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Using a cultural-ecological approach, the aim of this study is to explore cultural-specific parenting practices that may help African American children navigate the American educational system and support their academic achievement. Specifically, this study examines: (a) the associations between parental racial socialization and child academic achievement, and (b) the variations in these associations across child gender and family socio-economic status. The participants were 134 African American children and their mothers. The children were fifth grade students in public elementary schools in a mid-sized southeastern city. Data were collected from children and their mothers during home interviews. Academic achievement data were reported by the children's schools. Multiple linear regression analyses were used to examine the associations between parental racial socialization (preparation for bias, pride development) and academic achievement (GPA), and the moderating effects of gender and SES on these associations. Preparation for bias and pride development did not significantly predict academic achievement. However, gender moderated the associations between preparation for bias and academic achievement. The greater frequency of preparation bias messages delivered to boys increased GPAs. However, as the frequency of preparation for bias messages delivered to girls increased, GPA decreased. SES did not significantly moderate the associations between either dimension of racial socialization and academic achievement.

THE INFLUENCES OF PARENTAL RACIAL SOCIALIZATION ON THE

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN: A

CULTURAL-ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

by

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Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Stephanie, who believed in me and pushed me to succeed when I did not believe in myself. To the rest of my family who has always lifted me up to higher heights. To all of those who came before me and gave their time, money, resources, and lives to make it possible for me to have this opportunity. Above all, this work is dedicated to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the true and living son of God. I was unable to complete this work under my own power. It is only by the power of his Holy Spirit that this dissertation was completed. It is he who made this and all good things possible. "Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1Corinthians 13:13).

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty first century, advances in technology have created a global

economy. Goods and services can be exchanged across the globe at speeds previously

believed impossible. This global economy has created a two-tiered workforce. The top

tier consists of individuals with a great deal of professional or technical expertise while

the bottom tier consists of low wage, manual labor, and service sector jobs which require

little or no training (Silvia, 2006). Within this context, the American educational system

has been tasked with supplying the nation's children with the skills needed to function

effectively in society. However, in an economy in which the ability to communicate

effectively across cultures becomes more valuable each day; the American educational

system continues to reflect the racial and ethnic inequities of the broader society.

One of the most frequently mentioned examples of this inequity is the disparity in

academic achievement between African American and European American students. This

disparity not only reflects the inequities of the educational system, but also reinforces

them by offering African American students inferior opportunities to participate in the

top tier of today's global economy. Indeed, students who fail to successfully navigate the

educational system are less likely to reach top-tier positions (US Census Bureau, 2005),

less likely to escape working class positions, and less likely to become upwardly mobile

(US Census Bureau, 2005). These students also have an increased risk for poverty (US Department of Education, 2003). Given the racial and economic inequities reflected in the American education system, an important question is; what can African American families do to promote the academic success of their children?

<div align="center">Race, Social Inequality, and the American Educational System</div>

African Americans have long sought access to educational opportunity as an avenue to social, economic, and political integration into mainstream American society (Dubois, 1903; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Washington, 1901). However, the American public education system was not designed to create opportunities for the social, economic, and political development of marginalized peoples (McNergney & Herbert, 1998). As a young nation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the United States was searching for a formalized system of education. At the same time, the United States was experiencing a period of rapid industrialization which influenced the nature of public education. Schools that emphasized the need to train and socialize cheap, reliable labor were created. These schools emphasized a strict adherence to time schedules. They also focused on moral development and low-level reading, writing, and arithmetic skills (McNergney & Herbert, 1998).

In the mid-nineteenth century, the advent of American common schools meant tax supported schools for basic education. Over the next century, American public education underwent a series of administrative and structural reforms. Nevertheless, public schools continued to serve as a means of preparing children for the lower tier work of a rapidly industrializing labor market by perpetuating an educational philosophy that focused on

"repetition, drill, helped along with a healthy dose of punishment" (McNergney & Herbert, 1998, p.64). On the other hand, wealthier citizens sent their children to private or parochial schools where the curriculum emphasized theory and critical thinking skills that prepared them to occupy positions of authority in America's economic, social, and legal systems.

The history of the American public education system suggests that it has two major purposes. The first of these purposes is to provide American youth with the basic skills and knowledge needed to effectively function within American society. This is represented in the associations between educational attainment and individual level economic, social, and emotional outcomes. Individuals who do well in elementary and secondary schools continue on to higher education (Wirt, Snyder, Burns, Seastrom, & Hussar, 2003) and greatly increase their chances of economic success (US Department of Education, 2003). Individuals who drop out of high school before earning a diploma greatly decrease their earning potential (US Census Bureau, 2005). Lack of educational attainment is also positively associated with social and emotional problems such as unemployment, criminal activity, feelings of dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and stifled motivation (Greenberg, Michalopoulos, & Robins, 2003). The second major purpose of the American educational system is to promote the internalization of societal values. Gordon (1999) suggests that education is not only a personal process by which individuals acquire knowledge and skills, but that it is also a social "process that is initiated, guided, and mediated by others" (p. xii). Ultimately, the educational system reflects the values of the larger society and, in effect, socializes the children and youth

who participate in the system with these values. Gordon (1999) continues his argument by stating that the absence of social equality within the broader American society is inevitably recreated within America's educational system. The history of African Americans in the American educational system is an illustration of the ways in which social and racial inequalities manifest themselves in American society.

<p style="text-align:center">African Americans in the American Educational System</p>

America has a clear history of social and educational inequality and inequity based on race and ethnicity. African Americans have traditionally been denied equal and equitable access to American education and educational institutions (Deplit, 1995; Gordon, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1996). The ancestors of a majority of African Americans arrived in this country as slaves. African American slaves were generally denied access to basic literacy skills. It was commonplace for localities to outlaw the practice of educating slaves, both children and adults. After emancipation, Jim Crow laws prevented African Americans from entering established European American educational institutions. In the 1896 Plessy versus Ferguson ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that African American students were entitled to "separate but equal" public facilities. This ruling led the way for African American inclusion in the public education system. However, the separate public school facilities of African American students rarely provided an equal quality of education. Indeed, African American students continued to have inferior access to education or equal access to an inferior quality of education.

The 1954 Brown versus the Topeka Kansas Board of Education U.S. Supreme Court decision was society's most profound effort to provide equal and equitable education to African American students. Early advocates of desegregation believed that the desegregation of public schools would remove differences in the quality of education, thus bringing an end to racial disparities in academic achievement (Braddock & Eitle, 2004). Contemporary critics argue that desegregation has done very little, or nothing at all, to improve the academic performance of African American students (Epstein, 1985; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Oakes, 1990; Patterson, Niles, Carlson, & Kelley, 2008). However, there is evidence that racial desegregation did have short-term and long-term effects on African American students (Braddock & Eitle, 2004). For example, Braddock and Eitle (2004) reported that, in the short-term, desegregation resulted in achievement gains for African American students; and in the long-term, desegregation resulted in "lifelong social integration and occupational attainment" (p.838). Despite these improvements, racial disparities in academic achievement persist more than fifty years after the Brown decision (Farley & Allen, 1989; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2000; McCown & Weinstein, 2008; Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001; Nieto, 1996).

The Role of Cultural and Ecological Factors in the Academic Achievement of

African American Children

There is a great deal of literature that documents the academic disparities between African American and European American students (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Farley & Allen, 1989; Flores, 2007; McCown & Weinstein, 2008; Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001;

Ogbu, 1994; Osborne, 1999). Much of this research focuses on differences in achievement (i.e. grades and test scores). The research indicates that the achievement gap between African American and European American students begins early in students' academic careers. During the elementary school years, the racial disparity in academic achievement widens and becomes a stable gap during the secondary school years (Gagne, 2005; Phillips, Crouse, & Ralph, 1998; Viadero, 2008). In addition to differences in academic achievement, African American students tend to have lower levels of educational attainment, higher rates of grade retention, higher rates of school suspensions, and higher rates of expulsions than their European American counterparts (Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001).

With the debunking of genetic deficit perspectives as an explanation for the racial achievement gap, scholars have theorized about the roles of ecological contexts, culture, and family process in explaining academic outcomes among African American children. Recent efforts have focused on culturally-relevant models which examine the cultural and ecological factors that influence the academic achievement of African American children. Within the discipline of education, there has been a shift away from examining characteristics of the student and family as solely responsible for academic achievement (Asante, 1991; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001; Stewart, 2008). This shift has led educational researchers to examine the characteristics of various environments (e.g. school, home, and neighborhood) as contributing to the academic achievement of students. Developmental and family studies scholars have argued that cultural and ecological factors influence a variety of child

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competencies, including academic competence (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; McLoyd, 2006; Ogbu, 1981; Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990). Research from these perspectives examines the performance of African American students, without comparison to their European American counterparts, in an attempt to identify successful adaptation and coping strategies. Subsequently, I will refer to culturally-relevant perspectives that focus on cultural and ecological factors as cultural-ecological perspectives or models.

Recent research from the cultural-ecological perspective has the potential to identify culturally-specific parenting practices that African American parents use to help create positive outcomes for their children (Garcia Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995; Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990). Racial socialization is a culturally-specific parenting practice by which African American parents indoctrinate their children with the attitudes, perceptions, values, and behaviors that parents deem appropriate for their ethnic group. It is through racial socialization that parents attempt to provide their children with the understanding and skills needed to cope with the unique environmental challenges they will face and create positive outcomes. Thus, racial socialization is a parenting practice that African American parents might use to help their children adapt to the challenges they face in a school system based on White, middle-class, male norms.

