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AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS' SOCIALIZATION AROUND RACISM IN THE  
EDUCATION SETTING

by

ALLANA ZUCKERMAN

Under the Direction of Ciara Smalls-Glover, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

African American youth experience individual and institutional level discrimination (e.g., Berkel et al., 2009; Jones, 1997). These experiences negatively impact their overall well-being (e.g., Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Wang & Huguley, 2012). African American parents use racial socialization to teach their children strategies to cope with racial discrimination (e.g., McAdoo, 2002; Peters, 1997). Given the positive impact of racial socialization on the negative outcomes associated with discrimination (e.g., Bynum et al., 2007), more work is needed to understand how contextual factors influence this process. The current study used qualitative methods to examine racial socialization in response to two levels of school-based discrimination. Directed content analysis was used on transcripts from ten focus groups of African American parents (N= 73). Results indicated that parents provided similar cultural socialization messages in response to both levels of discrimination whereas preparation for bias messages differed. Implications for preparing youth for school-based discrimination are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: School, Parenting, Racial socialization, Racial discrimination, Qualitative

AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS' SOCIALIZATION AROUND RACISM IN THE  
EDUCATION SETTING

by

ALLANA ZUCKERMAN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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2014

AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS' SOCIALIZATION AROUND RACISM IN THE  
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by

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August 2014

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to thank my family and friends who have offered unwavering support. I specifically want to thank my parents (Vikki and Allen) whose continued support made this work and all future works possible.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The legacy of institutional and structural racism faced by African Americans in the United States has continually limited opportunities for advancement (Smetana, 2011). One area where racism and discrimination regularly occur is in the education system. Disparities in academic achievement between Black and White youth have historical roots in the racial oppression of African Americans within the larger societal context (Lewis & Manno, 2011). While the proposed contributions to these disparities (e.g., unequal access to education) have become less blatant over time, disparities between these groups on high school dropout rates and post-secondary degree attainment persist (Lewis & Manno, 2011). For example, gaps in high school dropout rates between Black and White youth from 1990 to 2010 have remained unchanged, suggesting stagnation in reducing racial disparities in education (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). At the same time, the gap between Black and White students in attaining Bachelor's degrees or higher has increased from 13 to 19 percent from the years of 1980 to 2011 (NCES, U.S. Department of Education, 2012b).

Previous work has argued that the racism and discrimination that shape the experiences of African Americans in the United States is a major reason for the academic disparities between Black and White youth (e.g., Hilliard, 1991; Lewis & Manno, 2011; Noguera, 2003). Unequal access and distribution of resources in favor of White Americans is just one way in which discrimination negatively impacts African Americans (e.g., Hilliard, 1991; Lewis & Manno, 2011; Noguera, 2003). This body of literature suggests that the racism that students of color experience in the education system contributes negatively to their academic advancement (e.g., Constantine, 2006; Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman & Smith, 2000; Noguera, 2003; Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010). Moreover, previous work has shown that adolescents

experience multiple levels of racism in the school setting (e.g., Berkel et al., 2009; Seaton, 2009). Adolescent education lays the foundation for adult well-being; therefore an environmental context that includes racism in the school setting could negatively impact their well-being from adolescence into adulthood (Kao & Turney, 2010).

African American parents know their children will face racism and provide them with specific messages to combat these experiences. This process is called racial socialization (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997). These messages are intended to help their children cope with discrimination (e.g., Smalls-Glover, Williams, Zuckerman & Thomas, 2013). Given the prevalence of academic disparities for African American youth, and the long term impact of these disparities on adult well-being, it is paramount to examine the practices that protect this population from the negative consequences of racial discrimination in the education system (e.g., racial socialization).

### **1.1 African American Youth Experiences of Racial Discrimination in the Education Setting**

Historically, racism has been a pervasive force for African American youth and unfortunately, it continues to be one. While there are multiple environments in which African American youth experience racism, the school setting is one of great importance (Constantine, 2006; Garcia-Coll et al., 1996; Jones, 1997). Past researchers have provided evidence of the consequences of racism on academic and health outcomes from secondary school to college (e.g., Reynolds et al., 2010; Wang & Huguley, 2012). Much of this work has not often distinguished between the type of discrimination an African American child faced (i.e., individual or institutional) even though youth report experiencing multiple facets of racism in the

school setting; this remains a gap in the literature. The current section will be organized based on the type of racism youth are reporting (i.e. individual and institutional) as understood by theory.

### ***1.1.1 Individual racism in the education setting.***

Individual racism includes any direct or indirect action by a member of the power majority group that seeks to discriminate against a person of color by implying he or she is inferior (Jones, 1997). Individual racism – in general and in the school system – manifests in a plethora of ways including physical violence, direct verbal insults, or false accusations (Thomas, 2006). Physical violence can occur on the group or individual level wherein one’s racial group membership makes him or her a target for being physically harmed by a member or members of the power majority group. Direct verbal insults include using derogatory racial slurs in the form of name-calling, which often leads to a confrontation (Thomas, 2006). Another form of individual racism includes false accusations made against a person based on his or her racial group membership (Thomas, 2006). An accusation is a form of individual racism if that same accusation would not have been made or tolerated if it were made against a person from another race or the race of the power majority group. Individual racism in the school setting includes these examples as well as low academic expectations and biases from teachers (Thomas, 2006; Weinstein, Gregory, & Stambler, 2004).

These discriminatory experiences adversely affect African American youth. Moreover, negative school experiences have long-term consequences. In a study done by Wang and Huguley (2012), students’ perception of teacher discrimination at eighth grade was a negative predictor of all academic outcomes for Black youth in eleventh grade. Furthermore, Wang and Huguley’s (2012) study indicates the pervasive impact of perceived teacher discrimination on youth engagement, and this finding was even more prominent for Black males who also reported

more discrimination from teachers and peers alike. Moreover, in a study of high and low performing urban low-income African American youth transitioning to high school, 77% of students said negative experiences with teachers was a challenge to acclimating to the ninth grade (Newman et al., 2000).

### ***1.1.2 Institutional racism in the education setting***

Institutional racism refers to oppressive practices that benefit the majority group while maintaining hegemony over marginalized groups (Jones, 1997). One of the ways in which this type of racism appears is through the reflection of practices engaged in at the level of the institution that restrict access to resources based solely on one's racial group membership (Jones, 1997). In the education setting, the structure and culture of the school send inherent messages that support and preserve racial categories and stereotypes (Hughes, McGill, Ford & Tubbs, 2011; Noguera, 2003). One way this manifests is through policies and practices that marginalize people of color by systematically treating them based on racist perceptions of ability such as placing students in lower level courses and tracking (Hilliard, 1991; Oaks, 2005; Snyder, 2011). Other forms of institutional racism include omitting African American history from course curriculum and disciplining African American students harsher than their White counterparts (Hilliard, 1991; Hughes et al., 2011; Noguera, 2003).

As with instances of individual racism, institutional racism also adversely affects African American youth. For example, for urban African American adolescents, greater perceptions of collective/institutional racism were associated with more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem (Seaton, 2009; Seaton & Yip, 2009). The link between racial discrimination in the school setting and negative outcomes is not relegated to youth in junior or high school. For example, in a study with Black and Latino college students in a predominantly White institution it was found

that higher levels of institutional racism were related to higher levels of amotivation (Reynolds et al., 2010). Furthermore, these findings illustrate that a negative environment perpetuating institutional racism may affect attitudes about school and motivation to achieve for students of color, particularly African American youth (Reynolds et al., 2010).

### ***1.1.3 Teacher discrimination: Individual or institutional?***

One issue with previous work on racism, particularly in the school system, is that discrimination has been defined in many ways. Some authors have collapsed an understanding of discrimination using a broad definition that encompasses both individual and institutional level experiences (e.g., Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). Authors who have studied racism at the individual and institutional level usually do so with a broad definition including multiple domains (e.g., school, work, the public, etc.) (e.g., Reynolds et al., 2010; Seaton, 2009; Seaton & Yip, Snyder, 2011). While this work is extremely important, it limits our understanding of whether teacher discrimination exists at the individual level, the institutional level practices or both. Qualitative work has made this distinction unclear as well, sometimes defining racism broadly while the definition includes either individual experiences with teachers or institutional level practices that teachers within a school adhere to (such as tracking) (e.g., Newman et al., 2000; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). These findings provide an excellent foundation for this study as they have provided quantitative and qualitative evidence that youth experience multiple levels of discrimination in school and teacher discrimination occurs at both of these levels. The current work can potentially make these distinctions clearer.

Moreover, this body of work provides evidence for both the pervasive nature of racism within the education system as well as long-term negative consequences associated with it. Specifically, this work shows how racial discrimination is part of the school experience for Black

youth across their educational career. The report of experienced racism, negative effects from these experiences, as well as the growing disparities between Black and White youth in higher education, reveal a growing need to better understand factors that contribute to the protection of African American students against these forces. One protective factor discussed widely in the literature is the culturally relevant parenting practice of racial socialization.

## **1.2 Racial Socialization: Parents' Role as a Buffer Between Youth's Experience of School Based Racism and Academic Outcomes**

Racial socialization is defined as messages given to the younger generation “for the development of values, attitudes, behaviors and beliefs regarding the meaning and significance of race and racial stratification, intergroup and intragroup interactions and personal and group identity” (Lesane-Brown, 2006, p. 403). Garcia-Coll and colleagues' (1996) integrative model of ethnic minority parenting attends to the unique impact that environments like the school and neighborhood can have on youth of color. In particular, this model illustrates how these contexts can be promoting as well as inhibiting depending on the nature of the environment. As such, parents need to promote culturally defined coping mechanisms based on the specific demands these promoting and inhibiting environments place on minority children (Garcia-Coll et al., 1996; Peters, 1997). McAdoo (2002a, 2002b) states that the historical understanding by African American parents is that they must instill in their children the ability to know when it is appropriate to engage in certain behaviors in order to cope with everyday experiences in a racially oppressive society. For Black parents, racial socialization is important because they must socialize their children based on their racial group membership including values and behaviors that transcend race in order to face the realities of being Black in American society (Garcia-Coll & Pachter, 2002; McAdoo, 2002a; McAdoo 2002b; Peters, 1997; Smetana, 2011).



