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Racial Socialization, Private Regard, and Behavior Problems in African American Youth: Global Self-Esteem as a Mediator

BreAnna L. Davis,

University of Maryland, College Park

Mia A. Smith-Bynum,

University of Maryland, College Park

Farzana T. Saleem,

The George Washington University

Tiffany Francois, and

University of Maryland, College Park

Sharon F. Lambert

The George Washington University

Abstract

Racial socialization messages appear to have varying impacts on the adjustment of African American youth. To further explore this, we examined how two types of racial socialization messages might influence African American youth internalizing and externalizing behavior. The Youth Self Report was used to measure these behavior outcomes. Given that racial socialization messages may not be directly linked to behavior outcomes, we considered private regard, an aspect of racial identity, to serve as a mediator. Additionally, we examined global self-esteem as a mediator of the complex dynamic between racial socialization messages and behavior outcomes. Adolescents in our study completed paper assessments. Majority of the participants were female (56 %) and reside in a metropolitan area in the Mid-Atlantic region. Adolescent's ages ranged from 14 to 17 years with the average age being 15 years old. Path analysis revealed cultural pride and alertness to discrimination messages varied in their relation to private regard. Results also indicated a strong linkage between private regard, global self-esteem, and internalizing behaviors. Interestingly, the linkage between private regard, global self-esteem and externalizing behaviors was not as robust. Further, private regard appeared to directly and indirectly impact externalizing behaviors. The implications of these findings for racial socialization strategies, identity development (racial and global) as it pertains to behavior problems for African American adolescents are discussed.

Introduction

A growing body of evidence has indicated that racial socialization is a relevant and frequent parenting strategy for African American parents (Hughes et al., 2006; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). Racial socialization has been defined as any conversations about race to children. This strategy includes messages about race and culture, how to function as an individual of that race and cope with possible discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1999;

Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). African American parents partake in the racial socialization process in a number of ways (Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2009; Thornton et al., 1990). For some parents, the discussion of race is a central component to how they raise their children (*proactive*); for other parents, race-related issues may only be discussed in response to an event that has occurred or if their children initiated it (*reactive*) (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1999).

As cultural pride reinforcement and cultural alertness for discrimination messages have been especially central in theoretical and empirical literature (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2009; Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, 2009a; Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009b; Wang & Huguley, 2012), only these aspects of racial socialization will be examined. Cultural pride reinforcement, which is similar to racial pride (Lesane-Brown, Scottham, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2006) and cultural socialization (Hughes et al., 2006), involves messages that promote African American pride and passing on knowledge of African American culture. It has been noted as an important process in ethnic minority families due to its impact on positive youth development, racial identity and mental health.

Alertness to discrimination is another common strategy that African American parents use when socializing their children around race (Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor & Davis, 2002). Alertness to discrimination is distinct in its intent to raise children's awareness about the realities of racial discrimination and the difficulties that can characterize Black-White race relations (Stevenson et al., 2002). It is similar in purpose to preparation for bias (Hughes et al., 2006), racial barrier (Lesane-Brown et al., 2006), and protective racial socialization messages (Stevenson et al., 2002).

A small number of studies have investigated linkages between cultural pride reinforcement and youths' internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, but the findings are varied. More frequent messages about cultural socialization were linked to lower antisocial behavior in a study with African American and White youth in fourth through sixth grade (Hughes et al., 2009b). Additionally, Davis and Stevenson (2006) also found that cultural socialization was associated with fewer depressive symptoms among adolescents ($M = 15.4$) living in neighborhoods with greater resources (i.e. engaged neighbors per the Neighborhood Social Capital Scale). Using a sample of emerging adults, Bynum, Burton and Best (2007) found a similar pattern. Specifically, young adults that reported receiving more messages focused on cultural pride reinforcement from parents also reported less anxiety, depression, and somatization.

Few studies have examined the effects of parental messages to African American youth about the realities of racial discrimination on emotional and behavioral problems, and the findings are mixed (Hughes et al., 2006). Preparation for bias, defined as informing African American youth about racial discrimination along with strategies for coping with it, was linked to fewer depressive symptoms for adolescents ($M = 14.6$ years) (Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, & Bishop, 1997). One other known study that examined this dimension of racial socialization as a predictor of internalizing and externalizing behaviors did not find any significant direct effects (Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013).

