increasing fathers' promotion of

mistrust when mothers had less personal experience of discrimination, suggesting a compensatory response by fathers.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

### **Gender Moderation Results**

We next examined whether there were significant differences in the association of perceived couple racial discrimination and racial socialization parenting practices across child gender. To do this, similar parameters across gender were consecutively constrained to be equal for each model. Significant chi-square difference tests when comparing constrained pathways against an unconstrained model represents gender moderation.

**Cultural socialization.** Gender did not moderate any of the paths for cultural socialization.

**Preparation for bias.** Gender moderated the partner effect for mothers. The fit statistics for the constrained model were  $\chi^2(9) = 15.09, p > .05, CFI = .92, TLI = .83, RMSEA = .07$  [95% C.I. = 0.00, 0.12] resulting in a significant chi-square difference test ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 7.96, \Delta df = 1, p \leq .05$ ). In other words, there was a significantly different impact of mothers' experience of discrimination on the way in which fathers approached preparation for bias with their offspring. With their daughters, fathers increased their preparation for bias as mothers' experience of discrimination increased. For their sons, fathers increased their preparation for bias as mothers' experience of discrimination decreased. No other actor or partner effects were moderated by gender.

**Promotion of mistrust.** Gender moderated the actor effect for fathers and the partner effect for mothers. The fit statistics for the constrained model for the father's actor effect were  $\chi^2(7) = 24.95, p \leq .05, CFI = .49, TLI = .30, RMSEA = .13$  [95% C.I. = 0.08, 0.18] resulting in a

significant chi-square difference test ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 17.26, \Delta df = 1, p \leq .05$ ). These results suggested that there was a significantly different impact of fathers' experiences of racial discrimination on their use of promotion of mistrust with their offspring such that as racial discrimination experiences increased for fathers, promotion of mistrust messages increased significantly more for sons than for daughters. The fit statistic results for the partner effect for mothers were  $\chi^2(7) = 19.65, p \leq .05, CFI = .64, TLI = .08, RMSEA = .11$  [95% C. I. = 0.05, 0.16] resulting in a significant chi-square difference test ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 11.96, \Delta df = 1, p \leq .05$ ). In other words, as the number of racial discrimination instances decreased for mothers of sons, so the number of messages of mistrust their partners provided increased; however, when there was an increase of racial discrimination experiences among mothers reporting on their daughters, partners also tended to increase messages of mistrust.

### **Discussion**

The objective of the current study was to understand the role of parents' experiences of racial discrimination in their racial socialization practices. Using the actor-partner interdependence model, we examined posited effects of experienced racial discrimination on one's own and one's partner's racial socialization techniques while considering the gender of the target child. Overall, findings add to the scarce body of literature on racial discrimination and racial socialization practices by demonstrating that parents change their socialization practices, particularly those related to negative messages about society and other racial groups, as a function of interpersonal experiences with discrimination.

First, we hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between one's perceived racial discrimination and own racial socialization practices. For mothers reporting on their daughters, this was supported for all three racial socialization practices (i.e., cultural

socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust). In regards to sons, actor effects for mothers were present only for preparation for bias. This pattern of findings may be explained by the similarity of gender between mothers and daughters. Specifically, mothers of daughters who perceive elevated levels of couple racial discrimination experiences may be more active in sharing cultural values, preparing their daughters for racial discrimination, and promoting wariness or distrust of other races in order to protect them from similar experiences. Mothers perceiving increasing levels of couple racial discrimination may also be more inclined to prepare their sons for bias due to the greater likelihood of African American males to be discriminated against in society (Varner & Mandara, 2013). Mothers may be sensitive to the idea that if they are experiencing such racial injustices, their sons are at an even greater risk.

It is important to note that the only significant finding regarding racial discrimination and cultural socialization was among mothers of daughters. Existing literature on racial discrimination and cultural socialization are mixed, with some studies finding a relationship (e.g., Hughes & Johnson, 2001) and others that do not (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997). Conversely, it may be that gender is a modifier of this relationship as girls are being prepared to have cultural pride, and to be strong, independent, and resilient—traditional characteristics of women in African American families (Hill & Sprague, 1999). It is possible that the relative lack of an effect of racial discrimination on cultural socialization practices with sons suggest that it may not be seen as providing increased resilience for male offspring.