Previous research has found that African American parents often report engaging in racial socialization strategies (Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004; Hughes & Chen, 1997, Thomas & Speight, 1999). Coard and colleagues (2004) found that of the 15 parents they interviewed about racial socialization strategies, all reported engaging in these practices with their children. Moreover, Thomas and Speight (1999) found that, in a sample of 104 African American parents, 96% reported that they felt it was important to engage in conversations with their children regarding issues related to race. Given the importance Black parents attribute to giving their children messages about race, a better understanding of the types of messages parents report giving their children is necessary.

Throughout the racial socialization literature, several typologies of racial socialization messages have been identified that capture the content of messages parents give their children about race (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Coard et al., 2004; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006). Bowman and Howard (1985) conducted a pivotal study in the racial socialization literature that laid the foundation for understanding the content of parental messages about race. In this study, the authors examined parental messages that are proactively given to children to make them aware of racial barriers and give them the ability to cope with them. Two of the four themes Bowman and Howard (1985) outlined include Ethnic Pride (messages emphasizing racial heritage and pride) and Racial Barriers (messages emphasizing awareness of racial barriers and strategies for interracial conflict). Based on the categories identified by Bowman and Howard (1985), Hughes and Chen (1997) outlined four main categories of racial socialization messages. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on two of these categories – Cultural Socialization and Preparation for Bias. Cultural Socialization refers to practices parents engage in that teach children about racial heritage and promote children's racial pride (Hughes & Chen, 1997).

Examples of this type of socialization include exposing children to culturally relevant information and encouraging children to have pride in their racial group. Preparation for Bias refers to parents instilling awareness of racial discrimination in their children as well as how to cope with those types of discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1997). Examples of this include making the child aware of the existence of racism and giving them specific instructions such as telling them to work twice as hard because of their race.

While more than two types of racial socialization messages exist, preparation for bias and cultural socialization messages have consistently been associated with psychological, behavioral and academic outcomes (e.g., Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007; Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). Furthermore, these two types of racial socialization are also frequently discussed when examining school based discrimination and academic outcomes (Friend, Hunter & Fletcher, 2011; Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, West-Bey, 2009b; Wang & Huguley, 2012). As such, the current study will focus on these two types of racial socialization messages – cultural socialization and preparation for bias.

### **1.3 Cultural Socialization, Preparation for Bias and Academic Outcomes**

Parents' racial socialization messages have also been shown to serve as a protective factor against a variety of factors including exposure to violence and racial discrimination (Degruy, Kjellstrand, Briggs & Brennan, 2011; Harris-Britt et al., 2007). Previous research indicates a consistent relationship between cultural socialization and academic outcomes such that messages about racial pride predict higher academic achievement, particularly in terms of higher engagement (Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way & Foust, 2009a; Hughes et al., 2008; Smalls, 2009). Moreover, cultural socialization has been shown to predict less psychological distress in African American college freshmen (Bynum, Burton & Best, 2007). Cultural socialization messages

(e.g., messages including cultural history or heritage) have been found to be more common than messages about preparation for bias messages (e.g., messages about discrimination or racial bias) (Coard et al., 2004; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2009a).

Research concerning the relationship between preparation for bias messages and outcomes has been more mixed. Some research finds a positive association between preparation for bias and academic outcomes while others find a negative association (Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2009b). For example, preparation for bias messages have been shown to be a significant positive predictor of GPA in boys but not in girls (Friend et al., 2011). Conversely, barrier socialization – similar to preparation for bias messages – has been shown to predict lower grades but only for boys who tended to have more negative views of African Americans (Smalls & Cooper, 2012).

It has been argued that these mixed findings are the result of the lack of understanding regarding the nuances of preparing a child for racial discrimination, particularly in the scholastic setting. Another proposed reason behind these mixed findings is that preparation for bias messages given in isolation provide different content than preparation for bias messages given in tandem with other messages, especially cultural socialization. For example, one argument is that a message given to a child preparing them solely for discrimination could instill in them a level of dejection and might discourage them from engaging in environments where discrimination is likely to occur, such as in the academic realm (Hughes et al., 2009b). These mixed findings illustrate the need for understanding the context surrounding the nuanced transmission of these messages (Hughes et al., 2011). The current body of work on racial socialization necessitates a deeper understanding of the ways in which racial socialization can be utilized to its fullest capacity to promote successful outcomes even in the face of racial discrimination. One way in

which we can further our understanding of this process is by examining the messages parents provide in response to racism in the school setting.

#### **1.4 Parental Preparation for and Response to Youth School Based Racism Experiences**

There are two reasons why parents give their child messages about race and the education system: they desire to prepare the child for a discrimination experience or they are responding to the child's discrimination experience. In the case of preparation for discrimination in the education system, past research has shown that Black parents who perceived racism at school reported higher levels of interactions with their children at home (McKay, Atkins, Hawthorn, Brown & Lynn, 2003). These findings suggest that parents perceive racism at the scholastic level and that perception is informing their parenting practices. This work also suggests that parents are preparing their children for the racism they perceive as emanating from the school environment (McKay et al., 2003). For parents of color, one facet of parental involvement might include racial socialization with the understanding that their child will experience school based discrimination because of their race.

Another study, by Suzzio and colleagues (2008), found that African American mothers of young children knew the importance of preparing their children for institutional practices that would limit them because of their race (e.g., tracking). Two main themes that emerged from the messages mothers gave to their children included the importance of learning about African American history and the importance of using education to overcome racism by fighting to gain access to higher education. This qualitative study is one of the few that links parents' beliefs about the racial discrimination their children will face in the education system with the types of messages they gave their children to prepare for this phenomenon.

Previous work has found that parents instill in their children the notion that their behaviors are perceived a certain way because of their race. For example, African American parents provide preparation for bias messages that instruct youth to ignore or change behavior to cope with the experience of racism (Smalls-Glover et al., 2013). However, when preparation for bias messages included instructions for the child, these instructions varied (Smalls-Glover et al., 2013). This work has concluded that future research is needed to determine if patterns in coping strategies and race-related messages vary depending on the type of racism experience the child was being prepared for (Smalls-Glover et al., 2013). Furthermore, Black youth recognize that when they engage in certain behaviors they are perceived differently than other racial groups who engage in the same behaviors (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). In a qualitative study conducted by Rosenbloom and Way (2004), Black youth realized that changing that behavior was crucial to being safe and avoiding trouble with authority figures (e.g., police, school teachers and administrators, shopkeepers, etc.). Taken together these findings illustrate that parents give preparation for bias messages that may include certain behaviors the child can engage in as a way of combating racism while ensuring their child's safety. However, these coping behaviors are varied suggesting that other contextual factors are influencing when parents encourage or discourage certain coping behaviors. In this way, the mixed findings reported on the effectiveness of preparation for bias messages as a buffer to discrimination may be related to the context of those messages. Examining differential patterns of racial socialization messages based on the type of discrimination that triggered the message could provide the necessary context to further understand these findings.

## 1.5 Conceptual Framing and Study Rationale

The process of transmitting a racial socialization message can be examined using an ecological framework. By incorporating an ecological perspective, we gain an understanding of the ways in which parents, schools and children interact to inform the messages parents transmit about race and education. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory encompasses five levels, but the ones most relevant to the current study are the microsystem and the mesosystem. The microsystem includes any environment where an individual experiences interpersonal interactions (e.g., school, family, workplace, etc.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The mesosystem includes the processes of two or more settings relevant to the individual (e.g., interactions between school and home) (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). A mesosystem model is one where processes that occur in two settings relevant to the individual affect one another. In the current study, examining how experiences the child is having at school impact the messages their parents give them about race at home would be an example of a mesosystem model.

Few studies have examined how school experiences impact decisions that the family (parent or child) make at home. The current study further contributes to the literature by looking at the interaction between the school, the child and the parent, as past research has only examined the interplay between two of these at once but never all three. While we do know African American parents use racial socialization to prepare their children for the possibility of racism, there has been no deliberate connection made between African American youth experiences and parents' response to those experiences. The current study seeks to address this gap by providing context to the transmission of racial socialization messages that have been given by the parent either to prepare the child for discrimination or as a result of the child sharing a discrimination experience they had in school.

Given the complexity of the relationship between the realities faced by African Americans in the larger societal context and the family processes in response to those realities, a richer understanding of this relationship is needed (Hughes & Chen, 1997). Where previous quantitative work has allowed for an understanding of the frequency of racial socialization messages, the contextual issues surrounding transmission of race related messages and factors that influence that transmission are not well accounted for with a quantitative approach (Hughes & Dumont, 1993). Qualitative methods allow for a multidimensional understanding of racial socialization that can more accurately capture the way in which parents transmit messages about race (Bentley, Adams & Stevenson, 2009). Furthermore, the use of qualitative methodology has the power to yield more complete pictures of these race-based conversations between parent and child thereby providing insight into the process of racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006).

Previous qualitative work examining racial socialization has focused on the content and the transmission of racial socialization messages (e.g., Coard et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2008). Much of the quantitative findings that explore the relationship between school-based discrimination and racial socialization do not differentiate or compare between individual and institutional racism. Furthermore, research to date has not examined potential differences in the racial socialization messages children receive based on the type of discrimination that triggered the parent giving their child that message. However, when qualitatively exploring youth experiences of racism in education, they are clearly experiencing multiple levels of discrimination (Berkel et al., 2009). Previous qualitative work has found that African American mothers feel it is important to share messages that instill cultural pride while preparing their children for the unfair treatment they will receive in the education system (Suzzio et al., 2008). Furthermore, much of the research examining African American youth's racial discrimination

experiences use the broad term school-based discrimination to encompass being discriminated against in multiple contexts (e.g. individual and institutional) and by multiple sources (e.g. teacher and peer). More work is needed to connect Black youth experiences of racism in the school setting to parents' preparation for and response to those discriminatory experiences.