Some literature has provided evidence for how the combination of cultural pride and alertness to discrimination messages can influence child behavior outcomes. For example, when cultural pride was examined in combination with messages focused on informing children about racial discrimination, higher rates of anxiety and depression were reported by parents for their first grade students (Caughy, Nettles, & Lima, 2011). Caughy et al. (2011) suggested that parental messages regarding discrimination and racism above a certain frequency may increase child anxiety/depression in young children. While, this finding provided additional evidence that varying types of racial socialization messages may impact behavior in different manners, it is important to note the use of parent report of these processes. Elmore and Gaylord-Harden (2013) also used parent report in their study examining dimensions of racial socialization as predictors of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. This study yielded null direct effects. It is believed that youth report of their parents' socialization efforts may have been a more accurate representation of the levels of depression and anxiety symptoms experienced in the sample.

Racial/ethnic identity has also been recognized as a salient factor that contributes to positive adjustment for African American youth (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). Racial identity is defined as the psychological meaning of being African American to members of this racial group (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Racial identity has been noted to function as a protective factor for African American adolescent's psychosocial adjustment (Dotterer et al., 2009; Neblett, Banks, Cooper, & Smalls-Glover, 2013; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Some researchers conceptualize African American identity as a single construct, while others define racial identity as having multiple dimensions (Allen, Thornton, & Watkins, 1992; Sanders-Thompson, 1995; Sellers et al., 1998). We focused on private regard, a single dimension of a multidimensional conceptualization of racial identity (Sellers et al., 1998). Private regard refers to the extent to which African Americans' personal assessment of their positive or negative feelings about being African American and towards African Americans in general.

Furthermore, there is evidence to support linkages between cultural pride reinforcement messages and private regard (Hernandez, Conger, Robins, Bacher, & Widaman, 2014; Hughes et al., 2009a; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009). These studies found that cultural socialization was associated with positive feelings and a sense of connectedness to one's ethnic group. Similarly, little is known with respect to the link between perceived parental messages about the realities of discrimination and private regard. For instance, receiving frequent socialization messages that emphasize the realities of discrimination and unfair treatment based on race can cause some youth to internalize these messages and become demoralized or foster negative feelings about being African American (e.g., private regard) (Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007). Therefore, a high volume of perceived messages emphasizing alertness to discrimination socialization may overemphasize the challenges of racial bias and racial mistrust without conveying sufficient coping strategies (Harris-Britt et al., 2007). Other studies have not detected a link between alertness to discrimination messages (or similar constructs) and any dimensions of racial identity in African American early adolescents (ages 11–14; Williams & Smalls-Glover, 2014).

Moreover, a growing body of literature has examined how ethnic or racial identity as single construct, as well as specific aspects of racial identity, relate to behavior problems (Hughes et al., 2009b; Neblett et al., 2013; McMahon & Watts, 2002; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Thomas, Townsend, & Belgrave, 2003). These studies demonstrated that positive feelings about being African American were linked to lower internalizing symptoms. For example, in a study of 314 African American adolescents (ages 11–17) Sellers et al. (2006) found that more positive attitudes about African Americans (i.e., private regard) were associated with decreased depressive symptomatology. Similarly, Bynum et al. (2008) noted in their sample of 107 African American late-adolescent males, that those who felt positive about being African American reported fewer depressive symptoms. McMahon and Watts' (2002) study of 209 African American early adolescents revealed that ethnic identity, measured by the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM, Phinney & Chavira, 1992) predicted fewer aggressive behaviors. Literature honing in processes similar to private regard (e.g., affirmation and belonging) yields similar results. Hughes et al. (2009b) found among 805 African American and White early adolescents that students with higher ethnic affirmation, a construct similar to private regard, reported lower antisocial behavior (i.e. externalizing behavior). Among African American fourth graders, Thomas et al. (2003) found that children who had a positive view of their racial group also had teachers that perceived them as having good behavior in the school setting. Finally, Smith, Levine, Smith, Dumas, & Prinz (2009) used the MEIM to assess positive feelings about one's group. Children with low reports of belonging were found to display higher levels of aggressive behavior and externalizing difficulties by their parents (Smith et al., 2009).

