BAILEY, ARIANA C. M.S. An Examination of the Associations Between Racial Discrimination and Racial Identity Beliefs and the Moderating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among African American Emerging Adult First-Year College Students. (2023)
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The current study explored the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs (centrality, public regard, and private regard) and the moderating role of psychological well-being in these associations. Using the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (Spencer et al., 1997) as the theoretical framework, the study aimed to determine whether higher psychological well-being was associated with more adaptive racial identity beliefs in the context of frequent racial discrimination experiences. Study participants consisted of 129 African American emerging adult first-year college students attending a Minority Serving Institution (mean age = 18.29, SD = 0.6, 82.2% women). Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that racial discrimination was significantly and negatively associated with public regard, while psychological well-being was significantly and positively associated with centrality and private regard. Furthermore, psychological well-being significantly moderated the association between racial discrimination and private regard, revealing that the impact of racial discrimination on private regard varied depending on students' levels of psychological well-being. Overall, these findings shed light on the complex relationships between racial discrimination, racial identity beliefs, and psychological well-being among African American emerging adult college students. The implications of these findings and the significance of investigating the potential role of psychological well-being in shaping racial identity and coping with racial discrimination are discussed.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

AND RACIAL IDENTITY BELIEFS AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN

FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

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DEDICATION

To my mother, thank you for your tireless dedication to my success, for always being a source of strength and inspiration, and for your selfless commitment to making me the best woman I can be. Your love for me has been a beacon of hope during my darkest moments, and your unwavering support has been a constant reminder that I am never alone. I know it isn't easy, but you continue on anyway, so I will too.

This thesis written by Ariana Bailey has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The social identity theory posits that individuals' social group memberships, such as membership in a racial group, can inform their self-concept (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Additionally, individuals' race-related experiences can inform the significance or importance and the qualitative meanings that individuals attribute to being a member of their racial group in their self-concepts or their racial identity beliefs (Sellers et al., 1998). For instance, the subordination of one's racial group in society may impact how they feel about their racial group and themselves (Hogg, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). This is especially relevant for African Americans, as the group's social history is replete with racial subjugation, discrimination, and violence, starting with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Behrendt, 2010) and evolving into Jim Crow laws (Walker, 2018), racial segregation of schools and communities (Epstein, 2010), economic disenfranchisement (Lui et al., 2006), and targeted policing and mass imprisonment (Fleury-Steiner & Longazel, 2013). A more recent example of the discrimination manifested by racism against African Americans is the excessive police force that led to the unjust death of George Floyd (Boboltz & Miller, 2021) in 2020. Similar to the incredible civil response to the racially unjust events of the past (e.g., Civil Rights Movement; Bloom, 2019), more recent events of racial injustice have led to widespread racial reckoning and mass protests against this racial violence (Reny & Newman, 2021).

Recent instances of racial discrimination that many young people experienced vicariously through widespread media forms, as well as racial discrimination experienced directly and interpersonally, can have implications for the beliefs African American young people have about themselves and their racial group (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Such experiences, tied to identity beliefs, are especially impactful during the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood

(Hope et al., 2015). Accordingly, the current study seeks to elucidate how racial discrimination experiences affect the racial identity beliefs of African American first-year college students transitioning into emerging adulthood, as well as how psychological well-being might affect the strength of these associations and lead to more adaptive racial identity beliefs in the context of their racial discrimination experiences.

Racial Identity Development in the Transition from Adolescence to Emerging Adulthood

Pioneering literature has posited that identity formation processes occur mainly during adolescence (Erikson, 1959), but growing empirical attention underscores the salience of racial identity developmental processes that continue through adolescence into emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Brody, 2008; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). The transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood has significant implications for one's identity development, as the answer to the question "Who am I?" may require recalibration in the new contexts and experiences that come with entering a new stage of life. This recalibration becomes even more distinct when the transition to emerging adulthood occurs in the college context (Arnett, 2016). For African Americans in particular, the stress of transitioning into emerging adulthood is coupled with the stress of navigating a racially hostile society. Additionally, new race-related experiences and environments for first-year college students can influence changes in their racial identity beliefs (Baber, 2012; Chavous et al., 2018; Syed & Azmitia, 2009).

Until recently, few studies have focused on the contents of racial identity beliefs during the transition to emerging adulthood, despite the evidence that racial identity during adulthood requires the identity processes that occurred in adolescence to be continued in emerging adulthood (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Syed & Azmitia, 2009). Arnett (2000) proposes that emerging adulthood is a demographically and subjectively distinct developmental period that

holds great significance for identity development. Moving beyond one's intimate social world and into the larger society as an emerging adult often means moving into more racially and ethnically diverse environments. For African American emerging adult college students, the increasing number of non-Blacks in their environments also increases the likelihood of experiencing or observing interactions that reflect racism (i.e., racial discrimination; Harrell, 2000; Arnett & Brody, 2008; English et al., 2014; Hunt et al., 2007; Seaton & Yip, 2008).

Associations between Racial Discrimination and Racial Identity Beliefs

Research has documented significant associations between racial discrimination experiences and racial identity beliefs among African American college students (Sellers & Shelton, 2003) and adolescents (Del Toro et al., 2021; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2018; Richardson et al., 2015; Seaton, 2009; Seaton et al., 2009). Among such research, more frequent experiences of racial discrimination have been associated with less positive affective views about African Americans (i.e., private regard; Del Toro et al., 2021; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2017; Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers et al., 2003), more negative perceptions of society's views of African Americans (i.e., public regard; Del Toro et al., 2021; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2017; Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers et al., 2003), and the increased importance of race in one's self-concept (i.e., centrality; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2017; Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers et al., 2003). Particular levels of these racial identity beliefs have been associated with positive outcomes in areas of psychosocial functioning, academic performance, educational attainment, and health (Berwise & Mena, 2020; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Su et al., 2021). Accordingly, it is important to assess the specific ways in which racial discrimination affects African Americans' racial identity beliefs during the transition to emerging adulthood and the potential factors that can lead to more adaptive racial identity beliefs.

Psychological Well-being as a Moderating Factor in the Associations between Racial

Discrimination and Racial Identity Beliefs

While external resources like parental racial socialization messages are known to impact the effect of racial discrimination on African Americans' racial identity beliefs (Richardson et al., 2015), less is known about whether and how personal resources internal to an individual mitigate the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs. Carol Ryff (1989a) defines psychological well-being as a combination of positive dimensions that allow individuals to thrive and realize their full potential, such as having a sense of purpose and direction, achieving satisfying relationships with others, and gaining a sense of self-realization. These dimensions have been referred to in previous literature as internal or psychological resources that contribute to the overall positive functioning of an individual (Bookwala & Fekete, 2009; Gorgievski et al., 2011; Pellerin & Raufaste, 2021; Ron, 2020; Wiium et al., 2021; Windle & Woods, 2004). Given the bidirectional relationship between psychological functioning and identity processes (Meca et al., 2019; Potterton et al., 2022), it is possible that the internal resources that comprise psychological well-being may impact the feelings or beliefs one has regarding their race. The current study takes this line of questioning a step further by considering whether psychological well-being moderates the associations between racial discrimination experiences and racial identity beliefs.

Previous research has yet to consider how psychological well-being may affect the strength of racial discrimination's impact on the racial identity beliefs of African American emerging adult college students. Although links between racial discrimination, racial identity beliefs, and indicators related to psychological well-being (e.g., psychological distress; Sellers et al., 2003) have been documented, that area of research tends to focus on how racial identity

beliefs can buffer or exacerbate the relationship between racial discrimination and indicators of psychological well-being (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers et al., 2006). The role of psychological well-being in understanding the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs is not yet well understood. Thus, the literature stands to benefit from an examination of the extent to which psychological well-being moderates the links between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs, as higher psychological well-being could influence more adaptive racial identity beliefs among African American emerging adult college students who experience racial discrimination. According to the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST; Spencer, 1995; Spencer et al., 1997), the accumulated stress derived from racially discriminatory experiences necessitates the utilization of appropriate coping methods for the most adaptive outcomes. Studies have investigated the possible role of psychological well-being as a personal resource that could favor coping adaptively with academic stress (Freire et al., 2016). It is possible that psychological well-being could similarly affect how adaptively or maladaptively one copes with stress caused by racial discrimination, which would then affect individuals' emerging racial identity beliefs. Accordingly, this study seeks to contribute to the literature by examining the extent to which psychological well-being moderates the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs among African Americans transitioning to emerging adulthood. By examining psychological well-being's ability to buffer or exacerbate racial discrimination's effect on racial identity beliefs, we can uncover the role of internal psychological resources in the development of contextually adaptive and maladaptive racial identity beliefs.

The adaptiveness of an African American emerging adult's racial identity has great stake in ensuring positive life stage outcomes (Berwise & Mena, 2020; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Su et

al., 2021). Even so, African Americans' racial identity beliefs during the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood have been under-investigated in previous literature. This study addresses this gap by, first, assessing the effects of African American emerging adult first-year college students' racial discrimination experiences on their racial identity beliefs and, second, assessing the ways in which their psychological well-being moderates the associations between racial discrimination experiences and racial identity beliefs. The latter goal addresses the understudied role of the potential impact of psychological well-being on individuals' racial identity beliefs in the context of their racial discrimination experiences.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizations of Racism and Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination is the differential and negative treatment of individuals or groups based on their racial group membership and phenotypical characteristics, such as skin color (Seaton et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2003). Racial discrimination is the behavior that manifests from racism, such that it consists of actions based on White-supremacist attitudes that denigrate Black individuals or other groups because of their racial affiliation (Clark et al., 1999). Racism and racial discrimination take on many different forms. Jones (1972, 1997) specifically delineated three primary forms of racism: individual, institutional, and cultural. Individual forms of racism refer to interpersonal interactions that represent a belief in the inferiority of a particular racial group. This form of racism encompasses the actions of an individual that are consciously and unconsciously racist, as well as implicitly and explicitly racist (Jones et al., 2013). Institutional forms of racism are represented by the inequity embedded within societal structures (e.g., laws and policies) that are created and maintained by racist beliefs. Cultural racism refers to societal norms and customs that demonstrate the assumption that the dominating group's culture (e.g., language, traditions, and appearance) is superior to those of the subordinated groups.

Jones's conceptualization of racism has informed the development of theories such as Harrell's (2000) Multidimensional Model of Racism-Related Stress. Harrell (2000) expounded upon Jones's primary conceptualizations of racism by describing the interpersonal, collective, cultural-symbolic, and sociopolitical contexts under which racism can occur. Harrell's model posited that racism-related stress can be derived from six possible sources: significant personal life experiences, vicarious life experiences, daily microaggressions, chronic contextual stress,

significant collective racial experiences, and learning race-related history from previous generations. Of these sources of racism-related stress, the most relevant to the current study is daily microaggressions. These experiences include the more subtle, recurrent forms of racial discrimination. While most recognize more blatant or explicit forms of racial discrimination like verbal insults and police brutality (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996), it may be more difficult to notice more obscure forms like microaggressions. According to Su and his colleagues (2020), when racial discrimination is more explicit, it is easier to regard the experience as being caused externally by racism. However, more subtle forms of racial discrimination create "situational ambiguity," in which a person may attribute an experience to an external cause (i.e., racism) or an internal cause or personal flaw. For example, African American college students attending a predominately white campus have reported that they have encountered disbelief from others when they demonstrated academic excellence or expressed professional career ambitions (Williams et al., 2020). These experiences could either be attributed to the racist assumption of African Americans' intellectual inferiority or to the individual's presumed lack of ability, regardless of race. Attribution of these experiences has important implications for individuals' psychosocial well-being (Major & Dover, 2016; Major et al., 2002) and racial identity beliefs (Seaton et al., 2009).