The current study also found that as fathers perceived increasing levels of couple racial discrimination, they were more likely to transmit preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust messages to their sons but not their daughters. It seems that the degree to which parents share race-based messages with their sons and daughters may be reflective of how they have

experienced or witnessed racial discrimination among African American men and women in society. Specifically, parents may socialize their children differently based on how they have been treated and what they perceive their sons and daughters will experience. Overall, these findings demonstrated that mothers' perceptions of couple racial discrimination have the greatest effect on socialization messages to daughters, whereas fathers' perceptions of couple racial discrimination have the greatest effect on sons.

Our second hypothesis was that there will be a positive relationship between one's perceived racial discrimination and the partner's racial socialization practices. This hypothesis was partially supported. Specifically, the more mothers perceived couple racial discrimination, the more fathers prepared their daughters for racial bias. It is interesting that this is the only finding in the current study where fathers socialized their daughters in the presence of racial discrimination. It may be that mothers are sharing their racial discrimination experiences with their partners and consequently fathers take on a socializing role for their daughters out of concern. This adds a new dimension to the notion that fathers tend to act as socializing agents only to their sons when in fact their engagement in the practice with daughters is related to their female partner's experiences of race-based stress.

Other partner effects were present, although not in the expected direction. When reporting on sons, the less mothers perceived couple racial discrimination, the more fathers communicated promotion of mistrust messages to their sons. Yet, when looking at this in the context of other relationships previously explored, the more fathers perceived couple racial discrimination, the more likely they are to promote mistrust. It may be that mothers with fewer perceptions of couple racial discrimination are not relaying such messages to their sons and consequently, fathers are taking more of the socializing role.

It must also be noted that no partner effects for fathers were present in any of the models. In other words, fathers' perceptions of couple racial discrimination have little to no influence on mother's use of racial socialization strategies. This finding could reflect the fact that mothers have consistently been identified as the primary socializing agents for children (McHale et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2010).

Finally, we hypothesized that mothers and fathers would socialize their daughters and sons differently when faced with racial discrimination. This hypothesis was supported as we found that as perceptions of couple racial discrimination experiences increased, mothers reporting on their daughters prepared them for racial bias significantly more than mothers reporting on their sons. This may be due to the similarity of parent and child gender. In fact, Brown and colleagues (2010) found that mothers tended to socialize their daughters on how to cope with racism significantly more than mothers socialized their sons after controlling for age, family structure, and socioeconomic status variables. Previous research also found that girls were more likely to be socialized with cultural socialization practices but boys were more likely to receive socialization practices that included racial discrimination coping skills and promotion of mistrust (Caughy et al., 2011).

Furthermore, our findings demonstrated that fathers use significantly more promotion of mistrust messages, as their perception of couple racial discrimination experiences increased, with their sons compared to fathers reporting on their daughters. It is possible that since Black men may be viewed as a threat or danger to society they are socialized by their fathers to not trust others or be wary of authority. As stated earlier, this relationship is likely due to the shared experience and similarity of gender as African American fathers can share this plight with their sons. It was also found that fathers socialized their sons to mistrust to the extent that their

mothers perceived less couple racial discrimination. In contrast, fathers tended to socialize their daughters to mistrust more when their mothers perceived more couple racial discrimination. In other words, the target of fathers' communicated distrust and wariness messages depended on the experiences of the mother. Further investigation into the use of promotion of mistrust messages is warranted given that our study suggests these types of messages are being used in African American families and especially since some studies have found that promotion of mistrust message are related to increased behavioral problems (e.g. Caughy, Nettles, O'Campo, & Lohrfink, 2006).

These findings highlight differences between mothers and fathers as they socialize their children to grow up in society. These parenting differences reflect both parents' previous experiences with race-based stress and may have beneficial aspects that promote success and well-being. For instance, some parents may turn their negative experience with racial discrimination into a teachable moment for their children in order to protect them and make them aware of potential injustices they may face. Such messages have been shown to relate to positive functioning such as decreased depression, ethnic identity development, higher cognitive scores, and decreased behavioral problems (McHale et al., 2006; Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007; Caughy et al., 2011).