An often-overlooked process when examining the impact of private regard on psychosocial adjustment is its connection to adolescents' global self-esteem (Neblett et al., 2006; Sellers et al., 1998). However, beyond the emphasis on psychosocial adjustment, a substantial amount of research has indicated that racial and ethnic identity is positively linked with global self-esteem, regardless of measurement strategy (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). Numerous studies have demonstrated support for a link between either racial or ethnic identity as a global construct and self-esteem (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Smith, Walker, Brookins, & Seay, 1999). A recent meta-analysis of 184 studies using measures of ethnic identity for ethnically diverse samples ($n = 41,626$) indicated that ethnic identity was associated with self-esteem but had fewer direct benefits for psychopathology specifically (e.g., depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, behavior problems; Smith & Silva, 2011). Because developing a positive ethnic identity is essential for the well-being of ethnic minority adolescents', particularly when growing up in communities in which they are the minority (Umaña-Taylor, 2004), it is important to examine how these factors relate to youth's behaviors.

The development of a positive self-esteem and sense of self-worth is one of the major developmental tasks of adolescence and it fosters positive psychosocial outcomes (Erikson, 1950, 1968; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rosenberg, 1965). Evidence has demonstrated that adolescents who reported a more positive sense of global self-esteem also were more likely have fewer self-reported internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Erikson, 1950, 1968; Harter, 2012; Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, & deVries, 2004; Neblett, Rivas-Drake, & Umana-Taylor, 2012). Previous research has demonstrated that low self-esteem during mid-to-late

adolescence predicted more depressive symptoms at age 21 (Orth, Robins, & Roberts, 2008) and externalizing problems from early to mid-adolescence (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Jessor, Turbin, & Costa, 1998).

One study found that when accounting for ethnic identity, that a strong positive sense of global self-worth was significantly related to lower levels of anxiety and depression, and greater beliefs supporting aggressive behavior (McMahon & Watts, 2002). This finding demonstrated the possible linkages between racial identity (i.e. private regard), and global self-esteem as they influence behavior problems. Thus, in line recent work such as McMahon and Watts (2002), as well as Neblett et al. (2012), which address how the constructs of ethnic-racial identity, global self-concept, and global self-esteem are inter-related, we considered a specific racial identity attitude (e.g., private regard) to be reflective of youth's global self-concept, and relatedly global self-esteem (Sellers et al., 1998). In this study, we predicted that private regard would be linked to global self-esteem, which in turn would predict both internalizing and externalizing behaviors.

The Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children (Garcia Coll et al., 1996) is a framework that highlights how perceptions of racial socialization influences behavioral outcomes for African American youth. This framework was one of the first to incorporate and emphasize cultural and context-based factors for understanding the growth and development of minority children. It acknowledges that there are distinct experiences that children of color encounter and explicitly accounts for the unique ecological contexts within which African American youth and other children of color develop. Specifically, factors such as a child's gender, race, and socioeconomic status have bearing on access to the resources and opportunities that shape developmental outcomes for African American youth.

Garcia Coll et al. (1996) noted that overlap between gender, race, and socioeconomic status impact minority youth in various ways that affect the trajectory of their development. Thus, depending on the various contexts that African American youth find themselves in, these various characteristics of their social position may elicit access to privilege or result in marginalization (i.e., discrimination). Because of the historical devaluation of ethnic minorities in American society, it is necessary for African American parents to integrate race into their efforts to socialize their children (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). This process is one strategy that African American parents employ to help their child achieve their developmental tasks successfully.

Our proposed model also incorporated elements of a more recent framework described by Neblett et al. (2012) that argues that racial socialization and racial identity are influential factors for positive development in ethnic minority youth. Neblett et al. (2012) argued that the dynamic interplay between racial socialization, racial identity, and aspects of the self-concept work together to shape children's psychological and behavioral responses to racial discrimination. Specifically, positive messages about the significance and meaning of being a part of a racial group and positive feelings about the group fosters adolescents' sense of competence when striving to accomplish social, academic, and behavioral tasks that undergird positive development. Though racial socialization messages and positive feelings

about African Americans have been linked to private regard and positive global self-esteem in ethnic minority adolescents (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Neblett et al., 2006), limited research has investigated linkages between internalizing and externalizing behaviors in African American youth. Building upon existing evidence and theory, this study tested a hypothetical model proposing that two aspects of racial socialization messages (e.g., cultural pride reinforcement, alertness to discrimination) would be linked to adolescent internalizing and externalizing problems via private regard and global self-esteem.

Method

Participants

The sample consists of 105 African American adolescents living in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. These adolescents participated in a larger study of racial socialization and parenting processes. In order to participate, adolescents were required to be between the ages of 14 and 17, and self-identify as African American. The majority of the adolescents identified their racial/ethnic group to be African American (91%). The age range of the adolescents was from age 14 to age 17 with a median age of 15. Forty-four percent of the adolescents in the sample identified as male, with 56% of the adolescents identifying as female. Thirty-eight percent of the adolescents resided in married-couple households. A total of 54% resided in single-parent household (23% divorced; 31% never married). The female caregivers of the participants reported education levels ranging from grade school to a doctoral program. The median education level for the adolescents' female caregiver was an associate's degree.

Procedures

Trained undergraduate research assistants collected the data. Ninety-five percent of the research assistants were African American. High numbers of African American interviewers were used to enhance trust and rapport with the participating families given the sensitive nature of the data being collected. Research assistants completed 25 hours of training in data collection as well as training in human subjects' protections prior to conducting the interviews in the families' homes.

Families were recruited primarily through advertisements in a variety of free, widely available print outlets. These newspapers and publications are available in public transit stations, lobbies in grocery stores, drug stores, and community centers, doctors' offices and other locations on a regular basis. These advertisements directed potential participants to an information page about the project hosted on Facebook informing them about the project and how to contact project staff to learn more. Efforts were also made to recruit participants via relationships with community liaisons.

All interested caregivers contacted the research staff through telephone or email, and participating caregivers were screened by telephone. Research staff also explained study procedures including data collection activities, informed consent, risks, confidentiality, and compensation during the telephone calls. Those who passed the screening and wished to partake in the study set up an appointment for the in-home interview. Follow-up telephone

calls and emails were conducted to confirm appointment times and address any further concerns about participating in the study.

Research assistants began each session by obtaining informed consent from female caregivers and assent from adolescents. The female caregiver and adolescent completed a packet of paper and pencil questionnaires assessing racial socialization and racial identity as well as other pertinent psychosocial processes. To ensure confidentiality, and to preserve the adolescent's right to refuse participation given the sensitive nature of some study questions (e.g., substance use, stealing, truancy, atypical sexual behavior), the female caregiver and adolescent completed forms and questionnaires in separate rooms. The study procedures lasted about two hours. Each family was compensated with \$50 for their participation. The present study was conducted in compliance with the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Demographic background information—Adolescents completed an information sheet that collected background information on them and their family.

Racial socialization messages—Adolescents' perception of messages about alertness to discrimination and cultural pride reinforcement were measured using the Cultural Pride Reinforcement and Cultural Alertness to Discrimination subscales of the Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization Scale (TERS; Stevenson et al., 2002). The TERS assesses adolescent's experience of racial socialization messages in terms of frequency and content of the messages. The TERS is a 40-item scale that contains 5 factors: (1) Cultural Pride Reinforcement, (2) Cultural Legacy Appreciation, (3) Cultural Coping with Antagonism, (4) Cultural Alertness to Discrimination, and (5) Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream. The measure was developed on a sample of 260 African American adolescents from inner-city communities participating in a summer job program in a major city on the East Coast. A factor analysis was completed on the validity sample. The results indicated support for the full scale factor as well as the 5 subscales. The TERS demonstrates evidence of convergent validity with adolescent's responses to an item assessing the frequency of family communication about racial issues. In the validity sample, the Cronbach's alpha was .91 for the full scale and ranged from .71 to .85 for the factors.

Cultural Pride Reinforcement items assessed perceived parental messages that promote African American pride, and passing on knowledge of African American culture from parent to children. A sample item from the scale states, "Be proud of who you are" ($\alpha = .65$). Items in the Cultural Alertness of Discrimination subscale assessed perceived parental messages focused on adolescents' awareness of racial barriers existing in society and assessed messages about persisting difficulties in race relations between Blacks and Whites ($\alpha = .83$). A sample item from the scale states, "Whites make it hard for people to get ahead in this world." Participants were asked to respond to all items using a 3-point scale ranging from '1' for *never*, '2' for *a few times*, and '3' for *a lot of times*.

Private regard—Adolescents' private regard was measured with the Private Regard subscale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Revised (MIBI-R; Sellers,

Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997; Sellers et al., 1998). The Private Regard subscale, consisting of 6 items, assessed positive feelings toward one's racial group. A sample item from the scale states, "I feel good about black people." Participants were asked to respond to all items using a 7-point scale ranging from '1' for *Strongly Disagree* to '7' to for *Strongly Agree*, with '4' as *Neutral*. The Cronbach's alpha for the present sample is .64. An inspection of the scores indicated that participants' responses at the item level were negatively skewed where scores grouped on the right. Previous evidence indicates that scores on low end of this measure are rare as most feel good about being African American (Sellers et al., 1997). The original and adapted versions of the MIBI-R, which have similar alphas, have been used successfully with adult and adolescent samples and show adequate to excellent reliability and validity ($\alpha = .81$, Chavous et al., 2003; $\alpha = .67$, Caldwell, Zimmerman, Bernat, Sellers, & Notaro, 2002; $\alpha = .62$, Stevenson & Arrington, 2009).