Harrell's (2000) model was operationalized into the Racism and Life Experiences scales that measure racism-related stress, coping, socialization, and attitudes (RaLES; Harrell, 1997). Within this measure, the Daily Life Experiences - Frequency subscale (DLE-F; Harrell, 1997) measures the frequency and attribution of daily microaggressions. Researchers have used this scale to assess the direct and indirect effects of daily racial discrimination on a range of factors across the life course, including indicators of psychological functioning (Assari et al., 2017;

Banks, 2010; Britt-Spells et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003) and racial identity (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Chavous et al., 2018; Clifton et al., 2021; Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

Racial Discrimination Experiences Among African Americans

The continued prevalence of experiences of racial discrimination among African Americans is well documented in empirical research. Studies examining the Pew Research Center's 2016 Racial Attitudes in America online survey dataset found that over 73% of Black Americans between the ages of 18 and 65 reported having experienced discrimination or unfair treatment due to their race (Lee et al., 2019). Similarly, data collected from a nationally representative telephone survey in 2017 revealed that over 50% of African Americans had personally experienced racial discrimination in a range of institutional and interpersonal situations (Bleich et al., 2019), including microaggressions. The 2017 survey also revealed that 92% of Black Americans reported a general belief that discrimination against African Americans exists presently.

Racial Discrimination Experiences Among African American Adolescents and Emerging Adults

The current study examines the racial discrimination experiences that first-year emerging adult college students experienced over the past year in their transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood. Thus, it is important to review the previous research on racial discrimination experiences among these two distinct developmental periods. The likelihood of having daily racially discriminatory experiences continues to be highly probable for African American adolescents and emerging adults. A quantitative daily diary study revealed that Black (88% African American; 1% African; 11% Other) middle- and high-school-aged adolescents

average over five racial discrimination experiences per day that occur either vicariously or individually in both online (e.g., social media) and offline interpersonal spaces (English et al., 2020). This aligns with previous studies where African American youth reported their discrimination experiences retrospectively. For instance, Gibbons et al. (2004) found that 91% of African American preadolescents between the ages of 10 and 12 reported experiencing at least one discriminatory experience in their lifetime. Brody et al. (2006) found that 92% of rural African American youth had perceived discriminatory treatment in the previous year, and Prelow et al. (2004) discovered that 77% of African American adolescents reported experiencing at least one racially discriminatory incident in the past 3 months. In contrast, when using an adapted version of the Daily Life Experiences – Frequency scale (DLE-F; Harrell, 1997), African American middle and high school students reported that racial discrimination experiences occurred infrequently over the past year (Smalls et al., 2017). However, within the same study, an overwhelming majority of respondents reported having experienced some racial discrimination, suggesting that despite the reported lack of prevalence in the past year, racial discrimination remained a normative experience for African American youth.

The risk of racial discrimination continues for African Americans in the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood. D'Augelli and Hershberger (1993) found that 41% of African American college students attending a mid-Atlantic predominately white institution (PWI) reported occasionally hearing disparaging racial remarks, 41% reported frequently hearing such remarks, and 59% reported that they had been the target of racial insults at least once or twice. A study examining racial hassles among a sample of African American college students from three different PWIs in the Midwest and Southeast using the DLE-F scale (Harrell, 1997) found that more than half of the respondents reported experiencing at least 13 racial hassles in

the past year, where the most frequently reported racial hassles were being ignored, overlooked, or not given service, being treated rudely or disrespectfully, and others reacting as if they were afraid or intimidated (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). In the same year, 55% of African American college students attending a PWI in the Northeast reported experiencing at least one or two incidents that were rated as "probably or definitely racist" during a two-week interval (Swim et al., 2003). More generally, for African American young adults, 82% have reported experiencing at least one racially discriminatory event during the past year, with being stared at by strangers (53.8%) and followed around (e.g., in stores; 52%) being reported most frequently (Caldwell et al., 2004).

More recent social trends research has suggested that interpersonal racial discrimination experiences may become more distinct beyond high school. For example, about 55% of Black American adults with some college education reported to the Pew Research Center that someone treated them suspiciously because of their race in the past year, and 52% reported that people had treated them as if they weren't intelligent. In contrast, respectively, only 38% and 37% of Black American adults with a high school diploma or less than a high school diploma report such events (Anderson, 2016). This pattern of findings aligns with qualitative studies on Black college students' racial discrimination experiences that document suspicion of criminality and expectations of intellectual inferiority as common microaggressions (Lewis et al., 2021; Pusey-Reid et al., 2022; Tsai & Fulgini, 2012; Watkins et al., 2010). Previous research has indicated that increased racial discrimination is directly linked to less positive affective and evaluative feelings toward one's racial group (Richardson et al., 2015; Seaton, 2009; Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). The current study also investigates the effects of racial discrimination

experiences on racial identity beliefs. However, it is critical to understand factors that can influence adaptive racial identity beliefs despite racial discrimination experiences.

Theoretical Foundations of Identity

According to Erikson's (1950, 1959) Stages of Psychosocial Development, identity is especially relevant during adolescence, as it is the stage that includes the central crisis of identity versus role confusion. In this stage, adolescents are described as needing to achieve a moderately stable sense of self to successfully transition into the subsequent developmental stage. While research has largely substantiated that presumption, emerging evidence has showcased that configuring identity in adulthood requires a continuation of the processes that occur in adolescence (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Syed & Azmitia, 2009). Furthermore, some researchers have proposed that most identity exploration occurs in emerging adulthood rather than adolescence (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Brody, 2008). However, regardless of when identity processes are most salient, the content that informs one's self-concept and sense of identity comes from the social groups with whom one affiliates.

According to the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), individuals' self-concepts can be based on their membership in social groups. These social groups can include religions, nationalities, occupations, sexual orientations, gender, ethnicity, and racial groups, among others. Membership in social groups can be an important source of self-esteem and can provide a sense of belonging within one's society and culture (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). The social standing or status of social groups in a given society is also relevant to social identities, as external perception and treatment of the group can inform how one perceives themselves and their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is especially salient for African Americans, for whom racial hostility is an environmental constant.

Black Racial Identity Models and Measures

Scholars recognize that the meaning of being racially Black is tied to the group's unique cultural history and experience of racism in the United States (Sellers et al., 1998). Models of Black racial identity, such as Cross's model of Nigrescence (Cross, 1971, 1991), often include an optimal set of racial identity beliefs and attitudes that are either implicitly or explicitly stated, although what is considered optimal differs among researchers (Sellers et al., 1998). This model prescribes a stage-based trajectory of Black racial identity that begins as immature or maladaptive and completes or resolves when the optimal Black identity is achieved. This model considers Black individuals' feelings towards themselves, their racial group, as well as the white majority. In the first stage, pre-encounter, Black individuals do not view their race as important to their self-concept and likely idealize the dominant White culture or emphasize a different social identity (e.g., gender, religion, etc.). The following stage, encounter, consists of a positive or negative experience that catalyzes reexamination and further development of one's Black identity. What follows is an immersion/emersion stage in which an individual becomes overly pro-Black and anti-White to appear Black culturally while likely not fully committed to the identity internally.

The following two final stages in the Nigresence model reflect what Cross would consider the most optimal Black racial identities (Cross, 1991). These stages are the *internalization* stage, signified by feelings of security and satisfaction about being Black, and the *internalization-commitment* stage, represented by individuals' ability to utilize their Black identity to take action. Parham and Helms (1981) operationalized the Nigresence model to measure the attitudes individuals are likely to have toward themselves, Blacks, and Whites as they go through the first four stages. The model was also expanded upon to describe the specific

ways in which each stage manifests in late adolescence/early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood (Parham, 1989) and adapted to investigate the identities of other racial/ethnic groups (e.g., White racial identity; Helms, 1984).

A similar stage model of Black racial identity is Jake Milliones's Developmental Inventory of Black Consciousness (Milliones, 1980), affirming the notion of security and satisfaction with Blackness and being active in dismantling racism as adaptive components of Black Americans' racial identity. However, other conceptualizations of Black racial identity focus more on its multidimensional nature than its expected trajectory and less on Black Americans' attitudes toward Whites. For example, Baldwin's (1984, 1987) African Self-Consciousness Scale measured the knowledge that African Americans possessed of themselves as African people historically, culturally, and philosophically. The scale itself consisted of knowledge-based or competency dimensions on topics like Black survival and anti-Black forces as well as action-based or engagement in expressive dimensions of racial identity in various areas of life, such as education, family, religion, cultural activities, interpersonal relations, and political orientation.

Other multidimensional measures of Black racial identity include the Multidimensional Racial Identification Scale (Sanders Thompson, 1995), which defines racial identity as including the constructs of physical identity, psychological identity, sociopolitical identity, and cultural identity. This differs from Oyserman and colleagues' (1995) measure, which, in an examination of the link between academic efficacy and racial identity, focused on feelings of connectedness to Black people, awareness of racism, and the extent to which one views academic achievement as important to the racial group as key aspects of Black racial identity. Resnicow's (1999) Racial and Ethnic Identity Scale would follow suit in viewing Black Americans' beliefs about being

Black and awareness of both institutional and individual racism as core dimensions of Black racial identity but would also incorporate attitudes towards Whites as proposed by Cross's Nigresence Model (Cross, 1993).

Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity

Robert Sellers et al.'s (1998) conceptualization of Black racial identity attempted to integrate both universal identity dimensions and dimensions specific to Black Americans. This integration led to the development of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers et al., 1998). The MMRI defines racial identity as the personal significance and qualitative meaning of race to one's self-concept (Sellers et al., 1998). However, similar to the previously discussed Black racial identity models, the MMRI is attentive to the experiences that make race a unique form of racial identity for African Americans and recognizes that there is great variability in racial identity beliefs among the group.

According to the MMRI, the racial identity beliefs of Black Americans include racial regard, racial centrality, racial salience, and various racial ideologies about the way Black Americans should behave in society. *Centrality* refers to the hierarchical ranking of race based on the proximity it has to one's core self-definition among other social identities. In other words, it describes the extent to which a person normally defines themselves with regard to race. Centrality is conceptualized as typically stable within an individual across contexts, whereas *salience* describes the extent to which a person's race is a relevant part of their self-concept and is conceptually more variable depending on the contextual situation. *Regard* consists of the sub-categories of public regard and private regard. *Public regard* focuses on the perception of out-group members and describes whether an African American feels that others view their racial group positively or negatively. *Private regard* is conceptually similar to racial pride and

describes how positively or negatively an African American feels about being African American, as well as how positively or negatively they feel towards other African Americans. Taken together, regard is cumulatively defined as a person's affective and evaluative judgment of their race. The final dimension, *ideology*, refers to individuals' beliefs or opinions regarding how African Americans should navigate society. The MMRI indicates that there are four ideological classifications: nationalist, oppressed minority, assimilationist, and humanist. A *nationalist ideology* emphasizes the importance and uniqueness of being of African descent; an *oppressed minority ideology* emphasizes the commonalties between African Americans and other oppressed groups; an *assimilationist ideology* emphasizes the commonalties between African Americans and the rest of American society; and a *humanist ideology* emphasizes the commonalties of all humans.

The MMRI dimensions, particularly regard and centrality, have been documented to have important implications for the positive development of African American adolescents and young adults. More positive attitudes about African Americans (i.e., higher private regard) are associated with increased psychosocial functioning (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Sellers et al., 2006) as well as lower levels of perceived stress and depressive symptoms (Sellers et al., 2006) among African American adolescents. Higher private regard is associated with lower psychological distress among African American emerging adults as well (Willis et al., 2021). The belief that other groups hold more positive attitudes towards African Americans (i.e., higher public regard) is not significantly related to better outcomes in psychological functioning among African American adolescents (Sellers et al., 2006) and young adults (Sellers et al., 2003). However, for African American emerging adults, higher public regard has a significant negative relationship with psychological distress (Willis et al., 2021). Greater importance of race to one's

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self-concept (i.e., higher centrality) is associated with lower levels of stress and symptoms of depression and anxiety for African American young adults (Sellers et al., 2003), as well as higher levels of peer acceptance, a correlate of psychosocial functioning, among African American 11th and 12th graders (Rock et al., 2011; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

Interestingly, higher centrality is also associated with a greater perception of racial discrimination for African American young adults (Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003). The more they perceive racial discrimination, the more stress and psychological distress they experience (Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). However, contrary to the indirect link between higher centrality and higher psychological distress via the increased perception of racial discrimination, moderation analyses reveal that higher centrality has been found to buffer the deleterious effects of racial discrimination on African American young adults (Sellers et al., 2003). Interestingly, lower racial centrality has been found to exacerbate psychological distress among African American adolescents (Perkins et al., 2022).

