

## ABSTRACT

SMART, AVRIL ALICIA. Exploring Perceived Discrimination, Racial Identity, and Religiosity as Indicators of African American Parents' Racial Socialization Practices. (Under the direction of Pamela P. Martin PhD).

Racial socialization is an integral part of the parenting process for African American parents (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Coard & Sellers, 2005; McAdoo, 2002). To further understand the factors that influence parents' racial socialization practices, this study explored the direct links between age, education, income, perceived discrimination, racial identity attitudes, religiosity, and the racial socialization practices in a sample of 205 African American parents. Zero order correlations and hierarchical regression were used to explore the direct links between independent variables (age, education, income, perceived discrimination, racial identity attitudes and religiosity) and racial socialization practices. It was also hypothesized that racial identity and religiosity would serve as moderators in the relationship between perceived discrimination and racial socialization practices. Results showed significant links between demographic factors, racial identity attitudes and religiosity to parents' racial socialization practices, however no significant moderations were found.

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Exploring Perceived Discrimination, Racial Identity, and Religiosity as Indicators of  
African American Parents' Racial Socialization Practices

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents (Earl and Cecile Smart) and my sisters (Cheryl, Ceronne, Jacqueline and Kelly). I love each of you more than I can ever say in words.

## BIOGRAPHY

Avril Alicia Smart is the youngest daughter of Earl and Cecile Smart. She was born on the island of Jamaica and spent the majority of her childhood in Annotto Bay, St Mary. After elementary school her family moved to Northern California where Avril attended middle and high school. She attended college at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, North Carolina where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. During her time in college Avril was very active in several community and university organizations where she fostered her interest in leadership and community development. After college Avril accepted a position in San Francisco, before making the decision to pursue a PhD in psychology at North Carolina State University.

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## **Introduction**

Parents' role in the lives of their children is critical and complex. In particular, as children begin to explore social environments beyond the boundaries of their families, parental support can help children negotiate interactions that challenge their limited knowledge of the world. For people of color, parental responsibility includes incorporating strategies that help prepare their children for potential adverse encounters including discrimination and racism (Hughes, 2003; Sanders Thompson, 1994). Citing the historic work of M.F. Peters (1985), Stevenson and Davis (2004) discussed challenges faced by African American parents, in particular, as they describe the difficulties of raising African American children in a racially salient world. In their discussions, these authors concluded that for African American parents, parenting involves constantly wrestling with "raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are black in a society in which being black has negative connotations" (p.356). African American parenting strategies not only include the extensive responsibilities faced by all parents during child rearing, they must also protect their children from the inherent unfairness presented by societal challenges of racism and discrimination in the United States (Stevenson, 1996). Furthermore, African American parents feel that they are obligated to teach their children about racial issues; justifying their decisions based on the presence of racism in society and the importance of developing coping strategies to combat racial issues (Caldwell, Schmeelk, Cone & Zimmerman, 2006; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor & Allen, 1990). Parent

demographic characteristics, perceived discrimination, racial identity attitudes, and religiosity have been identified as independent contributors to particular parenting practices of African American parents. The purpose of this study was to explore the potential direct effect of demographic characteristics, perceived discrimination, racial identity attitudes, and religiosity on the racial socialization practices of African American parents. In addition, this study investigated racial identity attitudes and religiosity as potential moderators in the relationship between parents' perceived discrimination and their racial socialization practices.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Literature Review**

Racial socialization is a process defined by an exchange of life lessons from one generation to the next, including the transmission of knowledge about history, culture, and pride (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Hughes, 2003; Thomas & Speight, 1999). For African American parents specifically the racial socialization process plays a major role in “buffering the impact of racism and promoting a sense of cultural pride for their children” (Stevenson, 1994, p. 191). Several authors contend that racial socialization is a necessary strategy for parents to offset the longstanding, historic oppressive social reality for many African Americans in the United States (Peters, 1985; Stevenson, 1994). Thus, racial socialization represents one of the primary mechanisms by which African American parents ensure that their children are equipped with the strategies to manage a racialized

society. The body of research examining racial socialization practices reflects the sweeping nature of this topic among African Americans and concludes that transmission of messages concerning race and ethnicity are most prevalent within this group (Hughes, Roderiguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson & Spicer, 2006). The following sections will review the racial socialization literature on African Americans with a focus on identifying the empirical links between demographic characteristics, perceived discrimination, racial identity attitudes and religiosity.