Although there is ample evidence of the benefits of racial socialization strategies, some messages are not beneficial and create a cycle of mistrust and perhaps self-fulfilling prophecies. Studies using diverse samples (e.g. African American, Caribbean, and immigrants) have found that an overemphasis on discrimination may lead to greater depressive symptoms, and deviant behavior in adolescents (Hughes et al., 2006; Rumbaut, 1994; Biafora, Taylor, Warheit, & Zimmerman, 1993). For example, if youth are socialized to mistrust society as a result of racial

discrimination from their parents, they may be perceived unfairly and consequently treated unfairly producing a vicious cycle. In addition, parents may create a culture of hypersensitivity that may not have otherwise been present.

Therefore, it is important to attend to racial socialization practices in parenting programs designed to positively influence African American youth. It is a dimension of parenting that is salient in ethnic minority family life (Coard et al., 2004) and that may influence a range of outcomes for youth. Parenting interventions designed to influence racial socialization should focus on promoting positive racial socialization strategies that will provide greater resilience for youth. Results from the current study inform parenting interventions by highlighting the ways in which parental history of discrimination may influence their approach to socializing their children. Parents who have experienced racial discrimination may need support or instruction regarding ways to relay positive socialization messages to their children and steer away from promoting mistrust or hypersensitivity. Racial discrimination experiences the parents have gone through may not be the same experiences their children go through, so assistance on how to navigate this socialization process may be needed.

These findings also have research implications. Scholars would benefit from examining multiple domains of racial socialization. As shown in the current study, there are distinct constructs that are transmitted to varying degrees and under certain conditions. It will also be important for researchers to explore the role of African American fathers in youth's development as it relates to racial socialization. Our study suggests that African American fathers do have a role in socializing children despite the broader literature that focuses only on mothers' experiences even when fathers are in the picture.

The present study must be considered in the context of its limitations. First, the data are

cross-sectional and therefore it is difficult to ascertain whether racial discrimination experiences led parents to use particular socialization strategies or whether sending these messages about race made parents' more aware of racial discrimination instances. Future studies should examine these constructs over time and construct cross-lagged analyses to confirm hypothesized relationships. An additional limitation to the study is that the findings may not be generalizable to all African Americans as they were recruited from the Southeastern part of the U.S. and thus may not capture the complexity and heterogeneity of other African American families' experiences. Furthermore, participants were self-selected based on interest in participating in a study aimed to enhance couple relationship processes and competence-promoting parenting practices. Thus, replication studies using other regional samples and/or a nationally-representative sample of African American couples are needed. It must also be noted that there were low internal consistencies for the promotion of mistrust subscale. Additional work is needed to assess this racial socialization strategy among African American couples to enhance reliability. A final limitation is that parents were asked to report on a particular target child; therefore the present study does not capture whether parents utilize the same parenting strategy across children if siblings are present. Future studies should examine these relationships using intra-familial data to assess the complexity of each family's structure as it relates to racial discrimination and racial socialization across gender.

Despite these limitations, there are several strengths to the study. First, this study includes the experiences of African American fathers and examines parents' racial discrimination experiences in the context of the couple. Past studies either focused on mothers or analyzed mothers and fathers separately which loses vital information and inappropriately assumes that data from different family members are independent. An additional strength of the

study is that it includes a sizable sample of African American couples and thus we were better able to explore variability in the relationship between parenting experiences and parenting practices. Finally, we examined racial socialization as a multidimensional construct as opposed to studying it as a single dimension. This allowed us to see how past racial discrimination experiences were associated with each racial socialization strategy.

In summary, this study found significant associations between mothers' and fathers' racial discrimination experiences and their racial socialization practices across gender. In essence, we concluded that incidents of racial discrimination are not isolated events but create a shared experience that influences one's own and/or another's behavior. These findings further our understanding of the influence of racial discrimination on parenting in the couple context and how shared gender of the parent and child can differentiate whether African American children are receiving cultural socialization, preparation for bias, or promotion of mistrust messages as a function of parent experienced racial discrimination. As racial discrimination remains present in today's society, this study reminds us that it is essential to remain cognizant of how it influences family processes.