### **1.6 Specific Aims and Hypotheses of the Current Study**

The current study seeks to address these gaps by using a qualitative approach to gain a better understanding of how parents respond to African American youth's experiences of discrimination in the school setting. In doing so, this work seeks to provide a richer understanding of the ways in which African American parents can utilize this socialization practice to provide children with the tools necessary to successfully navigate the social mores of the education system. Specifically, the current study has three research aims (Figure 1):

Aim 1: To examine the content of the racial socialization messages parents give their children to prepare them for, or in response to, racism in the education system.

Hypothesis 1: The content of racial socialization messages will align with cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages as defined in the existing literature.

Aim 2: To examine the educational experiences of racism that triggers the transmission of a racial socialization message from the parent to the child.

Hypothesis 2: Triggers to these conversations will align with definitions of individual and institutional racism in the school setting.

Aim 3: To examine if there are differences in the content of racial messages parents give based on the nature of the educational racism that triggers the message (Figure 2).



Hypothesis 3: Based on the lack of information distinguishing youth experiences of individual and institutional discrimination in the school setting and parental racial messages, no apriori hypotheses were expected related to this aim.

## 2 METHODS

The current study used existing data collected in 2011-2012 for the Black Families Speak study. The author chose this dataset because the questions that were used to prompt discussion from parents are specifically included asking parents about their racial socialization practices.

### 2.1 Sample

The sample included 73 parents from a large metropolitan city in the Southeast who represented 62 families. Ninety-eight percent of participants identified as Black/African American. Seventy-seven percent were female and 23% were male. The majority of the sample reported being married (55.6%) while 44% of the sample reported being single (e.g., divorced, cohabitating, widowed or never married). About half of the parents reported college as their highest level of education (52%). This included having an Associates degree, some college or a Bachelors degree. Thirty-two percent of parents reported graduate level work as their highest level of work (e.g., some graduate school, Masters or Ph.D.) and 15% of participants reported high school (e.g., some high school or received high school diploma). Forty-eight percent of the sample reported being employed full-time while 15.1% reported being employed part-time and 35.6% reported other (either self-employed or unemployed). The age of parents ranges from 23 years old to 59 years old ( $M=37.6$ ,  $SD=8.4$ ). The mean number of children in each household was two children. Age of the children ranges from less than one year old to 22 years old.

## 2.2 Procedure

Participants were recruited through four community organizations in a large metropolitan city in the Southeast. All recruitment materials that went out to community partners were sent to potential participants that met the criteria of 1) identifying as African American and 2) having an African American child or worked with African American children. The recruitment flyer asked if they were interested in discussing the content of conversations caregivers have with children about race and the influence of race in children's pursuit of success. Potential participants were told this would involve being part of a focus group for 90 minutes and they would be compensated for their time with \$35.00. To verify eligibility, potential participants were then screened via telephone and asked two questions: 1) Are you a parent/caregiver of or work with an African American child? and 2) Do you identify as African American?. If participants said yes to both questions then they were asked if they were available to participate in one of the focus groups that were available in their community.

Each focus group was held in a central location within the community. Community locations included a participants' home, a local church, an elementary school and a community center. Groups consisted of an average of six participants. The focus groups were audio and video recorded. Participants were first given registration packets with a consent form and demographic questions. Participants were given two copies of the consent form, one to keep and one to read and return to the research assistant with their signature to indicate they read and understood the details of the study. After participants filled out the packet, the principal investigator facilitated each focus group with a series of questions about what participants believed about being Black and what issues were most important to discuss with children about race. The principal investigator was the moderator of nine out of ten of the focus groups with the

finally focus group being conducted by a doctoral candidate who was a prominent fixture in the study. Following the completion of the focus group, participants were asked for their completed registration forms.

### **2.3 Measures**

The registration packet participants filled out contained questions asking for demographic information including age, gender, race, marital status, highest level of education, current employment status, number of children and age of children. The moderator of the focus groups used a list of questions to engage parents in conversations around the subject of study. A list of the questions is in Appendix A. First, parents were asked to introduce themselves and answer an ice-breaker question. Next, parents were asked several questions that were used by the moderator to ensure that participants in each focus group touched on the subjects related to the current study. The moderator asked all the questions during all the focus groups to establish validity by ensuring that the information collected as consistent across all of the focus groups.

### **2.4 Data Management**

Focus groups were audio and video recorded. Audio and video recordings were downloaded to a password-protected folder on a double password and firewall protected computer in a locked research lab. All forms with participants' names were stored in a locked file cabinet in the same room. Participants' demographic information are maintained in a data set on the same double protected computer. No identifying information is linked to participants' demographic information in the dataset or their responses in the transcripts.

## **2.5 Analytic Strategy**

Audio files of the focus groups were transcribed verbatim to analyze participant responses. All transcripts were checked by a total of four undergraduate research assistants to ensure participants' responses were transcribed verbatim and to separate any identifying information from participant responses. A directed content analysis was done for research aims 1 and 2 since prior theories have already identified types of racial socialization and types of racism (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This type of analysis is deductive since existing theory was used to inform the creation of codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000; Perry & Jensen, 2001; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). For research aim 3, deductive and inductive analyses were used to examine patterns of a racial socialization message based on the type of discrimination that triggered the message. Deductive analyses included frequencies of the type of message based on the type of trigger. Inductive analyses were used to explore differential patterns in the content of the messages based on the type of discrimination that triggered transmission of the message. An inductive approach was added to research aim 3 to allow for themes to emerge directly from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000; Perry & Jensen, 2001; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). A qualitative codebook was created to explain the categories and provide detailed examples of the codes. These codes informed the deductive analyses as they are based on previously existing literature. This codebook was updated throughout the analytic process and any new codes that resulted from inductive analyses were added.

### **2.5.1 Preliminary analyses**

Transcripts were uploaded into NVivo 10, a qualitative software, which was used for all analyses. Preliminary analyses were conducted to identify and flag instances where parents describe racial socialization messages they provided their children. That included messages in

response to their child experience of racism at school or preparing their child for experiencing racism at in the education setting. The qualitative codebook in Appendix B provides a list of keywords related to school experiences that were used in NVivo 10 to search for instances of racism in the school setting. Keywords related to school-based experiences were generated based on previous qualitative studies related to parental socialization beliefs and youth experiences of discrimination (e.g., Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Suzzio et al., 2008). Instances where parents report sharing a racial socialization messages in response to that experience were then highlighted using NVivo 10. Narratives identified from preliminary analyses were then used to examine the three research aims of the current study.

### ***2.5.2 Analytic strategy for research aim 1***

Deductive coding was used to examine the content of racial socialization messages in response to racism in education (research aim 1). The codebook was used to help determine if the content of these messages reflected one of two types of racial socialization outlined by Hughes and Chen (1997) – cultural socialization and preparation for bias (Appendix B). Cultural socialization included narratives where parents provide messages or practices that instill racial pride, or teach children about their racial heritage (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006). Examples include attending culturally relevant events or celebrating Black history month (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006). Preparation for bias messages included instances where parents provide messages that seek to promote the child’s awareness of racial discrimination and how to handle these situations (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006). The examples and keywords provided in the codebook were created based on examples from the literature and were used to inform whether messages were coded as reflecting cultural socialization or preparation for bias.

### **2.5.3 Analytic strategy for research aim 2**

Deductive coding was used to examine the trigger to racial socialization messages (research aim 2). Parents' narratives on providing their children with a racial socialization message in response to their child's experience of racism in education were already flagged as a result of analyses from research aim 1. In order to address research aim 2, triggers to the conversations flagged from analyses for research aim 1 were identified. Using NVivo 10, triggers to these conversations were identified and highlighted.

Next, deductive analyses were done wherein triggers were coded as representing one of two types of racism in the education system – individual racism and institutional racism (Appendix B). Individual racism included instances such as reports of singular instances teacher discrimination, stories of verbal insults using derogatory racial slurs and racially motivated accusations (e.g., Jones, 1997; Thomas, 2006). Institutional racism included school-wide instances of teacher discrimination, being placed in lower level courses, being disciplined in a harsher manner than White counterparts and other forms of unfair treatment by teachers and administrators against Black students in the school setting (e.g., Hughes et al., 2011; Noguera, 2003; Oakes, 2005). To distinguish from individual racism, a trigger was coded as exhibiting institutional racism when it is made clear that the action is systemic and not reflective of one individual instance. For example, if one teacher punishes one Black student harsher than a White student, this would be reflective of individual racism. However if Black students in a school are systemically and consistently being punished harsher than White students, then this was coded as institutional racism since it is reflective of an institutional practice and not one individual solitary instance. The examples and keywords provided in the codebook were created based on examples

from the literature and were used to inform whether messages were coded as reflecting institutional or individual racism.

#### ***2.5.4 Analytic strategy for research aim3***

In order to examine differences in racial socialization messages based on the type of racism triggering the message (research aim 3), deductive and inductive analyses were conducted. Specifically, results from deductive analyses done for research aim 1 (content of messages) and research aim 2 (trigger to messages) were used to group the racial socialization messages based on the type of school-based discrimination that triggered the message. For example, if a message was coded as cultural socialization, the researcher went back to analyses from research aim 2 to determine how the trigger to this message was coded. Using NVivo 10, the message was then given a sub-code based on the trigger. This allowed the researcher to pair each type of racial socialization message with the type of discrimination that triggered that message. Next, NVivo 10 was used to calculate frequencies to examine differences in the types of messages parents reported giving their child based on the type of discrimination that triggered the message (Figure 2). Finally, inductive analyses were done in order to examine themes or patterns that emerged directly from the data in the content of racial socialization messages to determine if parents messages differed based on the type of racism experience.