Global self-esteem—We used the Harter Global Self-Worth subscale from the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA; Harter, 2012) was used to assess the global self-esteem of adolescents ages 14–19. The SPPA contains eight Specific Domains and a separate Global Self-Worth subscale. Each of the 9 subscales contains 5 items—45 items total. Global self-esteem measured "how much one likes oneself as a person, is happy with the way one is leading one's life, is generally happy with the way one is, as a human being" (Harter, 2012, p. 4). A sample item from the scale states, "Some teenagers don't like the way they are leading their life but other teenagers do like the way they are leading their life." Participants were asked to respond to all items using a 4-point scale ranging from '1' for *least adequate self-judgment* to '4' to for *most adequate self-judgment*. The Cronbach's alpha in the present sample was reasonably strong at .83.

The original version of this measure was validated on four samples (90% White) who resided in neighborhoods ranging from lower middle class to upper middle class. Internal consistency ranged from .80 to .89 across the four samples. The measure also has strong convergent validity given that it correlates with Marsh and colleagues' (1988, 1990, 1991) General Self-Concept Subscale, a measure that is well respected for its psychometrics. Additionally, construct validity of the Global self-worth has been demonstrated as measures of domain specific self-concepts, their importance and global self-worth were included in a number of empirical studies (Harter, 2012).

Internalizing and externalizing problems—The Internalizing Problems and the Externalizing Problems subscales from the Youth Self Report (YSR; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) were used to assess adolescents' internalizing and externalizing problems in this study. The Internalizing Problems subscale contains items assessing the extent to which respondents experience emotional and physical complaints (e. g., sadness, anxiety, poor energy, withdrawn behavior, worries, headaches, nightmare, nausea) ($\alpha = .91$). The Externalizing Problems subscale measures the frequency of rule-breaking behavior and aggressive behavior such as stealing, property destruction, school disobedience, substance abuse, fighting, affiliation with deviant peers, lying, and truancy ($\alpha = .89$). Items assessing suicidality and intent to self-harm were not included in this study to reduce risk to the participants and because of the community nature of the sample. Items are rated on 3-point

scale ranging from 0 (*not true*) to 2 (*very true or often true*). T-scores for the Internalizing Problems and Externalizing Problems scales were used in the analyses. A T-score of 70 or above on either subscale indicates problems of a clinically significant nature. The YSR has strong psychometric properties. It was normed and validated on a nationally representative sample of children between the ages 11 to 18. The YSR has strong evidence of test-retest reliability and internal consistency as well as strong evidence of criterion validity and content validity.

Data Analyses

To test the hypothetical model, we conducted a path analysis (LISREL 8.80; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2007) using data from the full sample. In structural equation modeling, the chi-square likelihood ratio test is used to evaluate model fit. It tests for the extent to which the hypothesized model explains the relationships in the observed data. Nonsignificant probability levels are desired because they indicate close fit between the hypothetical model and the actual relationships among the study variables. Because chi square is highly sensitive to small sample sizes, as in the case in the present study, three additional fit indices that are better suited to small samples were used to evaluate model fit. These are the Goodness of Fit (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI). Scores closer to 1.00 on these indices are considered to be indicative of excellent model fit, and scores above .90 indicate acceptable model fit (Byrne, 2013).

Initial results of our path analysis model indicated a poor fit of the data with the original conceptual model. Data from the modification indices indicated that the proposed pathways in the original model did not account for all of the variance in the model. Using this information, we permitted the errors for message type and youth behaviors to covary freely. We also added direct pathways from private regard to each behavioral outcome. These actions improved the fit considerably and those results are reported here.

Results

Univariate statistics are presented in Table 1. The next step in the descriptive analyses involved completion of correlations among all major study variables. These results are also shown in Table 1. Cultural Pride Reinforcement messages were statistically correlated with Cultural Alertness to Discrimination ($r = .24$), Private Regard ($r = .34$), and negatively correlated with externalizing problems at trend level. Cultural Alertness to Discrimination messages were statistically correlated with internalizing problems ($r = .19$), and externalizing problems ($r = .30$). Private regard was statistically correlated with Global Self Esteem ($r = .42$) and externalizing problems ($r = -.27$). Global self-esteem was statistically correlated with internalizing problems ($r = -.46$), and externalizing problems ($r = -.35$). Finally, internalizing problems and externalizing problems were statistically correlated ($r = .45$). As can be seen in Table 1, adolescent age was not correlated with any of the other study variables; thus age was dropped from the main analyses.

As can be seen in Figure 1, results indicated support for many of the proposed pathways. As expected, alertness to discrimination ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .05$) and cultural pride reinforcement ($\beta = .35$, $p < .05$) were associated with private regard in the expected directions. Similarly,

private regard positively predicted youths' global self-esteem ($\beta = .41, p < .01$). As can be seen in Figure 1, there was support for a negative relationship between global self-esteem and externalizing problems ($\beta = -.28, p < .05$). However, a stronger linkage between private regard and externalizing problems ($\beta = -.83, p < .05$) remained. Further, while a positive global self-esteem did not appear to be linked to lower levels of externalizing behaviors, higher levels of private regard were more beneficial for adolescents' externalizing behaviors.

The chi-square for the revised model fell into an acceptable range, $\chi^2 (5, N = 109) = 7.77, p = .15$. Each indicator of goodness of fit for small samples fell into the acceptable range of .90 or higher (NNFI = .92; CFI = .97; GFI = .98).

Discussion

Our primary objective was to examine the way in which varying racial socialization messages impacted youth behavior problems. We speculated that private regard and global self-esteem were important pathways through which racial socialization messages influence externalizing and internalizing problems. Specifically, we proposed that through private regard and global self-esteem, that cultural pride reinforcement messages would have a positive impact on behavior outcomes. We also proposed that alertness to discrimination messages would have a negative impact on adolescent behavior outcomes through linkages to private regard and global self-esteem.

Consistent with predictions, we found evidence that cultural pride reinforcement was positively associated with adolescents' private regard. The results indicate that parental messages about having pride in one's cultural heritage were associated adolescents reports of feeling good about being African American. This set of findings regarding linking racial socialization with specific aspects of racial identity (e.g., private regard) is consistent with the theoretical frameworks that notes ethnic-racial socialization as a precursor to racial identity (Garcia Coll et al., 1999; Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2012). Studies that examine this link generally find that messages about ethnic pride, history, and heritage facilitate the development of more favorable views of one's ethnic-racial group (Hernandez et al., 2014; Hughes et al., 2009a; Neblett et al., 2009). Moreover, the findings from this study adds to the growing literature that instilling a sense of pride in adolescents has an important influence in the significance that African American youth attribute to their feelings about their ethnic group. This is an important finding as private regard has been determined a beneficial factor in managing the effects of discrimination for African American adolescents (e.g., Quintana, 2007).

Consistent with predictions, recollection of parental messages regarding being alert to discrimination was negatively associated with private regard. Adolescents who reported that their parents conveyed more frequent messages about the realities of racial bias, discrimination, and racial barriers to success reported feeling less positive about being African American. These findings are consistent with previous literature that suggests some risk in delivering preparation for bias messages for adolescents' self-esteem (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Neblett et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2002). The messages that signal to youth that they will consistently face discrimination may be maladaptive for mental health outcomes

and aspects of identity development. This could be particularly problematic if these messages are delivered in absence of other racial socialization messages, instead of messages that include strategies for coping with racial discrimination or that promote cultural pride (e.g., Granberg, Edmond, Simons, Gibbons, & Lei, 2012; Neblett et al., 2009). Additionally, other research indicates that there may be a curvilinear effect of racial barrier messages, such that a moderate amount of preparation for bias is associated with better adjustment outcomes (Frabutt, et al., 2002; Harris-Britt et al., 2007). Taken together, these findings illuminate the complexity of the receipt and impact of messages about the realities of racial discrimination. Thus, parents should be cautious in delivering frequent messages about racial bias could negatively impact adolescents' developing positive racial identity and psychosocial adjustment.

Results supported the proposed positive relationship between private regard and global self-esteem. Specifically, adolescents that reported positive feelings about African Americans also reported having more positive self-esteem. This result is consistent with previous studies that found feeling good about one's racial group was related to feeling good about one's self overall (Hughes & Demo, 1989, Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Rowley et al., 1998; Smith & Silva, 2011). For adolescents, having racial pride may be essential during a developmental period marked by increased social comparison (Eccles & Roeser, 2009), sensitivity to others' evaluations (Harter, 2012), and increased risk for racial discrimination (Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2008). Therefore, African American adolescents who have higher levels of private regard and global self-esteem may be more equipped to manage stressors, including race-related stress. Thus, higher levels of private regard and global-self-esteem is beneficial for their psychological health.

As expected, greater global self-esteem predicted fewer reports of internalizing behaviors. These results suggest that global self-esteem served as a conduit that connects adolescents' private regard to their internalizing behavior. Adolescents who felt good about being African American also reported positive global self-esteem. This pattern, in turn, predicted less internalizing behaviors. These results suggest that private regard may bolster the self-esteem of African American adolescents in this sample, which may result in fewer problems with depressive symptoms, worries, or anxiety in general. The presence of a positive global self-esteem may have helped decrease any perceptions of stress, and thus reduce the risk of less favorable adjustment outcomes. Collectively, the pathway also illustrated one potential conduit for the ways racial socialization messages shape psychosocial outcomes in this population.

Interestingly, private regard retained a direct, negative relationship to externalizing behaviors, even after global self-esteem was accounted for. Specifically, adolescents who reported higher levels of private regard were less likely to report problems with externalizing behaviors. To date, few studies have measured aspects of racial identity in conjunction with global self-esteem with the goal of assessing their collective connection to adolescent emotional and behavioral outcomes in this population. McMahon and Watts (2002) sought to examine the extent to which ethnic identity and global self-worth accounted for distinctive variance in coping, aggression, and adjustment among youth grades five through eight. They conducted simultaneous multiple regressions and found that youth with a greater sense of

ethnic/racial identity reported fewer aggressive behaviors, when taking into account global self-worth. With the use of a path analysis, our study provides further evidence of how racial identity and global self-worth can impact adjustment in African American youth.

One explanation for the differing patterns of linkage for private regard and global self-esteem and each of the outcome variables (e.g., internalizing behaviors externalizing behaviors), is that externalizing and internalizing behaviors manifest in distinct manners and have different etiologies. Externalizing behaviors are negative behaviors that are easily observed by others and elicit negative reactions from individuals in their environment (Jianghong, 2004). In the case of internalizing behaviors (e.g., sadness, social withdrawal), youths may be the only ones who are aware that they are experiencing any distress. When we consider how youths make meaning of race-salient messages that are potentially discouraging, youths may display their distress more overtly because it is a reaction to the powerlessness they may feel to change the racial narrative about black inferiority.

The linkages between both global self-esteem and private regard are important factors in understanding the exhibition of delinquent and aggressive behaviors in African American adolescents. As mentioned before, an individual's behavior is likely to be in accordance with his or her perceptions of their self (Rosenberg, 1981; Tajfel, 1981). Both aspects of the developing self are likely to be sensitized to race-based messages, whether through racial socialization or through the experience of racial discrimination. For example, a school counselor discouraging an African American student from exploring college options or the experience of being followed around at a clothing store because of one's race are experiences that have the ability to influence one's perception of self and could prompt an assertive reaction. Therefore, private regard may be particularly salient for African American youth as they confront negative, racially motivated, messages from the dominant culture.

Interestingly, McMahon and Watts (2002) suggested that a positive racial identity rather than a positive global self-concept mattered most for influencing beliefs against the use of aggression. Although debatable, this claim at minimum acknowledges the relevancy of racial identity for African American youth behavior. And while the current literature has focused more on the link between global racial identity and behavior, there is evidence to suggest that having negative feelings about being Black is linked to destructive behaviors (Phinney et al., 1997; Smith et al., 2009). Our finding that private regard is directly linked to behavior broadens the current state of understanding about varying aspects of racial identity and how they relate to behavior for African American youth. Further research examining private regard, as well as other aspects of racial identity, is warranted in better understanding this process. Be it as it may, it is crucial for parents to provide effective racial socialization messages that bolster positive feelings about being African American, as it may directly impact how youth behave in school and the community, in spite of negative messages they might receive within in this contexts.

We caution parents to be conscious about the frequency in which they convey alertness to discrimination messages as they may be harmful for adolescent adjustment. Given the social context in which African American adolescents are developing in, it would be a disservice to eliminate all messages warning youth about the bias they may face. However, these

conversations should be accompanied with the instilment of racial pride and knowledge of African American culture to children. In fact, previous studies have found that providing a mixture of racial socialization messages is beneficial for adolescent's psychological health (e.g., Granberg et al., 2012; Neblett et al., 2008), which may be useful in helping youth understand, prepare for, and manage racial discrimination. By providing multiple messages parents will be able to better arm African American youth with the psychological protection against negative racial stereotypes, promote a positive private regard and global self-esteem, thus helping adolescents regulate their behavior.

It is important to reemphasize, that in this study, cultural pride reinforcement and alertness to discrimination messages had varying impacts on private regard, and thus global self-esteem and behavior outcomes. Existing literature has found that females reported hearing more messages about cultural pride and males reported hearing more messages about racial barriers (Brown, Linver, & Evans, 2010; Hughes et al., 2009a; Neblett et al., 2009; Thomas & Speight, 1999). While we did not examine role of gender in this study, it is possible that racial socialization impacts behavior differently depending on the gender of the adolescent. This is an important area of research and we encourage future research to continue to look carefully at gender as it relates to racial socialization in this population.

Surprisingly, age was uncorrelated with our study variables. This finding is inconsistent with previous research (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Evidence suggests that children and adolescents' understanding of race and racial issues grows more sophisticated as they age (Alejandro-Wright, 1985; Branch & Newcombe, 1986; Brown & Bigler, 2005). Moreover, studies indicate that parents appear to calibrate the frequency of racial socialization messages as they age (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; McHale et al., 2006). Two things may explain this finding. Our sample focused exclusively on the middle stage of adolescence (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Most of the adolescents in our sample were 15 years of age. Limited variation in age may be responsible for this finding. Though a review of the correlations indicates that they were quite small and nonsignificant, we did have somewhat limited statistical power. This may explain the lack of correlations with adolescent age. Though we did not detect such a finding here, this does not necessarily suggest that adolescent age is unimportant in the processes under study as other studies have shown. Future researchers should continue to include and examine adolescent age in research on racial socialization to further clarify its role.

As with all studies, this study is not without limitations. Special consideration must be given to the social and cultural context (e.g., metropolitan, Mid-Atlantic) within which this research was conducted. Because the study results only can be generalized African American adolescents from similar demographic backgrounds, it is important to conduct similar studies within samples from varying residential settings, regions, and neighborhood demographics. While we were only interested in adolescent perspectives/perceptions on the parental messages due to their saliency for youth processes, more may have been illuminated if we had also considered these processes from the view of parents. Future studies should seek to explore these nuances. Another limitation of this study is that our data are cross-sectional and causal relationships cannot be inferred from our findings. More longitudinal research is needed to tease out the nuances of these relationships and also, examine the bi-

directionality between parental racial socialization efforts, adolescents' racialized experiences, private regard, and global self-esteem and behavior outcomes.

Despite these limitations, this study extends the literature forward by providing a better understanding of how racial socialization influences adolescent behavior. These results appear to piece together previous empirical work regarding proposed pathways of influence between racial socialization, racial identity, and adolescent mental health in African American youth (Bennett, 2007; Neblett, Terzian, & Harriott, 2010). Many studies have looked at the relationship between these constructs in pairs, but not in a comprehensive manner. This study provides additional evidence that cultural pride reinforcement and alertness to discrimination messages affect adolescents in different manners (Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013). Finally, this study grants further insight into the complex relationship between racial socialization and adjustment. Aspects of racial identity (e.g., private regard) and global self-esteem are important pathways that we must consider when thinking about how socialization impacts adolescent wellbeing.

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chi-square = 7.77, $p = .15$, $df = 5$. NNFI = .92 CFI = .97, GFI = .98. RMSEA = .07.

Figure 1.

Final Model Linking Racial Socialization to Behavioral Outcomes

Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations Among Racial Socialization, Private Regard, Global Self Esteem and Behavior Problem Variables (N = 105)

Table 1

Variable Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	1.0						
2. Cultural Pride Reinforcement	-.01	1.0					
3. Cultural Alertness to Discrimination	.08	.26**	1.0				
4. Private Regard	-.10	.34***	-.09	1.0			
5. Global Self Esteem	-.12	.09	-.15	.42***	1.0		
6. Internalizing problems	.06	.11	.19*	-.15	-.46***	1.0	
7. Externalizing Problems	-.02	-.16 ⁺	.30**	-.27**	-.35***	.45***	1.0
<i>M</i>	15.5	23.53	11.94	6.12	3.29	53.50	57.21
<i>SD</i>	1.02	2.94	3.37	.78	.61	9.11	10.22

⁺ *p* .10.* *p* < .05.** *p* < .01.*** *p* < .001.