### **The Content of Racial Socialization Messages**

Hughes et al. (2006) provide a comprehensive review of the extant literature on racial socialization practices among parents. In their review of the racial socialization literature, the authors incorporated retrospective studies (e.g. Hughes & Chen, 1997; Sanders Thompson, 1999), research on varying populations of color (e.g. Phinney & Chavarilla, 1995), and research on differences in parental demographic factors (e.g. Demo & Hughes, 1990; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Marshall, 1995; Sanders Thompson, 1999; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor & Allen, 1990). This review described four thematic distinctions in racial socialization messages. The four emergent themes were: (1) cultural socialization; (2) preparation for bias; (3) promotion of mistrust; and (4) egalitarianism (Hughes et al., 2006). These four thematic distinctions help define and describe diverse child rearing practices among African Americans. The following sections will discuss specific racial socialization research that falls within the four themes identified by Hughes et al., (2006) highlighting findings specific to African American parents.

The first theme is cultural socialization. Racial socialization messages that fall under the “cultural socialization” theme (Hughes et al., 2006) are those that are used by parents to teach children about the historical past of their particular ethnic group and/or promote racial pride and heritage among children and adolescents (Branch & Newcombe, 1986; Demo & Hughes, 1990). Several scholars have documented that racial socialization messages that reinforce cultural history, pride, and heritage are among the most frequently transmitted racial socialization messages for parents of color (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Hughes et al., 2006; Johnson, 2001; Knight, Bernal, Cota et al., 1993; Ou & McAdoo, 1993). In addition, cultural socialization messages are recognized as having significant impacts on the development of racial attitudes among African American children and adolescents. Studies investigating the implications of parents’ cultural socialization messages show relationships to youth’s locus of control and depressive symptoms (McHale, Crouter, Kim, Burton, Davis Dotterer & Swanson, 2006), academic achievement (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn & Sellers, 2006), and self esteem (Fischer & Shaw, 1999). Cultural socialization messages are particularly relevant to African Americans as they are among the most frequently transmitted messages and have significant implications for adolescent development. Thus, a concentration on racial socialization messages that are cultural in nature can substantially inform our understanding of the child rearing process for African American parents.

Preparation for bias is the second theme which describes racial socialization messages that promote awareness of racism and discrimination as well as help children develop strategies for coping with potential social challenges in society (Hughes et al.,

2006; Thomas & Speight 1999). Parents indicate that the presence of racism in the lives of African Americans and its effect on the ability to function in society justifies choosing racial socialization messages that focus on race (Thomas & Speight 1999). Moreover, in a study investigating cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages among African American, Puerto Rican and Dominican parents, Hughes (2003) found high frequencies of both types of racial socialization messages across groups. African American parents, however, were statistically more likely to report transmitting racial socialization messages regarding preparation for bias than any other ethnic group in the study. Furthermore, in one of the few studies investigating parent-child dyads, Frabutt, Walker & MacKinnon-Lewis (2002) examined the propensity of African American mothers to transmit racial socialization messages focused on preparing children to cope with incidences of discrimination. When the sample was divided based on their frequency of transmitting racial socialization messages (i.e. high, moderate and low), the results showed that mothers with moderate frequencies of transmitting racial socialization messages engaged in more positive parenting practices for children in early adolescence compared to mothers in the low and high frequency group. Specifically, mothers who communicated moderate levels of racial socialization messages that underscored preparation for and coping with discrimination, were warmer and communicated more with their children than mothers who communicated fewer socialization messages. Taken together, the aforementioned research provides examples that highlight the prevalence of preparation of bias messages in African American parents' racial socialization practices. Also, these studies underscore African American parents' propensity to instill preparation

for bias socialization messages and suggests that these messages may be their attempt to educate their children on strategies to successfully navigate the biases of a racist society.