#### ***2.5.5 Inter-rater agreement***

After coding was completed, an additional graduate research assistant (GRA) was trained to code 10% of the responses to obtain inter-coder agreement (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). Inter-coder agreement is the extent to which different coders assign the same code to each response (Lombard et al., 2002). In the current study, the GRA's independent analyses were compared to the author's independent analyses in order to calculate percent

agreement, which is the percentage of all coding decisions made by coders where all coders agreed (Lombard et al., 2002). Percent agreement between the author and the GRA was 1.00 indicating that both parties were 100% in agreement.

### **3 RESULTS**

Results from preliminary analyses on all 10 focus groups revealed that, in 5 out of 10 focus groups, parents reported giving their child a race related message in response to or preparation for racism in the school setting. Specifically, 20 narratives across 5 focus groups included the transmission of a race related message in response to or preparation for a child's experience of discrimination in the school setting. Directed content analyses were conducted on these narratives to address all 3 research aims. The following section will discuss results from these analyses.

#### **3.1 Research aim 1: Racial socialization**

Research aim 1 (to examine the content of racial socialization messages in response to racism in education) was addressed using deductive coding. Participant responses that included a message they gave their children about race were coded as either exhibiting cultural socialization or preparation for bias. Results from directed content analyses of the focus group transcripts for themes of racial socialization revealed that participant responses did align with cultural socialization and preparation for bias.

##### ***3.1.1 Cultural socialization***

Racial socialization messages that aligned with cultural socialization emerged from 3 out of 5 focus groups (Table 1). At least half of all participants in each of these 3 focus groups had a Bachelors degree or higher (80%, 100% and 50% respectively). When parents discussed cultural socialization they usually included messages about racial pride and Black history. One example



of cultural socialization that emerged from these responses comes from the narrative of a mother who shared how she promotes culturally relevant standards of beauty to her daughter.

“Well like in her playroom for instance, at her level there are images of women of African art faces...I put them on the wall and then she starts looking excited and talking about the colors of the beads and we talk about the beads and colors.”

Here, this participant goes on to explain how she exposes her daughter to African art to make sure her she has an image of beauty that looks like her. This is one example of a parent exposing their child to culturally relevant art with the purpose of promoting pride in her racial heritage.

Another example of cultural socialization that emerged from participant responses comes from a mother who engaged in activities with her daughter to teach her about Black History.

“I feel like with my children there’s a need of – in school their real Black history. Not just what’s in the books. So sometimes in the morning when we’re on our way driving to school, I’ll let them listen to Tom Joyner give the Black History facts. Because then they see that there are people just like them that created the things that they use everyday and that they’re not beneath anyone that they can achieve the same thing.”

Here, the mother explains how the lack of inclusive teaching of Black history in school has made her want to ensure her children know that the history of Black people includes success. She goes on to describe the she does this so her children to know they can do anything and that they should have pride in being Black because of what Black people have accomplished. Similar to the previous narrative, this example is important because it shows how parents are engaging in specific actions with the intention promoting racial pride.

### ***3.1.2 Preparation for bias***

Racial socialization messages that aligned with preparation for bias emerged from all 5 focus groups (Table 1). When parents discussed preparation for bias they usually included messages about being aware of what racism looks like and teaching their child how to react and

respond to racism. One example comes from a mother making sure that her daughter knows what racism looks like and how to navigate a racially discriminatory experience.

“But I’m trying to teach her – you can try to work through a racial situation yourself, but to be mindful of how it looks. Sometimes it’s not but I think our teenagers need to know what it looks like, what the face of racism is.”

This is one example of a parent wanting to make sure that their child knows that racism can manifest many different ways depending on the situation. Moreover, the parent in this example shares that her child needs to know how to handle any “racial situation” that should arise. This narrative provides insight into the information parents find important for their child to know and why.

Another example of a preparation for bias message comes from a mother sharing that she told her son how to react to someone calling him a racially derogatory name.

“So any type of discrimination, all that stuff, you’re not going to just dismiss it. I don't think you should just dismiss it. I mean, I may be different from other people, I just don't think you should dismiss it. You're on the bus with this person for almost a year, if he’s going to call you a nigger everyday I need you to address it.”

This is one example of how one mother decided to respond to her son’s experience of being called a “nigger” every day on the school bus. Her response included the fact that he should address it and not dismiss these racist actions of a fellow student. Similar to the previous narrative, the parent here is sharing how important it is for her son to be able to handle this experience of racism.

Another way in which parents prepared their child for how to react to racism was to tell their children that, as Black children, they have to work harder than their White counterparts in school in order to succeed. One example of this type of message is from a narrative of a mother explaining to her son that now that he is transitioning from middle school to high school he has to work harder because he is Black.

“So I brought to his attention, ‘As a Black child, you have to do better. You have to get A’s and B’s. It is important that you get that because no one’s going to give you a free share. You’re going to have to work extremely hard for it. When you go off to high school, you’re going to be with the children who are not on the honor roll. You’re going to be put with a group of children who probably are struggling with C’s and D’s, which is something you’re not used to. And you’re going to have to fight and work your way up.’ So, my conversation with him went on for hours and hours.”

In this example, the mother is very explicit that her son is going to be placed in lower level classes and exposed to different circumstances now that he is moving up in school. She also tells him that he is going to have to work harder and fight in order to succeed. This message was a theme that came up in many parents’ responses when sharing the messages they gave their children. Many parents prepared their children for being judged more harshly and given less privileges than their White counterparts.

### **3.2 Research aim 2: Triggers to racial socialization**

Research aim 2 (to examine the trigger to racial socialization messages) was addressed using deductive coding. Triggers to a parent giving a race related message to their child were coded as exhibiting individual or institutional racism in the school setting. Results from directed content analysis revealed that triggers to these conversations did align with either individual or institutional racism.

#### **3.2.1 Individual racism**

Triggers to the transmission of a racial socialization message that aligned with individual racism emerged from 4 out of 5 focus groups (Table 2). When experiences of individual racism came up they usually involved either 1) the child being discriminated against by another student, 2) the child being discriminated against by a teacher or 3) another student saying something that confirmed a negative racial stereotype. When another student discriminated against the child, this usually involved being called a derogatory name or racial slur directly, overhearing White

students talk about other Black people in derogatory ways or being treated in a negative way by a White student. One example of this comes from a mother's explanation of how her son's experience with being discriminated against lead to her discussing with him how to handle the situation.

"You tell me what happened and then I will say what it - and if it's negative as far as race, I will tell them, 'You need to say something back', because of the fact that I feel like my children. I don't want them to be on the bus and not say anything. I don't think that's right."

Here, a mother is describing how she wants her son to know the correct way to respond and react when being discriminated against by a classmate in a school context, such as on the school bus. She goes on to say that it is especially important for him as a Black man to know how to diffuse a racially charged situation without cursing and instead using his words more respectfully while still handling the situation. This is just one example where the child's experience being discriminated against because of race at school triggered the transmission of a racial socialization message between mother and child. This example also provides insight into the various social spaces that are part of the school where Black children experience racism, providing further evidence for the pervasive nature of racism within this context.

When parents shared their children's experience of being discriminated against by teachers, they typically involved parents preparing their child for having to prove themselves in school, being aware that teachers will limit their opportunities because they are African American and being punished harsher than a White counterpart. One example of a child's experience of individual racism in the school setting comes from a mother's description of how a teacher punished her son harsher than his White counterpart for his minor role in a negative interaction between two other students.

“There’s one that occurred last year with a Caucasian girl and Caucasian boy. And my son, intermediary between the two, he wrote – my son didn’t know the little boy, he wrote a note to the girl that he was going to rape her after school. And he folded it up and asked my son to give it to her. He did sign it but because my son gave it to her, my son got suspended...And my whole problem was, why wasn’t the other little boy suspended?”

Here, a mother is describing how the teacher punishes her son for something that was done by a White student while they did not punish the White student. The mother in this narrative goes on to describe how ashamed her son was after he was reprimanded for this infraction, further showcasing how these experiences negatively impact Black youth in multiple ways including psychologically. This is just one example of a teacher discriminating against a Black student by choosing a harsher punishment for them than they chose for their White counterpart.

Another example of individual racism can be found in a mother’s recount of her daughter’s experience with other children at school and being made fun of for not perpetuating a negative stereotype about Black youth and academic achievement.

“Pretty much in school, it’s like she’s just told that she’s not acting a certain way because she’s African American, like she’s supposed to be, I guess, doing certain things that she’s not doing it, and she’s making good grades. She wants to go to college and she’s get made fun of a lot by other kids saying that she’s acting a different color because of what she’s doing.”

Here, this mother is sharing how her daughter was made fun of because her academic success and goals did not perpetuate the negative stereotype of Black youth not doing well in school or valuing education. This experience triggered a conversation between her and her daughter about race and what it means to be Black to her.

### **3.2.2 Institutional racism**

Triggers to a racial socialization message that aligned with institutional racism emerged from all 5 focus groups (Table 2). All instances of institutional racism involved a practice that discriminated against Black students or favored White students. Specifically these practices

included: testing biases, the content being taught or not being taught in the classroom, disciplining Black students more harshly than White students and celebrating culturally specific events for racial groups other than Black students. One example comes from a mother's recollection of a conversation she had with a fellow parent about the harsher punishment of Black students by teachers and administrators at her son's school (Table 2).

“What she said to me is, during recess, it seems like a disproportionate amount of Black boys are put to the side to sit out because they are they appear to be misbehaving...The school is predominately White and I feel that even at seven, that my son is very aware perhaps that he's being singled out.”