There is an emerging research literature from a cultural-ecological perspective that examines the connections between cultural characteristics and racial socialization practices and how these factors impact the developmental outcomes of ethnic minority

children. Within the last decade, studies of racial socialization have moved from an articulation and identification of racial socialization messages to examining its associations with parental characteristics, child factors, and contextual factors (Hughes et al., 2006; McLoyd, 2006). Although studies have considered the links between racial socialization and academic achievement, this remains an emergent literature with respect to children during middle childhood and early adolescence, the impact of different dimensions of racial socialization practices on academic achievement, and the moderating effects of gender and SES. Further study of the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement, and how these associations vary by ecological contexts, could help to identify specific strategies that African American parents can use to help their children to become academically successful.

Study Aims

Using a cultural-ecological perspective, the aim of this study is to explore cultural-specific parenting practices that may help African American children navigate the American educational system and support their academic achievement. Specifically, this study examines: (a) the associations between parental racial socialization and child academic achievement, and (b) the variations in these associations across child gender and family socio-economic status. Chapter one of this dissertation provides a brief history of African Americans in the American educational system, a discussion of the role of cultural and ecological factors in the academic achievement of African American children, and presents the aims of this study. Chapter two provides an overview of theoretical perspectives that have been used to explain racial differences in academic

achievement, examines the theoretical perspective employed for the current study,

reviews the existing literature on racial socialization and academic achievement, and

presents the model and hypotheses to be tested. Chapter three reviews the methods used

to achieve the aims of the current study and the data analysis plan. Chapter four presents

the findings, and the final chapter includes a discussion of the findings, the limitations of

the study, and directions for future research and implications for practice.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have clearly established the associations between academic achievement and economic, social, and psychological well-being later in life (Greenberg, Michalopoulos, & Robins, 2003; US Census Bureau, 2005; US Department of Education, 2003; Wirt, Snyder, Burns, Seastrom, & Hussar, 2003). Similarly, the differences in academic achievement between African American students and their European American counterparts are clearly documented (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Farley & Allen, 1989; Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001; Ogbu, 1994; Osborne, 1999). For nearly a century, social scientists and educators have been researching the causes of and solutions to these differences in educational outcomes.

Perspectives have shifted from identifying genetic and cultural deficits as explanations of the academic achievement gap to identifying culturally based family-level practices that African American parents use to help their children to be academically successful, without comparison to other racial or ethnic groups. There is an emerging literature concerning the associations between parental racial socialization practices and academic achievement. However, there are still a limited number of studies that examine children in late childhood and early adolescence, and the effect of different dimensions of racial socialization on academic achievement.

This chapter examines the theoretical approaches to the study of African American academic achievement and discusses the value of utilizing a cultural-ecological perspective to examine the associations between academic achievement and multiple dimensions of racial socialization. The literature on the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement is also reviewed.

Theoretical Approaches to African American Academic Achievement

Explanations for racial disparities in academic achievement and schooling experiences have come from a variety of perspectives including: (a) the genetic deficit perspective, (b) the cultural deficit perspective, and (c) the culturally relevant perspective. While the first perspective assumes the genetic inferiority of African Americans, the latter two perspectives reject this assumption and focus on the influences of parenting practices and socialization within African American families and their influences on children's developmental outcomes, albeit with distinctive explanatory models.

Much of the early research on racial differences in academic achievement attributed African American students' failure to achieve high levels of academic success to genetic deficits (Peterson, 1923; Terman, 1922; Witty & Decker, 1927). Beginning in the late nineteenth century, scientists developed theories to explain the assumed mental inferiority of African Americans. As African Americans entered the public education system in the early twentieth century, this genetic deficit perspective was used to explain differences in academic achievement (Peterson, 1923; Terman, 1922). Several reviews of the literature on racial differences in cognitive ability have made it clear that much of this research is flawed and grounded in unfounded assumptions (Gould, 1981; Guthrie, 1976;

Guthrie, 1991). Although the genetic deficit perspective has not been predominant for some time, there has been a notable revival of this perspective that has received public attention (Herrnstein & Murray, 1984; Jensen, 1984; Rushton, 2000). With the genetic deficit perspective largely debunked, researchers turned their attention to the roles of culture and family processes to explain racial gaps in academic achievement.

The Role of Culture and Links to Family Processes

As IQ and psychometric testing continued to flourish within the growing discipline of psychology, theoretical and empirical studies of race, culture, and community within the emerging field of sociology would supplant genetic deficit models (Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 1922; Frazier, 1939; Staples, 1971). However, the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of White, male, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class Americans would remain the norm against which African Americans would be compared. Moreover, African American families' divergences from these "normative patterns" were thought to be cultural-based deficits emanating from within African American families and their communities. These deficits were thought to prevent African American children from achieving the same levels of academic success as European American children (Moynihan, 1965; Witty & Decker, 1927).

Garcia Coll, Meyer, and Brillon (1995) argued that within the cultural deficit framework there are two major, interconnected lines of inquiry which focused on the family influences on academic achievement. These lines of inquiry emphasize (a) the influences of family structure, cultural norms, family processes, and socialization of African Americans (Allen, 1978; Frazier, 1939; Moynihan, 1965) and (b) the role of

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locus of control, self-esteem, and delay of gratification on academic achievement and other developmental outcomes (Banks, McQuarter, Pryor, & Salter, 1983; Davis, Johnson, Cribbs, & Saunders, 2002; Enger, Howerton, & Cobb, 2001; Flowers, Milner, & Moore, 2003; Ward, Banks, & Wilson, 1991). Generally, African American family structure, parenting, and socialization strategies were viewed as indicators of social pathologies that undermined the development of children's competencies and psychological well-being (e.g., locus of control, delay of gratification) which then had implications for academic achievement (Allen, 1978; McLoyd & Randolph, 1984; Staples, 1971).

This cultural deficit perspective, which focused on cultural variation and deviation from the norm, remained the predominant paradigm for the study of African American children and families well into the 1970s (Allen, 1978; Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, & Johnson, 1993). Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this work expanded to focus on the distinctive ecologies of African American children and other ethnic minority children (Garcia Coll, et al. 1995; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1981; Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990). This expansion represented a shift towards a culturally-relevant perspective.

The current discourse on the education of African American children is largely informed by culturally-relevant perspectives that highlight cultural and ecological factors as contributing to the success or failure of African American students. There are two major strands of research from this perspective. The first strand focuses on race, culture, and the American educational system (Asante, 1991; Diamond, Lewis, & Gordon, 2007;

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Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Majors & Billson, 1992, Ogbu, 2004). This strand examines how African American academic achievement can be explained through an examination of the ways in which race and culture are constructed within and by the American educational system (Asante, 1991; Diamond, Lewis, & Gordon, 2007; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Majors & Billson, 1992; Ogbu, 2004). These perspectives posit that there is an increased likelihood of African American academic failure within an educational system founded on White, male, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class norms. The second strand of cultural relevant research within developmental psychology and family studies has emphasized cultural strengths of African American children and families, culturally-based socialization, and distinctive family patterns (e.g., extended kinship system). Within this strand the above areas of emphasis are viewed as evidence of adaptation rather than pathology (Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, & Johnson, 1993; Murry et al., 2006). Although this area of work has received considerable attention, there is still a need to explore the associations between cultural-specific socialization processes and academic achievement with attention to variations across defined ecologies.

Towards a Cultural-Ecological Approach to Academic Achievement:

The Influences of Racial Socialization

Slaughter-Defoe et al. (1990), in their review and integration of frameworks for the study of ethnic minority children's academic achievement, argued that "frameworks that emphasize how cultural/ecological factors influence achievement supply the most desirable foci for future research efforts……" (p.364). Cultural-ecological models are used to examine how a population's cultural values and the personal attributes and

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behaviors of its members interact with the demands of their environments to generate strategies and tasks designed to meet these demands. These models draw on earlier research on parental socialization that focused on the practical problems of how to rear children and the interactive processes by which individuals acquire the values, attitudes, and skills of the society to which they belong (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1981; Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990). This study draws on cultural-ecological models developed by Ogbu (1981) and Garcia Coll et al. (1996) that focus on the experiences of ethnic-minority children and families. Both of these models provide a framework for understanding African American parents' use of culturally-specific socialization practices to foster personal identity and self esteem; foster feelings of belongingness to kinship networks; and to help children to cope with racism, oppression, and discrimination (Garcia Coll et al., 1995; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1981).

Effective Environment: Race, Social Class, and Gender

The models of Ogbu (1981) and Garcia Coll et al. (1996) outline the ways in which the ecologies of minority children, shaped by social inequality, influence culture and culturally-based adaptations. Ogbu (1981), drawing on theories of cultural anthropology and human ecology, focused on how ecological systems influence the way that parents socialize their children to acquire specific competencies. Effective environment is a concept developed by Ogbu that refers to environmental or ecological demands faced by a population. The effective environment directly impacts a population's efforts to sustain itself and to ensure its physical survival. Drawing on this concept, Garcia Coll et al. (1996) highlighted social position (e.g., race/ethnicity, social

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class), social stratification mechanisms (e.g., racism, oppression, segregation), and their roles in creating promoting or inhibiting environments (e.g., neighborhoods, schools, workplaces) which together form the effective environment of ethnic minority children and their families.

Ogbu (1981) and Garcia Coll et al. (1996) further developed the construct of effective environment with the understanding that the ecologies of African American children and families are not only shaped by race or ethnicity, but also by social class. For example, African American children and families with lower levels of SES are more likely to be involved with predominantly African American academic, social, and educational institutions, while those African Americans with higher levels of SES are more likely to be involved with predominantly European American academic, social, and economic institutions. Hence, family-level SES is an ecological factor that may influence the types and levels of racial socialization that happen in African American families (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006).

As an indicator of social position and social stratification, gender also shapes the effective environment of children and families. Child gender impacts family-level processes and childrearing techniques which ultimately influence specific gendered cultural tasks and competencies which also intersect with race and ethnicity (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2005; Thomas & King, 2007). Thus, child gender is likely to shape aspects of adaptive culture and the socialization strategies families enlist in rearing their children. For example, researchers have found that ethnic minority boys are more likely to be viewed as threatening by others than are

ethnic minority girls (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002). Ethnic minority males also report more discrimination than do ethnic minority females (F Borrell, Kiefe, Williams, Diez-Roux, & Gordon-Larsen, 2006; Fisher & Shaw, 1999). As Hughes et al. (2006) argued in their review of the racial socialization literature, "one might expect ethnic-racial socialization messages to differ for boys versus girls because of the possibility that parents anticipate their differential experiences in external contexts such as…schools" (p.759).

Adaptive Culture and Child Competence

The effective environment influences the cultural norms of a population and results in the creation of a unique adaptive culture. Garcia Coll et al. (1996) described adaptive culture as traditions and cultural legacies. These authors also acknowledged the important roles of political and economic histories and migration patterns from which they emerge. Ogbu (1981) constructed adaptive culture as emergent cultural tasks and context-specific models of success or competence, as well as parents' approach to childrearing to develop these competencies. Both theories draw attention to ethnic-minority families' culturally-based responses to the unique challenges they face. For example, African American families continue to be confronted with a lack of equitable educational opportunities. At the same time, many African American families have the belief that educational success is the major portal to economic success in the United States (Davis-Kean, 2005; Ford, 1993). African American parents may attempt to cope with this conflict by socializing their children into the child competencies believed to help their children successfully navigate the inequities of the educational system.

Adaptive culture shapes many aspects of family life (e.g., roles, behaviors) and family interactions (e.g., parenting, socialization strategies) which create child competencies. Child competencies can also be understood as strategies for coping with the effective environment. Cultural-ecological models are designed not only to highlight the unique challenges faced by ethnic minority families, but also to provide a model for understanding how these families adapt to ecological pressures by creating family-level practices designed to influence child competencies (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1981). For Ogbu (1981) and Garcia Coll et al. (1996), parenting, childrearing techniques, and socialization strategies are among the family-level interactions used as coping strategies to address the demands of the effective environment and to support the development of the child competencies deemed necessary to meet cultural tasks.

Racial Socialization and Academic Competence

African American parents often find it necessary to use culturally-specific socialization practices to provide their children with the desired competencies. Rotherman and Phinney (1987) define racial socialization as "the developmental processes by which children acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and come to see themselves and others as members of the group" (p.11). The existing literature conceptualizes racial socialization as having multiple dimensions. Hughes et al. (2006) identify five dimensions that commonly appear in the racial socialization literature: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, egalitarianism, and other. Cultural socialization refers to parenting practices that teach African American children about their racial history or heritage and is also referred to as

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pride development. Preparation for bias refers to parenting practices focused on preparing

African American children to be aware of, and cope with, discrimination. Promotion of

mistrust refers to the parenting practices of socializing children to be wary of people from

other races. Egalitarianism refers to socializing children with the belief that all people are

equal and should be treated with a common humanity. Preparation for bias and pride

development are used for the purposes of this study because these are the dimensions that

have most frequently been associated with academic achievement in the existing

literature (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002;

Marshall, 1995).

African American families may use culturally-specific socialization practices to

orient their children toward success in a public education system that is based on White,

middle-class, male norms. In this instance, families may react to their effective

environment by socializing children to be aware that racism exists and is potentially

harmful. Families might also respond to the same or similar effective environment by

socializing their children to be proud of their ethnicity in the hope that this pride will

serve as a protective factor. Thus, parental racial socialization may be a practice that

African American parents use to support their children's success in an academic

environment based on the dominant cultural norms while at the same time supporting

their connections to African American social norms. Figure 1 illustrates the cultural-

ecological model used in this study which links parental racial socialization and child

academic achievement as they are influenced by the effective environment.

Figure 1.

Influences of Effective Environment and Adaptive Culture on Child Competence: A
Cultural-Ecological Model
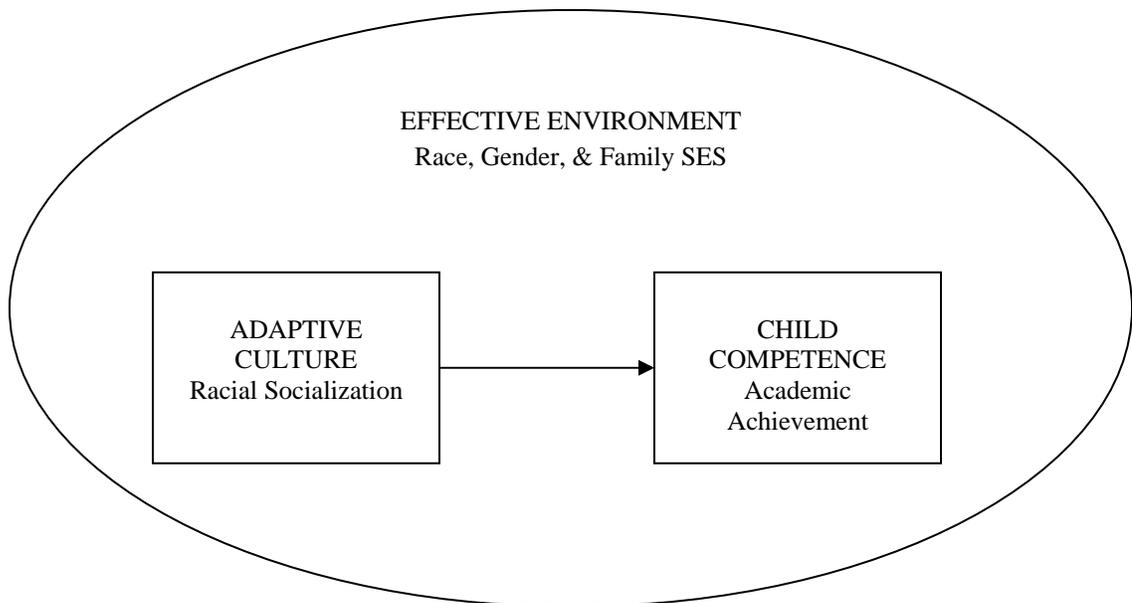
The Influences of Racial Socialization on Academic Achievement

Despite the expressed need for this work, there are few studies that apply a

culturally-relevant perspective to the study of academic achievement (Slaughter-Defoe et

al., 1990). Also, there are a limited number of studies from any theoretical perspective

that examine the association between racial socialization and academic achievement

(Hughes et al., 2006). Where this research does exist, there are gaps in the literature

which include a limited number of studies of children during middle childhood and early

adolescence, a lack of definitive evidence on the impact of different types of racial

socialization practices on academic achievement, and limited information on the moderating effects of ecological variables.

Only three studies have examined the association between racial socialization and academic achievement, or cognitive functioning, in younger African American children (Hughes et al., 2006). Marshall (1995) examined a sample of fifty-eight African American mothers and their nine- and ten-year-old children. Marshall (1995) found that those children who reported broad-based racial socialization had lower levels of academic achievement. However, the same study found that mother's report of racial socialization was not related to youth's academic achievement. Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, and Nickerson (2002), in a study of 200 children between three and five years of age and their mothers, had similar results. Using an observational measure of Afrocentric Home Environment, these researchers found that an Afrocentric Home Environment was positively associated with factual knowledge and problem-solving scores on the Kaufmann Assessment Battery for Children. However, mothers' reports of racial socialization were not associated with their children's cognitive abilities. Smith, Smith, Atkins, and Connell (2003) studied a sample of ninety-eight African American fourth graders. They found that mothers' reports of socialization toward racial-ethnic pride were associated with higher achievement as measured by grades and standardized tests. At the same time, mothers' reports of socialization towards racial distrust and perception of barriers due to race were associated with lower achievement. These studies suggest that if there is an association between racial socialization and academic or

cognitive competencies, for young children it may vary by type of message and how it is delivered.

There have been mixed results in the three studies that have examined the links between racial socialization and academic achievement in older children and adolescents. Bowman and Howard (1985) studied a sample of 377 African American students between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four. The researchers examined the associations between academic achievement and preparation for bias, pride development, self-development, and egalitarianism. Self-development refers to messages which emphasize the importance of hard work, self-reliance, initiative, and character building (e.g., you must work hard to get a good education/job). By comparing students who received preparation for bias messages (i.e. messages about racial barriers) to students who received no racial socialization messages, Bowman and Howard (1985) found that students who received preparation for bias messages received higher school grades then those who received no socialization messages. Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, and Sellers (2006) studied a sample of 548 African American adolescents. They found that levels of racial socialization messages about self-worth and the frequency of participation in activities or behaviors involving African American culture were significantly and positively related to self-reported grade point average. These findings conflict with those of Smith, Atkins, and Connell (2003) who found that racial-ethnic pride was associated with higher levels of achievement in younger children. However, Miller and MacIntosh (1999) examined a sample of 131 African American youth in grades eight through twelve

and found no statistically significant associations between racial socialization and academic achievement, when controlling for risk and protective factors.

Gender and social class differences in the links between racial socialization and academic achievement, and the potential moderating effects of these aspects of effective environment, have not been directly studied. While all of the aforementioned studies have samples that are diverse in terms of gender and SES, none examine these factors as potential moderators of the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement; and only two control for the influences of gender or SES (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson 2002; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). Using structural equation modeling, Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, and Nickerson (2002) found the effects of Afrocentric Home Environment on cognitive competencies was reduced to marginal significance when SES was added to the model. However, multi-group analyses to examine gender or SES differences in the model were not conducted. Neblett, Philip, Cogbern, and Sellers (2006), when controlling for the effects of gender and SES, found that cultural socialization was a significant predictor of academic achievement. Although previous studies on parental racial socialization have focused almost exclusively on race as an ecological context, cultural-ecological theory suggests that race, gender, and social class together shape the effective environment. Thus, the moderating effects of gender and SES on the associations between the between racial socialization and academic achievement are important to consider.

The Moderating Effects of Child Gender and SES

A cultural-ecological perspective suggests both gender differences in racial socialization and a moderating role for gender when considering the association between racial socialization and child competencies. While there have been a number of studies which have examined influences of child gender on the type and frequency of racial socialization messages, no studies were found which examined the moderating effects of child gender on the associations between dimensions of racial socialization and academic achievement among African American children. Studies of gender differences have found that boys are more likely to receive preparation for bias messages while girls are more likely to receive messages about racial pride (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Thomas & Speight, 1999). However, a number of other studies have found no significant gender differences in racial socialization practices (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Scott, 2003; Stevenson, Reed, & Bodison, 1996; Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000). There is mixed evidence in regard to the effect of gender on the type and frequency of racial socialization messages. However, studies have only examined if there is an association between gender and the type of messages received but not whether the associations between racial socialization and children's competencies vary by child gender.

The cultural-ecological perspective suggests that SES may influence the association between culturally-specific socialization practices and child outcomes. There are a number of studies that examine how the type and frequency of racial socialization messages vary by SES. Hughes et al. (2006) found that African American parents with

higher SES reported higher levels of racial socialization. Preparation for bias and cultural

socialization messages (i.e. practices that teach about racial history or heritage) were both

delivered with less frequency among parents in clerical jobs, sales jobs, machine trades,

or service occupations than by parents with professional or managerial positions (Hughes

& Chen, 1997). Likewise, research has shown that parents with higher incomes and more

education are more likely to deliver cultural socialization and preparation for bias

messages to their children (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, &

Nickerson, 2002; McHale et al., 2006). Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, and Nickerson

(2002) also found that African American parents with higher incomes were more likely to

have homes with an Afrocentric environment than African American parents in lower

income brackets. In studies in which both income and education have been included,

findings have suggested that respondents in middle SES groups were more likely to focus

on discrimination and mistrust messages and less likely to deliver egalitarian messages

than respondents in lower and higher SES groups (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, &

Nickerson, 2002; Thornton, 1997). There have been some studies which have failed to

find SES differences in types and frequency of racial socialization; however, these

studies tend to have smaller sample sizes and homogeneity in SES.

In summary, the existing literature on racial socialization documents a positive

association between preparation for bias and academic achievement. There are

conflicting findings on the associations between pride development and academic

achievement. The literature examines the impact of gender and SES on the type and

frequency of racial socialization messages that parents deliver. However, there are no

tests for how gender and SES moderates the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement. The current study employs a cultural-ecological model to study the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement. This model suggests that gender and SES, as effective environment, will moderate the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement.

Model and Hypotheses

Based on a cultural-ecological perspective and the reviewed literature, a hypothesized model was developed (Figure 2). This model illustrates the associations between two types of parental racial socialization (preparation for bias and pride development) and children's academic achievement, and the moderating effects of child gender and SES. It is hypothesized that racial socialization will be associated with academic achievement, and that this association will be moderated by child gender and social class. Specifically, it is hypothesized that preparation for bias will be positively associated with academic achievement. The direction of the association between pride development and academic achievement has varied across studies. It is hypothesized that pride development will be associated with academic achievement; however, the direction of this association is not hypothesized.

The theory employed for this study suggests that gender will alter the association between racial socialization and academic achievement. However, there are no tests of gender differences in the existing literature. Thus, it is hypothesized that gender will moderate the association between racial socialization and academic achievement. However, the direction of these effects is not hypothesized. Likewise, the theory

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employed for this study suggests that SES will alter the nature of the association between racial socialization and academic achievement. However, the literature contains no tests of SES differences in the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement. Thus, it is hypothesized that SES will moderate the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement, but the direction of the effects is not hypothesized.

The testing of a cultural-ecological model that links parental racial socialization and child academic achievement, as they are influenced by effective environment, contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it adds to the theoretical literature by applying a cultural-ecological approach to the study of African American parental socialization practices and the academic achievement of African American children. Second, it contributes to the existing literature by examining how the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement vary by different dimensions of racial socialization. Finally, few studies have examined the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement during middle childhood and early adolescence.

Figure 2.

Hypothesized Model: Associations between Racial Socialization, Academic
Achievement, and the Moderating Effects of Child Gender and SES

```
┌─────────────────────────┐                          ┌─────────────────────┐
│   Racial Socialization  │                          │     Academic        │
│ (Preparation for Bias and│ ──────────────────────▶ │   Achievement       │
│   Pride Development)     │              ▲           │      (GPA)          │
└─────────────────────────┘              │           └─────────────────────┘
                                         │
                              ┌──────────────────────┐
                              │     Child Gender     │
                              │                      │
                              │     Family SES       │
                              └──────────────────────┘
```
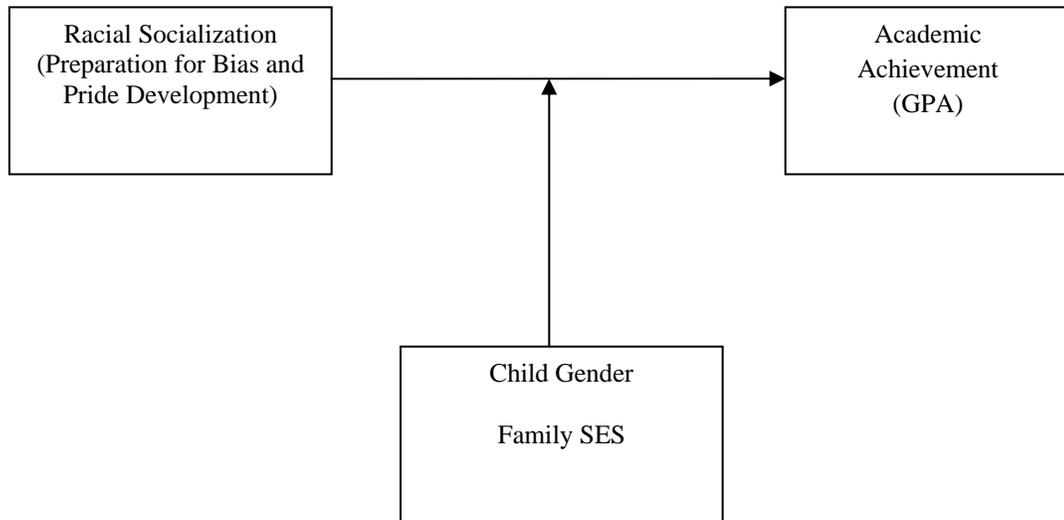
CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study is a within-group analysis of African American children and families. The study utilizes cross-sectional data to investigate the influence of mother's racial socialization on the academic achievement of African American fifth grade students. Data used for the current study were collected as part of a larger, mixed-method, longitudinal study that examined the ways in which social relationships between parents and their children's friend's parents have the potential to create positive psychological and behavioral outcomes for children.

Participants

Participants for the study were 132 African American fifth grade boys and girls and their mothers. The student sample was 55% female and 45% male with a mean age of 10.29 years and a standard deviation of .52 years. Three of the children in the sample were in fourth grade, with the remaining children being fifth graders. All the children were self-identified as Black or African American. The mothers in the sample had a mean age of 37.41 years with a standard deviation of 6.06 years and all self-identified as Black or African American. The sample had a mean Hollingshead socio-economic status (SES) score of 37.72, which would be classified as skilled craftsmen, clerical, or sales workers.

Procedures

A classroom-based data collection was first conducted at each of the participating schools. All children who participated in classroom-based data collection received a small, school-related gift. Using data collected during the school-based data collection, research assistants determined child eligibility for the in-home data collection. Research assistants then contacted parents of eligible students (participated in the school-based data collection, African American or European American ethnicity, living with biological or adoptive mother, child born in the United States)to recruit mothers and children for the in-home data collection. In-home data collection involved face-to-face interviews and supervised questionnaire completion with mothers and children conducted separately. When possible, interviews were conducted by a same-race interviewer to remove any potential cultural biases and to eliminate any potential cross-racial discomfort during the interview. The home visits took one to two hours to complete. Consent for participation in the in-home interviews was obtained from parents and children provided assent before each interview began. Parents were given cash incentives and children were given a small school related gift for each year they participated in the study. Child grades in four major academic subjects (Math, English/Reading, Science, and Social Studies) were collected from teachers at the end of the school year.

Community and School District Profile

The participant families resided in a mid-sized southeastern county that was diverse with respect to social class and ethnicity. Thirty-one percent of the county's population was African American, and 39% of the population in the county's most

populous city was African American. The income of the county population varied; 27% of households earned less than $25,000 per year, 27% of households earned between $25,000 and $49,999, 30% of households earned between $50,000 and $99,999, and 16% of households earned $100,000 or more. This variation in income reflects the SES of participant families.

All of the children initially recruited for the study were third grade students attending one of nine elementary schools in the same school district. The schools varied in racial composition and size. During the 2007-2008 school year, the district from which schools and families were recruited contained 120 schools spread throughout urban, suburban, and rural areas. The district served approximately 71,000 students and employed approximately 10,381 full-time and part-time employees. Fifty-percent of the student population qualified for free or reduced lunch. The student population was comprised of 40% European American students, 41% African American students, 9% Hispanic/Latino students, 5% Asian students, 1% Native American students, and 4% Multi-ethnic students. With respect to academic achievement, fifty-four percent of all fifth-grade students in the district were at or above grade level in reading. Thirty-seven percent of the districts fifth-grade African American students were at or above grade level in reading. Thus, during the 2007-2008 school year, approximately six out of ten of the district's African American fifth-grade students were below grade level in reading.

<center>Measures</center>

Study variables include child gender, family SES, racial socialization, and academic achievement. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics on all study variables.

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Socio-demographic Characteristics

      Socio-demographic characteristics included child gender and SES. For gender, children were coded as either 0 (*female)* or 1 (*male)*. Family SES was measured using the Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status (1975). Mothers reported their level of education which was then scored on a scale ranging from 1 (less than seventh grade) to 7 (graduate degree). Mothers were then asked to report there occupation which was rated on a scale of 1 (farm laborers/menial service workers) to 9 (higher executives, proprietors of large businesses, and major professionals). The education score is multiplied by a weight of three and the occupation score is multiplied by a weight of five. These two products are then added together to calculate the overall score for the mother. In single-parent households, the mothers were then asked if the target child's father was actively involved in the child's life. If the mother responded in the affirmative, then the father's score was calculated and both parents' scores were averaged to calculate SES. If single-parent mothers said that the father was not actively involved in the target child's life, the mother's score represented family SES. In two parent households, the family SES was determined by averaging the scores of both parents. In cases where the mother had a co-habiting partner or had remarried and the step-father lived in the household, the partner's or step-father's score was averaged with the mother's score to calculate family SES. Hollingshead (1975) family SES scores that can range from 9 (unemployed with little education) to 66 (executive/professional with graduate education). The SES for the sample ranged from 19.5 (unskilled laborers) to 66 (professional/executive). The mean SES for the sample was 37.72 with a standard deviation of 10.51.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization was measured using the Parents Experience of Racial Socialization (PERS) Scale (Stevenson, 1999; Appendix A). This is a forty-item scale that measures how often parents communicate specific racial socialization messages, verbally or physically, to their children. The measure contains four subscales: Cultural Survival, Spiritual Coping, Preparation for Bias, and Pride Development. Response options are a three-point Likert-scale that allows parents to answer 1 (*never)*, 2 (*a few times)*, or 3 (*lots of times)*. Cultural Survival measures the degree to which parents socialize their children with culturally appropriate survival strategies (e.g., "Knowing your African heritage is important for your survival"). Spiritual Coping measures the degree to which parents socialize their children to use spirituality as a coping mechanism (e.g., "Depending on religion and God will help you live a good life"). The current study focuses on the Preparation for Bias and Pride Development subscales because these dimensions are most frequently associated with academic achievement in the existing racial socialization literature. Preparation for Bias measures the degree to which parents socialize their children to understand that racism exists and is an obstacle for them (e.g., "Racism is real and you have to understand it or it will hurt you") and has a Cronbach's alpha of .88. Pride Development measures the degree to which parents socialize their children to be proud of their race (e.g., "You should be proud to be black") and has a Cronbach's alpha of .77.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is measured using grade point average. Grade point average was calculated using school reported grades from each target child's core classes: reading, math, science and social studies. Letter grades were assigned numeric scores such that A= 4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0. These grades were then averaged creating a grade point average for each child. The mean grade point average for the sample was 2.94 with a standard deviation of .77, a minimum of .75 and a maximum of 4.0.

Table 1

Study Variables: Descriptive Statistics

Variable Name	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Preparation for Bias	23.00	12.00	35.00	22.25	5.70
Pride Development	13.00	11.00	24.00	19.81	3.45
SES	46.50	19.50	66.00	37.72	10.51
Gender[a]	1.00	0.00	1.00	.45[b]	---
Grade Point Average	3.25	0.75	4.00	2.94	.77

[a] Child gender: 0 = *female*, 1 = *male*. [b] Represents the percentage of the sample that is male.

Data Analysis Plan

The aims of this study are two-fold: (1) to examine the associations between two dimensions of racial socialization and academic achievement; and (2) to examine variation in these associations across child gender and family socio-economic status. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was the original analysis of interest. However, the theoretical model proposed was just-identified and was, therefore, no ability to evaluate model fit. Thus, multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypothesized model and the predicted associations between racial socialization, academic achievement, and the moderating effects of child gender and SES.

Multiple linear regression analysis examines the relationship between one or more independent variables and a dependent variable by fitting a linear equation to observed data. Multiple linear regression allows one to examine the independent variables as predictors of the dependent variable and the percent of variance in the dependent variable explained by the regression model tested. To test for moderation, product terms between an independent variables and hypothesized moderator are calculated. Multiple linear regression is appropriate for the current study in that this analysis will determine if levels of racial socialization significantly predict student GPA and to what extent preparation for bias or pride development may deferentially predict GPA. Multiple regression analyses will also reveal if gender and GPA moderate the relationships between racial socialization and GPA. Multiple regression analyses are interpreted by examining what percentage of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by all of the

independent variables. The analysis is also interpreted by examining the extent to which each variable is a significant predictor of GPA.

For the current study, multiple linear regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses that preparation for bias would be associated with academic achievement and pride development would be positively associated with academic achievement and that gender and SES would moderate these associations. Two models were tested. Model 1 regressed academic achievement on gender, SES, preparation for bias, pride development, and the racial socialization by gender interaction terms. Model 2 regressed academic achievement on gender, SES, preparation for bias, pride development, and the racial socialization by SES interaction term. For each of the interaction terms, SES and dimensions of RS were centered. That is, they were adjusted to have the mean score of zero and a standard deviation of one. This was done because centering reduces multi-collinearity and for ease of interpretation of the regression coefficient. Preliminary analyses of the correlations between study variables were also conducted, as were post-hoc analyses of the correlations between preparation for bias and GPA for separate samples of boys and girls.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The aims of this study were to examine the associations between parental racial socialization and academic achievement and to explore the moderating effects of child gender and SES. This chapter presents findings from the analyses conducted to accomplish this aim.

Preliminary Analysis

Table 2 presents the correlations among preparation for bias, pride development, gender, SES, and GPA, and the means and standard deviations for the study variables. Preparation for bias and pride development were significantly positively correlated ($r = .66$, $p < .01$). As the frequency of preparation for bias messages parents delivered to their children increased, so did the frequency of pride development messages. GPA was significantly negatively correlated with both gender ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$) and SES ($r = .21$, $p < .05$). Girls had higher GPAs than boys and higher levels of SES were associated higher GPAs. There were no statistically significant associations between either dimension of racial socialization and GPA.

Table 2

Study Variables: Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations (N = 132)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Pride development	–				
2. Preparation for bias	.66**	–			
3. SES	-.14	-.17	–		
4. Gender[a]	-.05	-.03	.00	–	
5. GPA	.10	.02	.21*	-.36**	–
Mean	22.25	19.81	37.72	.45[b]	2.94
SD	5.7	3.45	10.51	—	.77

*p < .05. **p < .01. [a] Child gender: 0 = *female*, 1 = *male*. [b] Represents the percentage of the sample that was male.

<center>The Influences of Racial Socialization on Academic Achievement and the</center>

<center>Moderating Effects of Child Gender</center>

It was hypothesized that racial socialization would be associated with academic achievement and that gender would moderate these associations. To test these hypotheses, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted (Table 3). The regression model included gender, SES, preparation for bias, pride development, and an interaction

between racial socialization and gender. The model was significant and explained 22% of

the variance in academic achievement, $F_{(6, 94)} = 5.717$, p=.000, adjusted $R^2 = .221$.

Table 3

Multiple Linear Regression: Racial Socialization, Academic Achievement, and Moderating Effects of Gender

Predictor	B	SE	ß
Gender	-1.787	.819	-1.168*
SES	.020	.006	.283**
Preparation for Bias	-.019	.021	-.135
Pride Development	-.011	.034	-.050
Gender X Preparation for Bias	.070	.032	1.077*
Gender X Pride Development	-.019	.052	-.250

*p < .05 **p < .01

As reported in Table 2, child gender (ß = -1.168, p = .032) was a significant negative

predictor of academic achievement and SES (ß= .283, p = .002) was a significant positive

predictor of academic achievement. While neither pride development nor preparation for

bias was a significant predictor of academic achievement; there was a significant

interaction between preparation for bias and gender (ß = 1.077, p = .029). This indicated

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that gender significantly moderated the associations between preparation for bias and academic achievement. Figure 2 illustrates this interaction. For boys, as the frequency of preparation for bias messages increased, GPA also increased. For girls, as the frequency of preparation for bias messages increased, GPA decreased.

Figure 3.

Racial Socialization and Academic Achievement: Moderating Effects of Child Gender
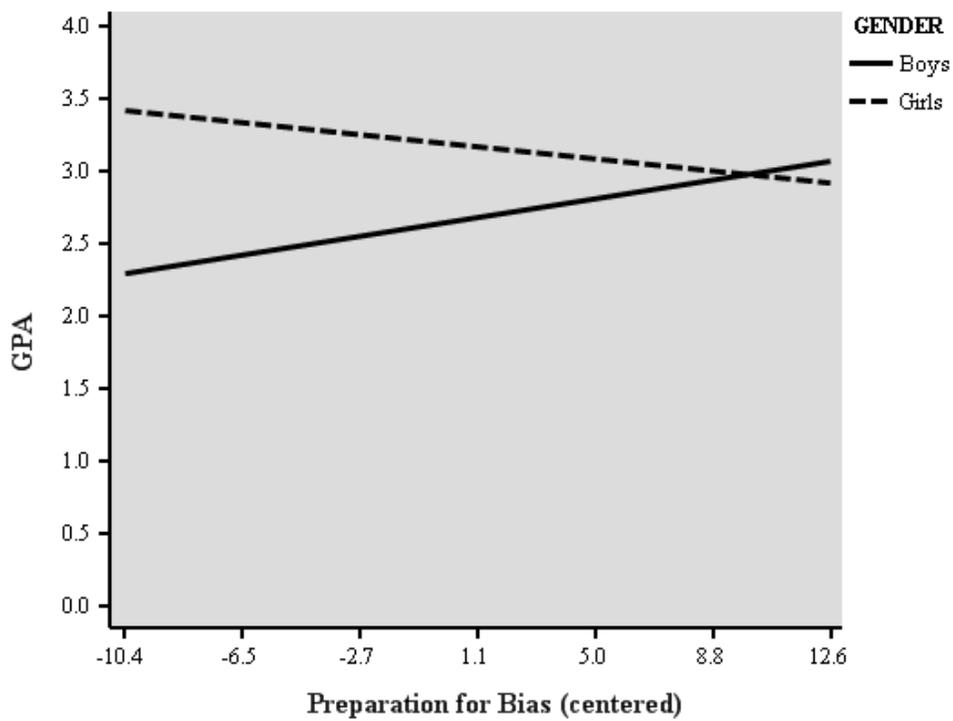
To further understand this interaction, correlations between preparation for bias and GPA for separate samples of boys and girls were calculated. One-tailed significance tests were used because the directional nature of this correlation was hypothesized. There was a significant and positive correlation between preparation for bias and GPA in boys ($r = .26$, $p = .04$). While the correlation between preparation for bias and GPA for girls was negative, but it was not significant ($r = -.18$, $p = .08$).

The Influences of Racial Socialization on Academic Achievement and the

Moderating Effects of SES

It was also hypothesized that racial socialization would be associated with academic achievement and that SES would moderate these associations. To test this hypothesis multiple linear regression analyses were conducted (Table 4). The model included gender, SES, preparation for bias, pride development, and interaction terms for each domain of racial socialization by SES.

Table 4.

Multiple Linear Regression: Racial Socialization, Academic Achievement, and Moderating Effects of SES

Predictor	B	SE	ß
Gender	-.580	.140	-.379**
SES	.010	.014	.148
Preparation for Bias	.005	.040	.033
Pride Development	-.026	.055	-.116
SES X Preparation for Bias	.001	.023	.034
SES X Pride Development	.005	.020	.130

*p < .05 **p < .01

The model was significant, explaining 22% of the variance in academic achievement, $F_{(6, 94)} = 4.421$, $p = .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .220$. However, gender (ß = -.379, $p = .000$) was the only significant predictor in this model. Preparation for bias and pride development were not significant predictors of GPA and there were no significant moderating effects of SES.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Educational success is imperative for the future economic, social, and emotional

well-being of youth (US Department of Education, 2003; Wirt, Snyder, Burns, Seastrom,

& Hussar, 2003). However, African Americans have faced a long history of inequality

and inequity in the American public education system. African American children have

been, and currently are, educated in a school system based on European American, male,

middle-class norms (Gordon, 1999; McNergney & Herbert, 1998). These institutions

have in the past, and in some cases currently, assumed that African American children

and families have a genetic or cultural deficit which makes them incapable of achieving

the same academic successes as their European American classmates (Chicago

Commission on Race Relations, 1922; Frazier, 1939; Peterson, 1923; Rushton, 2000;

Staples, 1971; Terman, 1922; Witty & Decker, 1927). This history of African Americans

in public education is paralleled by a history of research on the cognitive abilities and

academic achievement of African American children. This research has used assumed

genetic deficits and cultural deviance to explain differences in achievement between

African American students in their European American counterparts.

Cultural-ecological research perspectives have been developed which assume the

normalcy of African American children and families; and explore the cultural and

ecological factors that influence the developmental competencies of African American

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children (Garcia Coll, et al. 1995; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1981; Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990). In the face of an often oppressive educational system, the practices that African American parents and families may employ to help their children be academically successful have the potential to improve the well-being of their children. The current study employed a cultural-ecological perspective to help identify these practices by examining the associations between parental racial socialization (preparation for bias and pride development) and child academic achievement (GPA). The study also examined how differences in effective environment (i.e. child gender & family SES) may affect the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement.

It was hypothesized that preparation for bias would positively predict academic achievement, while pride development would predict academic achievement. These hypotheses were not confirmed; as neither preparation for bias nor pride development was a significant predictor of academic achievement. These findings are consistent with Marshall (1995) and Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph and Nickerson (2002) who found that mothers' reports of racial socialization were not correlated with academic achievement, nor were either of the dimensions of racial socialization a significant predictor of academic achievement. At the same time these findings are inconsistent with the research of Smith, Atkins, and Connell (2003) who found that mothers' reports of pride development were associated with higher achievement. The findings for the current study were also inconsistent with the findings of Bowman and Howard (1985) who found that preparation for bias messages were associated with higher academic achievement. These

studies varied in terms of methodology, measures of racial socialization used, and age of respondents. Furthermore, none of these studies examined the influences of gender and SES on the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement.

Cultural-ecological theory posits that the effective environment (e.g., gender and SES) influences culturally-specific parenting practices which, in turn, influence child competencies (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1981). This theory suggests that gender and SES will moderate the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement. However, previous studies on racial socialization have not examined gender or SES differences in these associations. To explore the links between cultural-specific parenting practices and academic competence and the influences of effective environment, the current study also tested the moderating effects of gender and SES on the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement. It was found that gender did moderate the association between preparation for bias and academic achievement. Preparation for bias was positively and significantly associated with GPA for boys only. SES did not moderate associations between either dimension of racial socialization and GPA.

The variations in the associations between preparation for bias and GPA by gender found in this study are suggestive of the ways in which the effective environment shapes cultural-specific parenting practices, and their links to children's academic competencies. That is, the intersection of gender and race results in different effective environments for African American boys and girls. The effective environment reflects the unique social position held by each individual and is comprised of their specific set of

social position variables which include race, gender, and social class (Collins, 1998). Thus, although both African American boys and girls are subject to the impacts of race and racism, the effective environments in which they are embedded may result in them being confronted with different forms or expressions of racism. In addition, gender may influence the specific behaviors African American children utilize in their attempts to cope with the racism they encounter.

Based on cultural-ecological theory, the effect of preparation for bias messages on boys' academic performance may be indicative of the specific form of racism that they are confronted with and the strategies that these boys may utilize to help them cope with the racial biases they encounter in school settings. Ethnic minority boys are more likely that their female counterparts to be perceived as a threat (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Casella, 2003). Ethnic minority boys also report more discrimination than do ethnic minority girls (Borrell, Kiefe, Williams, Diez-Roux, & Gordon-Larsen, 2006; Fisher & Shaw, 1999). In the school setting, African American male students are often viewed as "dangerous" or "troublemakers" (Bodwitch, 1993; Casella, 2003). They are sometimes viewed as "not fitting into the school" (Casella, 2003) and are overrepresented in exclusionary discipline practices (Fenning & Rose, 2007). In this context, when African American boys receive higher levels of preparation for bias messages, they may be better prepared to understand and cope with the racism they encounter. These boys may then be able to employ specific behaviors as mechanisms to cope with the racism they encounter. For example, African American boys may engage in attempts to be less threatening or to "fit-in" with the school culture. The resulting behavior is what Fordham and Ogbu (1985)

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referred to as "acting White". This concept of "acting White" refers to African Americans who adopt European American cultural and linguistic norms in order to create desired outcomes within social institutions which value European American, middle-class, male norms. Thus, for African American boys who know that they are perceived as dangerous or troublemakers in a school setting, "acting White" may become a strategy for successfully addressing these racist assumptions.

Research has shown that teachers associate European American cultural characteristics with higher achievement (Bodwitch, 1993; Casella, 2003; Corbleth & Korth, 1980; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Washington, 1982). Thus, when African American boys choose to "act White" in response to the racism they experience in the classroom, it has a positive impact on their academic achievement. African American boys with high levels of racial socialization could use "acting White" as the mechanism to cope with racism and discrimination that threatens academic success and the successful negotiation of relationships with teachers and school administrators. Indeed, Miller (1999) found that racial socialization may protect African American adolescents against discrimination and, thereby, positively influence academic achievement. Similarly, Sanders (1997) found that African American students who were highly aware of racial discrimination responded to it in ways that benefited their academic achievement.

The original thesis of "acting White" was that African American students do not desire to have high levels of academic achievement because it is considered "acting White". This thesis has been much debated in the literature for more than twenty years (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Fryer, 2006; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Obgu, 2004). Much of the

debate has centered on whether African American students oppose school achievement. Those who argue that African American students do not carry a culture that is oppositional to school norms point to within-group variation in academic achievement as their evidence (Harpalani, 2002; Horvat & Lewis, 2003). Ogbu (2004) later clarified that the original thesis was directly related to the collective identity of African American students, not to the racial and ethnic identities of individual students. Despite the great amount of work that has been done around the "acting White" thesis, there has been little exploration of gender differences in the way this coping strategy may be linked to school success. Indeed, the collective identity that Fordham and Ogbu (1985) refer to is likely a gendered identity.

Ogbu (2004) stated that collective identity is a people's sense of who they are and is expressed by cultural symbols. He continued by stating that, for oppressed ethnic groups, this collective identity is created by "two sets of factors: status problems and minority response to status problems" (p. 4). Status problems for African Americans include a history of slavery, economic and political disenfranchisement, and segregation. The response to these status problems would include slave revolts, the abolitionist movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Power movement. If one were to look to individual identities as the cultural symbols which reflect the status problems and responses, they would find that these are predominantly male identities (e.g., Kunta Kente, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Nat Turner, Fredrick Douglas, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X). Where female identities do exist, these identities are sometimes shifted towards maleness. For example,

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Harriet Tubman was called the "Moses" of her people. While African American women have played an equal, and often leading, role in dealing with and responding to the status problems of African Americans; the collective identity of African American people remains a largely male identity. Thus, the "acting White" thesis described by Fordham and Ogbu (1985) may be built primarily on the collective identity of African American males.

While African American girls may not be perceived as a threat or may not report discrimination as frequently as African American boys, they are certainly exposed to racism. The intersection of race and gender provides African American girls with a different experience of racism than their male counterparts. Fordham (1993) found that racism and sexism combine to create an image of African American girls as having "nothingness". In other words, these girls are expected to remain voiceless or silent because they, and their voices, are not valued in a racist and sexist educational setting. Those girls who receive high levels of preparation for bias messages are likely to be more aware of the racism that exists in their schools, and look for ways to oppose this image of nothingness. Fordham (1993) suggested that girls who make efforts to subvert this image of "nothingness" are often view as "loud" and labeled "those loud Black girls". In a setting that values adherence to European American, male norms, this "loudness", particularly from an African American girl, may be considered defiant and oppositional. The "loudness" leads to increases in negative behavioral referrals and adverse effects on the grades of these girls.

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Given this process, one might expect preparation for bias to be negatively related to academic achievement for girls. However, Fordham (1993) also identified the avenues through which girls who are aware of this bias may become academically successful. Fordham (1993) stated that there are two ways that African American girls become academically successful in the context of an oppressive school: "(1) becoming and remaining voiceless or silent or, alternatively, (2) impersonating a male image-symbolically- in self-presentation, including voice, thinking, speech pattern, and writing style, in the formal school context" (p. 10). Fordham (1993) noted that these strategies are used as a means of defying the oppression these girls encounter. When African American girls have higher levels of preparation for bias they may become more aware of the racism that exists in the context of their schools. They may then choose one of the behaviors outlined above as a means of coping with this racism. Thus, the impact of preparation for bias on children's GPA may vary by the specific behavior African American girls adopt to cope with the racism they encounter; as is also suggested by Miller (1999) and Sanders (1997).

It is also important to point out that for both boys and girls, these processes reflect reactions to racism and oppression in a school context. The choices that African American students make in academic settings to "act White", be loud, remain silent, or impersonate a male image do not necessarily carry over into a social setting. While these behaviors may be deemed appropriate for dealing with racism in an academic setting, they are not necessarily the behaviors that the same individual would adopt to deal with racism in a social setting. This being the case, the findings of the current study emphasize

the need for African American students to have the capacity to choose the appropriate behavioral strategies for a given context. Thus, in the words of W.E.B. DuBois (1903), "one ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p. 29).

It is also important to understand how variations in social class among African Americans also create distinctive effective environments; and how these effective environments may influence the associations between adaptive culture and child competence. In the current study, it was hypothesized that SES would moderate the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement. While the empirical literature on racial socialization includes no examination of SES differences in the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement, this hypothesis was developed largely based on the cultural-ecological perspective employed for the current study. SES did not moderate the association between either dimension of racial socialization and academic achievement. However, before concluding that SES, as an aspect of effective environment, fails to influence links between cultural-specific parenting practices and academic achievement, it is appropriate to explore alternative explanations for these findings.

There are potential explanations for these findings that are both theoretical and methodological. The cultural-ecological approach used in this study suggests that the effective environment influences the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement. However, the theory also suggests that aspects (i.e., race, gender,

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and class) of the effective environment do not operate independently of each other. Rather, the effective environment is a measure of how a variety of ecological variables interact to create a unique environment in which these associations occur (Collins, 1998). However, this study was unable to account for the complex ways in which social class may interact with other aspects of the effective environment (i.e., race, and gender) to influence the associations between adaptive culture and child competence.

As mentioned in the review of the literature, previous studies that found no variation in racial socialization messages by SES were limited in that they had small and relatively homogenous samples. In the current study, there was also a methodological limitation that may have impacted the ability to detect the potential moderating influences of SES on the associations between racial socialization and GPA. Although the sample for the current study was relatively diverse in terms of SES, it lacked representation of the lowest SES families. In educational practice and in school-based research, student SES is often measured by the number or percent of students on free and reduced lunch. This is discussed as dichotomous (i.e. students in poverty or students not in poverty). While the sample in this study does include lower-wage working class families and unskilled laborers, it may exclude families who are living in poverty. The limited number of respondents in poverty and a relatively small sample size may account for the finding that SES does not moderate the association between racial socialization and academic achievement.

The current study adds to the existing literature on racial socialization by examining the potential moderating effects of gender and SES on the association between

academic achievement and racial socialization. Equally important is the contribution that the current study makes to the theoretical literature. It is one of a limited number of studies to test a cultural-ecological model by examining how the effective environment influences the associations between adaptive culture and child competence. The study's finding regarding the moderating effects of child gender provide support for key assumptions of cultural-ecological models. However, further testing of the cultural-ecological model employed for this study is needed.

The above discussion highlights how race and gender cannot be considered separately when attempting to understand the influences of the effective environment. As Collins (1998) argued, race, gender, and social class are intersecting social locations that are structured by interlocking systems of subordination and domination. The current study makes a contribution to the existing theoretical literature by being among the first to empirically examine race, gender, and class as interconnected components of effective environment and their influences on the associations between cultural-specific parenting and academic achievement. In addition, the current study connects a number of culturally-relevant theoretical perspectives (Collins, 1998; Fordham, 1993; Fordham & Ogbu, 1985; Garcia Coll et al., 1995; Ogbu, 1981). In doing so, the study emphasizes the strengths of an inter-disciplinary approach and suggests that the associations between adaptive culture and child academic competence, within the effective environment, are best understood as a complex series of parenting practices, child coping strategies, and interactions within the family and school context.

Directions for Future Research

Future studies should use cultural-ecological models, with an emphasis on effective environment, as an analytical frame to examine a broad range of distinctive class groups and gender variations within those groups. Future studies should also consider the use of qualitative and mixed-methods designs to help better understand the extent to which parents craft racial socialization messages to specifically target their children's academic achievement; what specific coping mechanisms the children who receive racial socialization messages are likely to employ to cope with racism in the school setting; and how these patterns and processes may differ for across gender and diverse social class groups. Mixed-method and qualitative studies would also help to further the understanding of the intersections of race, gender, and class; and how the distinctive effective environments that result may influence the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement.

Developmental theories have pointed to the importance of understanding the bidirectional influences between parent and child (Peterson & Hann, 1999). Parent racial socialization measures used in this study provided information on the type and frequency of racial socialization messages that are delivered. However, these measures do not provide information on the type and frequency of racial socialization messages that are received or internalized by the child. The associations between racial socialization and academic achievement may also vary based on whether racial socialization messages were reported by parents or the child. For example, Marshall (1995) found that children who reported broad-based racial socialization had lower levels of academic achievement,

but mothers' reports of racial socialization were not associated with academic achievement. Further research should look at both parent and child reports of racial socialization messages. More broadly, it is important that future studies examine the dyadic nature of parental racial socialization.

As is the case in most studies of socialization, this work focused on mothers. Given the gendered component of racial socialization, it would be of interest to explore fathers' perceived racial socialization and its implications for boys and girls at various levels of family SES. It would also be of interest to consider differences in the impact of socialization practices by family structure (single-parent and two-parent family households) and how these practices may vary by child gender and family SES.

The findings on how age impacts the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement have been mixed. The current study bridges studies of early childhood and adolescence and suggests that changes in the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement may occur over time. As children develop the needs for specific competencies also change. Thus, the racial socialization messages that parents use to develop these competencies may change. For example, in early childhood parents may be less concerned about their children being victims of racism and might, therefore, deliver fewer preparation for bias messages. Children's age also shapes the contexts in which their interactions with others are likely to take place. If we are to better understand the links between racial socialization and academic achievement, it is important to explore these associations, and the contexts in which they occur, as they unfold over time and as children develop. Longitudinal studies are one methodological

approach that can help us to better understand developmental patterns in the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement. In addition to shedding light on how the types and frequencies of racial socialization messages change over time, longitudinal studies would allow researchers to examine how the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement may vary as children develop.