The belief that other groups hold more negative attitudes towards African Americans (i.e., lower public regard) has also been indirectly linked to psychological distress via the increased perception of racial discrimination (Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003). However, similar to patterns of centrality findings, moderation analyses reveal an association in which lower public regard beliefs (e.g., having an awareness or expectation of racial discrimination in America) buffer racial discrimination's harmful effects on psychological functioning among African American college students and adolescents, while higher public regard beliefs exacerbate them (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Sellers et al., 2006). The deleterious relationship between racial discrimination and psychological functioning (Sellers et al., 2006) was heightened for African American adolescents who believed that other groups held more positive attitudes toward

African Americans and lessened for those who did not. The relationship between perceived racial discrimination and the extent to which racial discrimination bothers African American college students is stronger for those with higher public regard as well (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Racial identity profiles that include having more negative feelings toward African Americans (i.e., lower private regard) exacerbated the associations between perceptions of racial discrimination and psychological well-being such that, for African American adolescents with lower private regard, racial discrimination experiences are associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms (Seaton, 2009).

Patterns of Racial Identity Beliefs Among African Americans

The MMRI (Sellers et al., 1998) was operationalized as a measure entitled the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1997), consisting of 7 subscales representing 3 stable dimensions of Black American racial identity (centrality, ideology, and regard). The majority of research utilizing the MIBI has been conducted with PWI-attending college students or young adult samples, except for two studies that used the centrality and regard subscales of the MIBI with African American high school students (Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers, Caldwell, et al., 2003) before the development of a teen version of the measurement (MIBI-t; Scottham et al., 2008). Studies that have utilized the MIBI scale reveal consistent trends in racial centrality, private regard, and public regard across samples of African American emerging adults. On average, racial centrality levels are moderately high among African American emerging adults (Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003) and among African American college students (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Chavous et al., 2018; Perkins et al., 2022; Sellers et al., 1997; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). For example, in Perkins et al. (2022), the average centrality score was 5.4 on a 7-point scale among African American college students

attending a PWI. Similarly, among African American emerging adults, the average centrality score was 4.7 on a 6-point scale in Lee et al. (2020). These scores suggest that racial identity is similarly important to the overall self-concepts of both African American emerging adults and college students. The similarity in scores is expected given that transitioning into emerging adulthood post-high school tends to overlap with attending college (McFarland et al., 2017). In contrast, African American emerging adult college students attending PWIs reported having lower public regard on average (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Chavous et al., 2018; Perkins et al., 2022; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003), meaning that they tended to believe that members of other groups view African Americans poorly. For example, in Chavous et al. (2018), the average public regard score was 3.4 on a 7-point scale. This finding is consistent with existing research demonstrating that experiencing racial discrimination is a normative risk factor for African American youth and emerging adults. Thus, it is reasonable for African Americans to frequently endorse the belief that African Americans are generally viewed negatively by others. Despite reporting lower public regard, African American emerging adults tend to report higher levels of private regard. This signifies that, despite the prevalence of racial discrimination, African Americans can maintain positive affective and evaluative views about being African American and towards other African Americans (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Chavous et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 1997; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Researchers need to elucidate the factors that allow for such a resilient belief to be maintained amidst persistent racial hostility.

Using a nationally representative sample of American adults (aged 18 – 65), the Pew Research Center reveals a similar pattern in the prevalence of views among Black American adults related to public regard and centrality beliefs. Over 80% of Black Americans report

believing that their racial group is treated less fairly in dealing with police, the criminal justice system, and in hiring, pay, and promotions for work, and over 50% report believing that their racial group is treated less fairly in getting loans, buying from stores, voting in elections, and seeking medical treatment (Horowitz et al., 2019). A requisite for higher public regard is the belief that Black Americans are treated with respect in larger society (Sellers et al., 1998). This pattern of findings, however, suggests that Black American adults may generally have low public regard. Additionally, 58% of Black Americans also report believing that Black and White Americans do not get along very well, and one-in-five Black individuals report the belief that all or most White Americans are prejudiced against Black people (Horowitz et al., 2019). Again, these findings provide further support that Black Americans have, on average, lower public regard, believing that White Americans do not view or treat their racial group positively. An additional finding suggests that Black Americans aged 50 and older are more likely to express more positive views of Black-White relations than those under 50 (Horowitz et al., 2019), suggesting that lower public regard might be more prevalent among younger Black American adults.

Approximately 71% of Black Americans report that their racial background is very important to their sense of self (Cox & Tamir, 2022), suggesting that most Black American adults have a higher racial centrality. Those that reported race as important to how they think of themselves were also more likely to feel connected to other Black people, affirming Black Americans' generally high racial centrality as the dimension's definition includes strong attachments to one's racial group (Sellers et al., 1998). Black adults with at least a bachelor's degree are more likely than those with lower levels of education to report that their racial identity is very important to them (Cox & Tamir, 2022). This pattern is similar to college-educated Black

Americans' reports of experiencing more micro-aggressive discrimination than non-college-educated Black Americans (Anderson, 2016), again suggesting that higher education is a unique context in which racialized experiences unfold and in which racial identification may be more central. As previously discussed, the associations between high racial centrality, low public regard, and psychological outcomes are complex, with both racial identity beliefs indirectly linked to psychological distress via the increased perception of racial discrimination (Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003) while simultaneously buffering racial discrimination's negative impact on psychological functioning (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Sellers et al., 2006). Experiences with racial discrimination can also directly affect positive and adaptive racial identity beliefs (Caldwell et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2020; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Seaton, 2009; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Su et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2017). Whether racial discrimination experiences encourage or inhibit adaptive racial identity beliefs depends on the specific belief being examined.

Associations Between Racial Discrimination and Racial Identity

Research examining the direct effects of racial discrimination on public regard, private regard, and centrality has largely consisted of adolescent samples due to the establishment of adolescence as a salient period for identity processes (Erikson, 1950; Erikson, 1959). However, there is a growing body of research that examines the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs in subsequent developmental stages (i.e., emerging and young adulthood).

In terms of public regard, more frequent racial discrimination experiences are concurrently and longitudinally linked to lower public regard (Seaton, 2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2017). In other words, the more racial discrimination

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experiences one perceives they have, the more one believes that other groups view African Americans negatively. Research has suggested that this association is true for both African American emerging adults (Caldwell et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Su et al., 2021) and adolescents experiencing discrimination from either peers or adults at school (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009).

Findings related to private regard suggest that there is a significant longitudinal association between greater perception of racial discrimination and lower private regard (Seaton et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2017) for African American adolescents. More frequent previous experiences of racial discrimination led to more negative feelings about being Black and more negative views of other Black people (Seaton et al., 2009). Racial discrimination trajectory also influences private regard trajectory, such that increases in discrimination are associated with declines in private regard and declines in discrimination are associated with increases in private regard (Wang et al., 2017). Cross-sectional correlations between racial discrimination and private regard have been largely non-significant (Caldwell et al., 2004; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Su et al., 2021), with only a couple of studies finding evidence that more frequent discrimination is associated with lower private regard among African American emerging and young adults (Lee et al., 2020; Yeo et al., 2022).

Longitudinal associations have also been found between racial discrimination and racial centrality. Recently, researchers have found that early-life racial discrimination is linked with significantly higher levels of adult racial centrality (Tobin et al., 2022). This relationship is true in cross-sectional assessments of emerging and young adult samples as well (Christophe et al., 2022; Hope et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Su et al., 2021). Interestingly, a study examining correlates of clusters of racial identity beliefs found that African American

adolescent boys experiencing more frequent discrimination but receiving fewer parental coping messages were overrepresented in the racial identity cluster characterized by low centrality, low private regard, and average public regard (Richardson et al., 2015). This finding suggests that, under certain circumstances, more frequent racial discrimination can be associated with lower centrality. As showcased, racial discrimination experiences have a significant effect on racial identity beliefs; however, this effect can be influenced by other factors, such as how much individuals have explored their identities (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2017) or parental racial socialization messages (Richardson et al., 2015). Accordingly, it is important to understand how other factors, internal to the individual, may impact the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs.

The contexts under which racial discrimination and racial identity processes occur can also have an impact on the type and frequency of racial discrimination experiences and subsequent racial identity beliefs. One such context, emerging adulthood, may be especially implicated in the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs. Emerging adulthood is a normative period for enrollment in higher education. Previously discussed evidence showcased the distinct effect higher education has on Black American racial discrimination experiences and racial identity beliefs (Anderson, 2016; Cox & Tamir, 2022; Horowitz et al., 2019). Therefore, research benefits from investigating the links between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs among emerging adults, specifically in the college student context.

<center>**Emerging Adulthood as a Context**</center>

According to Arnett (2000), the developmental period of emerging adulthood occurs between the ages of 18 and 25 and is largely a Western phenomenon. Within Western culture,

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emerging adults can delay the enduring commitments that are typically adopted in young

adulthood and maintained throughout adulthood (e.g., marriage, children, homeownership, etc.).

College enrollment is typical during this developmental period, as emerging adults are often still

in the process of obtaining education and training for long-term occupations. They are usually

unmarried and childless while exploring a variety of possible life directions, seeing themselves

as not yet meeting the perceived standards of adulthood (e.g., being responsible for a family,

being completely financially self-sufficient, or owning property; Arnett, 1997, 1998; Greene et

al., 1992; Scheer et al., 1994). Emerging adulthood is also distinct from adolescence since

normative adolescent experiences and expectations, such as attending secondary school,

conclude after age 18 (Arnett, 2000).

Emerging adults tend to have a wider range of possible activities to engage in than those

in older developmental periods because they are less likely to be constrained by long-term role

requirements (Arnett, 2000). For example, there is notable variability in emerging adult living

situations and school attendance. They may choose to be an on-campus college student or an

independent, full-time worker. Some may choose to begin cohabitating with a romantic partner

while working or going to school, continue to live with their parents while attending college, or

work and attend school at the same time. Given the proliferation of transitions, opportunities, and

responsibilities available at this point in life, emerging adulthood is proposed to be a distinct

developmental period in terms of identity exploration (Arnett, 2000).

Emerging Adulthood and Identity

Erikson (1950) designated identity versus role confusion as the central crisis of

adolescence. However, Erikson also articulated the belief that industrialized societies allow for

prolonged adolescence, during which identity explorations can continue (Erikson, 1950, 1968).

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This is foundational to Arnett's (2000) proposition that most identity exploration occurs in emerging adulthood rather than adolescence. While exploration of social identities may begin in adolescence, that exploration intensifies for emerging adults as they try different pathways in romance and work that inform the long-term life decisions made in later adulthood. This exploration is key for emerging adults' identity formation and is made more complex for African American emerging adults navigating the racial context of the United States.

For African American emerging adults, the burden of coping with negative racial stereotypes, racially differential treatment, and restricted opportunities due to racial prejudice is well experienced and understood (Horowitz et al., 2019). While determining who they are and whom they wish to be, African American emerging adults typically must simultaneously overcome racial discrimination experiences (Arnett, 2008). It is important to note that their identity exploration is likely being processed alone, as emerging adulthood is the period of time where individuals spend the most amount of time alone (Buecker et al., 2021), especially for those who have relocated outside of their family home (Jonsson, 1994; Morch, 1995). Moving into a larger society as an African American emerging adult often means moving into environments that are more diverse than their childhood communities. As the number and range of non-Blacks in their environment increases, so does the likelihood of experiencing racial discrimination (Arnett & Brody, 2008; English et al., 2014; Hunt et al., 2007; Seaton & Yip, 2008). The stress and new experiences inherent in transitioning from adolescence to emerging adulthood and the stress caused by racial discrimination experiences can independently and collectively impact African American emerging adults' racial identity development (Rivas-Drake & Witherspoon, 2013; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Emerging Adult College Students' Racial Experiences

The worldviews that emerging adults entering college bring from home may change due to exposure to peers with a variety of differing worldviews and life experiences (Arnett, 2000). If racial identity beliefs can be considered worldviews about one's racial group, one could surmise that college, or any other important life transition, would affect one's racial identity beliefs. Following this logic, Tsai and Fulgini (2012) proposed that transition periods involving new identity-based experiences could lead to either the affirmation or change of prior identity beliefs. Accordingly, researchers have reported that African American college students' racial identity beliefs change after attending college for at least a year (Baber, 2012; Chavous et al., 2018).

A qualitative study on African American students attending a predominantly White institution in the Mid-Atlantic revealed that connecting with a diverse community of other African American students resulted in changes in participating students' racial centrality and regard (Baber, 2012). Students in the study entered college with an established disposition toward African American culture that was rooted in their previous racial experiences and the perceived alignment between their self-concept and prescribed African American cultural markers. The critical mass of African American students attending their university allowed the participants to be exposed to the heterogeneity of African American experiences and, thus, find multiple new sources of support. As a result, participating students expressed increased positive feelings towards their race (i.e., higher private regard) and an increase in the importance of race to their overall self-concept (i.e., higher centrality) (Baber, 2012). The newfound peer support also appeared to strengthen African American students' perseverance when encountering negative assumptions connected to their racial group (Baber, 2012), indirectly showcasing the adaptive nature of higher private regard and centrality for African American college students

when coping with racial discrimination. Other studies have also demonstrated that having higher levels of private regard and centrality is adaptive for coping with racial discrimination. For example, according to moderation analyses, the positive association between racial discrimination and psychological distress is weakened among African American young adults with higher centrality (Sellers et al., 2003). In terms of private regard, racial discrimination is associated with higher alcohol consumption when African American college students' private regard is very low but is not significantly associated with alcohol consumption when their private regard is high or very high (Su et al., 2021).

Chavous and her colleagues (2018) had a similar finding in their quantitative study of Black college students' racial identity beliefs over their freshman year. Participants' race-related experiences at the interpersonal and institutional levels influenced their racial centrality and regard, but in ways that differed across racial identity dimensions. Students' changes in racial centrality are related to the racial composition of their community of origin and their current college experiences. For example, participants with lower centrality that was stable across their first year in college came from more racially diverse, or predominantly White, pre-college contexts and reported having more close White friendships and acquaintances in their first year than those with higher, stable centrality. These circumstances likely allowed race to be relatively less salient to their self-definition. While the racial composition of students' pre-college context and current college experiences also explained the same patterns in private regard trajectories, only racial discrimination experiences helped explain public regard. Students who had either lower and stable public regard or those with average public regard that increased over their freshman year reported experiencing more discrimination events than those who started with higher public regard and decreased over time (high-decrease trajectory). This finding is

consistent with the idea that for students entering college with more negative worldviews about society's regard for Black Americans, experiencing discrimination is affirming of their beliefs, allowing their lower public regard to be maintained over time (Seaton et al. 2009; Spencer et al. 2003). Interestingly, under the context of frequent racial discrimination experiences, lower levels of public regard have proven to be adaptive for African American college students, as moderation analyses reveal that lower public regard beliefs (e.g., having an awareness or expectation of racial discrimination in America) buffer racial discrimination's harmful effects on psychological distress, while higher public regard beliefs exacerbate them (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Given the relevance of racial identity and racial discrimination to the emerging adulthood developmental period for African Americans, it is important to assess the specific ways in which racial discrimination affects racial identity during the period. It is also important to illuminate what other factors are involved in having more adaptive racial identity beliefs during emerging adulthood despite racial discrimination experiences.

Conceptualizations of Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being has been defined as a multidimensional construct consisting of criteria that center on having a sense of purpose and direction, achieving satisfying relationships with others, and gaining a sense of self-realization (Ryff, 1989a). Preceding this definition, seminal discussions around the structure of psychological well-being focused mainly on individuals' positive and negative affect as well as their life satisfaction levels (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Bradburn, 1969; Bryant & Veroff, 1982; Diener & Emmons, 1984; Liang, 1984, 1985; Stock et al., 1986). Erikson's (1959) psychosocial stages, Buhler's (1935) basic life tendencies, and Neugarten's (1973) description of personality change also defined well-being as successfully confronting different challenges at various phases of life, following a trajectory of

continued growth across the life cycle. According to Ryff (1989b), these preceding conceptualizations contain similar features of positive psychological functioning and could be integrated into a summative formulation of well-being. Accordingly, Ryff's (1989a) conceptualization of psychological well-being brings together multiple frameworks of positive functioning to generate a multidimensional model.

Ryff's (1989a) model comprehensively defines well-being as having six core dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and autonomy. *Self-acceptance* refers to whether one holds a positive attitude toward oneself and one's life. The concept of self-acceptance or positive self-evaluation was a recurrent theme in early conceptualizations of positive functioning (Allport, 1961; Birren & Renner, 1980; Erikson, 1959; Maslow, 1968; Jahoda, 1958; Jung, 1933; Rogers, 1961; Ryff, 1989b). Under Ryff's (1989a) model, someone with high self-acceptance would acknowledge and accept multiple aspects of themselves, including their good and bad qualities. Conversely, a person with low self-acceptance would feel dissatisfied with themselves, be troubled about certain personal qualities, and wish to be different from who they are. In addition to a positive self-evaluation, many of the preceding theories emphasized the importance of positive interpersonal relations (Allport, 1961; Birren & Renner, 1980; Erikson, 1959; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961; Ryff, 1989b). Ryff (1989a) included *positive relations with others* as a component of the psychological well-being model. A person possessing positive relations with others is concerned with the welfare of others, capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy, and understands the reciprocal nature of human relationships. Someone with few close relationships with others may find it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others. They may be isolated and

frustrated in interpersonal relationships, not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others.

According to Ryff (1989a), optimal development requires not only that one achieve certain qualities but also that one continues to develop one's potential, grow, and expand as a person to adapt to an ever-changing world. *Personal growth* refers to a sense of continued development and maturation, such that the individual is open to new experiences, sees improvement in their behavior over time, and changes in ways that reflect more self-knowledge, while an individual lacking personal growth may feel a sense of personal stagnation and lack a sense of improvement or expansion over time. A person who is low in personal growth may also feel bored, uninterested in life, and unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors to address new challenges in life. Distinct from personal growth is *purpose in life*, or the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful. Those with a sense of purpose have goals in life and a sense of directedness, feel there is meaning to life, hold beliefs that give life purpose, and have aims and objectives for living, while those without likely have few goals or aims, lack a sense of direction, and have no outlooks or beliefs that give life meaning (Ryff, 1989a; Ryff, 1989b).

Previous perspectives also suggested that environmental mastery, or the active participation in and knowledge of the environment, is important to an integrated model of positive psychological functioning (Ryff, 1989b). Individuals with a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment may control a complex array of external activities, make effective use of surrounding opportunities, and possess a sense of agency in that they can choose or create contexts suitable to their personal needs and values (Ryff, 1989a; Ryff, 1989b). On the other hand, those lacking environmental mastery may have difficulty managing everyday affairs, feel unable to change or improve the surrounding context, be unaware of opportunities,

and lack a sense of control over the external world. Lastly, many theorists have emphasized the qualities of independence and autonomy in their models of psychological well-being (Jahoda, 1958; Loevinger, 1976; Neugarten, 1973; Ryff, 1989b; Rogers, 1961). Thus, Ryff included autonomy as the final component of her model of well-being. Those with a higher sense of autonomy are self-determining and independent, able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways, regulate behavior from within, and evaluate themselves by their personal standards. Lower levels of autonomy may lead to being more concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others, relying on the judgments of others to make important decisions, and conforming to social pressures.

The Moderating Potential of Psychological Well-Being in Racial Discrimination and Racial Identity Associations

Research shows that racial socialization messages serve as an external resource that can influence racial discrimination's effect on racial identity beliefs (Anderson et al., 2019; Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Richardson et al., 2015). Specifically, researchers have theorized that racial socialization provides a framework for making meaning of racial discrimination experiences and for helping youth cope adaptively when they have faced discrimination (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). However, little attention has been given in the literature to factors internal to an individual that may also provide a framework for such an appraisal. It is important for research to explore other factors that can moderate the strength of the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs.

One internal factor that might have relevance to the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs is psychological well-being. Research findings indicate that racial discrimination and psychological well-being are associated in such a way that

increased experience of racial discrimination is linked to increases in indicators of poor

psychological functioning such as depression, anxiety, and distress (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007;

Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Giurgescu et al., 2017; Le et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Perkins et

al., 2022; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Ryff's (1989a,

1989b) dimensions of psychological well-being are negatively associated with these poor

psychological functioning indicators (Edmondson & MacLeod, 2015). The moderating effect of

psychological functioning indicators has been studied in a range of psychology and family-

related associations across the lifespan (e.g., Cheref et al., 2015; Chou et al., 2015; Kempen et

al., 1999; Sorek, 2019; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010). For example, depression is a

significant moderator in the association between reflective rumination and suicidal ideation

among ethnic minority American college students (Cheref et al., 2015). Additionally, there is a

bidirectional relationship between psychosocial functioning and identity processes (Hatano et al.,

2019; Meca et al., 2019; Potterton et al., 2022), suggesting the possibility that psychological

well-being may impact the feelings or beliefs one has regarding their race. Taken together, one

could conclude that psychological well-being is a potential moderator of the associations

between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs.

Based on Ryff's (1989) conceptualization of psychological well-being, a psychologically

well individual possesses high levels of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, personal

growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and autonomy. While yet to be directly

examined, these dimensions may influence African Americans' appraisal of racial discrimination

experiences. For example, according to Ryff (1989), a psychologically well individual evaluates

themselves positively (i.e., has high self-acceptance). When an African American person with

high psychological well-being experiences racial discrimination, their positive self-evaluation

may allow them to continue to maintain more positive attitudes towards being African American and other African Americans (i.e., high private regard) despite the negative feedback from discriminatory experiences. The same could be the case for public regard as a psychologically well African American individual, even when having experienced racial discrimination, may be less inclined to report that other groups view African Americans negatively due to their understanding of human relationships (i.e., high positive relations with others) and ability to create contexts suitable to their needs and values (i.e., high environmental mastery). Race may be integrated into psychologically well African Americans' sense of purpose or life goals (i.e., purpose in life), adding to the relevance of race in their self-concept (i.e., centrality) that racial discrimination makes salient. These possibilities warrant empirical exploration, and there are theoretical frameworks that lend support.

The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory as a Guiding Theoretical Framework

By spotlighting the inequitable conditions (e.g., racial discrimination) that pervade the normative contexts of African Americans, PVEST provides a conceptual framework for understanding ways in which racial identity emerges in the lives of African American young people (Spencer et al., 1995; Spencer et al., 1997). Experiences of racial discrimination can serve as a form of distressing environmental feedback that impacts how African Americans view their world and make meaning of their race and its significance. The stress engagement derived from the appraisal of racial discrimination would necessitate the utilization of one or several coping methods (Spencer et al., 1995). For example, racial discrimination in the form of presumptuous microaggressive comments about one's intellect is a social phenomenon that African American college students often report experiencing (Anderson, 2016; Lewis et al., 2021; Pusey-Reid et al.,

2022; Tsai & Fulgini, 2012; Watkins et al., 2010), which informs their internal sense of value and self-efficacy as students and negatively affects academic performance (Spencer et al., 1997). The stress caused by the appraisal of micro-aggressive racial discrimination increases vulnerability to poor academic performance if strategies or resources are not in place to appropriately cope (Spencer, 2006). Psychological well-being has been documented as an effective resource for adaptively coping with the stressful demands of academic life (Freire et al., 2016). Accordingly, it is possible that psychological well-being could serve as a resource that informs the coping responses used for managing stress incurred by racial discrimination. Level of psychological well-being may dictate the individuals' adaptive capacity to manage frequent racial discrimination experiences, which would subsequently dictate individuals' emergent racial identity.

The PVEST framework explicitly considers the interaction between adolescents' contextual conditions and their developmental stage in describing identity processes; however, the framework is also conceptualized as cyclical (Spencer et al., 1997). The outcomes of one life stage inform the risks incurred and protective factors available in the following life stage. Self-appraisal upon transitioning from adolescence to emerging adulthood catalyzes the stress engagement, coping responses, and emergent identities that are acquired in the new developmental period. Accordingly, the identity processes in adolescence are proposed to continue and intensify into emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, it is proposed here that the PVEST model maintains relevance in emerging adulthood. Additionally, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI, Sellers et al., 1998) is complementary to PVEST as a measurement of emergent racial identity among African American emerging adults. Because the MMRI affords individuals the opportunity to provide their own determination of the

qualitative meaning and significance of race, great variability is allowed in individuals' racial identity definitions, and a more comprehensive examination of African Americans' within-group variation is provided (Richardson et al., 2015). It is proposed here that the variability in individuals' racial identity definitions may reflect the variability in the phenomenological appraisal of stressful racial experiences and the varying adaptiveness of the methods used to cope with such experiences as informed by individuals' psychological well-being who experience racial discrimination.

The Current Study

The present study will examine the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs and whether psychological well-being moderates these associations among a sample of African American emerging adult first-year college students. Previous research has indicated that the racial discrimination experiences perceived during key identity-forming developmental periods are important to consider in the normative development of African Americans' racial identity (Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Spencer et al., 1997). The current study examines participants' previous experiences of racial discrimination during their transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood (i.e., past-year discrimination experiences at the start of their first year in college). This study provides a unique opportunity to ascertain the impact of racial discrimination on racial identity beliefs because experiences and beliefs were assessed during a transformational period in the participants' lives. Additionally, these data were collected during a historical and unique period in U.S. society—the year 2020— in which society at large witnessed and grappled with widely publicized instances of racial discrimination and mass protests against racial injustice amidst a global COVID-19 pandemic. The heightened racial climate within which these students transitioned into emerging adult

college students, coupled with their own interpersonal racial discrimination experiences, provides a unique time period to examine racial identity development and the ways psychological well-being functioned to influence their racial identity beliefs within the context of discrimination. I am specifically interested in first determining how racial discrimination experiences are associated with public regard, private regard, and centrality. Next, I will examine whether African American emerging adult college students' level of psychological well-being moderates the associations between the frequency of racial discrimination experiences and their racial identity beliefs. That is, I will examine whether higher and lower levels of psychological well-being differentially affect the impact of racial discrimination on centrality, private regard, and public regard. This moderation analysis will show whether psychological well-being serves as an internal resource that impacts the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs.

Prior research has examined racial identity's direct effect on psychological functioning (Lee et al., 2020; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003) as well as racial identity's ability to buffer or exacerbate racial discrimination's effect on psychological functioning (Perkins et al., 2022; Seaton, 2009; Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). The current study departs from this trend, instead reversing the previously examined roles of racial identity and psychological well-being such that the present study will examine racial identity as the outcome and psychological well-being as the moderator. By exploring this reversal, this study establishes a connection to existing literature that investigates the determinants of acquiring adaptive beliefs regarding racial identity. Whereas past research has focused on external resources such as racial socialization as moderating associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs, this study will examine the moderating

role of psychological well-being to provide a new addition to the literature that focuses on an internal factor that may impact the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs.

Lastly, the current study will depart from the trend of examining identity during adolescence, instead adding to the growing body of research elucidating racial identity processes in emerging adulthood, specifically among a sample attending a unique institution of higher education. The African American emerging adult in college may have racial discrimination experiences that are distinct to the context of higher education and the type of institution attended. For example, African American adults who have attended college report having their intelligence questioned and being treated suspiciously more frequently than those who have not attended college (Anderson, 2016). African American college students attending PWIs report experiencing racial discrimination on campus more frequently than those who attend historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs; Campbell et al., 2019). These distinct racial experiences have implications for the racial identity beliefs of African American emerging adult first-year college students. Furthermore, much of the research conducted on African American college students consists of samples attending PWIs; however, this study examines students attending a minority-serving institution, offering insight into the racial discrimination experiences and racial identity beliefs of African American college students in an understudied environment. Whereas most research has been conducted with African American college students attending predominately White institutions (PWIs), the present study will examine the associations between racial discrimination, psychological well-being, and racial identity beliefs

among students attending a Minority Serving Institution (27% African American). Through this study, I will examine the following research questions:

1. Are there significant associations between the frequency of African American emerging adult first-year college students' racial discrimination experiences and their racial identity beliefs (i.e., public regard, private regard, and centrality)?

2. Does psychological well-being moderate the associations between the frequency of African American emerging adult first-year college students' racial discrimination experiences and their racial identity beliefs (i.e., public regard, private regard, and centrality)?

Hypotheses

There is substantial evidence in support of the notion that racial discrimination influences the racial identity beliefs of African American emerging adult first-year college students. As discussed, the report of more frequent experiences of racial discrimination has been documented to be associated with the belief that other groups view African Americans negatively (i.e., with lower public regard) among adolescents and emerging adults (Caldwell et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2020; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2017; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Seaton, 2009; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Su et al., 2021). More frequent experiences of racial discrimination are also associated with more negative feelings about being Black and toward other Black people (i.e., lower private regard; Lee et al., 2020; Seaton et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2017; Yeo et al., 2022). Lastly, more frequent racial discrimination has largely been documented to be associated with race being more central to African American adolescents' and emerging adults' self-concept (i.e., higher centrality; Christophe et al., 2022; Hope et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Su et al., 2021). According to the preceding evidence, in the

current study, it is hypothesized that there will be negative associations between interpersonal racial discrimination and public and private regard and a positive association between interpersonal racial discrimination and centrality. In other words, more frequent reports of interpersonal racial discrimination experiences are expected to be associated with lower public regard, lower private regard, and higher centrality.

In terms of the effect of psychological well-being, prior evidence highlights links between psychological functioning and identity processes (Hatano et al., 2018; Hatano et al., 2020a; Hatano et al., 2020b; Meca et al., 2019; Schwartz et al., 2012; van Doeselaar et al., 2018). More specifically, reduced psychological functioning has been documented to decrease identity commitment and increase identity exploration (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor et al., 2015; Phinney, 1990; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2005). Relatedly, decreased identity commitment is associated with decreased centrality and public regard (Douglass & Umaña -Taylor, 2019; Wang et al., 2017). Given the evidence of direct positive associations between psychological well-being dimensions and indicators of psychological functioning (Edmondson & MacLeod, 2015; Ryff, 2014), as well as associations between level of identity commitment and content of racial identity beliefs (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2019; Wang et al., 2017), it is hypothesized that psychological well-being will significantly moderate the associations between racial discrimination and public regard, private regard, and centrality.

More specifically, the negative associations between racial discrimination and public and private regard are expected to be weakened among participants with higher levels of psychological well-being. That is, for students with higher levels of psychological well-being, racial discrimination will have less of a negative impact on their public and private regard compared to students with lower levels of psychological well-being. As previously discussed,

having higher levels of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and autonomy (Ryff, 1989) may collectively encourage African American emerging adult college students to maintain more positive attitudes regarding being African American and how other groups view African Americans despite the negative effects of discriminatory experiences. In contrast, the positive association between racial discrimination and centrality is expected to be strengthened among participants with higher levels of psychological well-being. Research has demonstrated that, unlike private and public regard, centrality has a positive direct association with racial discrimination. However, the dimensions that comprise psychological well-being may collectively enhance the significance of race in the self-concept of African Americans. Therefore, centrality is hypothesized to be bolstered among students with higher levels of psychological well-being.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

Participants

The present study is a secondary data analysis from a larger study examining African American students' familial racial socialization, racial discrimination experiences, and academic, psychological, and racial identity beliefs. Data from 129 self-identified African American emerging adult college students attending a mid-sized Minority Serving Institution in the southeastern part of the United States were included in the sample. Data were collected in the fall semester of 2020 when students were first-year college students.

Sample Characteristics

Students ranged in age from 18 to 21 years old (M_{age} = 18.29, SD = 0.6), the majority of whom identified as women (82.2%, n = 106). Other students within the sample identified as men (15.5%, n = 20), gender fluid (0.8%, n = 1), gender non-binary (0.8%, n = 1), and agender (0.8%, n = 1). In the school year before entering college, 47.3% (n = 61) of students reported a GPA between 3.6 and 4.0, 34.9% (n = 45) of students reported a GPA between 3.1 and 3.5, 10.1% (n = 13) of students reported a GPA between 2.6 and 3.0, and 0.8% (n = 1) reported a GPA between 2.1 and 2.5. However, some students were not enrolled in school the year before entering college (7%, n = 9). Most students (94.6%, n = 122) indicated that they lived in North Carolina for the majority of their lives, while other students indicated areas within New Jersey (0.8%, n = 1), Maryland (1.6%, n = 2), Virginia (0.8%, n = 1), South Carolina (1.6%, n = 2), and Georgia (0.8%, n = 1) as their hometowns.

Procedures

Approval for participant recruitment and data collection was granted by the university's Institutional Review Board. The principal investigator obtained a list of email addresses of all

students who were identified as Black first-year students by the university's Office of Institutional Research. Students were recruited via an email that included the study advertising information and a link for students to take a 25-minute online survey via Qualtrics. Students were compensated with a $20 Amazon gift card upon completion of the survey.

<div align="center">**Measures**</div>

Demographic Variables

Participants self-reported their gender, age, year of enrollment in college, race, ethnicity, length of time as an American resident, and the zip code of their hometown.

Racial Discrimination

The frequency of discriminatory experiences was assessed using an adapted version of the Daily Life Experience (DLE) scale, which is a subscale of the Racism and Life Experiences Scale (RaLes; Harrell, 1994, 1997). The DLE is a self-report measure that assesses daily hassles or the frequency of microaggressions because of race in the past year. Participants were presented with a list of 18 discriminatory experiences, for example, "having your ideas ignored" and "not being taken seriously." Participants were asked to indicate whether they experienced each discriminatory event in the past year and were presented with 5 response options to indicate why they think the discriminatory event happened: (1) because of my race, (2) because of my gender, (3) because of both my race AND gender, (4) for some other reason, or (5) it did not happen. The current study operationalized racial discrimination as only instances in which participants selected that a discriminatory event occurred because of their race. The mean of racial discrimination experiences was examined, and higher scores indicated more frequent experiences of racial discrimination. Previous psychometric analyses indicate that internal consistency was adequate for this subscale, with construct validity indicating that DLE correlated

<div align="center">42</div>

negatively with social desirability and cultural mistrust (Harrell, 1997). Evidence of criterion-related validity was demonstrated in that DLE was related to perceived stress, psychological symptoms, and trauma-related symptoms (Harrell, 1997).

Psychological Well-Being

Participants' psychological well-being was measured by an abbreviated version of the Psychological Well-Being scale (Ryff, 1989). Participants were asked to respond by indicating the extent to which they agreed with each of the 24 items using a 5-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The scale consisted of six dimensions, with four items comprising each of the subscale dimensions. Positive relations with others assessed the extent to which a person has warm, satisfying, and trusting relationships with others (e.g., "My friends and I sympathize with each other's problems") Personal growth assessed the extent to which a person has a feeling of continued development (e.g., "I am the kind of person who likes to give new things a try"). Autonomy assessed the extent to which a person is self-determining and independent (e.g., "My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing"). Environmental mastery assessed the extent to which a person has a sense of mastery and competence in managing their environment (e.g., "In general, I feel I am in charge of my life"). Purpose in life assessed the extent to which a person has goals in life and a sense of directedness (e.g., "I have a sense of direction and purpose in life"). Self-acceptance assessed the extent to which a person possesses a positive attitude toward the self (e.g., "In general, I feel confident and positive about myself"). An overall composite score of psychological well-being was created by computing the average score across all 24 items (α=.84). Higher composite scores indicated higher overall psychological well-being.

Racial Identity Beliefs

An abbreviated version of the Multi-dimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1997) was utilized to assess individuals' racial identity beliefs. Participants were asked to respond by indicating the extent to which they agreed with each of the 22 items using a 7-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The current study examined three dimensions of racial identity: centrality, private regard, and public regard, and scales were calculated by the mean of each scale's items. Centrality assessed the extent to which race is an important part of the individual's overall sense of self (e.g., "I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people"). The centrality scale consisted of 3 items (α =.86), where higher scores indicated a stronger importance of race as a part of the individual's self-concept. Private regard measured positive feelings toward one's racial group (e.g., "I am happy that I am Black"). The scale consisted of 3 items (α =.86), where higher scores indicated an individual having stronger positive feelings toward being Black. Public regard assessed the extent to which participants believed that others view Black people in a positive way (e.g., "Most people think that Blacks are as smart as people from other races"). The scale consisted of 4 items (α =.87), where higher scores indicated that the individual believed people from other races view Black people more positively.

<div align="center">

Plan of Analysis

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Preliminary analyses consisted of reviewing the data's distribution and checking for normality, including skewness and kurtosis. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations were examined among each of the study's key variables.

The primary analyses for the study consisted of a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Analyses tested the effects of the independent variables, frequency of racial

discrimination experiences and psychological well-being on the three dependent variables, public regard, private regard, and centrality in separate models. Racial discrimination and psychological well-being variables were centered before creating the interaction variable. Moderation tested the impact of psychological well-being in the associations between racial discrimination and centrality, private regard, and public regard. The probability level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance for the main effects, whereas a probability level of .10 was used to determine statistical significance for the interaction effects to account for the increased power required to detect significant interaction effects (Whisman & Mcclelland, 2005). In addition, I examined the R^2 of each model to understand the variance accounted for and the ways R^2 changes once interactions were added to models. If there were significant interactions, simple slopes were used to examine the impact of higher or lower psychological well-being (calculated as one standard deviation above and below the sample mean, respectively) on the associations between racial discrimination and public regard, private regard, and centrality.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Racial Discrimination Experiences.

Most students (88.4%) reported having at least one racial discrimination experience in the past year prior to participating in the study of the 18 total discrimination experiences queried. Only 15 (11.6%) students neglected to attribute any of the discrimination experiences presented to their race. One participant reported the highest number of racial discrimination experiences, which was 17. The modes of racial discrimination experiences reported were zero and three. Of the 18 discrimination experiences presented, students attributed an average of 5.6 ($SD = 4.2$) experiences as occurring because of their race. Said another way, students attributed discrimination to their race 31.1% of the time ($SD = .2$). The distribution of how often students attributed discrimination to their race was nearly symmetrical (Skew = .52) with fewer extreme values (i.e., outliers) than would be expected in a normal distribution (Kurt = -.54). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic for racial discrimination experience frequency was significant (<.001) suggesting a violation of normality. However, this normality violation was refuted by a visual assessment of the derived normal Q-Q plot.

Participants reported that "being observed or followed while in public places" was the most common form of racial discrimination experienced, with 53.5% of students attributing the occurrence of that event to their race. Similarly, close to half of the sample reported experiencing the following discrimination because of their race: "being accused of something or treated suspiciously" (48.8%), "being stared at by strangers" (48.8%), "others reacting as if they were afraid or intimidated" (40.3%), and "being mistaken for someone of the same race"

(38.8%). Students attributed race to the following experiences less commonly: "not being taken seriously by others" (16.3% of the sample), "being left out of conversations or activities" (17.1%), and "having their ideas minimized, ignored, or devalued" (17.8%). Table 1 lists all 18 discriminatory events and the frequencies and percentages of the sample reporting each event to race.

Table 1. Sample Frequencies of Racial Discrimination Experiences

Discrimination Experience	f	%
	'Because of my race' ($n = 129$)	
1. I have been ignored, overlooked, or not given service.	41	31.8
2. I have been treated rudely or disrespectfully.	39	30.2
3. I have been accused of something or treated suspiciously.	63	48.8
4. Others have reacted to me as if they were afraid or intimidated.	52	40.3
5. I have been observed or followed while in public places.	69	53.5
6. My ideas or opinions have been minimized, ignored, or devalued.	23	17.8
7. I have overheard or been told an offensive joke or comment.	49	38
8. I have been insulted, called a name, or harassed.	28	21.7
9. Others have expected my work to be inferior.	33	25.6
10. I have been not taken seriously by others.	21	16.3
11. I have been left out of conversations or activities.	22	17.1
12. I have been treated in an "overly" friendly or superficial way.	46	35.7
13. I have been avoided by others.	40	31
14. I have been stared at by strangers.	63	48.8
15. I have been laughed at, made fun of, or taunted.	24	18.6
16. I have been treated as if I was stupid or talked down to.	29	22.5
17. I have been mistaken for someone else of my same race.	50	38.8
18. I have been disciplined unfairly.	31	24

Psychological Well-Being

Students' overall psychological well-being scores, averaged across all 24 items, were normally distributed, as indicated by a nonsignificant Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic (p=.20). The mean score for overall psychological well-being (measured on a 5-point scale) across all students indicated that they are faring fairly well psychologically, but there could be room for improvement (M = 3.5, SD = .5, Range: 2.29-4.58). Psychological well-being score distribution is nearly symmetrical (Skew = -.23) with fewer outliers than would be expected in a normal distribution (Kurt = .44). Normal Q-Q scatter plot observation also indicated that psychological well-being scores are normally distributed.

Racial Identity Beliefs

Each of the three racial identity beliefs that were assessed had a significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic, suggesting that they were not normally distributed. However, visual assessments of the corresponding normal Q-Q plots for centrality and public regard suggested normal distribution. Visual assessment of the corresponding histogram and normal Q-Q plot for private regard scores confirmed its distribution as asymmetrical. The three racial identity variables were all measured on a 7-point scale. Generally, students had high centrality (M = 6.0, SD = 1.2, Range of scores: 1-7), low public regard (M = 3.2, SD = 1.2, Range: 1-7), and high private regard (M = 6.7, SD = .7, Range: 3-7). The distribution of centrality scores (Skew = -1.42, Kurt = 2.07; Md = 6.33; IQR: 5.33-7.0) suggested that scores were negatively skewed and clustered toward higher values. The skewness and kurtosis of public regard scores suggested that the distribution was moderately positively skewed with fewer outliers than would be expected in a normal distribution (Skew = .53, Kurt = -.03). The skewness and kurtosis of private regard

scores suggested that the respective distribution was negatively skewed with more outliers than a normal distribution (Skew = -3.30, Kurt = 11.94).

Bivariate Correlations

Racial discrimination frequency, based on the average number of discriminatory events a student attributed to their race out of 18 total events, had a significant negative association with students' public regard, such that more frequent racial discrimination was associated with lower public regard (r = -.20, p = .03). However racial discrimination frequency was not significantly associated with private regard (r = .09, p = .29) or centrality (r = .14, p = .11) in bivariate correlational analysis. Centrality (r = .33, p <.001) and private regard (r = .33, p <.001) were significantly and positively related to overall psychological well-being, such that higher psychological well-being was associated with higher centrality and private regard. Of the three racial identity variables, centrality and private regard were significantly positively correlated (r = .56, p <.001), such that higher centrality was associated with higher private regard. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among all the key study variables.

Table 2. Pearson Bivariate Correlations

Scale	M	SD	Range	1	2	3	4	5
1. Racial Discrimination Frequency	5.6	4.2	0-17	-				
2. Centrality	6.0	1.2	1-7	.14	-			
3. Public Regard	3.2	1.2	1-7	-.20*	.08	-		
4. Private Regard	6.7	.7	3-7	.09	.56**	.05	-	
5. Psychological Well-Being	3.5	.5	2.3-4.6	-.01	.33**	.07	.33**	-

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Primary Analysis

The study used hierarchical multiple regression analyses to investigate 1) the impact of racial discrimination on racial identity beliefs and 2) the interaction between racial discrimination and psychological well-being on racial identity beliefs. Three separate models were used to examine the three racial identity belief dependent variables: centrality, public regard, and private regard. In the first block of each model, the frequency of racial discrimination experiences was entered to determine its association with each racial identity belief. Psychological well-being was added to the second block. The third block included the addition of the discrimination and psychological well-being interaction term. Both racial discrimination frequency and psychological well-being were centered before creating the interaction variable to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). Adding to the model in these three blocks made it feasible to assess how racial discrimination frequency, psychological well-being, and their interaction were related to centrality, public regard, and private regard beyond what could be explained by the variables' independent effects. Gender was not included as a control variable because of limited variability in the sample. Regression coefficients for each hierarchical regression model can be found in Tables 3-5.

Model Predicting Racial Centrality

Block 1 of the centrality regression model indicated that racial discrimination frequency was not a significant predictor of centrality ($\beta = .14$, $p = .11$), contrary to my hypothesis, and racial discrimination explained only 2% of the variance in students' centrality scores. The addition of psychological well-being in Block 2 resulted in a significant change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 = .11$, *F-change* = 15.99, $p < .001$), and explained 13% of the variance in centrality. Although not hypothesized, there was a significant main effect of psychological well-being that predicted

centrality ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$). The interaction term between racial discrimination frequency and psychological well-being was added to the regression equation in Block 3, but this did not result in a significant change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 = .004$, *F-change* = .54, $p = .46$). There was not a significant interaction between racial discrimination frequency and psychological well-being predicting centrality ($\beta = .33$, $p = .46$), contrary to my hypothesis.

Model Predicting Public Regard

Block 1 of this regression model indicated that racial discrimination frequency was significantly and negatively associated with public regard ($\beta = -.20$, $p = .03$). More frequent racial discrimination was associated with lower public regard, supporting my hypothesis, and racial discrimination explained 4% of the variance in students' public regard scores. The addition of psychological well-being in Block 2 did not result in a significant change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, *F-change* = .70, $p = .40$) nor did the addition of the racial discrimination and psychological well-being interaction term in Block 3 ($\Delta R^2 = .001$, *F-change* = .11, $p = .74$). There was not a significant interaction between racial discrimination frequency and psychological well-being predicting public regard ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .74$), contrary to my hypothesis. After accounting for the main effects of psychological well-being and the interaction, racial discrimination frequency maintained significance as a negative predictor of public regard ($\beta = -.19$, $p = .03$).

Model Predicting Private Regard

Racial discrimination frequency did not significantly predict private regard ($\beta = .09$, $p = .29$) in Block 1, contrary to my hypothesis and explained only .9% of the variance in students' private regard scores. The addition of psychological well-being in Block 2 significantly contributed to the variation in private regard as indicated by the significant change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 = .11$, *F-change* = 15.79, $p < .001$). There was a significant main effect of psychological well-

being that predicted private regard ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$). The change in R^2 after the addition of the

racial discrimination and psychological well-being interaction term in Block 3 had significance

($\Delta R^2 = .03$, *F-change* $= 4.07$, $p = .05$). Moreover, a significant interaction was found between

racial discrimination frequency and psychological well-being predicting private regard ($\beta = -.17$,

$p = .05$).

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Predicting Centrality

Variable	Block 1			Block 2			Block 3		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
1. RD Frequency	.71	.44	.14	.72	.42	.14†	.75	.42	.15†
2. Psychological Well-Being				.78	.20	.33***	.77	.20	.33***
3. RDxPWB Interaction							-.66	.89	-.06
R^2		.02			.13***			.13***	
ΔR^2		.02			.11***			.004	

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Predicting Public Regard

Variable	Block 1			Block 2			Block 3		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
1. RD Frequency	-1.26	.56	-.20*	-1.26	.56	-.20*	-1.24	.57	-.19**
2. Psychological Well-Being				.22	.26	.07	.21	.26	.07
3. RDxPWB Interaction							-.39	1.19	-.03
R^2		.04*			.04†			.05	
ΔR^2		.04			.01			.001	

Note. RD = Racial Discrimination Frequency; PWB = Psychological Well-Being
***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
†. Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed).

Table 5. Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Predicting Private Regard

	Block 1			Block 2			Block 3		
Variable	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
1. RD Frequency	.30	.23	.09	.30	.26	.10	.36	.26	.12
2. Psychological Well-Being				.49	.12	.33***	.46	.12	.32***
3. RDxPWB Interaction							-1.11	.55	-.17*
R^2		.01			.12***			.15***	
ΔR^2		.02			.11***			.03**	

Note. RD = Racial Discrimination Frequency; PWB = Psychological Well-Being
***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
[†]. Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed).

Simple Slopes Analysis

The regression analysis finding indicated that there was a significant interaction between racial discrimination and psychological well-being predicting private regard. To further probe the interaction, students' private regard was regressed onto racial discrimination frequency at high (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean) and low (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean) levels of psychological well-being (Aiken & West, 1991). As illustrated in Figure 1, the examination of simple slopes showed that the association between racial discrimination frequency and private regard varied depending on students' levels of psychological well-being. The association between racial discrimination frequency and private regard was positive for students with low levels of psychological well-being (β = .36) and negative for students with higher levels of psychological well-being (β = -.75), demonstrating that high psychological well-being had a negative effect on private regard under conditions of high racial discrimination frequency.

Figure 1. Moderating Effect of Psychological Well-Being on the Association Between Racial Discrimination and Private Regard
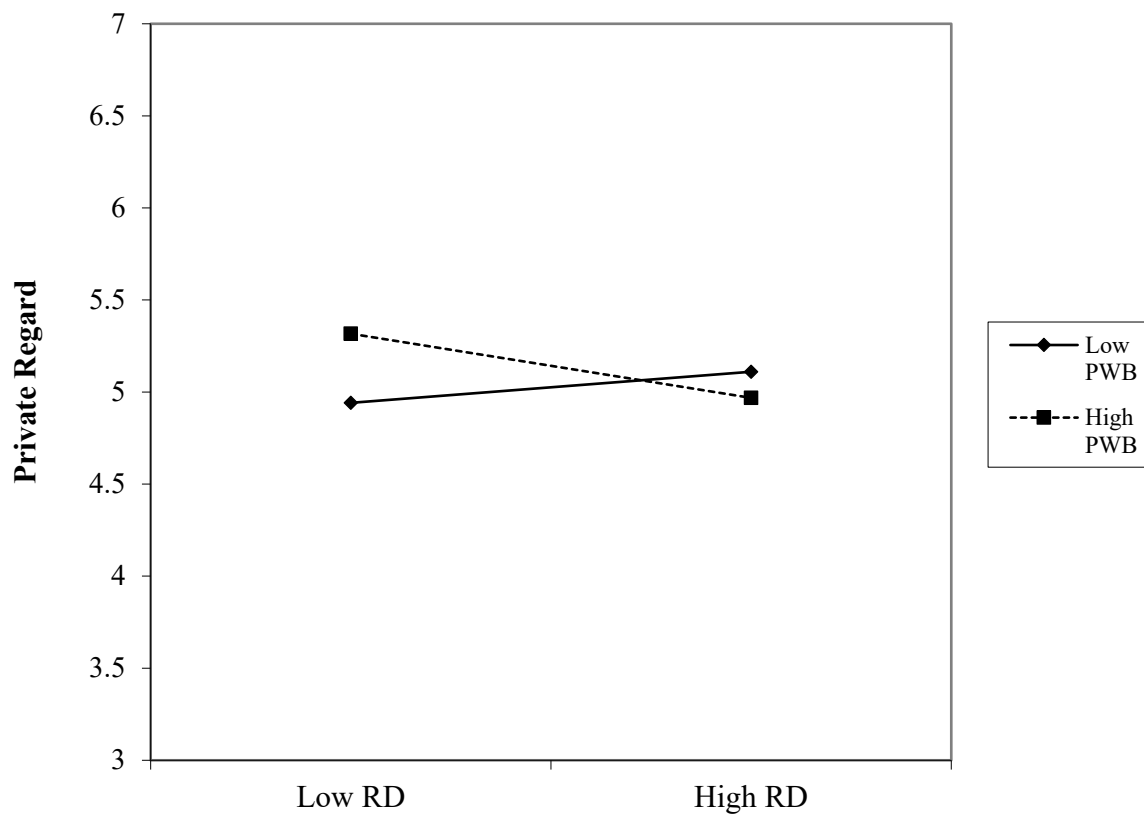
Note. RD = Racial Discrimination Frequency; PWB = Psychological Well-Being

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The current study had two aims. First, I examined the associations between racial discrimination frequency and centrality, public regard, and private regard among African American emerging adult first-year college students. The examination of participants' previous experiences of racial discrimination during their transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood provided a unique opportunity to ascertain the impact of racial discrimination on racial identity beliefs during a transformational period in the participants' lives and add to the growing body of literature on racial identity processes during emerging adulthood. Data for the study was collected during the year 2020, which was a period of heightened racial tension in America as instances of racial discrimination and mass protests were widely publicized. Given that the participants in our study transitioned to emerging adulthood during what seemed to be a period of American racial reckoning, the examination of racial discrimination's influence on racial identity beliefs is particularly valuable. Also of value is the use of a sample attending a unique institution of higher education. Whereas much of the research conducted on African American college students consists of samples attending PWIs, the participants in this study are students of a Minority Serving Institution, which is an especially understudied environment.

Second, the study examined the moderating capacity of psychological well-being in the associations between racial discrimination and the three racial identity beliefs. Psychological well-being is often not directly examined in relation to racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs, as measures of related factors like psychological functioning, depression, and anxiety symptoms are more commonly used. Prior research has examined racial identity beliefs as a determinant of psychological functioning (Lee et al., 2020; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003) and as a moderator in the relationship

between racial discrimination experiences and psychological functioning (Perkins et al., 2022; Seaton, 2009; Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). The current study is a reversal of this trend, examining psychological well-being as a moderator and racial identity beliefs as outcomes. This reversal connects this study to existing literature investigating the factors that influence African Americans' adaptive racial identity beliefs. Such literature has focused on external resources, like parental racial socialization, as factors influencing racial identity, but this study provides a new perspective by examining how psychological well-being functions as an internal resource and moderates associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs.

Interpretation of Results

Racial Discrimination and Racial Identity Beliefs

Contrary to expectations, racial discrimination was not significantly associated with centrality. This is a departure from other research among African American emerging adult and young adult samples, which has found that centrality and racial discrimination are directly and positively related using Harrell's (1994, 1997) Daily Life Experiences subscale (Lee et al., 2020; Sellers & Shelton, 2003) and other measurements of racial discrimination (Hope et al., 2019; Su et al., 2021). However, it is important to note that the data for the studies using the Daily Life Experiences subscale were collected between 2000 and 2012, which has a social and political climate that is distinct from that of 2020, when the current study's data was collected. Additionally, these studies asked participants to rate the frequency of each discriminatory event inquired using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never happened) to 5 (once a week or more). The current study opted to assess whether each event was experienced at least once in the past year as opposed to assessing whether each event was experienced multiple times in the past

year. It is possible that the current study's measure of racial discrimination had less variability than these previous studies due to the differences in the time frame of data collection as well as the operationalization of the Daily Life Experiences subscale. On the other hand, Hope et al. (2019) dichotomized responses based on whether the race-related events were experienced (1) or not experienced (0) by participants, as was done in the current study, and were still able to find a significant positive association between racial discrimination and centrality. Hope et al.'s findings may diverge from the current study's findings because of their use of a larger sample and their measurement of racial discrimination using the Index of Race-Related Stress (Seaton, 2003; Utsey, 1999), which does not limit participants' reports to experiences that occurred in the past year.

The current study's findings are consistent with previous research that examined the impact of racial discrimination on public regard among African American emerging adults and college students (Caldwell et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Su et al., 2021). As hypothesized, the study found that racial discrimination had a significant and negative effect on public regard, indicating that students who experienced more frequent racial discrimination were more likely to believe that other groups view African Americans negatively. This suggests that experiences of racial discrimination likely communicate a message to participants that African Americans are devalued and treated as inferior by other groups, which in turn leads to their perception that other groups hold a more negative view of African Americans. Overall, this finding underscores the significance of racial discrimination in shaping the perceptions of African American emerging adult college students regarding the attitudes of other racial groups towards their own racial group.

The study hypothesized a significant negative association between racial discrimination and private regard, but this was not supported by the findings. The distribution of private regard scores in the current sample was heavily skewed towards higher values, and this lower variability in scores could have contributed to the lack of significance between the two variables. The high levels of private regard found in the sample may reflect the benefits of attending a Minority Serving Institution with a substantial Black student population, as well as the resilience developed in the face of heightened racial tensions during the time of data collection. Both factors could have contributed to fostering positive feelings toward their own racial group. This result differs from prior research, which has demonstrated that frequent discrimination is linked to lower private regard among African American emerging and young adults (Lee et al., 2020; Yeo et al., 2022). However, previous cross-sectional studies exploring the association between racial discrimination and private regard have generally yielded non-significant results (Caldwell et al., 2004; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Su et al., 2021), indicating that the current study's findings are not a significant departure from existing literature. Taking the current and previous findings into account, racial discrimination may not have as significant an impact as other factors in shaping private regard. Scholars studying African American racial identity have posited that while environmental feedback in the form of discrimination can provide valuable information regarding broader society's attitudes towards African Americans, it is not the exclusive source upon which African Americans rely to develop their self-perceptions. Other factors, such as parental racial socialization, may contribute to fostering high private regard even in the presence of racial discrimination (Lee & Ahn, 2013).

Psychological Well-being in the Associations between Racial Discrimination and Racial

Identity

Of particular interest to this study was the moderating capacity of psychological well-being in the associations between racial discrimination and centrality, public regard, and private regard. It was hypothesized that psychological well-being would have a significant moderating effect on the associations with all three racial identity beliefs; however, the results revealed that psychological well-being only had a significant moderating effect in the case of private regard. It is possible that psychological well-being has a greater impact on shaping the positive racial self-perceptions of African American emerging adult college students, as well as their attitudes towards other Black individuals, than their perception of how other racial groups view Black people or the centrality of race to their self-concept. Additionally, simple slopes analysis showed that racial discrimination frequency was positively associated with private regard among students with low psychological well-being and negatively related to private regard among students with high psychological well-being. Only when racial discrimination was low did students with high psychological well-being exhibit significantly higher private regard than those with low psychological well-being, suggesting that psychological well-being only enhances the adaptiveness of racial identity beliefs when racial discrimination is not frequently experienced. Interpreted through the lens of the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST; Spencer, 1995, 1997), these findings suggest that psychological well-being may serve as an impactful resource for African American emerging adult college students in effectively coping with racial discrimination experiences, but only when such instances are rarely encountered. To ensure the validity of these findings, future research could replicate this study using similar measures of racial discrimination and psychological well-being.

The finding that more frequent experiences of racial discrimination are associated with lower private regard for students with high psychological well-being and higher private regard for students with low psychological well-being may seem counterintuitive. However, there are a few possible explanations for these associations. Individuals with high psychological well-being, as conceptualized by Ryff (1989a), likely have a positive outlook on themselves, feel good about their lives, and feel that they can achieve satisfying relationships with others. They likely have a positive self-image, which may be informed by having more positive, confidence-inducing social experiences than negative ones. They may be less likely to dwell on negative experiences or engage in self-criticism and instead focus on their strengths and positive attributes. However, when individuals with high psychological well-being frequently experience racial discrimination, it can be a significant deviation from their usual positive self-perception and experiences, leading to a heightened sensitivity to such negative experiences.

The impact of racial discrimination may be particularly damaging for individuals with high psychological well-being who may not be accustomed to negative experiences and be unprepared to handle them. They may feel that their positive self-image has been threatened, creating a cognitive dissonance between their positive self-concept and the negative treatment they have received. According to Festinger's (1962) cognitive dissonance theory, when an individual's experiences are not consistent with their beliefs and thoughts, a psychological tension is created. This tension can lead to negative emotions, including feelings of anger, frustration, and sadness (Harmon-Jones, 2000), motivating the individual to make changes to their attitude to bring about consistency between their thoughts and experiences. When an individual's personal or collective self-esteem or certainty is threatened, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), and self-affirmation

theory (Sherman et al., 2007) propose that defensive responses are triggered at both the personal and collective levels of identity. Thus, among students with high psychological well-being, decreased private regard may serve as a defense mechanism to maintain a positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem in the face of racial discrimination.

Individuals with low psychological well-being may have a more negative overall outlook on themselves and their lives, which would be expected to make them more vulnerable to the negative effects of discrimination. However, as a way of coping with these negative experiences, they may develop a stronger identification with their racial identity. Psychologists have theorized that, to alleviate personal uncertainty, individuals may defensively seek out group identification and social consensus (Hogg, 2007; Kruglanski et al., 2006). In the case of this study, personal uncertainty may be influenced by experiences of racial discrimination, which may lead to increased in-group positive affective attitudes (Hogg et al., 2007; McGregor et al., 2005; McGregor et al., 2001; Van den Bos, 2009). Further research is needed to better understand this relationship and its underlying mechanisms.

Although not accounted for in the current study's hypotheses, there were some interesting findings regarding the main effect of psychological well-being on the three racial identity beliefs assessed. Psychological well-being was not associated with public regard but had a significant, positive relationship with centrality and private regard. This discovery may indicate the significance of internal self-reflections in shaping the attitudes of African American emerging adult college students towards their racial identity and other Black individuals, as well as the extent to which their race influences their self-concept. Previous literature has found significant, positive associations between factors related to psychological well-being, centrality, and private regard. For example, higher private regard was found to be associated with lower psychological

distress among African American emerging adults as well (Willis et al., 2021), higher psychosocial functioning (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Sellers et al., 2006), and lower levels of perceived stress and depressive symptoms (Sellers et al., 2006) among African American adolescents. Higher centrality has been found to be associated with higher levels of psychosocial functioning for African American adolescents (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014), as well as lower levels of stress and symptoms of depression and anxiety for African American young adults (Sellers et al., 2003). It is worth noting that the findings in these studies assess racial discrimination as a predictor and psychological well-being as an outcome. In contrast, the current study flips these roles, demonstrating that the association between racial identity beliefs and psychological well-being or other related factors may be bidirectional. Further research is necessary to confirm if this is the case. Additionally, psychological well-being, as it was measured in the current study, encompassed several dimensions of self-perception, such as whether one has a positive self-evaluation of oneself (i.e., self-acceptance), a sense of direction in their life (i.e., purpose in life), or a sense of competence in managing their environment (i.e., environmental mastery). Considering that private regard and centrality are aspects of racial identity that involve internal appraisal, these self-perceptions may be particularly influential.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study makes valuable contributions to the field, there are several limitations that should be considered. Firstly, the sample was limited in terms of gender variability as most participants identified as women, which hindered the ability to control for gender in the analyses. Gender and race are both prominent social identities that can intersect and influence individuals' experiences of discrimination and their racial identity (Crenshaw, 1989, 1995, 2005; Dottolo & Stewart, 2008; Thomas et al., 2011), making it important to examine the potential influence of

gender on racial discrimination and racial identity when examining these topics. Since the study could not control for gender, any potential effects of race on discrimination or racial identity may be confounded by gender-related differences. Secondly, as the study aimed to explore the identity processes and experiences of African American emerging adult first-year college students irrespective of their gender, the limited variability in the sample size constrains the findings' generalizability to the target population. It is likely that the study findings do not accurately capture the experiences of men in the target population, who may face specific forms of discrimination based on their gender and race. Considering the over-representation of one gender in the current study's sample, it may be valuable to re-run the analyses and incorporate the selection of "because of my race and gender" in the operationalization of racial discrimination frequency, as it could provide a more precise estimate of the discrimination encountered by the sample in the year prior to their participation.

Sample size may also limit the generalizability of the study findings, as a larger sample size would increase external validity. While the entire cohort of African American first-year college students attending the selected Minority Serving Institution were recruited, students were able to accept or decline participation. Participants who chose to participate in the study may be different from those who did not, which could also affect the validity of the results. The data collected for the current study relied on self-report measures, introducing the possibility of social desirability bias as participants may have opted to respond in a socially desirable way rather than reporting their true experiences or feelings. This could have led to an underestimation of the extent of racial discrimination experienced or an overestimation of racial identity beliefs.

As previously mentioned, the study's measurement tool for racial discrimination was adapted for participants to indicate whether they attributed a discriminatory event to their race

rather than how often the events occurred. This decision may have limited the study's ability to accurately capture racial discrimination frequency and contributed to its weak associations with centrality and private regard. Another potential limitation of the study is its cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. To address this limitation, future studies could benefit from utilizing a longitudinal design to examine changes over time and provide stronger evidence for causality. Finally, although using an African American student sample in a Minority Serving Institution offers certain advantages, it remains unclear whether the study's findings can be generalized to students attending a PWI or HBCU as differences in factors like racial composition, campus climate, and faculty and staff diversity may affect the racial identity and perception of discrimination experiences among African American college students. Therefore, future research should aim to replicate the study in different types of academic institutions to confirm the external validity of the study's findings.

There are several other ways research could build on the findings of this study as well. For example, future research would benefit from investigating other potential moderators that may impact the associations between racial discrimination and racial identity beliefs. Since the current study was able to determine that psychological well-being plays a significant moderating role in the association between racial discrimination and private regard, future research could explore whether related factors like psychological functioning, psychological distress, depression, and anxiety symptoms also have a moderating effect on private regard and other racial identity beliefs. Exploring the moderating effect of particular dimensions of psychological well-being, such as self-acceptance and purpose in life, would be beneficial as well. By doing so, researchers would gain a more comprehensive understanding of how different factors may

mitigate or exacerbate the associations between racial discrimination and individuals' racial identity beliefs.

While the current study sheds light on the effects of racial discrimination and psychological well-being on centrality, public regard, and private regard as individual constructs, taking a more person-centered approach may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between these beliefs. By examining these beliefs separately, the current study overlooks the possible interrelatedness of these beliefs and therefore may not provide a complete picture of the relationships between these constructs. To gain a deeper understanding of how these beliefs interact with each other and how they relate to psychological well-being and racial discrimination, a cluster analysis may be a more suitable method of analysis. By examining students' beliefs as a whole, this approach could provide insights into how specific patterns of racial identity beliefs may be linked to coping with racial discrimination and certain psychological outcomes. For instance, in the case of the current study sample, there might be a significant difference in reports of psychological well-being levels between students characterized by frequent racial discrimination, high centrality, low public regard, and low private regard and students characterized by high levels of private regard and the same levels of racial discrimination, centrality, and public regard. The identification of subgroups with similar patterns of beliefs could help inform targeted interventions that address the specific needs and challenges of these groups. Overall, taking a more holistic approach to investigating the relationships between racial discrimination, psychological well-being, and patterns of racial identity beliefs could lead to a deeper understanding of how these constructs are interconnected and how they can be effectively addressed to promote positive outcomes for Black college students.

Researchers would also benefit from continuing to examine the direct effect of psychological well-being and other related factors on racial identity beliefs. This is particularly valuable in determining whether the relationship between racial identity beliefs and psychological well-being is bidirectional or unidirectional. There is value in examining this bidirectional relationship between these constructs, as it allows researchers to gain a more nuanced understanding of how the constructs are related, such as whether there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. Examinations of the bidirectional relationship between psychosocial functioning, socio-emotional disorders, and identity processes, as demonstrated by recent research (Hatano et al., 2019; Hatano et al., 2020a; Hatano et al., 2020b; Meca et al., 2019; Potterton et al., 2022), highlight the potential significance of such an investigation.

The current study focused on interpersonal microaggressive forms of racial discrimination, but other forms of discrimination may also impact individuals' racial identity differently. Future research could investigate how vicarious experiences of racism (Harrell, 1997), such as discrimination experienced by friends and family or witnessed via social media, may impact racial identity beliefs and whether the moderating effect of psychological well-being also applies in those contexts. Lastly, there may be important outcomes other than racial identity to consider. For example, future research could investigate the impact of psychological well-being on mental health, academic achievement, or career success in the face of racial discrimination.

Lastly, the current study's findings have significant implications for intervention development. For practitioners invested in creating a more supportive environment for Black students on college campuses, the provision of spaces designated specifically for Black student gatherings may be a valuable intervention for improving their psychological well-being and the

adaptiveness of their racial identity beliefs. By providing a safe and supportive environment in which they can freely express themselves, share their experiences, and receive support from their peers, practitioners can help Black students in need foster a sense of community. This, in turn, may have a direct impact on Black students' evaluation of their relationships with others and their sense of mastery over their environment, both of which are integral to Ryff's conceptualization of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989a). Furthermore, given the interrelated nature of Ryff's psychological well-being dimensions (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), creating supportive spaces for Black students can indirectly improve the levels of other psychological well-being constructs, such as self-acceptance.

Practitioners collaborating with or encouraging Black students to attend the meetings of student-led campus affinity groups, such as Black Student Unions, may be helpful in this regard. However, meetings or gatherings specifically intended to facilitate discussions about racial discrimination and psychological well-being among peers may be particularly effective. Psychologists have developed a therapy strategy based on Ryff's conceptualization of psychological well-being in which patients are instructed to write down their positive experiences in a daily diary (Fava, 1999; Fava, 2016). These entries are then discussed in therapy, where clinicians orient their patients toward enriching those positive experiences through guided recognition, expression, and communication of positive emotions. When implemented in a school setting, this therapy strategy has been successful in reducing depression symptoms among adolescent students (Ruini et al., 2006). As such, incorporating these strategies into the facilitation of peer discussions among Black college students may have substantial benefits. Providing Black college students with a strong peer support network and tools to improve their psychological well-being may better enable them to resist negative messages and

stereotypes about their race, thereby enhancing their ability to cope with discriminatory experiences. Moreover, fostering the psychological well-being of Black college students through the creation of spaces where they feel understood and validated by their racial group has the potential to promote more favorable attitudes towards their own race. By promoting a more positive outlook on their racial identity, Black college students may develop greater resilience in coping with the shame and self-doubt caused by their experiences of racial discrimination.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has explored the impact of racial discrimination on racial identity beliefs and the moderating effect of psychological well-being on these associations, which had yet to be investigated in previous literature. The results of this study support past research that finds a significant negative effect of racial discrimination on public regard. Our findings emphasize the importance of examining the impact of multiple factors on racial identity beliefs, including psychological well-being, and highlight the promoting function of psychological well-being among Black college students as a means to foster private regard toward their race and increased racial centrality. The current study also found psychological well-being to be a significant moderator in the associations between racial discrimination and private regard for this sample. Thus, it is important that future research examine other potential internal factors that may influence adaptive racial identities in the face of racial discrimination. Practitioners and educators working with Black college students could use such findings to develop interventions that focus on promoting psychological well-being and resilience in the face of racial discrimination. However, promoting psychological well-being is not enough on its own to fully address the negative effects of racial discrimination. While efforts to promote psychological well-being among Black college students are necessary and valuable, they should

be paired with continued efforts to reduce the occurrence of racial discrimination in society at large. This could include initiatives such as anti-discrimination policies, education, and awareness campaigns, as well as creating safe spaces for people to report instances of discrimination. Reducing the occurrence of discrimination in society can help create an environment in which psychological well-being has a more substantial adaptive effect.

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