In this example, a mother's concern about the racial inequality exhibited by the harsh way the school disciplines Black students triggered a conversation between her and her son about race. Furthermore, this narrative provides evidence of the messages institutional practices can send to students. The mother in this narrative shares that even at her son's young age of seven, he is aware that Black male children are targeted by the school for punishment which provides evidence for the messages institutions can send to students.

Examples of institutional racism in education includes parents discussing how African American history is absent from the historical content that is taught throughout their child's academic trajectory and the use of academic tests that are biased against Black students. Below, one father describes how the education system in general is structured for Black students to fail, particularly because of the biases in the tests they use.

“As a people, we are already put in school to fail, so because you're exceeding, you're not only passing but you're exceeding and something that they are already looking you to fail, pushing you to fail. The tests aren't equal...they are biased.”

This father's response is an example of institutional racism because it includes a description of how the academic institution is designed for Black children to fail.

Another example that emerged from parents' responses that aligned with institutional racism included issues with schools celebrating some ethnic/racial events but not others. One example is from a mother describing an experience she had in dealing with her child celebrating Black History Month with her class.

“...her teacher, she's an older Anglo-Caucasian lady, had been teaching about 30 years, whatever. A very good teacher, but she did not acknowledge Black History Month and [her daughter] had some stuff that she wanted [to share] again and we were all excited about it...Okay, we finally got there and [my daughter is saying] – so she told her teacher ‘I want to share this for Black history Month,’ or what. And she just refused to acknowledge it.”

The mother who shared this narrative goes on to say that the teacher later said she would allow her daughter to share for Black History Month but then the teacher never does. Once the mother attempts to contact her, the teacher has no real explanation for why she did not allow her daughter to share. This mother then goes on to explain how she perceived the school's stance on celebrating racially and culturally relevant holidays.

“I don't think the school acknowledged it because what they did in February, actually they had International Day where they celebrate all the different cultures and I think that's kind of a workaround. Because what I told this teacher and the headmistress was – and I told [her daughter], ‘I think that's a convenient workaround because you celebrate Saint Patrick's Day and you did all about the Irish. You celebrate Chinese New Year.’ And I love that, [her daughter] loves that. So I just wanted to get an understanding.”

In this example, the mother clearly describes how her daughter's school did not allow her daughter celebrate Black History Month with her fellow students based on the policy of the school. This mother perceived the practice of excluding the celebration of Black History Month as an institutionally supported practice. This is an example of institutional racism since the institution supported the practice of not allowing Black History Month to be celebrated in the classroom while other culturally relevant events are celebrated.

### **3.3 Research Aim 3: Type of Racial Socialization Message Triggered by Type of Racism**

Research aim 3 was to determine whether there were differences in the type and content of messages based on the type of racism the youth experienced. Deductive and inductive analyses were used to examine this aim (Figure 2). Deductive analyses included calculating the frequency of racial socialization messages parents gave based on the type of racism experience that triggered the message. Results from research aim 1 (the content of racial socialization messages) and research aim 2 (types of racism that trigger racial socialization messages) were used in the deductive analyses. An inductive approach was used to go beyond frequency and determine whether patterns existed in the content of racial socialization messages based on the type of racism experience that triggered the message. This was done in order to determine if there were similarities or differences in the content of parents messages (e.g., the content of cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages) based on the type of racism experience that triggered the message. Table 3 provides a summary of the number or frequency of the type of message by type of trigger and examples of content of the message based on the type of trigger. These results are from deductive (e.g., frequency) and inductive (e.g., content) analyses.

#### ***3.3.1 Deductive analyses: Frequency of type of message by type of trigger***

Cultural socialization in response to individual racism emerged from 2 out of 5 focus groups with a total of 3 references. Cultural socialization in response to institutional racism emerged from 3 focus groups with a total of 4 references. Preparation for bias messages in response to individual racism emerged from 4 focus groups with a total of 9 references. Preparation for bias messages in response to institutional racism emerged from 3 focus groups with a total of 4 participants. From these analyses, we can conclude that preparation for bias messages were given more often than cultural socialization messages in response to individual



racism. When looking at the number of references, cultural socialization and preparation for bias are given in similar numbers in response to institutional racism. Inductive analyses were done to determine if there were similarities and differences in the content of racial socialization messages based on the type of racism discrimination experience that triggered the message.

### ***3.3.2 Inductive analyses: Cultural socialization in response to racism experiences***

Inductive analyses were conducted to explore patterns in the content of parents' racial socialization messages that were triggered by individual and institutional racism that aligned with cultural socialization. Frequencies reported from deductive analyses had no influence on the inductive analyses reported here. In comparing the content of cultural socialization messages triggered by individual and institutional racism, they were very similar. Both types of racism experiences triggered cultural socialization messages that included a message that sought to promote racial pride or teach about Black history. In this example, a mother describes how her son does not have any race related problems at school right now because he is still young. However, she says that they do talk about what it means to be Black so in case things come up later he is prepared for an individual instance of discrimination.

"...when February came, the Black History Month came in. They [his school] did a little thing and we talked about it in depth thing, even had flashcards and books. And so at this age, he actually knows, actually I think starting to understand what it means to be Black in all sort and he did prior to."

This is just one example of a mother teaching her child about Black history to prepare the child to experience racism in the future. Another example can be found with one mother teaching her child about Black history in response to the lack of Black history that is taught in schools, a practice that she feels is supported by the education system, thereby being an act of institutional racism.

““I feel like with my children there's a need of - in school their real Black history. Not just what's in the books. So sometimes in the morning when we're on our way driving to school, I'll let them listen to Tom Joyner give the Black History facts. Because then they see that there are people just like them that created the things that they use everyday and that they're not beneath anyone that they can achieve the same thing.”

In this example, the mother purposely exposes her daughter to experiences where she can learn about Black history that is not being taught in her school. She describes the purpose and need she feels drive her to educate her daughter on the achievements of Black people that are not discussed at school. These narratives show that parents provide similar cultural socialization messages to instill racial pride whether their child is experiencing individual or institutional racism.

### ***3.3.2.1 Inductive analyses: Preparation for bias in response to racism experiences***

The content of parents’ racial socialization messages that were triggered by individual and institutional racism did align with preparation for bias. In comparing the content of preparation for bias messages triggered by individual and institutional racism, there were similarities and differences in the way in which parents prepared their child for discrimination. For example, both types of racism experiences triggered preparation for bias messages that included telling the child would have to work harder to prove themselves because they are Black. Table 3 provides a brief example of a message about having to work harder.

When the trigger is institutional racism, the content of preparation for bias messages either included working harder as a response to this form of racism or making sure the child was aware of how institutional racism manifests in the school setting. For example, one mother describes how another Black parent told her that “a disproportionate amount of Black boys are put to the side to sit out because they appear to be misbehaving” during recess. The practice of punishing Black boys harsher than White boys is an example of institutional racism. This

experience in her younger son's school prompted her to talk to her older son about being aware of racism and what it looks like.

“The school is predominantly White and I feel that even at seven, that my son is very aware perhaps that he's being singled out. I was looking at the questions and although I don't talk to him that much about race, I talk to my older son more about being aware and how things are. But even at seven, I'm seeing already that based on how he looks, it doesn't matter what his parenting situation at home looks like, he is being judged.”

This is one example of how a mother has been made aware of an institutional practice that is racially discriminatory and this experience prompted her to talk to her older son so that he knows how institutional racism manifest in the school setting.

Compared to the content of preparation for bias messages given in response to institutional racism, the content of these messages differed when individual racism was the trigger (Table 3). In this instance, the content of the message was included giving the child instructions for how to respond or react to the experience.

"So any type of discrimination, all that stuff, you're not going to just dismiss it. I don't think you should just dismiss it. I mean, I may be different from other people, I just don't think you should dismiss it. You're on a bus a with this person for almost a year, if he's going to call you a nigger everyday I need you to address that."

In this example, a mother shares how her child should respond if he is being called “nigger” every day on the school bus. She prepares him for this experience by telling him not to dismiss it and instead to address it head on. This is one example of the content of a preparation for bias message including the parent teaching their child how to react to an individual and interpersonal experience of racism.

For preparation for bias message overall, parents told their children to work harder and fight to get their education as a way to respond to both individual and institutional racism experiences. However, only when the trigger was an individual experience did parents teach their child how to respond directly to the individual responsible for the racism experience. Parental

messages about how to respond to institutional racism included reacting by working harder not by directly changing the practice or structure of the institution to eradicate the racism altogether. Conversely, only when the trigger was institutional did parents teach their child about how racism manifests. These differences in content based on the type of trigger allude to the difference in the underlying beliefs parents have about how their child can or should react to experiences of racism when they are at an individual level versus an institutional level.

### ***3.3.3 Summary of deductive and inductive results***

Deductive analyses revealed that, in terms of frequency, cultural socialization emerged slightly more in response to institutional racism (3 groups, 4 references) than to individual racism (2 focus groups, 3 references). However, inductive analyses revealed that the content of cultural socialization messages parents are giving in response to individual and institutional racism is very similar. More specifically, parents are giving cultural socialization messages about instilling racial pride or teaching about Black history in response to both types of racism.

Deductive analyses for preparation for bias revealed that, in terms of frequency, preparation for bias emerges slightly more in response to individual racism (4 focus groups, 9 references) than for institutional racism (3 focus groups, 4 references). Inductive analyses revealed similarities and differences in the content of preparation for bias messages based on the type of racism experience that triggered the message. For example, for both individual and institutional racism, parents gave preparation for bias messages that included telling their child they had to work harder in school because of their race. However, only for individual racism experiences did parents provide messages about how the child should respond directly to the aggressor who is discriminating against the child. Furthermore, only for institutional racism experiences did parents provide messages about being aware of how racism manifests at the institutional level.

Implications for the meaning behind these differences in content of preparation for bias messages based on the type of racism experience are explored further in the discussion section.

## **4 DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the current study was to examine the context of racial socialization messages by connecting youth experiences of racism in the school setting to parents' responses to and preparation for those experiences. Past research has shown that African American youth experience racism in the school setting and that parents provide children with messages to help them cope with these experiences. However, work has not been done to link these two occurrences. Instead, past work has often examined these two experiences separately. Moreover, past work has also examined discrimination as a uniform experience. Theoretical considerations have been made for the multifaceted experience of discrimination African American youth face. The current work extends this literature by examining discrimination within an ecological framework. Furthermore, the current work has provided empirical evidence for these multilevel experiences of discrimination that Black youth face. Using a qualitative approach, the current study sought to gain a better understanding of the ways in which parents are responding to African American youth experiences of racism in school. Specifically, the current study sought to examine the following: 1) the content of racial socialization messages parents gave their children in preparation for and in response to youths' experience of racism in the school setting, 2) the experiences of racism that triggered the racial socialization messages and 3) differences in the types of messages parents give based on the type of racism that triggered the message.

### **4.1 Content of Racial Socialization Messages and Triggers**

Findings from the current study support the author's first hypothesis since the content of parental messages did align with cultural socialization and preparation for bias. Furthermore,

these findings support past racial socialization work as parents' race-related messages do often align with cultural socialization and preparation for bias (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2008). Findings from the current study have contextualized the transmission of these messages in previously unknown ways. While hypothesis 1 was supported, the current study extends this literature by showing messages given in response to and preparation for African American youth experiences specifically in the school setting.

The way in which parents encouraged the importance of racial pride and an understanding of African American history support the conceptualizations of cultural socialization in the broader literature (e.g., Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2006). For example, Bowman and Howard (1985) found themes of the importance of having knowledge and pride about racial heritage in racial socialization messages that they identified as Ethnic Pride. Hughes and Chen (1997) outlined Cultural Socialization as a category of racial socialization that includes parents teaching children about their racial heritage and instilling pride. Parents in the current sample encouraged racial pride by providing culturally relevant standards of beauty such as one mother who made sure "there are images of women of African art faces" in her daughter's room. Parents also engaged in behaviors to teach their child about their racial history like one mother who said that "when we're on our way driving to school I let them listen to...the Black history facts." These examples illustrate how themes found in the current study support previous conceptualizations of racial socialization.

Examples of preparation for bias messages from the current study included parents promoting awareness of racial discrimination and how to handle or react to it. The way in which parents prepared their child for what racism looks like and how to respond to experiences of discrimination supports the conceptualizations of preparation for bias in the broader literature

(e.g., Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2006). For example, Bowman and Howard's (1985) racial barrier theme includes parents making children aware of racism and how to handle interracial conflict. This is similar to Hughes and Chen's (1997) conceptualization of preparation for bias messages which also includes racism awareness and how to cope with racism. Parents from the current study sought to instill awareness of how racism manifests in everyday experiences such as one mother shared her beliefs that "our teenagers need to know...what the face of racism looks like." Moreover, findings from the current study also demonstrate parents' needs to tell their child how to handle these situations such as another mother who told her son he was "going to have to fight and work [his] way up." As such, themes found in the current study support conceptualizations by Bowman and Howard (1985) as well as Hughes and Chen (1997) for how parents socialize their child about racial discrimination.

While findings from the content of racial socialization messages are consistent with previous literature, preparation for bias messages emerged more frequently than cultural socialization messages across the focus groups, which is not consistent with past research. Specifically, previous work has found that parents tend to provide more cultural socialization messages than preparation for bias messages (e.g., Bowman & Howard, 1985; Coard et al., 2004). However, previous research has often asked for all reports of racial socialization whereas the current study focused on racial socialization messages given in preparation for or in response to racism in the school setting. It could be that when the trigger to a racial socialization message is the child's experience of discrimination at school, then parents' responses include how to react to racism (preparation for bias) more often than with messages about cultural history or pride (cultural socialization). The current study, as well as this past research, illustrates the need for

future work to examine potential differences in the frequency and content of racial socialization messages based on what triggered the transmission of the message.

Results from the current study also supported the author's second hypothesis since the triggers to parental transmission of a racial socialization message did align with individual and institutional racism in the education setting. Moreover, these findings support past work that has found African American youth experiencing multiple forms of discrimination in the education setting (e.g., Berkel et al., 2009; Newman et al., 2000). Wang and Huguley (2012) found that 8<sup>th</sup> grade Black students experienced individual discrimination from teachers and this negatively predicted academic outcomes later in high school. African American parents from the current study reported their children experiencing similar discrimination from teachers in the education setting. Additional experiences of individual discrimination their children encountered included being called a derogatory name, a teacher punishing a Black student more harshly than a White student for similar infractions or other students making fun of the child for confirming negative racial stereotypes. These findings demonstrate the breadth of discriminatory experiences that African American youth experience at the individual level.

Triggers to parental transmission of a racial socialization message also aligned with institutional discrimination. These findings support previous research that has shown how African American youth experience institutional discrimination at school. For example, qualitative work by Berkel and colleagues (2009) found that Black youth described instances of institutional discrimination; specifically how White students were disciplined more leniently and given more privileges than Black students. Parents in the current study shared that their children (as well as other parents) recognized that African American students were underrepresented in higher-level courses and overrepresented in disciplinary situations. These findings support past



work that found evidence of institutional level practices and policies that discriminated against Black youth such as tracking (Oakes, 2005; Noguera, 2003). Additional experiences of institutional discrimination from the current study included testing biases, the lack of culturally relevant course content and celebrating culturally relevant holidays of some groups over others.

Taken together, findings on individual and institutional discrimination that support the second hypothesis of the current study confirm and support the finding that African American youth are experiencing multiple forms of discrimination from various sources (e.g., Seaton, 2009; Seaton & Yip, 2009). Furthermore, these findings extend this literature by showing that African American youth are experiencing multiple forms of discrimination in the school setting providing further evidence for the need to examine these experiences from an ecological perspective. By taking an ecological approach to understanding experiences of discrimination, we have begun to examine the multiple levels at which Black youth experience discrimination.

One issue that the current work has attempted to disentangle is how teacher discrimination manifests for African American youth and whether these experiences exist on an individual or on an institutional level. Past work has often found African American youth experiencing teacher discrimination in the form of negative differential treatment (e.g., graded and disciplined more harshly than White counterparts) (e.g., Newman et al., 2000; Wang & Huguley, 2012). Some of this work has found teacher discrimination manifesting at the individual level wherein interactions between a student and a particular teacher include a discriminatory experience (e.g., Newman et al., 2000; Wang & Huguley, 2012). The current work found this to be true as well with parents reporting instances where a specific teacher discriminated against their child. Past work has also found that African American youth report experiencing institutional level discrimination in the form of practices engaged by teachers at a

school-wide level (e.g., Seaton, 2009; Seaton & Yip, 2009). Findings from the current study further support this work wherein parents reported their children seeing school level practices such as tracking and harsher disciplinary practices towards Black students.

Additionally, the current study shows that, for African Americans, individual and institutional experiences of discrimination in school manifest differently. This is important to note since past work that has looked at school based racism as multidimensional has shown that different types of racism are differentially related to youth outcomes (e.g., Reynolds et al., 2010; Seaton, 2009; Seaton & Yip, 2009). Future researchers examining discrimination in the education system should make a distinction between an individual instance of teacher discrimination and institutional level practices in which teachers in a school engage. These two types of school based racism experiences could impact African American youth in previously unexplored ways.

#### **4.2 Examining Patterns of Parental Response to Child Racism Experiences**

As the relationship between a racial socialization message and what triggered the transmission of that message has not previously been examined, no apriori hypotheses were made. Findings from the current study show that parents use a combination of cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages in response to and preparation for individual and institutional discrimination in the school setting. However, differences in the frequency and content of these messages were found based on the type of discrimination experience that triggered the message. For example, parents provided a similar number of cultural socialization messages in response to institutional and individual racism. However, parents provided more preparation for bias messages than cultural socialization messages in response to individual racism. This finding contradicts previous work (e.g., Coard et al., 2004; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2009a) however these past studies have often discussed racial socialization

messages in response to all forms of racism, not just in the school setting. It could be that the context of the discriminatory experience changes the frequency and content of racial socialization messages parents engage in. It is possible that, for African American parents, the context of the discriminatory experience necessitates different types of messages and this possibility bears further examination.

Findings from the inductive analysis on cultural socialization messages revealed that the content of these messages in response to and preparation for individual and institutional discrimination was very similar. For example, the promotion of racial pride and teaching of Black history was included in the content of cultural socialization messages when triggered by both types of discrimination. It could be that parents believe that no matter who is discriminating against their child, they should know their racial history and be proud of it.

Findings from inductive analyses on preparation for bias messages revealed similarities and differences in the content of these messages in response to and preparation for individual and institutional discrimination. Specifically, the content of these messages often included the parent telling the child to work harder because they are Black when triggered by individual or institutional discrimination. One reason for this could be that whether a barrier to academic success is one person being discriminatory (individual discrimination) or a systemic practice keeping Black students from succeeding (institutional discrimination), working harder than their White counterparts would diffuse the experience. However, in response to individual level discrimination, parents often gave messages that included how the child should react and respond to the individual who is discriminating against them, regardless of whether the individual was a peer or authority figure. For example, if a peer said something derogatory, a parent often said the child should not ignore it and should learn how to navigate the situation. Even when it was a

teacher discriminating against the child, a parent would often tell the child to tell them what happened so the parent could then intervene. Conversely, when responding to institutional racism, instead of parents giving them specific instructions for how to handle or combat an institutional practice, parents focus their attention on making sure the child could identify an act of institutional discrimination. Instead of some form of combative reaction to these institutional practices, parents told their child to work harder to prove themselves in order to cope. These findings show differences in the actions in which parents encourage their child to engage depending on whether the discrimination is individual or institutional.

The differences found in the content of preparation for bias messages being based on the type of racism that triggered the message could speak to the unclear findings of previous work on the potentially protective impact preparation for bias messages has on youth outcomes. Previous research has found that a positive association between preparation for bias and African American youth outcomes (e.g., Friend et al., 2011) while some have found a negative association (e.g., Hughes et al., 2009b). Some have argued that a lack of understanding about the nuances of preparing a child for racial discrimination in the school setting could be the reason behind these mixed findings (e.g., Smalls & Cooper, 2012). The current study has provided further evidence for this argument given that, when considering racial discrimination as a multidimensional phenomenon, the content of preparation for bias messages differs based on the type of discrimination. It could be that preparation for bias may positively buffer the negative impacts of discrimination when the discrimination is at the individual level. The current study has found that when the discrimination is individual, parents provided a direction wherein the child should directly address the discriminator. This may give the child a sense that they have some agency and efficacy in combating and stopping racism directly. Conversely, when the discrimination

was at the institutional level, parents often told their child ways they could change themselves (e.g., work harder) to successfully navigate the school system without changing it in a way that would eradicate institutional level discrimination. Past work has found that parents give racial socialization messages that align with avoidant coping (e.g., Smalls-Glover et al., 2013). Results from the current study about differences in the content of preparation for bias messages when the trigger is institutional could contextualize this finding. Specifically, where preparation for bias messages may encourage agency in response to individual level discrimination they may discourage individual action as a response to institutional level discrimination. These differences in the content of preparation for bias messages based on the type of racism that triggers the message could speak to why we have mixed findings from previous literature.

Furthermore, findings from inductive analyses contextualized when and why parents are transmitting racial socialization messages to their children. In terms of cultural socialization, for example, parents in the current study found it important to teach their children about “the real Black history” to ensure they learned about successful African Americans. Parents reported that they engaged in these actions because their children were not receiving education about Black history in school. Another way in which findings from the current study further contextualize the transmission of racial socialization messages can be found with the preparation for bias messages parents provided. Parents often expressed the need for their children to know “what the face of racism is”, but these messages were often times accompanied by directions and advice for how to handle the situation. For example, a mother from the current study told her son administrators would put him in lower level courses once he starts high school. She then told him that he was “going to have to fight and work [his] way up” as a way to respond to this discrimination. In addition to contextualizing these messages, these findings support the literature by further

demonstrating that parents are providing racial socialization messages to their children because they know they will experience racism in the school setting (e.g., Suzzio et al., 2008).

### **4.3 Limitations and Future Directions**

The current study had several limitations. One limitation is that the parents in the study were mostly female, therefore, any messages that fathers may be giving their children are not well represented. Another limitation is that we only captured the parents' perspective on triggers for racial discrimination and messages provided in response to these triggers; however, we do not have the child's point of view. An additional limitation to the generalizability of the current study is that it includes parents from the Southeastern region of the United States. It could be that African American parent and child experiences could be different in other regions of the United States where more diverse school settings exist.

Future researchers should attempt to address some of the gaps in the current study in a number of ways. First, future studies should endeavor to reach more African American fathers in their samples to ensure that their voice is heard as well. Secondly, future work should obtain both parent and child accounts of youth's experience of discrimination and parental response with racial socialization messages. Furthermore, future studies should include African American parents and youth from multiple regions of the United States in order to gain a better understanding of the role a regional context may have on these experiences. This is particularly important when taking into consideration the differences in the history of institutional level discrimination of African Americans in the south versus the north regions of the United States.

Moreover, while using a qualitative approach has allowed us to understand the context of the transmission of racial socialization messages, future researchers should consider using a mixed methodology to answering this question with youth and parents. For example, youth

experience of discrimination in school and reports of racial socialization as well as parents' reports of racial socialization could be collected and analyzed quantitatively. Also, qualitative methods could be used to make connections between these variables and contextualize these experiences. To extend this work, future researchers should connect the youth's experience of racism, the racial socialization messages the parent provides and youth's outcomes to get a sense of what messages buffer the youth from the negative effects of racism and what messages do not. Since the current study has shown that different experiences trigger different messages, future work should extend this study by determining if these messages are protective in different ways on children's academic outcomes.

#### **4.4 Implications and Conclusions**

Findings from the current study present many implications related to both research and practice. First, the current study illustrates how community psychology ecological theory can enhance the understanding of what triggers the transmission of racial socialization messages in Black families. Ecological theory can continue to advance research in racial socialization and understanding the link between youth experience of discrimination and culturally relevant parenting practices. Additionally, these findings have implications for post-secondary education by illuminating the importance of family support and racial socialization messages and how messages in childhood can still be protective to discriminatory experiences once the child leaves the home. Furthermore, the current study has shown that individual and institutional experiences of discrimination manifest in different ways, which has implications for teachers and administrators who seek to eradicate racism at both levels within a scholastic institution.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix of Tables

Table 1

Results from Analyses for Research Aim 1: Racial Socialization Codes

Code	# of Focus Groups	# of References	Quote
Cultural Socialization	3	7	"Well like in her playroom for instance, at her level there are images of women of African art faces...I put them on the wall and then she starts looking excited and talking about the colors of the beads and we talk about beads and colors."
Preparation for Bias	5	13	"But I'm trying to teach her - you can try to work through a racial situation yourself, but to be mindful of how it looks. Sometimes it's not but I think our teenagers need to know what it looks like, what the face of racism is"



Table 2

## Results from Analyses for Research Aim 2: Racial Socialization Trigger Codes

Code	# of Focus Groups	# of References	Quote
Individual Racism	4	12	"You tell me what happened and then I will say what it - and if it's negative as far as race, I will tell them, 'You need to say something back', because of the fact that I feel like my children. I don't want them to be on the bus and not say anything. I don't think that's right"
Institutional Racism	5	8	"What she said to me is, during recess, it seems like a disproportionate amount of Black boys are put to the side to sit out because they are they appear to be misbehaving... The school is predominately White and I feel that even at seven, that my son is very aware perhaps that he's being singled out."

Table 3

## Type of Racial Socialization Message by Type of Trigger

	Individual Racism Trigger (2 focus groups, 3 references)	Institutional Racism Trigger (3 focus groups, 4 references)
Cultural Socialization Message	"...when February came, the Black History Month came in. They [his school] did a little thing and we talked about it in depth thing, even had flashcards and books. And so at this age, he actually knows, actually I think starting to understand what it means to be Black in all sort and he did prior to. "	"I feel like with my children there's a need of - in school their real Black history. Not just what's in the books. So sometimes in the morning when we're on our way driving to school, I'll let them listen to Tom Joyner give the Black History facts. Because then they see that there are people just like them that created the things that they use everyday and that they're not beneath anyone that they can achieve the same thing."
Preparation for Bias Message	"So any type of discrimination, all that stuff, you're not going to just dismiss it. I don't think you should just dismiss it. I mean, I may be different from other people, I just don't think you should dismiss it. You're on a bus a with this person for almost a year, if he's going to call you a nigger everyday I need you to address that."	"So I brought to his attention, 'As a Black child, you have to do better. You have to get A's and B's. It is important that you get that because no one's going to give you a free share. You're going to have to work extremely hard for it. When you go off to high school, you're going to be put with a group of children who probably are struggling with C's and D's which is something you're not used to. And you're going to have to fight and work your way up.'"