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Table 1.  
*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Study Variables (N = 322)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Women's Perceived Discrimination	--									
2. Men's Perceived Discrimination	.28***	--								
3. Women's Cultural Socialization	.17**	.08	--							
4. Men's Cultural Socialization	-.02	.10	.11*	--						
5. Women's Preparation for Bias	.31***	.11*	.48***	.08	--					
6. Men's Preparation for Bias	.10	.18**	.20***	.51***	.29***	--				
7. Women's Promotion of Mistrust	.12*	.01	.28***	-.00	.31***	.18**	--			
8. Men's Promotion of Mistrust	.06	.19***	.07	.28***	.10	.42***	.09	--		
9. Child age	.05	.05	-.03	.07	.08	.18**	.06	.14*	--	
10. Economic Pressure	.09	.00	.04	-.04	.07	.04	-.02	.01	.12*	--
Mean	23.28	24.15	10.41	10.46	7.80	7.63	4.37	4.37	12.59	2.78
SD	8.46	9.29	2.78	2.78	2.48	2.37	0.82	0.93	1.98	1.05
Range	13 - 52	13 - 52	6 - 18	6 - 18	5 - 15	5 - 15	4 - 11	4 - 12	9 - 17	1 - 5

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

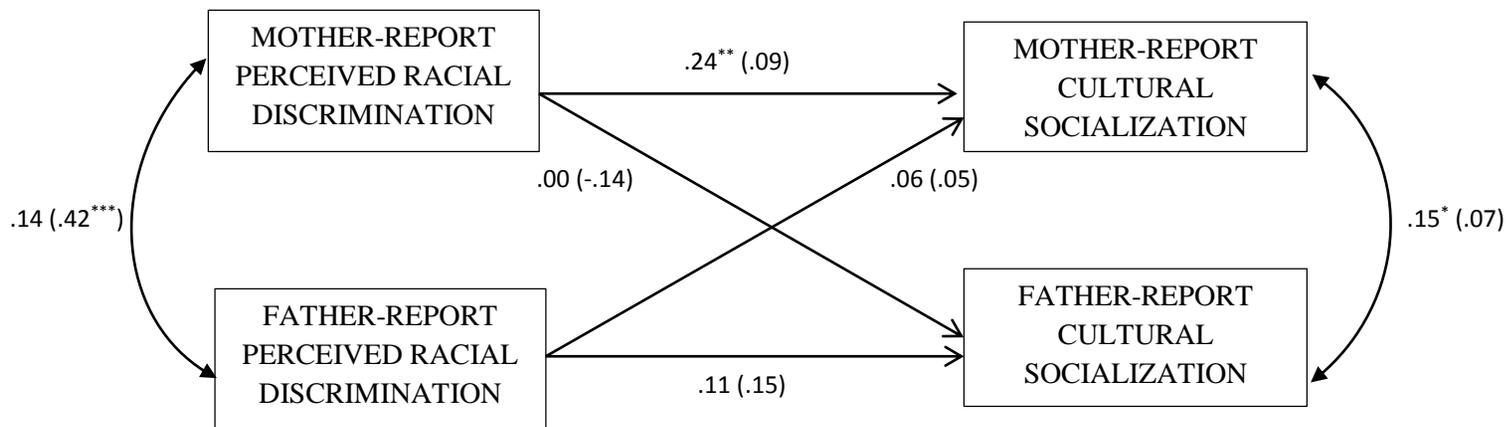


Figure 1. Standardized path coefficients for parent reports of perceived racial discrimination and cultural socialization for those with female children ( $n = 168$ ) and those with male children ( $n = 154$ ). Standardized estimates for parents of female children are on the left and standardized estimates of male children are in parentheses.  $\chi^2 (8) = 7.23, p > .05, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.19, RMSEA = .00$  [95% C.I. = 0.00, 0.09]. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