The existing studies on the associations between racial socialization and academic achievement use various measures of academic achievement. The current study used GPA to measure students' academic competence. Student grades are influenced not only by students' knowledge of the subject matter, but are also reflective of students' successful navigation of the demands of the school context. Thus, GPA may be a superior measure of academic success and school engagement than are achievement tests. However, GPA only represents one domain of academic competence. Other academic outcome measures may be more closely linked to culturally-specific parenting practices that help children to cope with racism in schools or to successfully navigate the school setting. For example, Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, and Sanders (2006) found that academic curiosity and academic persistence were significantly associated with multiple dimensions of racial socialization. Furthermore, different indicators of successful academic involvement may be related to different dimensions of racial socialization. Further research should explore the extent to which other academic outcome measures are associated with various dimensions of racial socialization.

<div align="center">Implications for Practice</div>

In America's current economic climate the stakes are high for education as a field of practice. Students who fail to exhibit success in their academic careers are at an increased risk of being relegated to low-wage service sectors jobs (US Census Bureau, 2005) and at an increased risk of poverty (US Department of Education 2003). In this context, practitioners must work to identify strategies to help all students to succeed. Across the United States, African Americans are frequently identified as at-risk for academic failure. Various interventions have been developed to assist African American students in becoming academically successful.

Many of the interventions that have been developed focus on increasing parent involvement, which has been shown to positively impact academic achievement (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). The programs generally work to provide parents with strategies to help children with homework and for communicating with teachers and school administrators. The findings in the current study suggest that these parent interventions should also include communication with, and among, African American parents about parental socialization strategies they can use to effectively influence academic achievement; as well as behaviors or strategies that their children can use to cope with the racism they confront in an academic setting. In addition to highlighting that preparation for bias is positively associated with GPA among African American boys, parent-focused interventions should provide parents with opportunities to discuss and share the specific socialization practices they use, and how these practices vary by gender. These interventions should draw on the works of Collins (1998), Fordham (1993), and Fordham and Ogbu (1985) to illustrate for parents that parental socialization practices influence the

behaviors that children may use to cope with the racism and oppression that they might encounter in school. Parents can be given information to inform them not only about the socialization strategies that promote academic competencies, but also about parenting practices that promote appropriate behaviors to achieve success in both academic and social settings.

Many academic interventions are targeted toward African American boys. These interventions often take the form of school-based group mentoring programs that focus on self-discipline, character education, and personal goal setting. Many of these programs are designed to socialize African American boys with the competencies required to be academically successful. There is some degree of variation in the curricula and pedagogy of these programs. However, a large majority contain the delivery of socialization messages to the boys by a mentor or group leader. Given the findings of the current study, additional socialization messages which emphasize preparation for bias (e.g. "I may have to work twice as hard as others to be successful and I am prepared to do that" or "When others receive opportunities that I do not, I will continue to work hard in order to create opportunities for myself") could be added to the curricula of these programs. Adding preparation for bias messages to the curricula could positively impact the academic achievement of students in the program by preparing them to cope with the racism they encounter. Academic interventions for girls should incorporate information on strategies that African American girls can use to cope with the racism they may encounter in the school setting, which do not negatively impact academic achievement,. It is imperative for all academic intervention programs that when these research findings

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are used to develop interventions, they are accompanied by high level program evaluations to determine if these interventions and the additions to the curriculum are successful in improving academic achievement.

The current study attempted to address the shortcomings of research on African American children's academic achievement research conducted from a cultural-deficit perspective. Peters (1997) identified shortcomings of the cultural-deficit perspective. They include the following: 1) research approaches that examine a specific culture are ignored; 2) the research does not considered dyadic interaction; 3) the research is almost exclusively comparative; 4) the influence of environmental factors is ignored; 5) there is no understanding of within-group variability; 6) "problem populations", such as families in poverty or children with behavioral problems, are very frequently the focus of the research; 7) the study of African American families focuses on intervention and fails to fully consider culturally specific processes; 8) the research is often conducted in awkward settings and fails to recognize the correlations between study variables, intelligence quotient, and socio-economic status; 9) the research fails to consider the influence of the researcher; and 10) the research employs very subjective measures of the home environment. It is important to note that all research conducted from a cultural deficit perspective does not contain all ten of these shortcomings. The work of researchers utilizing a culturally-relevant perspective attempts to address these shortcomings.

Although African American parents may have parenting practices that overlap with the dominant culture (Garcia Coll, Meyer, & Brillion, 1995), the current study used a cultural-ecological perspective to examine parenting practices that are specific to

African American life and culture. The current study also employed an exclusively

African American sample and did not use any racial comparisons. The study included

concepts that are measures of ecological influences. The study also examined within-

group variability by including measures of gender and socioeconomic status. At the same

time, the study avoided researching a "problem population" by making sure that the

population was normally distributed in terms of socioeconomic status and academic

outcomes. The research was not conducted in strange setting, as the majority of the data

were collected in the homes of research participants. There were no attempts to

subjectively assess the home environment of the participants. Finally, the achievement

outcomes of participants were treated as normal reactions to cultural and ecological

influences.

In closing, the academic achievement of African Americans children has been the

subject of decades of research. However, we are just beginning to understand that ways

that culture, ecological contexts, and family processes converge to impact African

American parenting practices and children's academic achievement. There are expanding

opportunities to examine culturally-specific parenting practices and their influences on

child outcomes from a cultural-ecological perspective. Research on racial socialization is

an example of an emerging literature that seeks to better understand the aforementioned

links. The current study adds to this emerging literature by using a cultural-ecological

model to guide the study of associations between racial socialization and academic

achievement and how these associations are impacted by ecological contexts. The use of

a socio-economically diverse sample of exclusively African American students in late

childhood also makes a contribution to our understanding of the developmental variation in these processes. There is a wealth of knowledge to obtain about the myriad of cultural and ecological factors that influence parenting practices in ethnic minority families and how these parenting practices influence child outcomes. Findings from this research can contribute not only to academic knowledge, but also to the practical knowledge of parenting practices that can be employed to help African American children to develop academic, social, and emotional competencies and positive outcomes.

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Parents' Experiences of Racial Socialization (PERS) Measure

Parents Experience of Racial Socialization Scale (PERS)	Never (1)	A Few Times (2)	A Lot (3)
Preparation for Bias			
1. American society is fair toward Black people.			
2. Black children will feel better about themselves if they go to school with mostly White children.			
11. If you work hard then you can overcome barriers in life.			
13. Black children will learn more if they go to a mostly White school.			
15. Racism is real and you have to understand it or it will hurt you.			
28. You have to work twice as hard as Whites in order to get ahead in this world.			
29. Whites make it hard for people to get ahead in this world.			
34. Whites have more opportunities than Blacks.			
35. A Black child or teenager will be harassed just because she or he is Black.			
36. More job opportunities would be open to Blacks if people were not racist.			
38. Blacks don't always have the same opportunities as Whites.			
40. Racism is not as bad today as it used to be before the 1960s.			
Cultural Survival			
5. Relatives can help Black parents raise their children.			
7. Racism and discrimination are the hardest things a Black child has to face.			
8. Having large families can help many Black families survive life struggles.			
10. All races are equal.			
14. Knowing your African heritage is important for your survival.			
17. Too much talk about racism will keep you from reaching your goals in life.			
21. Teachers can help Black children to grow by showing signs of			
22.Only people who are blood-related to you should be called your "Family"			
26. You should know Black history so that you will be a better person.			
27. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and he will not turn away from it."			
31. Going to a Black school will help Black children feel better about themselves.			
32. You need to learn how to live in a White world and a Black world.			
39. Black children don't have to know about Africa to survive life in America.			
Pride Development			
4. It is important never to forget Black slavery.			
9. You should be proud to be Black.			
16. You are connected to a history that goes back to African royalty.			
18. Schools should be required to teach all children about Black history.			
23. Getting a good education is still the best way for you to get ahead.			
24. Don't forget who your people are because you may need them someday.			
30. Be proud of who you are.			
33. Never be ashamed of your color.			

Spiritual Coping			
3. Families that go to church or mosque will be close and stay together.			
6. Religion is an important part of a person's life.			
12. A belief in God can help a person deal with tough life struggles.			
19. Depending on religion and God will help you live a good life.			
20. Families who talk openly about religion or God will help each other grow.			
25. Spiritual battles that people fight are more important then the physical ones.			
37. Black children should be taught early that God can protect them from racial hatred.			

APPENDIX B

Hollingshead Four-Factor Index of Social Status

Education Level	Score
Less than seventh grade	1
Junior high school (9th grade)	2
Partial high school (10th or 11th grade)	3
High school graduate or GED	4
Partial college (at least one year)	5
College or university graduation	6
Graduate degree	7

Occupational Scale	Score
Farm laborers/menial service workers	1
Unskilled workers	2
Machine operators and semiskilled workers	3
Smaller business owners, skilled manual workers, craftsmen, and tenant farmers	4
Clerical and sales workers, small farm and business owners	5
Technicians, semiprofessionals, small business owners	6
Smaller business owners, farm owners, minor professionals	7
Administrators, lesser professionals, proprietors of medium-sized businesses	8
Higher executives, proprietors or large businesses, and major professionals	9

Social Strata Computed	Scores
Unskilled laborers, menial service workers	9-19
Machine operators, semiskilled workers	20-29
Skilled craftsmen, clerical, sales workers	30-39
Medium business, minor professional, technical	40-54
Major business and professional	55-66