Appendix of Figures

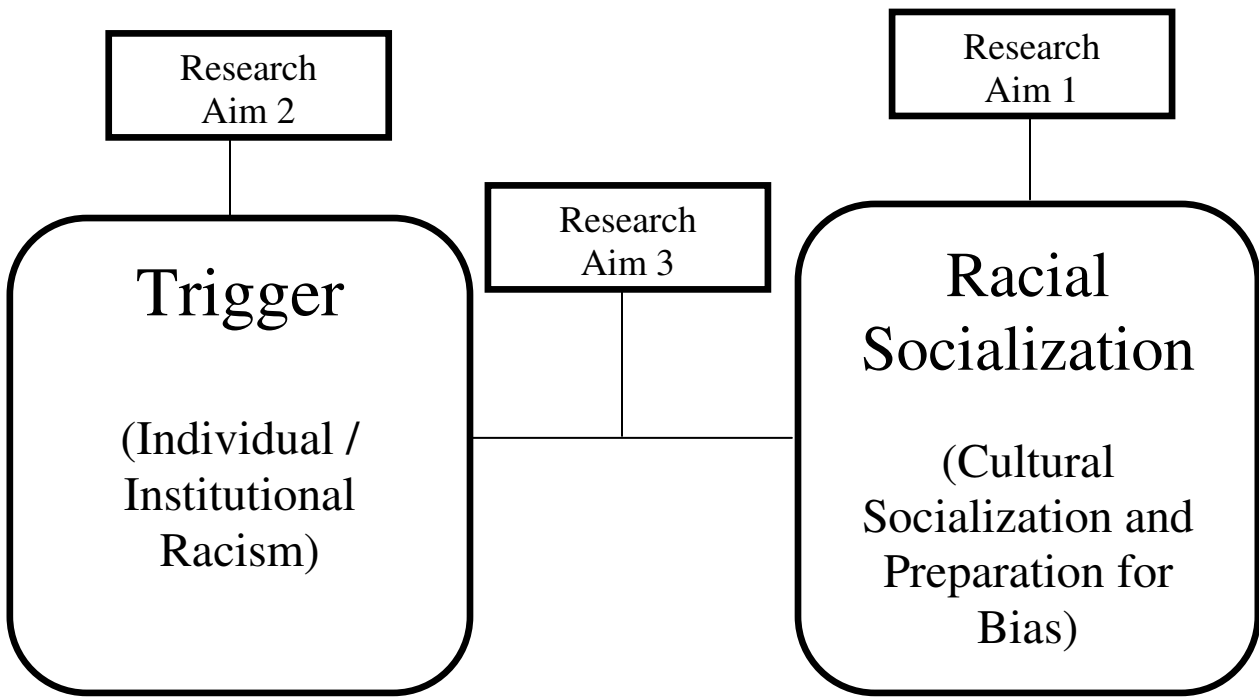


Figure 1

Research aims for the current study

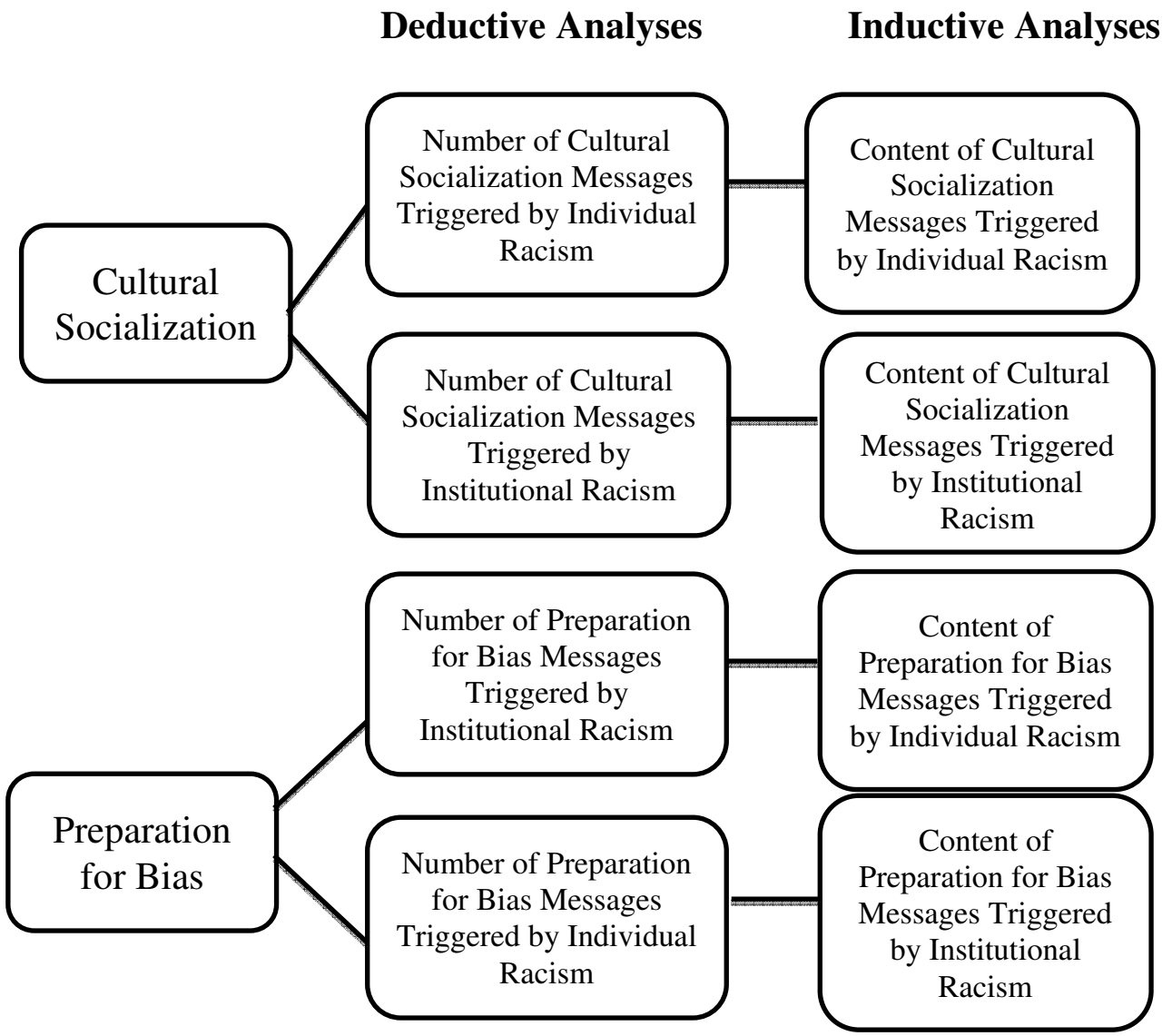


Figure 2  
Research aim 3 deductive and inductive analyses

### **Appendix of Focus Group Questions Used to Prompt Discussion**

1. Ice breaker: What was your favorite cartoon as a child?
2. What is the first thing that comes into your mind when you think about being Black (or African American)?
  - a. Tell us about what your parent(s) or caregiver(s) taught you about race and about racism
3. What are the greatest needs or most important issues that you believe are affecting African Americans in the U.S. today?
4. What are some of the most important issues affecting the young African Americans in the neighborhood that you live in?
5. What do you think are the most important things to teach your children about race and/or what it means to be Black in America?
6. Describe some ways that you support your child's education generally. First take a moment to list these on paper to help you brainstorm and then we will share.
7. What are barriers that your child has already encountered or might encounter on the road to success?
  - a. Are any of these barriers race related?
  - b. If so, can you tell us about that barrier and the result of that experience?
8. How have you helped your child to cope with a race-related barrier?
  - a. What are some of the things that you have taught your child about race?
  - b. What have you shared with your child/children about how race has impacted your life?

9. In what situations have these conversations come up? For example, was it in response to an election, news broadcast, a family or friend's experience, something that happened at school?
  - a. Imagine that your child came home and told you that while at the mall someone called them a derogatory name. How would you respond?
10. Our purpose was to learn more about how to best prepare African American youth to overcome barriers to success. [Insert summary of participant comments] Have we missed anything?

### **Appendix of Qualitative Codebook for Data Analysis**

#### **Racial Socialization Categories (Hughes et al., 2006)**

##### **I. Cultural Socialization/Racial Pride [NODE]**

- a. Definition: "parental practices that teach children about their racial or ethnic heritage and history; promote cultural customs and traditions; and that promote children's cultural, racial and ethnic pride" (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2006). Examples from the literature include "talking about important historical or cultural figures; exposing children to culturally relevant books, artifacts, music or stories; celebrating cultural holiday's; and eating ethnic foods" (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2006).
- b. Survey Items include:
  - i. *Talked to child about important people or events in your group's history*
  - ii. *Encouraged child to read books about own ethnic group(s)*
- c. Keywords:
  - i. African American History or Black History
  - ii. Black is beautiful
  - iii. Pride
  - iv. Kwanza
  - v. Heritage
  - vi. Proud
  - vii. Accomplishments
  - viii. Success
  - ix. Black pride
  - x. Culture
  - xi. African Heritage
  - xii. Strong Black (or African American)
  - xiii. History
  - xiv. Traditions

## II. Preparation of Bias/Racial Barrier [NODE]

- a. Definition: “parents efforts to promote their children’s awareness of discrimination and prepares them to cope with it” (Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2008; Hughes & Chen, 1997).
- b. Survey Items include:
  - i. Talked to child about others trying to limit him or her because of race
  - ii. Told child must be better to get same rewards because of race
  - iii. Talked to someone else about discrimination when your child could hear you
  - iv. Talked to child about unfair treatment due to race
- c. Keywords:
  - i. Discrimination
  - ii. “have to do better” or “do better”
  - iii. Respect
  - iv. Racism
  - v. Racially
  - vi. Unfair
  - vii. Unequal
  - viii. Minority
  - ix. Barriers
  - x. Prejudice
  - xi. Bias
  - xii. Inequality
  - xiii. Work hard(er)

### Individual and Institutional Racism (Jones, 1997)

#### I. Individual Racism [NODE]

- a. Definition: any direct or indirect action or act that seeks to discriminate a person of color by implying they are inferior (Jones, 1997).
- b. Examples of Individual Racism in Education Setting:
  - i. Physical violence: group or individual level violence, wherein one’s racial group membership makes them a target for being physically harmed by a member of the majority group
  - ii. Direct verbal insults: using derogatory racial slurs in the form of name-calling, which often leads to some form of confrontation (Thomas, 2006)
  - iii. False accusations: accusations made against a person based on their racial group membership such that, where they from another racial group, such an accusation would neither be made nor tolerated (Thomas, 2006)

#### II. Institutional Racism [NODE]

- a. Definition: oppressive practices that benefit the majority group while maintaining hegemony over marginalized groups (Jones, 1997). This type of racism usually appears in one of two ways. Either it manifests as an extension of individual or collective racist attitudes towards a particular group by manipulating institutions in order to perpetuate racial inequality wherein one racial group is favored over others (Jones, 1997). And/or it reflects practices engaged in at the level of the

institution that restrict access to resources based solely on one's racial group membership (Jones 1997).

- b. Examples of Institutional Racism in Education Setting:
  - i. Structure and culture of the school send inherent messages that support and preserve racial categories or stereotypes. These messages are exhibited by how children from marginalized racial or ethnic groups are systemically treated based on perceptions of ability, (Hughes et al., 2011; Noguera, 2003)
  - ii. Acceptance and practices that place Black students in disproportionately lower level courses and consistently limits opportunities to academic achievement (Hilliard, 1991; Oakes, 2005)
  - iii. Teacher discrimination (which places a direct limit on academic achievement)
  - iv. Being placed in lower level courses
  - v. Being disciplined harsher than White counterparts
  - vi. Policies and practices of an institution that discriminate against people of color

### **School-Based Experiences**

#### **I. Academics/School/Education of Child [NODE]**

- a. Education
- b. Grade
- c. Teacher
- d. Professor
- e. School
- f. Study
- g. Exam
- h. Test
- i. Project
- j. Lesson
- k. Class
- l. Homework
- m. Assignment
- n. Teen
- o. Elementary School
- p. Middle School
- q. High School
- r. College