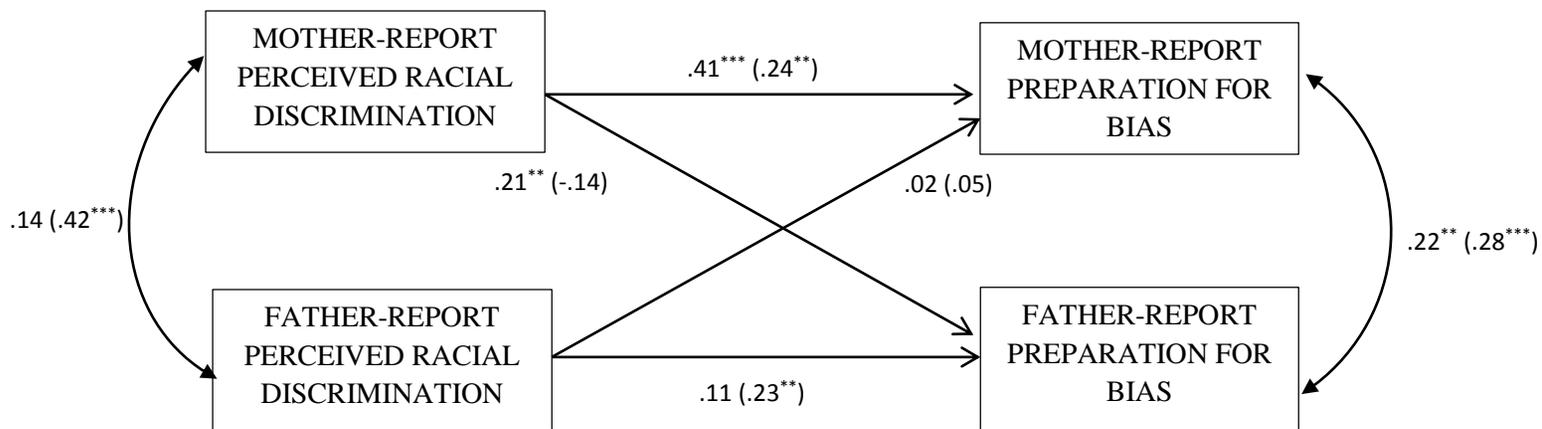


Figure 2. Standardized path coefficients for parent reports of perceived racial discrimination and preparation for bias for those with female children ( $n = 168$ ) and those with male children ( $n = 154$ ). Standardized estimates for parents of female children are on the left and standardized estimates of male children are in parentheses.  $\chi^2 (8) = 7.13, p > .05$ , CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.03, RMSEA = .00 [95% C.I. = 0.00, 0.09]. \*  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

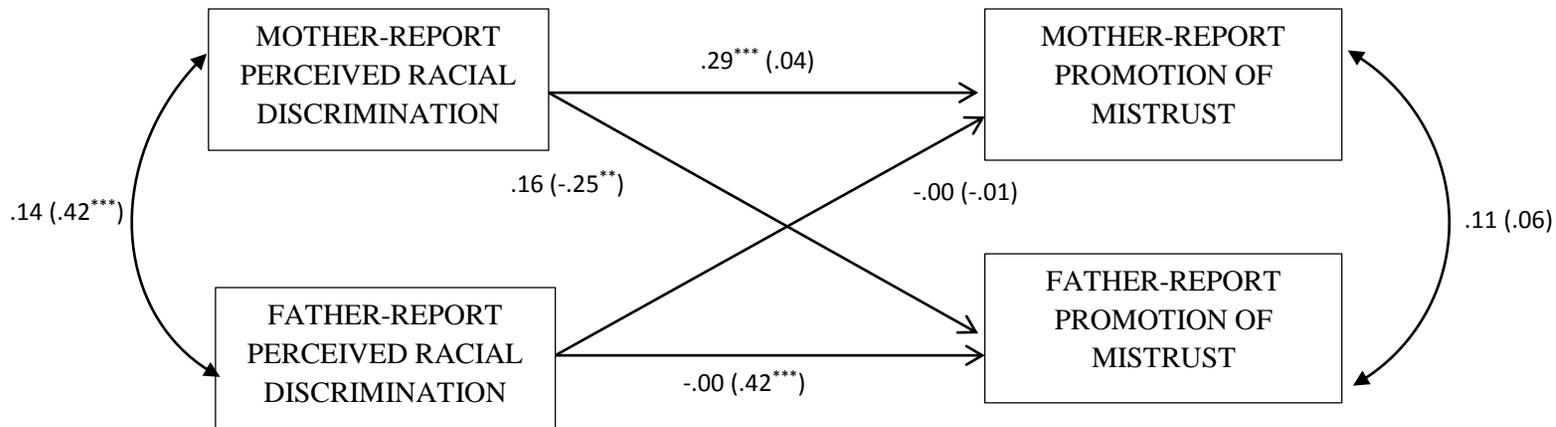


Figure 3. Standardized path coefficients for parent reports of perceived racial discrimination and promotion of mistrust for those with female children ( $n = 168$ ) and those with male children ( $n = 154$ ). Standardized estimates for parents of female children are on the left and standardized estimates of male children are in parentheses.  $\chi^2(6) = 7.69, p > .05, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.86, RMSEA = .04$  [95% C.I. = .00, .12]. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .