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Using data from Black 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context study (Eccles, 1999), this study examined the distinct impact of racial discrimination from peers and teachers on adolescents' academic engagement, as well as moderating influences of various aspects of parental involvement including general involvement practices and culturally distinctive involvement. It was hypothesized that perceived discrimination from both sources of discrimination, peers and teachers, would predict lower academic engagement and parenting factors would buffer those negative effects. Results indicated that experiences of peer and teacher discrimination uniquely predicted different dimensions of academic engagement, and there was evidence of some gender influence on these relationships. Moreover, the author found that while both areas of parental involvement were important predictors of academic engagement, only culturally distinctive parental involvement moderated the effects of discrimination on academic engagement.

BLACK ADOLESCENTS' DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCES AND ACADEMIC  
ENGAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF GENERAL AND CULTURALLY-  
DISTINCTIVE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The historical and current stream of educational disparities between Black and white students brings into question the structures within the education system that continue to preserve racial barriers. Many commonly held explanations for the Black-white achievement gap have often been framed as an issue of student ability rather than an issue of structural racism and discrimination; however, the effects of structural factors on racial/ethnic differences in educational outcomes is widely documented.

Despite several decades of educational reform, the achievement gap continues to be the most persistent issue discussed among educators (Jeynes, 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2017), while there has been some progress in narrowing the achievement gap, indicated by lower dropout rates and higher high school completion rates, the reading achievement gap was larger in 2015 than in 1992 and there was no improvement in the math achievement gap from 2015 and 1992. This trend indicates that the achievement gap is not a new challenge and continues to be a cause of concern. More importantly, these persistent trends indicate that the underlying issue of the achievement gap has not be adequately addressed; thus, researchers are tasked with making issues of discrimination within education more evident.

Racial discrimination is most certainly a hindrance to academic outcomes for Black adolescents (Chavous et al., 2008; Neblett et al., 2006; Wang & Hugueley, 2012), who report higher levels of discrimination compared to their white counterparts (Fisher et al., 2000). Discrimination is a leading barrier to diminishing the Black-white achievement gap. As discrimination in educational institutions has a long and deep history, dismantling this barrier will require attention from every level. In addition to changes in policy and school practices, families are tasked with helping Black youth succeed in the face of discrimination.

### **History of Racism and Discrimination as Barriers to Education**

To understand the current achievement gap, it is necessary to review the historical context that positions educational disparities. Racial discrimination can be found consistently throughout US history leading up to current inequities. During slavery, Black people were legally denied access to learn to read or write. The small percentage of Blacks who received some form of education did so under harsh conditions. By the end of slavery most states had established public school systems where mostly white children were already getting formal education (Anderson, 1988). After emancipation, newly formed free communities went on a quest to obtain education (Paige and Witty, 2010). When free and compulsory public schools were established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Black people were still not granted equal access, even though it was the contributions of Blacks that drove the development of universal schooling (Anderson, 1988). Onward post reconstruction, Black families faced legal segregation forcing those who could get an education to attend mostly underfunded schools. Separate but equal laws presented

challenges for both Black educators and students to get access to necessary school resources. It was not until half a century later that the separate but equal ruling would be overturned by the 1954 Brown versus Board of Education Supreme Court ruling that determined “separate cannot be equal.” Although the ruling created new opportunities for progress, Blacks continued to be treated unfairly. Some scholars contend that schools are just as segregated now as they were before the 1954 ruling (Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2002).

More than six decades past Brown versus Board of Education, racial inequities in education persist. Structural discrimination informs educational policies and practices; and moreover, racial prejudice influences race-based microaggressions, insults and exclusionary practices, and the racial climate which Black youth may experience within the school context.

### **Discrimination and Black Adolescents’ Education**

Experiences of racial discrimination in any setting can be a liability for the overall well-being of adolescents (Benner & Graham, 2013), but experiences of racial discrimination in the school setting are likely to be more directly connected to educational outcomes (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Wang & Huguley, 2012; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Black students report being either discouraged from enrolling in advanced level courses, unfairly disciplined, or unfairly evaluated because of their race (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000). Black students also report experiencing discrimination from peers which includes negative treatment such as

being bullied or socially isolated because of their race (Brown & Bigler, 2005). These are both examples of overt discrimination that can hinder academic success.

**Teacher versus peer discrimination.** Studies that have explored the consequences of discrimination often report that different sources of racial discrimination uniquely contribute to educational outcomes (Benner & Graham, 2013; Wang & Huguley, 2012), such that teacher discrimination predicts a wide range of academic outcomes, and peer discrimination predicts socially oriented academic outcomes (i.e., sense of belonging). Teacher discrimination is alarming during adolescence because it corrodes teacher instructions and classroom climate (Diemer, Marchand, McKellar, & Malanchuk, 2016), which shape positive learning environments or lack thereof. Peer discrimination is also alarming during this period, particularly because it involves a developmental feature of adolescence, social interactions (Bellmore, Nishina, You, & Ma, 2012). Examining both teacher and peer discrimination is important to gain clarity on how both sources of discrimination influence academic outcomes among Black adolescents.

**Discrimination and academic engagement.** Studies that have examined educational inequities have mostly explored how racial discrimination influences academic achievement. There are also studies that have examined the role of racial discrimination in predicting academic engagement. Academic engagement is a multifaceted construct that includes psychological, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions (Jimerson, Campos, & Grief, 2003). Academic engagement is an important construct given its link to academic achievement (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Griffin, Cooper, Golden,

White, & Metzger, 2017; Wang & Holcombe, 2010;). Experiences of racial discrimination likely influences Black students to disengage from school which leads to poor academic achievement.

### **Parenting as a Protective Factor**

Although experiences of discrimination can negatively influence adolescent academic outcomes, not all adolescents who experience discrimination disengage from school (Chavous et al., 2008). Black parents play a pivotal role in preparing their children for a racially charged society (Coard & Sellers, 2005). As so, parenting is one avenue worth examining to understand strategies to support youth in navigating the harmful effects of racial discrimination.

**Parental involvement.** Parental involvement is a primary family-level factor associated with adolescent academic success. (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Although parental involvement has received considerable attention, studies primarily have focused on white families. The absence of Black families in early formulations reflected perspectives that Black family processes were non-normative and pathological. Moreover, it was the presumed absence of parental practices that were thought to be linked to poor academic outcomes among Black youth.

In the first half of the 20th century parental involvement was not a construct commonly studied among researchers because it was assumed that parental involvement was a function of family structure, which was studied instead (Jeynes, 2011). Parental involvement emerged as a core construct, as white, largely middle-class families experienced transitions in women's work. In other words, women began entering the

labor force at great numbers, which changed the nature of family life in the home. This change evoked public concerns about child rearing, which became a shared process between parents and schools. The construction of parental involvement, was applied to Black families, without consideration of the unique historical differences in family life (e.g. racism, reliance on extended family networks). Moreover, because parental involvement as a construct is grounded in the history and experiences of white families, it has been narrowly defined focusing on a limited scope of behaviors. Nevertheless, researchers have explored parental involvement in Black families and have consistently reported that the construct plays an important role in Black adolescents' academic outcomes (Banerjee, Harrel, & Johnson, 2011; Rowley et al. 2010; Jeynes, 2016; Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003; Kerpelman, Eryigit, & Stephens, 2008).

**Integrating culturally distinctive parenting.** The parental involvement literature has not really considered parents' racial socialization practices, which is a culturally distinctive way Black parents are involved with their children's education. This idea has mildly been addressed with the very few studies that have examined how parenting factors such as communication (Tang, McLoyd, & Hallman, 2016), parent-adolescent relationships (Cooper & McLoyd, 2011) and democratic parenting styles (Smalls, 2009) serve as moderators of racial socialization and youth outcomes. Given the amount of research on racial socialization in predicting developmental outcomes, racial socialization may be more salient when it comes to parental involvement as it relates to schools than has previously been suggested.

**Racial socialization.** Many parents engage in racial socialization which is the process through which parents convey messages about the meaning of race, teach children about the significance and implications of being a member of their racial group, and help children cope with discrimination (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Boykin & Toms, 1985; Coard & Sellers, 2005; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). Most of the racial socialization literature has focused on its relationship to psychological outcomes (e.g. depression); however, racial socialization has also been linked to academic outcomes (Chavous et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2003). Researchers have found that racial socialization messages are associated with higher academic engagement (Smalls, 2009, Smalls & Cooper, 2012; Wong et al., 2003), and grades (Brown, Linver, Evans, & DeGennaro, 2009; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). Racial socialization is a race and cultural-specific practice and it is one of several strategies parents engage to support child well-being; however, studies rarely consider racial socialization in relation to other dimensions of parenting (Smalls, 2009). Considering racial socialization as an aspect of parental involvement will not only be valuable for gaining clarity in how parental involvement supports youths' academic engagement, but also for a more well-rounded understanding of the protective role of parenting.

### **Theoretical Model**

It is important to consider a theoretical model such as Garcia Coll et al's Integrative model which centralizes culturally relevant constructs to understand Black adolescent development. The model recognizes that social position factors such as one's race does not directly affect developmental outcomes but are mediated through social

mechanisms such as discrimination. Garcia Coll et al's Integrative model recognizes unique ways families respond to such social mechanisms. Children's competences are a function of their adaptive culture, family processes, and the child's own characteristics; this study focused on the function of family processes.

### **Research Aims**

Using data from Black 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context study (Eccles, 1999), this study aims to:

1. Examine the impact of racial discrimination from peers and teachers on adolescents' academic engagement,
2. Examine the moderating influences of various aspects of parental involvement (general and culturally distinctive) on the relationship between peer and teacher discrimination on adolescents' academic engagement as well as to examine how these relationships varied by gender

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL MODEL AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Identifying protective factors that buffer the association between racial discrimination and developmental outcomes has been an ongoing task for researchers. Because the research is moving toward understanding *what* and *how* promotive factors attenuate the negative effects of discrimination on academic outcomes (Neblett et al., 2012), aspects of parenting that represent a broader understanding of parental involvement are examined.

#### **An Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competences of Minority Children**

Positioning cultural and ecological context as factors that are central to the development of youth of color is necessary to best understand how development unfolds and further debunk myths of pathology associated with this group (McLoyd, 2006). McLoyd's (1990) solicited scholars to acknowledge the conceptual shortcomings that have appeared throughout research focusing on youth of color. The issue encouraged researchers to instead focus on exploring within group variation, process-oriented instead of outcome-oriented approaches, and contextual factors that explain ethnic differences in developmental trajectories. Many theorists embraced these ideas and proposed theoretical models that departed from traditional approaches of studying Black children (Coll et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1981; Swanson, Spencer, Harpalani, et al., 2003). Ogbu (1981)

pointed out that the universal model in which dominant research findings are derived is not a useful model for studying the development of human competence or school success. The dominant models used in mainstream research are grounded in assumptions that do not emphasize constructs relevant to youth of color. For example, one of the assumptions of such models is that the nature of human competencies can be adequately studied by focusing on micro-level analysis of the child's early experiences (Ogbu, 1981). Garcia Coll et al explained that although ecological theories intended to acknowledge the importance of contextual influences, published research has a pattern of not including macro-level influences. Another assumption of dominant models pointed out by Ogbu is that children's later success depends on the acquisition of white middle-class competencies by way of white middle-class child-rearing practices.

Garcia Coll et al. (1996) suggested that minority families engage in adaptive cultural practices that are appropriate for their contextual challenges to help their children succeed. Too often implications concluded from white youth have been used as the standard in which other groups are compared, which signals that the race-associated privileges that promote individual-context fit for white youth are the norm (Spencer, 2006). Swanson et al and Coll et al. explained that research has not taken a developmental approach to understand minority development and this practice leads to an emphasis on outcomes rather than on process.

To address these shortcomings, informed by social stratification theory, Garcia Coll et al. proposed an Integrative model for the study of developmental competencies of minority children. The assumptions of Coll et al's theory include an acknowledgment of

social position factors such as race, class, and gender that make developmental pathways more likely to occur depending on the interactive elements of a persons' social position. Garcia Coll et al strongly suggested that social position factors do not directly affect outcomes but are linked to societal factors such as racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression, which more directly influence an individual's environment. These environments can be what Garcia Coll et al described as promotive or inhibitive.

Promotive environments are more positive, while inhibitive environments are more negative. The presence of appropriate resources can make an environment promotive, while lack of such resources can make an environment inhibitive. It is important to note that the same environment can have aspects that make it both promotive and inhibitive. For instance, school discrimination could be inhibitive if the child does not have resources to combat discriminatory experiences. If the child has appropriate resources, school discrimination could also be considered promotive in that it prepares them to deal with societal demands inflicted by discrimination (Garcia Coll et al., 1996).

Garcia Coll et al. (1996) explains that race is one of the most important attributes on which society is stratified. Given the racial inequities in US schools, it is necessary to examine the role families play in promoting academic opportunities for their children. Families of color engage in unique family processes which allow them to meet the needs of its members.

In line with Garcia Coll et al's Integrative model, this study considered how both social position factors (e.g. race) and social stratification mechanisms (e.g.

discrimination) inform developmental outcomes (e.g. academic engagement) while considering their association with family processes (e.g. parental involvement).

## **Literature Review**

**Discrimination and academic outcomes.** Discrimination is defined as experiencing harmful treatment, whether subtle or overt, because of one's membership to a particular group (Brown & Bigler, 2005). Research has shown that most Black youth perceive discriminatory treatment. For example, Seaton and Douglass (2014) reported that 97% of their sample of adolescents reported experiencing at least one discriminatory experience over a two-week period. Harris-Britt, Valrie, & Kurtz-Costes (2007) reported that 94% of their sample reported experiencing at least one discriminatory event within the past three months. These reports do not come by surprise as theorist such as Garcia Coll et al., (1996) have acknowledged that discrimination is a common experience for youth of color. Although adolescents' experiences with discrimination in various context can have a negative impact on their academic outcomes (Neblett et al., 2006; Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers, 2007; Thompson & Gregory, 2011), this study focuses primarily on the role of school-based experiences of discrimination on academic engagement.

School-based discrimination has been associated with academic achievement (e.g. grades) (Neblett et al., 2006; Thomas, Cladwell, Faison, & Jackson, 2009; Wang and Huguley, 2012) and school engagement (Chavous et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2003). Of the studies that have included both types of academic outcomes, they concluded that discrimination predicts engagement, which then impacts achievement. An example of this

path was reported by Griffin et al. (2017), who found that youth with more discrimination experiences reported lower behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which was then associated with lower standardized test scores. Chavous et al. (2008) who was guided by Coll et al's Integrative model found that discrimination was directly and indirectly linked to engagement and achievement, while Griffin et al. (2017) who was also guided by Coll et al's Integrative model, found that discrimination was linked to achievement indirectly through engagement. It is important to note that Chavous et al. (2008) took a longitudinal approach, while Griffin et al. (2017) investigated this relationship at one time point. Among scholars that have found associations between discrimination and engagement, there have been differences in how they measured engagement. For example, Dotterer, et al. (2009) measured engagement by looking at school self-esteem and school bonding. Small et al. (2007) measured school engagement by students' level of academic persistence, academic curiosity, and negative school behaviors. Thompson and Gregory (2011) measured school engagement by students' effort and motivation to complete tasks in the classrooms. In this study, three dimensions of school engagement are examined, psychological engagement which refers to how students feel (i.e., school importance), behavioral engagement which refers to how students behave (i.e., school participation) and cognitive engagement which refers to how students think (i.e., academic self-concept) about school.

Although scholars consistently report discrimination being linked to various academic outcomes, there is some discrepancy in the relationships between which components of engagement are likely to be impacted by adolescents' perceptions of

discrimination from both teachers and peers. Fortunately, youth have support systems that assist them in combating the negative effects of discrimination and parents can play a key role in facilitating such support.

**Parenting and academic outcomes.** Parenting and Black youth educational outcomes have emerged as two of the most discussed topics among educators (Jeynes, 2011). Parental involvement broadly refers to parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children (Jeynes, 2016). Two areas of parental involvement are discussed. The first is general parental involvement, which consist of aspects of parental involvement that all parents engage regardless of race. The second is culturally distinctive parental involvement, which consist of aspects of parental involvement that are unique to Black families.

***General parental involvement.*** This type of parental involvement has been conceptualized as a multiple dimensional construct and the dimensions that have been identified by educators as most frequently practiced include; parental style (e.g. demonstrating supportive and helpful parenting), parental expectations (e.g. maintaining high expectations of child's academic ability), communication (e.g. communicating about school related activities), homework (e.g. checking child's homework), reading (e.g. reading with children), and attendance/participation (e.g. attending school functions) (Jeynes, 2011, p. 70). In a meta-analysis examining parental involvement and academic outcomes, Jeynes (2011) suggested that certain dimensions of parental involvement are more predictive of academic achievement compared to other dimensions. There continues to be some discrepancy as to which dimensions of parental involvement are associated

with higher academic achievement. For example, while Jeynes concluded that homework help was negatively associated with achievement, Strayhorn (2010) found that in a sample of Black adolescents, homework help had a positive impact on achievement. In effort to gain clarity of the impact of parental involvement, many scholars have identified factors that underline the effects of parental involvement such as gender (Graves, 2010). For instance, many researchers (Jeynes, 2005; Trusty, 2002; Wood, Kaplan, and McLoyd, 2007) have reported parents had lower expectations for their sons compared to their daughters.

Moreover, researchers have found that as a result of unwelcoming school climates in which parents' experience discrimination, mothers in particular, choose to be more involved with their children's education at home rather than at school (Rowley et al., 2010). The presence of a cultural gap between schools and Black parents explains why parents are more involved at home than at school (West-Olatunji, 2010). For this reason, this study focuses on dimensions of parents home based involvement. As scholars have recognized that parenting practices function in synergy and recommend exploring more than one dimension of parental involvement to better understand this process (Wang, Hill, & Hofkens, 2014), this study focuses on several aspects of home-based parental involvement, including expectations and communication.

*Parental expectations.* The influence of parental expectations on youths' academic success has received substantial attention. In general, students who have parents who hold high expectations for them, tend to have positive academic outcomes. Furthermore, among the various dimensions of parental involvement, parental

expectations are thought to be beneficial across all developmental periods, while other dimensions have been identified as being more crucial at specific periods of time (Froiland & Davison, 2014). For example, reading and helping with homework with children is more beneficial for younger children, while those types of parental involvement behaviors are negative during adolescents (Jeynes, 2016). Parental expectations refer to whether parents have high, but reasonable expectations of what their child could achieve (Jeynes, 2016). Most research that investigate the role of parental involvement and academic achievement have used mostly white samples, but there is reason to believe parental expectations are important for the academic success of Black youth as well (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). For example, Strayhorn (2010) found that parents expectations had a positive association with math achievement among Black youth. Moreover, parental expectations have been associated with educational aspirations (Smith-Maddox, 2000), academic achievement (Reynolds, 1998), and youth's educational expectations (Trusty, 2002). Similar to other dimensions of parental involvement, parent level factors such as education level and socioeconomic status are associated with parents' educational expectations for their children (Tusty, 2002). Given the positive effects of parental expectations, the current study explores the construct as a potential protective factor of the negative effects of discrimination.

*Parental communication.* Parental-adolescent communication has been identified as an important practice for supporting adolescent resilience. Scholars have mostly looked at how communication decreases adolescent risky behaviors, such as sexual risk (Harris, 2016; Hutchinson & Montgomery, 2016). Although the case, some scholars have

found that parent-adolescent communication about school is also beneficial for youth academic outcomes. Wang, Hill, and Hofkens (2014) included communication as a dimension of parental involvement and found that increases in communication was associated with increases in GPA. In addition to exploring bivariate association between family processes and academic outcomes, some scholars have explored how different family processes interact to predict outcomes (Cooper & McLoyd, 2011; Smalls, 2009; Tang et al., 2016). For instance, scholars have suggested that dimensions of parent-child relationships, such as communication, cultivates the conditions for adolescents to effectively digest parents socialization messages (Tang et al., 2016). As scholars have reported that family processes moderate the relationship between racial socialization and outcomes (Tang et al., 2016; Cooper & McLoyd, 2011), considering parental communication alongside racial socialization will be helpful for revealing how such parenting variables attenuate the negative effects of discrimination.

***Racial socialization.*** In the first paper to identify racial socialization as a parenting practice, Marie Peters (1985) described racial socialization as the “special things parents do to prepare their children for being black in a racist-oriented society” ( p. 70).

Racial socialization is a complex, multidimensional construct, and because of this there is no single or commonly accepted definition (Lesane-Brown, 2006). Hughes and Chen (1997) summarized common themes of racial socialization which included cultural socialization (teaching children about their racial heritage and history), preparation for bias (promoting awareness of discrimination), promotion of mistrust (emphasizing the

need for wariness or distrust in interracial interactions), and egalitarianism (encouraging children to value individual qualities over racial group membership). The most commonly studied are cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages (Hughes et al., 2006). Researchers have conceptualized and measured racial socialization in different ways, which makes it challenging to integrate research findings (Lesane-Brown, 2006).

The majority of the racial socialization literature explores the impact of racial socialization on psychological outcomes such as depression, anxiety, anger, self-esteem, and well-being (Caughy, Nettles, & Lima, 2011; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Neblett et al., 2008; Saleem & Lambert, 2016) and racial identity development (Neblett, Small, Ford, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2009; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Seaton, Yip, Morgan-Lopez, & Sellers, 2012). There are fewer studies that explore the relationship between racial socialization and academic outcomes (Hughes et al., 2006). This is partly because racial socialization has been thought to influence academic outcomes through psychological outcomes such as self-esteem (Hughes et al., 2006). In a sample of early adolescents, Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, (2009) reported that racial socialization messages indirectly affected academic engagement by way of self-esteem. Hughes et al. (2009) also reported that racial socialization directly impacted academic engagement. They suggested that there are several potential mechanisms beyond self-esteem that are at play. Many other studies have also found that racial socialization has a proximal influence on academic outcomes.

Although most studies have examined links between racial socialization messages and psychological outcomes, there is evidence that racial socialization predicts academic

outcomes as well. Bowman & Howard (1985) conducted the initial examination of racial socialization and academic performance and reported that barrier messages were associated with higher grades. More recently, scholars have examined links between parents' racial socialization and youths' academic efficacy and engagement (Hughes et al., 2009; Smalls, 2009), school adjustment (Anglin & Wade, 2007) and grades (Brown et al., 2009; Neblett et al., 2006; Smalls & Cooper, 2012). While racial socialization is thought to be a predictor of positive outcomes, there is discrepancy in the literature. For instance, Neblett et al., (2006) reported that students who reported more racial pride messages had lower grades, but those who reported more socialization practices (i.e., cultural activities) had higher grades. In contrast, Brown et al. (2009) reported that celebrating African American heritage was negatively associated with grades, while cultural pride was positively associated with grades. In terms of barrier messages, Hughes et al. (2009) reported that preparation for bias was unrelated to academic engagement, that is until they included moderator variables in the analysis. Haris-Britt et al. (2007) reported that low and high amounts of preparation for bias messages were associated with negative outcomes and that youth benefited from moderate amounts of preparation for bias.

Smalls and Cooper (2012) offered an explanation for these discrepancies and suggested that the positive influence of racial socialization messages is conditional. To understand the conditions in which racial socialization leads to positive outcomes, scholars have explored a number of factors that influence the association. Brown et al. (2009) reported that gender moderated the association between racial socialization and

grades. This is partly explained by the different types of messages boys and girls receive. Researchers have found that boys tend to receive more barrier messages compared to girls (Priest et al., 2014), which is possibly a reflection of the parents' anticipation of the experiences their children will face based on their gender (Hughes et al., 2006). As so, the protective nature of racial socialization messages may be different for boys and girls.

There is a growing literature on racial socialization as a protective factor of the harmful effects of discrimination on academic outcomes (Dotterer et al., 2009; Hughes et al., 2009; Neblett et al., 2006; Wang & Huguley, 2012). Wang and Huguley (2012) reported that cultural socialization messages moderated the effect of discrimination on GPA and educational aspirations. On the other hand, Neblett et al. (2006) reported that while racial socialization messages were predictive of academic curiosity, persistence, and GPA, they did not moderate the relationship between discrimination and outcomes. Similar to Neblett and colleagues, Dotterer et al. (2009) found that racial socialization had additive effects on school self-esteem and school bonding but did not moderate the discrimination and academic engagement association. It is important to note that the studies mentioned conceptualized and measured discrimination and racial socialization differently. While Neblett and colleagues included youths' perceived day to day experiences of discrimination and six dimensions of racial socialization (racial pride, racial barrier, egalitarian, self-worth, negative, behavior), Wang and Hugely, and Dotterer and colleagues, included youths' discrimination experiences specifically at school and only two dimensions of racial socialization (cultural socialization and preparation for bias). Neblett and colleagues used adolescents report of racial socialization, while Wang

and Huguely, and Dotterer and colleagues used parents report of racial socialization. Each study used different scales to measure racial socialization, which may also explain the discrepancy in findings. Clearly there is much more to understand about the way racial socialization influences academic engagement (Wang & Huguely, 2012).

### **General and Cultural Aspects of Parental Involvement, and Academic Outcomes**

Mainstream theories have not done the best job in revealing the positive influence Black parents have on children's outcomes despite the challenges they may face. This is why it is helpful to utilize theoretical models, such as Coll et al's (1996) Integrative model, which acknowledges the unique challenges Black families encounter, as a way to better understand the role of family on child outcomes. Additionally, Black parents' involvement may not be captured by traditional measures of parental involvement (Jeynes, 2016). Measures of parental involvement are usually self-report questionnaires, which limit the information researchers can obtain about the nature of parental involvement in Black families.

Under most definitions of parental involvement, racial socialization can be considered a type of parental involvement. In fact, Banerjee et al., (2011) argued that racial socialization is a form of parental involvement. This may explain why in a meta-analysis examining parental involvement and academic outcomes, Jeynes' (2003) found that African American youth benefited the most from parental involvement. Jeynes (2003) explained that African American parents were not more involved than other ethnic groups, but when they were involved it had a larger effect. Black youth are more likely to experience discrimination in school compared to their peers, so having parents that are

involved is crucial to protect them from the harmful effects of discrimination. Peters (1985) made the argument that Black families continuously face racism; thus, racism and families' response to racism must be included in any interpretation of parental behavior in Black families (p. 67). This further drives the point that by examining parental involvement and racial socialization as an additional component of parental involvement, researchers will be better positioned to explain the process by which parenting can promote academic success even in the presence of discrimination.

Very few studies have examined the role of both parental involvement and racial socialization on academic outcomes among Black adolescents. Of those included Smalls (2009), and Cooper and Smalls (2010). Smalls looked at both democratic-involved parenting and racial socialization and found that pride messages were associated with academic engagement and barrier messages were not. Smalls also reported that while there was not a two-way interaction between pride messages and democratic parenting on academic engagement, there was a two-way interaction with barrier messages and democratic involvement parenting. Consistent with Smalls, Cooper and Smalls (2010) looked at parental academic socialization and racial socialization and found that pride messages were associated with academic engagement and barrier messages were not. There was a significant two-way interaction between pride messages and academic socialization but not for barrier messages and academic socialization. The field is only recently beginning to explore these parenting factors together. Extending on the research that exist in this area, this study considered racial socialization as an additional aspect of parental involvement. To the author's knowledge no studies have explored the role of

parental involvement in moderating the negative effects of discrimination on academic outcomes.

### **Study Hypotheses**

Study Aim 1 was to examine the influence of discrimination by teachers and by peers at school on academic engagement. It is hypothesized that Black adolescents' perceived discrimination by teachers and by peers at school will be independently and negatively associated with academic engagement.

Study Aim 2 was to examine the moderating role of parental involvement in above mentioned relationship(s) as well as to examine how these relationships varied by gender. Based on prior research, perceived discrimination at school is predicted to negatively relate to academic engagement (Chavous et al., 2008; Dotterer et al., 2009; Wong et al., 2003). Furthermore, based on prior research, cultural socialization (Wang & Huguley, 2012) and barrier messages (Dotterer et al., 2009; Wang & Huguley, 2012) will buffer the negative effects of discrimination on academic outcomes. No previous studies have examined parental expectations and communication as moderators of the relationship between discrimination and academic outcomes, but since they have been consistently associated with positive academic outcomes for Black youth (Jeynes, 2011), the author predicted that they would buffer negative effects of discrimination on academic outcomes. Lastly, the author predicted that the negative effects of both teacher and peer discrimination would be more pronounced for boys.

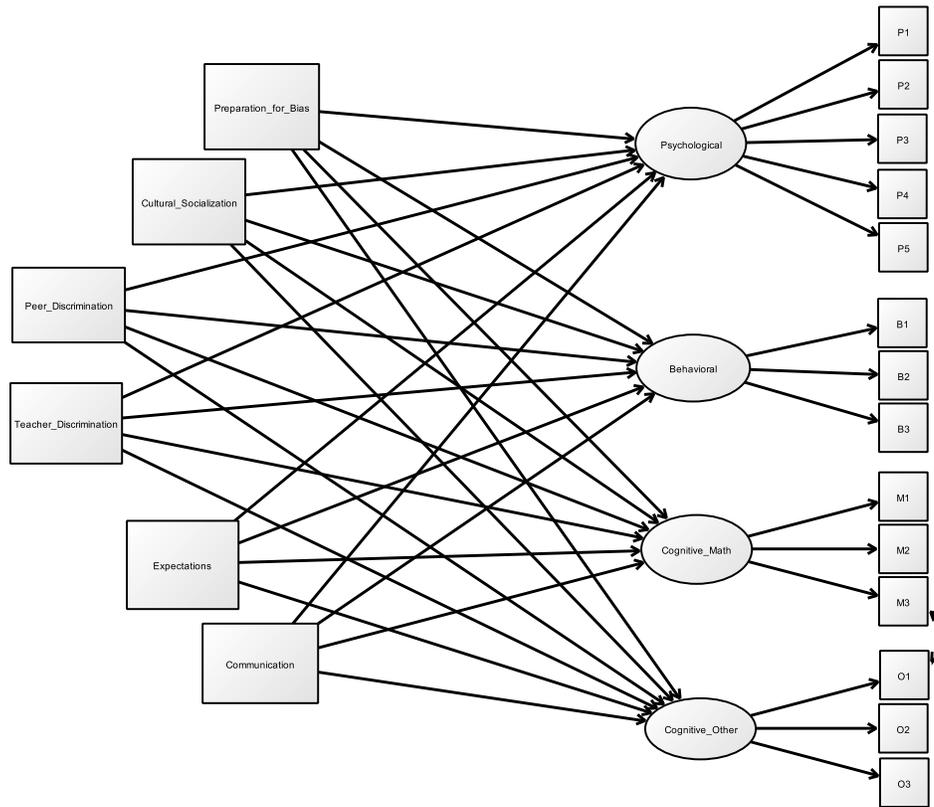


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Hypothesis.

Note. The square boxes represent measured variables, and the ovals represent latent variables. All parenting variables were tested as moderators between both sources of discrimination and all engagement outcomes, these paths are not shown in the model.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### **Participants**

The data reported in the present study were obtained from the Maryland Adolescents Development in Context (MADIC) study, which was conducted by Eccles (1999). MADIC is a longitudinal study that aimed to understand the influences of social context on developmental trajectories during adolescence among an ethnically diverse sample. There were five waves of data collection commencing at adolescence (i.e., entering middle school) through post high-school graduation. The current study used wave three data collected on Black families from May to November of 1993 (adolescent participants' 8th grade year). Wave three data consisted of 629 Black participants (52.6% male). The sample was collected from an economically diverse Eastern Seaboard U.S. county consisting of low-income high-risk urban; middle class suburban, and rural neighborhoods. The Black population in this county has steadily increased over the past several decades (i.e., rose from 37.3% in 1980 to 50.7% in 1990 to 62.7% in 2000). Black families in the sample used for this study had an average household income of \$40K-\$45K.

## Measures

Confirmatory factor analysis using *Mplus* version 8.0 were performed to ensure appropriate psychometric properties of the scales and items. See Table 1 for an overview of the example items used in the study and factor loadings.

**Academic engagement.** The adolescent academic measures assessed three areas of engagement; psychological, behavioral, and cognitive. Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) model of engagement suggested that students' perception of school-related activities as meaningful is a key aspect of psychological academic engagement. Student's level of attentiveness in school is a component of behavioral engagement. Furthermore, students' beliefs related to self is a key aspect of their cognitive engagement (Jimmerson, Campos, & Grief, 2003). *Psychological engagement* was captured by five items (internal reliability estimated at .477) assessing adolescents' perceptions of school importance. Higher scores indicated a higher value placed on school. *Behavioral engagement* was captured by a three-item scale (internal reliability estimated at .731) assessing the extent to which students are distracted in classes and have trouble getting schoolwork done. Higher scores indicated more difficulty in participating in school. The author included adolescents' academic ability beliefs pertaining to math and other subjects to capture adolescents' *cognitive engagement*. Three items on a 7-point scale (internal reliability estimated at .821) were used to measure adolescents' beliefs about their ability in math. Three items on a 7-point scale (internal reliability estimated at .745) were also used to measure adolescents' beliefs about their ability in other subjects. Higher scores indicated higher increased perceptions of ability.

**Perceived discrimination.** Youths' perceived racial discrimination experiences at school were assessed using a school discrimination scale developed by the MADICS primary investigators. The scale was made up of two subscales. A *peer discrimination* subscale assessed youths' perceptions of negative peer treatment due to their race with three items. The *teacher discrimination* scale included five items evaluating students' perceptions of discrimination in class settings by teachers. Responses to both subscales were on a 5-point scale (internal reliability estimated at .862 and .881 respectively) with higher scores indicating higher perceptions of discrimination.

**Racial socialization.** Two dimensions of racial socialization were assessed: *cultural socialization* and *preparation for bias*. *Cultural socialization* was captured by the Importance of Ethnicity scale developed by MADICS staff. Higher scores on this measure indicated more frequent messages of cultural socialization given to youth by parents. *Preparation for bias* messages were captured by the Proactive Management of Anticipated Discrimination scale developed by MADICS staff. Higher scores on this measure indicated more frequent preparation for bias messages given to youth by parents. Internal reliability estimated at .714 and .830 respectively.

**Parental involvement.** Two dimensions of parental involvement were assessed: *parental expectations* and *parental communication* with youth about school. *Parental expectations* was measured using three items (internal reliability estimated at .730) assessing parents' expectations about their child's academic trajectory. Higher scores indicated higher expectations parents had for their children. *Parental communication* was measured using four items (internal reliability estimated at .772) assessing parents'

conversations with their children about school related topics. Higher scores indicated parents talked to their child more frequently.

### **Analytic Plan**

There are three hypotheses in this study. It is predicted that peer and teacher discrimination would significantly lower three dimensions of adolescents' academic engagement. Furthermore, adolescents with parents who report higher rates of racial socialization and parental involvement, will be less impacted by the harmful effects of discrimination compared to those who have parents who report lower rates of racial socialization and parental involvement. To test these hypotheses, latent variable structural equation modeling (SEM) with full information likelihood (FIML) estimation in *Mplus* was used. SEM with latent variables accounts for the measurement error in study variables and the outcome variables were modeled as latent variables. Factor scores were computed for predictor variables and all factors scores were highly correlated with latent variables (i.e., had high factor determinacy). The overall model fit of the hypothesized model to the observed data was determined using two indices: comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Convention states that good model fit occurs when the CFI is greater than .90 and when the RMSEA are below .06 (McDonald & Ho, 2002) For each academic engagement outcome main effects and interactions were assessed. The second step of analysis involved a multigroup analysis by gender to explore if there were any gendered effects in the relationship between discrimination and outcome variables. In conducting multigroup analysis, all of the regression paths were constrained to be equal across gender. Any modification indices

above the threshold for statistical significance suggested freeing equality constraints on the regression paths, which is indicative of a moderator effect.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Descriptive statistics including correlations between latent variables are presented in Table 2. All parameter estimates are reported in Table 3.

#### **Structural Equation Model**

Based on two fit indices, the initial hypothesized model fit the observed data well ( $X^2=311.214$   $df=130$   $p<.001$   $RMSEA =.047$ ,  $CFI = .944$ ).

#### **Psychological Engagement**

**Main effects.** In assessing the main effects for psychological engagement, partial support of hypothesis one was found. While peer discrimination ( $B= -.499$ ,  $\beta= -.600$ ,  $p=.001$ ) predicted psychological engagement, teacher discrimination did not. Adolescents who experienced increased discrimination from peers had lower psychological engagement. Multigroup analysis by gender suggested that freeing the path from peer discrimination to psychological engagement would improve model fit. After freeing the equality constraint on this path, results indicated that the relationship between peer discrimination and psychological engagement was negative and significant for both boys ( $B=-.528$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and girls ( $B=-.340$ ,  $p=.001$ ), but more strongly related for boys.

**Parenting moderators.** In assessing the interaction effects, it was found that there was a statistically significant interaction between peer discrimination and preparation for bias messages in predicting school importance ( $B=-.129$ ,  $\beta =-.195$

$p=.001$ ). The negative association between peer discrimination and psychological engagement intensified at higher levels of preparation for bias. Put another way, in contrast to my hypothesis, parent report of preparation for bias messages made the harmful effects of peer discrimination on psychological engagement significantly worse. There was also a significant interaction between teacher discrimination and preparation for bias messages ( $B=-.134$ ,  $\beta=-.153$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Similar to peer discrimination, preparation for bias made the harmful effects of teacher discrimination on psychological engagement significantly worse. In the multigroup analysis by gender, results indicated that there was no gender effect for neither the interaction between peer discrimination and preparation for bias nor teacher discrimination and preparation for bias.

### **Behavioral Engagement**

**Main effects.** Similar to the results for psychological engagement, in assessing the main effects for behavioral engagement, I found partial support of my hypothesis. Peer discrimination predicted adolescents behavioral engagement ( $B=.177$ ,  $\beta= p=.019$ ), while teacher discrimination did not. Keeping in mind, higher scores on behavioral engagement meant adolescent had more difficulty participating in school, adolescents who experienced more discrimination from their peers had lower behavioral engagement. Multigroup analysis results revealed that there was no gender effect for this relationship.

**Parenting moderators.** In assessing possible interactions between discrimination and parental factors, I found that there was a marginally significant interaction between peer discrimination and preparation for bias in predicting adolescents' behavioral engagement ( $B=-.097$ ,  $\beta= -.132$ ,  $p=.040$ ). This means that preparation for bias messages

made the relationship between peer discrimination and behavioral engagement significantly worse. Multigroup analysis suggested that there was no gendered effect.

### **Cognitive Engagement**

**Main effects.** In assessing the main effects for cognitive engagement, peer discrimination predicted adolescents' engagement in subjects other than math ( $B = -.202$ ,  $\beta = -.173$ ,  $p = .020$ ), but not for math. This association suggested that adolescents who experience more discrimination from peers had lower engagement in other subjects, but engagement in math was not influenced by peers. The association between teacher discrimination and engagement in math varied by gender. While there was no overall association between teacher discrimination and engagement in other subjects, teacher discrimination was negatively associated with engagement in math, but only for boys. That is, multigroup analysis by gender, suggested that teacher discrimination was strongly related to ability beliefs in math for boys ( $B = -.274$ ,  $p = .018$ ) and unrelated for girls. This means that boys who reported higher rates of teacher discrimination tended to have lower engagement in math, but this was not the case for girls.

**Parenting moderators.** There was a significant interaction between teacher discrimination and cultural socialization in predicting math engagement ( $B = .330$ ,  $\beta = .094$ ,  $p = .039$ ). For adolescents who had very low levels of cultural socialization, the relationship between teacher discrimination and math ability beliefs was statistically significant, suggesting that teacher discrimination was most harmful to such youth. On the other hand, when adolescents had moderate or high levels of cultural socialization the

relationship between teacher discrimination and math ability beliefs was diminished to nonsignificant levels. There was no gendered effect for this interaction.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

Guided by Garcia Coll et al's (1996) Integrative model, this study examined the relationship between sources of school-based racial discrimination and academic engagement among Black adolescents. Additionally, the author examined the influence of general and culturally distinctive aspects of parental involvement on the relationship between different sources of racial discrimination and adolescent academic engagement. Gendered effects were also examined. It was hypothesized that both sources of racial discrimination would be associated with lower engagement. The author also hypothesized that each aspect of parental involvement would weaken the relationship between discrimination and academic engagement. Furthermore, it was expected that the relationship between discrimination and academic engagement would be more pronounced for boys.

The general expectation that different sources of school-based discrimination would be associated with lower academic engagement was supported. Results indicated that experiences of peer and teacher discrimination predicted different dimensions of academic engagement, and there was evidence of some gender influence on these relations. Moreover, the author found that only culturally distinctive parenting moderated the effects of discrimination on academic engagement.

## **Discrimination and Academic Engagement**

Results from the structural equation model revealed that teacher and peer discrimination lowered adolescents' academic engagement, and these results differed based on gender. These findings are consistent with Garcia Coll et al.,'s Integrative model, which suggest social position factors -in this case race- influences adolescents' experiences of social mechanisms like discrimination, and such experiences can undermine academic outcomes. Teacher and peer discrimination uniquely predicted academic engagement, such that teacher discrimination predicted math cognitive engagement only for boys, and peer discrimination predicted psychological, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in subjects other than math for both boys and girls. These findings are consistent with earlier study findings concluding that teacher and peer discrimination experiences are distinctive risk factors for academic outcomes and vary by gender (Chavous et al., 2008; Wang & Huguley, 2012).

**Peer discrimination.** Peer discrimination, similar to peer rejection, has been consistently shown in earlier studies to be detrimental to adolescent outcomes, particularly given the critical importance of peer acceptance during adolescence (Griffin et al., 2017). The current study found that adolescent report of peer discrimination was associated with lower psychological, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in non-math subjects. These findings reveal the potential extent to which experiences of peer discrimination are detrimental to the academic engagement of Black youth. Specifically, as reports of peer discrimination was overt in nature (e.g. how often they got into fights, were not chosen for teams/activities, or other kids not wanting to hang out with them

because of their race), adolescents who experience these overt types of peer discrimination may invest their attention elsewhere as a way to cope with the presumed rejection in the school context. Peer discrimination predicted cognitive engagement in other subjects which had more to do with the fact that “other subjects” is very broad and could include classes such as dance, music, art, gym, and other various electives. Students may interact with these teachers less often than they would their core classes like math. Moreover, given the nature of these type of classes there may be more opportunities for peer interactions (e.g. playing on teams in physical education classes). Increased interactions with peers may expose youth to more experiences of peer discrimination.

Typically, studies find that teacher discrimination is a more robust source of discrimination predicting academic outcomes compared to peer discrimination (Wang & Huguley, 2012); however, in this study peer discrimination predicted more academic outcome variables than did teacher discrimination. These findings indicate that the more robust source of discrimination depends on what outcomes are considered. Peer discrimination likely predicted two of the dimensions of academic engagement because these dimensions (psychological and behavioral engagement) had less to do with evaluations of performance and achievement but more so attitudes and behaviors. The peer influence literature suggest that peers can be a source of protection or risk for influencing adolescents thinking and behavior (Butler-Barnes et al., 2015). Given this is a time of wanting to be accepted by peers, positive support from peers can be an asset but

in the case of peer discrimination, peers are a risk factor undermining academic outcomes.

**Teacher discrimination.** Consistent with previous studies, experiences of teacher discrimination impacted outcomes differently than experiences of peer discrimination. Researchers have reported that while peer discrimination influences aspects of engagement, teacher discrimination typically influences outcomes related to performance or achievement (e.g. grades and GPA) (Wang & Huguley, 2012). Teacher discrimination likely predicted cognitive engagement specifically for math and not the other dimensions of engagement because cognitive engagement is tied to classroom performance where teachers have a stronger influence than peers. Garcia Coll et al.,'s Integrative model suggest different sources of racial discrimination have different effects based on the power spheres they occupy. Teachers have power over performance evaluations and those evaluations are probably considered when students evaluate themselves. This likely came out only for boys because teachers typically have lower expectations for Black boys and such expectations would influence how teachers evaluate them and in turn how they evaluate themselves.

**Gender.** The relationship between teacher discrimination and math ability beliefs was only significant for boys. In understanding this finding, it is necessary to consider the broader negative societal narrative that exist regarding Black boys' educational achievement. Black boys are often misperceived as aggressive and violent. As school personnel are socialized to accept such perceptions of Black boys, boys are more likely to experience overt discrimination from teachers compared to their female counterparts. To

the extent that school personnel consciously or unconsciously accept or displays the acceptance of these negative perceptions it is likely that Black boys will experience school personnel as biased against them and perhaps more favorable toward Black girls. The current study confirmed that boys tend to report more experiences of discrimination from both peers and teachers compared to girls, which is consistent with previous studies (Wang & Huguley, 2012).

Garcia Coll et al's Integrative model would suggest that teacher and peer discrimination in the school context may represent an inhibitory environment, and such environments can undermine adolescent academic outcomes. Opposite to an inhibitory environment would be a promotive environment, which would entail adolescents having access to a variety of sources of support. Teacher and peer discrimination hinders the support adolescents could have from teachers and peers. In such cases, parents may serve as a source of support that assist youth in navigating inhibitory environments.

### **The Role of Parenting**

Results show that both general and culturally distinctive dimensions of parental involvement are important factors for adolescents' academic engagement. Parents expectations and communication were predictive of adolescents' academic engagement but did not moderate the effects of discrimination. On the other hand, cultural socialization and preparation for bias were predictive of adolescents' academic engagement and moderated the negative effects of both peer and teacher discrimination on different dimensions of academic engagement.

**Cultural socialization.** Consistent with my hypothesis, cultural socialization moderated the negative effects of teacher discrimination on cognitive engagement in math. This finding is consistent with previous studies that found that teaching youth about their cultural heritage serves as a protective factor for experiences of discrimination. Discrimination particularly from teachers who are evaluating students may create a dissonance-producing situation. Students with higher cultural socialization (i.e., celebrating their heritage) provides a supportive avenue that offers an opposite and relatable framing of self. Cultural socialization may be a way for youth to work through the dissonance created by teacher discrimination. Coll et al's Integrative model supports this assertion by suggesting that families respond to social mechanisms such as discrimination with adaptive methods; cultural socialization is one adaptive method parents use to combat youths' experiences of discrimination. Considering that only teacher discrimination significantly impacted boys math ability beliefs and cultural socialization moderated that relationship for both boys and girls; this shows the destructive nature of teacher discrimination for boys. Teacher discrimination toward boys seems so potent that cultural socialization offers some mitigation but not enough to completely counteract the effects of teacher discrimination.

**Preparation for bias.** Interestingly, preparation for bias moderated the relationship between discrimination and engagement but not in the direction hypothesized. Preparation for bias exacerbated the negative effects of peer discrimination on psychological but weakened the effects of peer discrimination on behavioral engagement. The distinct moderating effect preparation for bias had on psychological

versus behavioral engagement, speaks to the discrepancies in previous research examining the influence of preparation for bias. Some researchers have found that preparation for bias is linked to increased academic outcomes (Smalls, 2009) while others have linked it to lower academic outcomes (Hughes et al., 2009). Preparation for bias potentially moderated the effects of peer discrimination on psychological and behavioral engagement differently because of the nature of the items used to capture preparation for bias in this study. There are different types of preparation for bias messages; while some may only communicate potential experiences of discrimination, others may provide coping strategies for how to deal with discrimination. In this study, the items used to capture preparation for bias were coping strategies that were also behavioral in nature (e.g. work harder than others) refer to Table 1 for all items. Given that the coping strategies were behavioral in nature, they were beneficial for helping youth remain behavioral engaged, but such coping strategies were not as relevant for helping youths' psychological engagement.

Adding to the complex conversation regarding the influence of preparation for bias messages, this study demonstrates that for youth experiencing peer discrimination, having parents who talk about being prepared for such experiences may help youth remain behaviorally engagement but when they realize these type of experiences may be something that will be ongoing, in thinking about the future (considering the future orientation of the items used to capture psychological engagement) youth may develop adverse attitudes toward school. Preparation for bias messages may be more effective when coupled with other socialization messages (e.g. cultural socialization) which could

create a healthy balance in the type of messages communicated (Wang & Huguley, 2012).

**Parental communication.** Parents communication predicted psychological engagement. The two strongest items that loaded onto the author's measurement of parental communication were future oriented (e.g. My 8th grader and I talk about future jobs he/she might have). Parents talking with their children about future jobs, and how certain courses will help prepare them for future jobs was beneficial for youths' psychological engagement which was also future oriented (e.g. Suppose you DO get a good education in high school. How likely is it that you will end up with the kind of job you want). Such conversations help youth make the connection between their schooling and future endeavors.

Although parental communication did not moderate the relationship between either source of discrimination and psychological engagement, it is possible that if considered in the same statistical model as preparation for bias, communication would change the meaning of the moderating effect of preparation for bias. As preparation for bias worsened the effect of peer discrimination on psychological engagement, given the future orientation of parental communication, it may counteract the direction of the influence of preparation for bias. For instance, youth experiencing peer discrimination that have parents who transmit preparation for bias messages and communicate about the relevance of school for their future, their psychological engagement would be higher compared to those who have parents communicating preparation for bias messages but not also about the relevance of school for the future.

Although parental communication seemed relevant for youth's psychological engagement, parental communication, as measured in this study, may be irrelevant for helping youth engage behaviorally and cognitively. Parents may communicate other messages to encourage their children's behavioral and cognitive engagement.

**Parental expectations.** Parental expectations predicted all academic engagement outcomes included in the study. Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) suggested that parental expectations is a form of communication that conveys the value parents place on educational attainment and this value is internalized by youth and becomes the basis for which they strive to achieve. Earlier scholars (Trust, 2002; Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007) have also suggested that parental expectations shape youth's expectations pertaining to school. In the current study, parental expectations may have been such a strong predictor for youth outcomes because parental expectations shaped youths' expectations for their academic engagement.

Parental expectations did not moderate the effects of discrimination on engagement as expected. Parental expectations likely did not moderate the negative effects of teacher discrimination because youth who reported teacher discrimination likely had teachers who set lower expectations for them. Teachers' expectations for their students determines how they interact with students and how they evaluate students. Given the influence teachers have in the classroom, teachers' expectations may overshadow the influence of parental expectations in predicting academic engagement. Parental expectations did not moderate the negative effects of peer discrimination on engagement potentially because although parents may set high expectations, their

expectations may not hold weight with peer interactions particularly because adolescents is a period in which peers can have a stronger influence than parents.

These findings indicate that even though parents' communication and expectations may not moderate the effects of discrimination on engagement, they are still important predictors of adolescents' academic engagement.

### **Conclusion**

This study makes significant contributions to the empirical literature. Taken together, the findings indicate that both peer and teacher discrimination negatively influence Black adolescents' academic engagement. Furthermore, the findings confirm that parenting is one area that could foster academic success among Black youth in the face of discrimination. Study findings support the need for a broader understanding of parents' involvement when considering Black families. While parents' expectations, communication, and ability to instill cultural socialization, and preparation for bias messages are all important predictors of academic engagement, only the culturally specific dimensions of parental involvement attenuated the negative effects of discrimination. Discrimination is a common and daunting experience for Black youth. It is necessary for Black parents to recognize such and be involved in their children's education in many different ways.

### **Implications**

As the achievement gap remains a serious problem, the current study provides practical insight that can be used to help promote Black youths' academic achievement. Considering the detrimental effects of both peer and teacher discrimination, educators,

researchers, and other professionals providing service to Black youth should explore ways to address both sources of discrimination. While there are an increasing amount of schools implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives and cultural competence training to teachers and school administrators, there remains far more to do to decrease peer discrimination. This study's findings also have implications for parenting interventions. For example, it would be important for parenting interventions targeting Black parents to place emphasis on increasing parents' involvement in schools and to understand its protective and buffering effect. Ideally parenting interventions would consider the salience of both general and culturally distinctive racial aspects of parenting (e.g., parental involvement) in effort to provide clear guidance to parents for how to optimally support Black families and youth.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

While this study contributes to the growing literature focused on the effects of racial discrimination in Black adolescents, there are several limitations or areas that could be improved. This study employed a sample from a single geographic area to examine the effects of racial discrimination. Although the study yielded significant relationships amongst variables for this sample, conclusions may not be generalizable to other geographic areas in the country. In addition, the context in which the study was constructed is considered unique (i.e., MADICS-Prince George's County) in that it is a racially and economically diverse county compared to other areas in the country. Data was collected from students from different schools in the county and given the demographics of the county, the racial composition of the schools could have been

different (i.e., predominately white, black, or no clear majority). The effects of discrimination from teachers and peers may vary based on the school's racial composition. Scholars have found that discrimination occurring in particular types of context have different effects. For example, Seaton and Douglass (2014) reported that students attending a school with no clear racial majority experienced less discrimination than those attending schools that are predominantly white or black. For these reasons, it would be helpful for future studies to clarify the racial composition of the schools in which youth report experiences of teacher and peer discrimination to better understand the conditions in which the effects of discrimination are likely to occur and are detrimental to academic outcomes.

Moreover, it would be important for future studies to consider the political climate during the time of data collection. Data for this study was collected during the 1990s when Prince George's county led the nation in police-induced fatalities in which victims were mostly unarmed Blacks. Such climates can influence adolescents' racial identity, particularly their public regard (i.e., how they think others view Black people). If they are in a context where people who share their racial background are being treated unjustly, it may be more obvious that in the eyes of others, Blacks occupy a devalued social status. Racial identity, specifically public regard has been linked to adolescents' experiences of discrimination, which makes it an important factor to consider along with the political climate of the time.

In addition to considering factors related to context, it would also be useful to explore this topic longitudinally. Researchers have found that the extent to which parents

are involved in their children's education changes over time. More importantly, discrimination may not only have short-term effects, but long-term effects as well.

Furthermore, a person-centered approach would provide a more in-depth examination of the relationship between experiences of discrimination, academic engagement, and parenting. Caughy, Nettles, and Lima (2011) utilized a person-centered approach to examine patterns of racial socialization in Black families and concluded that although differences did not emerge when looking at the mean levels of variables, there were different patterns of socialization practices that emerged. As mentioned earlier, it may be that the moderating effect of racial socialization intensifies when parents are involved in various ways. This question would be best explored using a person-centered approach as opposed to a three-way interaction, which would require a significant amount of power to detect. A person-centered approach would reveal useful information about this complex process that variable-centered approaches would not.

Although the model used in this study suggest looking at how parenting can support adolescent's engagement, researchers may need to approach the study of academic outcomes for Black youth with a broader lens. Like most studies, the current study took a nuclear family model approach in understanding families but thinking about how families are actually organized will really open our thinking about parenting. Given this line of work, exploring extended family networks would be an important area of exploration. Black families tend to rely on extended family networks to support youth; thus, a closer look at how those systems socialize youth around race and education would

be useful for understanding family level protective factors that support positive youth development.

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APPENDIX A

DATA TABLES

Table 1

Factor Loadings for All Latent Variables

| <b>Latent Construct</b>  | <b>Factor Loadings</b> |                           |
|--|------------------------|---------------------------|
|  | <b>B</b>               | <b><math>\beta</math></b> |
| Math ability beliefs   |                        |                           |
| 1. Compared to other kids your age, how well do you do in math?  | 1.000                  | .854                      |
| 2. Compared to other kids your age, how well do you expect to do next year in math?  | .679                   | .635                      |
| 3. How good are you in math?   | 1.044                  | .811                      |
| Other subjects ability beliefs   |                        |                           |
| 1. Compared to other kids your age, how well do you do in other school subjects?   | 1.000                  | .752                      |
| 2. Compared to other kids your age, how well do you expect to do next year in other school subjects?                                   | .762                   | .564                      |
| 3. How good are you in other school subjects?  | 1.034                  | .788                      |
| School importance  |                        |                           |
| 1. I have to do well in school if I want to be a success in life.  | 1.00                   | .736                      |
| 2. Getting a good education is the best way to get ahead in life for the kids in my neighborhood.                                      | .816                   | .531                      |
| 3. The school teaches me things that my family wants me to learn.  | .688                   | .490                      |
| 4. Suppose you DO get a good education in high school. How likely is it that you will end up with the kind of job you want?            | .565                   | .488                      |
| 6. Suppose you DON'T get a good education in high school. How likely is it that you will end up with the kind of job you want?         | -.605                  | -.432                     |
| School participation   |                        |                           |
| 1. How often do you have trouble in school because it is hard for you to sit in your seat a long time?                                 | 1.000                  | .628                      |
| 2. How often do you find that you start daydreaming, or thinking about something else when you are doing schoolwork or homework?       | 1.166                  | .750                      |
| 3. How often do you find that it is hard for you to keep your mind on your work when there are other things going on in the same room? | 1.045                  | .690                      |

Teacher discrimination

|   |       |      |
|---|-------|------|
| 1. How often do you feel that teachers call on you less often than they call on other kids because of your race?  | .884  | .698 |
| 2. How often do you feel teachers grade you harder than they grade other kids because of your race?   | 1.000 | .833 |
| 3. How often do you feel you get disciplined more harshly by teachers than other kids do because of your race?  | 1.070 | .812 |
| 4. How often do you feel teachers think you are less smart than you really are because of your race?  | .989  | .822 |
| 5. How often do you feel teachers/counselors discourage you from taking certain class because of your race?   | .788  | .688 |
| Peer discrimination   |       |      |
| 1. How often do you feel like you are not picked for certain teams or other activities because of your race?  | 1.000 | .849 |
| 2. How often do you feel that you get in fights with some kids because of your race?  | .868  | .818 |
| 3. How often do you feel that kids do not want to hang out with you because of your race?   | .841  | .794 |
| Preparation for bias  |       |      |
| 1. How often do you suggest to your 8 <sup>th</sup> grader that good ways of dealing with racial discrimination he/she may face is to do better than everyone else in school? | .631  | .495 |
| 2. "... " have faith in God?  | .659  | .504 |
| 3. "... " do your best and be a good person?  | .626  | .586 |
| 4. "... " work harder than others?  | .855  | .646 |
| 5. "... " stand up and demand your rights?  | 1.000 | .762 |
| 6. "... " try hard to get along with other people?  | .906  | .746 |
| 7. "... " not blame yourself when you experience discrimination?  | .961  | .719 |
| Cultural socialization  |       |      |
| 1. How important is your racial background to the daily life of your family?  | .853  | .459 |
| 2. How important is it for (CHILD) to know about (his/her) racial background?   | .341  | .443 |
| 3. How often do you talk in the family about your racial background?  | 1.512 | .604 |
| 4. How often do you celebrate any special days connected to your racial background?   | 1.281 | .696 |
| 5. How often does (CHILD) study the traditions of or about being (x) race?  | 1.000 | .668 |
| 6. How often do you participate in community activities with people of your racial background?  | .858  | .444 |
| Parental expectations   |       |      |
| 1. What are the chances your 8 <sup>th</sup> grader will do very well academically in high school?  | 1.554 | .694 |

|  |        |       |
|--|--------|-------|
| 2. If finances were not a problem and everything else went right, how far would you like to see (child) go in school?                              | 2.399  | .517  |
| 3. Things often don't go right, so how far do you think (child) will actually go in school?  | 1.00   | .310  |
| 4. What are the chances your 8th grader will get in trouble at school?   |        |       |
| 5. What are the chances your 8th grader will skip school often?  | -1.305 | -.584 |
| 6. What are the chances your 8th grader will have trouble finishing what he or she starts?   | -1.516 | -.654 |
| Parent communication   |        |       |
| 1. My 8 <sup>th</sup> grader talks to me about problems he/she is having at school.  | 1.154  | .570  |
| 2. My 8th grader and I talk about future jobs he/she might have.   | 1.530  | .805  |
| 3. My 8 <sup>th</sup> grader and I talk about what courses should take in school and how these courses will prepare him/her for these future jobs. | 1.614  | .852  |
| 4. My 8th grader talks to me about how things are going with his/her friends.  | 1.00   | .484  |

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Note. All parameter estimates significant at  $p < .001$

Table 2

## Correlations Among Latent Variables

| Variable                  | 1    | 2       | 3       | 4        | 5        | 6        | 7     | 8       | 9        | 10      |
|---------------------------|------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|-------|---------|----------|---------|
| 1. Math                   | 1.00 | .700*** | .428*** | -.274*** | -.174**  | -.144**  | .051  | -.003   | .316*    | .120*   |
| 2. Other subjects         |      | 1.00    | .562*** | -.300*** | -.199*** | -.215*** | .095  | .050    | .413***  | .155**  |
| 3. School importance      |      |         | 1.00    | -.250*** | -.494*** | -.582*** | -.010 | -.026   | .364***  | .143**  |
| 4. School participation   |      |         |         | 1.00     | .283***  | .298***  | -.024 | .067    | -.070*** | -.024   |
| 5. Teacher discrimination |      |         |         |          | 1.00     | .762***  | .030  | .013    | -.293*** | -.033   |
| 6. Peer discrimination    |      |         |         |          |          | 1.00     | -.010 | .009    | -.286*** | .003    |
| 7. Cultural socialization |      |         |         |          |          |          | 1.00  | .210*** | .231***  | .321*** |
| 8. Preparation for bias   |      |         |         |          |          |          |       | 1.00    | .026     | .398*** |
| 9. Expectations           |      |         |         |          |          |          |       |         | 1.00     | .280*** |
| 10. Communication         |      |         |         |          |          |          |       |         |          | 1.00    |

Note. \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

Table 3

## Parameter Estimates

| <i>Parameter Estimate</i> | <i>full sample</i> |         |          | <i>boys</i> |         |          | <i>girls</i> |         |          |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|--------------|---------|----------|
|                           | <i>B</i>           | $\beta$ | <i>p</i> | <i>B</i>    | $\beta$ | <i>p</i> | <i>B</i>     | $\beta$ | <i>p</i> |
| Psychological Engagement  |                    |         |          |             |         |          |              |         |          |
| CS                        | -0.201             | -0.131  | 0.003    | -0.186      | -0.113  | 0.005    | -0.186       | -0.355  | 0.005    |
| PB                        | -0.054             | -0.078  | 0.083    | -0.054      | -0.072  | 0.073    | -0.054       | -0.104  | 0.073    |
| C                         | 0.173              | 0.175   | 0        | 0.175       | 0.159   | 0        | 0.175        | 0.336   | 0        |
| E                         | 0.427              | 0.217   | 0        | 0.383       | 0.175   | 0        | 0.383        | 0.732   | 0        |
| TD                        | 0.052              | 0.066   | 0.358    | 0.028       | 0.033   | 0.629    | 0.028        | 0.053   | 0.629    |
| PD                        | -0.499             | -0.6    | 0        | -0.528      | -0.632  | 0        | -0.34        | -0.651  | 0        |
| Behavioral Engagement     |                    |         |          |             |         |          |              |         |          |
| CS                        | -0.081             | -0.048  | 0.331    | -0.086      | -0.055  | 0.294    | -0.086       | -0.113  | 0.294    |
| PB                        | 0.093              | 0.124   | 0.015    | 0.089       | 0.123   | 0.017    | 0.089        | 0.117   | 0.017    |
| C                         | -0.029             | -0.026  | 0.632    | -0.018      | -0.017  | 0.757    | -0.018       | -0.024  | 0.757    |
| E                         | -0.371             | -0.172  | 0.002    | -0.379      | -0.182  | 0.001    | -0.379       | -0.497  | 0.001    |
| TD                        | 0.066              | 0.076   | 0.344    | 0.068       | 0.085   | 0.322    | 0.068        | 0.089   | 0.322    |
| PD                        | 0.177              | 0.194   | 0.019    | 0.188       | 0.236   | 0.01     | 0.188        | 0.247   | 0.01     |
| Cognitive Engagement      |                    |         |          |             |         |          |              |         |          |

|    |                  |        |        |       |        |        |       |        |        |       |
|----|------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
|    | (Math)           |        |        |       |        |        |       |        |        |       |
|    | CS               | -0.144 | -0.05  | 0.279 | -0.133 | -0.048 | 0.302 | -0.133 | -0.107 | 0.302 |
|    | PB               | -0.028 | -0.021 | 0.651 | -0.029 | -0.022 | 0.624 | -0.029 | -0.023 | 0.624 |
|    | C                | 0.075  | 0.04   | 0.43  | 0.075  | 0.04   | 0.418 | 0.075  | 0.06   | 0.418 |
|    | E                | 1.296  | 0.349  | 0     | 1.339  | 0.361  | 0     | 1.339  | 1.074  | 0     |
|    | TD               | -0.15  | -0.1   | 0.18  | -0.274 | -0.193 | 0.018 | -0.012 | -0.009 | 0.926 |
|    | PD               | 0.081  | 0.051  | 0.492 | 0.065  | 0.046  | 0.57  | 0.065  | 0.052  | 0.57  |
|    | (Other Subjects) |        |        |       |        |        |       |        |        |       |
|    | CS               | -0.079 | -0.037 | 0.419 | -0.08  | -0.037 | 0.415 | -0.08  | -0.092 | 0.415 |
|    | PB               | 0.038  | 0.04   | 0.391 | 0.036  | 0.036  | 0.416 | 0.036  | 0.042  | 0.416 |
|    | C                | 0.032  | 0.023  | 0.651 | 0.032  | 0.022  | 0.646 | 0.032  | 0.037  | 0.646 |
| 89 | E                | 1.188  | 0.431  | 0     | 1.178  | 0.408  | 0     | 1.178  | 1.359  | 0     |
|    | TD               | 0.045  | 0.04   | 0.585 | 0.043  | 0.039  | 0.605 | 0.043  | 0.05   | 0.605 |
|    | PD               | -0.202 | -0.173 | 0.02  | -0.189 | -0.171 | 0.031 | -0.189 | -0.218 | 0.031 |

Table 3 (continued)

| <i>Parameter Estimate</i> | <i>Full sample</i> |         |          | <i>boys</i> |         |          | <i>girls</i> |         |          |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|--------------|---------|----------|
|                           | <i>B</i>           | $\beta$ | <i>p</i> | <i>B</i>    | $\beta$ | <i>p</i> | <i>B</i>     | $\beta$ | <i>p</i> |
| Psychological Engagement  |                    |         |          |             |         |          |              |         |          |
| PD X CS                   | -0.16              | -0.242  | 0.054    | -0.164      | -0.089  | 0.051    | -0.164       | -0.086  | 0.052    |

|    |                             |        |        |       |        |        |       |        |        |       |
|----|-----------------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
|    | PD X PB                     | -0.129 | -0.195 | 0.001 | -0.134 | -0.159 | 0     | -0.134 | -0.161 | 0.001 |
|    | PD X C                      | 0.041  | 0.062  | 0.472 | 0.074  | 0.058  | 0.201 | 0.074  | 0.067  | 0.205 |
|    | PD X E                      | -0.075 | -0.112 | 0.495 | -0.132 | -0.057 | 0.236 | -0.132 | -0.057 | 0.235 |
|    | TD X CS                     | -0.084 | -0.045 | 0.298 | -0.084 | -0.045 | 0.292 | -0.084 | -0.052 | 0.292 |
|    | TD X PB                     | -0.134 | -0.153 | 0     | -0.134 | -0.153 | 0     | -0.134 | -0.174 | 0     |
|    | TD X C                      | 0.014  | 0.012  | 0.794 | 0.043  | 0.033  | 0.426 | 0.043  | 0.045  | 0.426 |
|    | TD X E                      | -0.03  | -0.013 | 0.77  | -0.072 | -0.032 | 0.488 | -0.072 | -0.035 | 0.488 |
|    | Behavioral Engagement       |        |        |       |        |        |       |        |        |       |
|    | PD X CS                     | 0.004  | 0.005  | 0.973 | -0.001 | 0      | 0.995 | -0.001 | .000   | 0.995 |
|    | PD X PB                     | -0.097 | -0.132 | 0.04  | -0.086 | -0.108 | 0.057 | -0.086 | -.071  | 0.057 |
|    | PD X C                      | -0.028 | -.038  | 0.697 | -0.039 | -0.032 | 0.576 | -0.039 | -.024  | 0.576 |
| 69 | PD X E                      | 0.112  | 0.153  | 0.408 | 0.15   | 0.068  | 0.257 | 0.15   | 0.044  | 0.257 |
|    | TD X CS                     | 0.042  | 0.021  | 0.673 | 0.041  | 0.023  | 0.669 | 0.041  | 0.018  | 0.669 |
|    | TD X PB                     | -0.088 | -0.092 | 0.057 | -0.083 | -0.1   | 0.063 | -0.083 | -0.074 | 0.063 |
|    | TD X C                      | -0.044 | -0.033 | 0.518 | -0.038 | -0.031 | 0.563 | -0.038 | -0.027 | 0.563 |
|    | TD X E                      | 0.038  | 0.015  | 0.764 | 0.059  | 0.028  | 0.631 | 0.059  | 0.02   | 0.631 |
|    | Cognitive Engagement (Math) |        |        |       |        |        |       |        |        |       |
|    | PD X CS                     | 0.117  | 0.093  | 0.483 | 0.118  | 0.037  | 0.462 | 0.118  | 0.025  | 0.462 |
|    | PD X PB                     | 0.032  | 0.025  | 0.673 | 0.015  | 0.01   | 0.84  | 0.015  | 0.007  | 0.84  |
|    | PD X C                      | -0.176 | -0.14  | 0.126 | -0.153 | -0.07  | 0.171 | -0.153 | -0.058 | 0.171 |
|    | PD X E                      | -0.061 | -0.049 | 0.779 | -0.18  | -0.046 | 0.401 | -0.18  | -0.032 | 0.398 |
|    | TD X CS                     | 0.33   | 0.094  | 0.039 | 0.317  | 0.099  | 0.039 | 0.317  | 0.082  | 0.039 |

|                  |        |        |       |        |        |       |        |        |        |
|------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| TD X PB          | 0.014  | 0.008  | 0.851 | 0.008  | 0.005  | 0.916 | 0.008  | 0.004  | 0.916  |
| TD X C           | -0.144 | -0.063 | 0.185 | -0.143 | -0.065 | 0.173 | -0.143 | -0.062 | 0.173  |
| TD X E           | -0.074 | -0.017 | 0.717 | -0.17  | -0.044 | 0.395 | -0.17  | -0.034 | 0.395  |
| (Other Subjects) |        |        |       |        |        |       |        |        |        |
| PD X CS          | 0.067  | 0.072  | 0.583 | 0.072  | 0.03   | 0.558 | 0.072  | 0.023  | 0.585  |
| PD X PB          | -0.008 | -0.009 | 0.887 | -0.016 | -0.014 | 0.779 | -0.016 | -0.011 | -0.281 |
| PD X C           | -0.122 | -0.131 | 0.15  | -0.111 | -0.066 | 0.193 | -0.111 | -0.06  | -1.301 |
| PD X E           | -0.109 | -0.117 | 0.502 | -0.097 | -0.032 | 0.553 | -0.097 | -0.025 | -0.594 |
| TD X CS          | 0.133  | 0.051  | 0.257 | 0.128  | 0.052  | 0.277 | 0.128  | 0.048  | 0.277  |
| TD X PB          | 0.004  | 0.003  | 0.948 | 0      | 0      | 0.998 | 0      | 0      | 0.998  |
| TD X C           | -0.129 | -0.077 | 0.109 | -0.123 | -0.072 | 0.126 | -0.123 | -0.077 | 0.126  |
| TD X E           | -0.044 | -0.014 | 0.772 | -0.019 | -0.006 | 0.899 | -0.019 | -0.006 | 0.899  |

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CS=Cultural socialization, PB=Preparation for bias, C=Communication, E=Expectations, TD=Teacher discrimination, PD=Peer discrimination