The third theme is promotion of mistrust and is composed of messages that advise caution in interracial interactions (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006). In their investigation into the factors that contribute to racial socialization in African American families, Hughes and Chen (1997) found that parents with older children reported imparting more promotion of mistrust messages than parents with younger children. Other research exploring the presence of promotion of mistrust messages within parent-child dyads documents the distinct perspectives of the child and parent on the nature of racial socialization practices. For instance, in an exploratory investigation into the overlap between parent and child accounts of racial socialization practices, Hughes and Johnson (2001) found that only a small percentage (21%) of parents reported promotion of mistrust messages to their children. In addition, both parent and child accounts of unfair treatment in schools were the only predictors of promotion of mistrust messages whereas other indicators such as demographics and parent indicators were not significant predictors. These studies show inconsistencies in the prevalence of promotion of mistrust racial socialization messages, with parents reporting less frequent transmission of these messages relative to other racial socialization messages (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Despite inconsistencies with regard to the prevalence of promotion of mistrust themed socialization messages, these particular messages remain an important part of the socialization process.

The fourth and final unifying theme in racial socialization research concerns egalitarianism (Hughes et. al., 2006) or parental transmissions that convey messages of harmony with regard to different racial groups. Egalitarian messages encourage children to adhere less to the traditions of their native culture or ethnic group and more to the expectations of mainstream society in an attempt to obscure the effects of race (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hughes et al., 2006). In a study exploring differences in racial socialization messages across minority groups, i.e. African Americans, Japanese Americans and Mexican Americans, Phinney and Chavira (1995) used a mixed method approach to delineate between racial socialization messages across groups and to determine what unique racial socialization messages affect adolescent ethnic identity<sup>1</sup>. Results from this study highlight significant differences between parents of color with regard to emphasis of egalitarian racial socialization messages. Combined with Japanese Americans, African American parents delivered more messages focused on adaptation to mainstream society and achievement than Mexican American parents. Results also showed that parents who emphasized more egalitarian racial socialization strategies had adolescents with higher ethnic identity scores (Phinney & Chavira, 1995). In a study on ethnic socialization, Marshall (1995) attempted to determine which messages parents considered most important to transmit to their children<sup>2</sup>. Results concluded that for some African American parents socialization messages that are racially salient are of secondary

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<sup>1</sup> Ethnic identity is a process by which one understands the significance and meaning of membership within a particular ethnic group (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Chavira, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Hughes et al. (2006) argue that the term ethnic socialization is applied to research concerning socialization practices among multiple ethnic groups but is conceptually similar to racial socialization. The content of ethnic socialization messages emphasize cultural and ethnicity oriented messages with no mention of the concept of race.

importance to those that encourage an egalitarian outlook. In particular, parents held messages on education, religion, self esteem, and hard work as higher priorities than more racially salient messages (i.e., responses categorized as representing ethnic socialization practices).

To review, Hughes et al. (2006) created four themes based on the most relevant socialization messages presented in racial socialization literature. The previous sections discussed research findings that highlight the racial socialization practices of African Americans across the four themes; however, the review does not provide evidence that the four themes are distinct to African American parents specifically. Though authors have discovered similarities in research on the modes of transmitting racial socialization messages (Lesane-Brown, 2006) and the content of the racial socialization messages (Hughes et al., 2006), their findings do not necessarily speak to the unique racial socialization process for African American parents. Racial socialization practices for African American parents have been noted to transcend that of other parents specifically because of the extremely challenging social environment presented by racism and discrimination (Peters, 1985). Thus, investigating the racial socialization process of African American parents requires a particular lens as demonstrated by the work of Demo and Hughes (1990). Their discussion of the themes most relevant to the African American racial socialization process is a direct reflection of the lived experiences of African American parents.

Demo and Hughes (1990) conceptualization of racial socialization represents a comprehensive understanding of the content of racial socialization messages for African

Americans specifically. Their four distinct categories (individualistic/ universalistic, integrative/assertive, cautious/defensive and egalitarian) are based on responses from African Americans reflecting on the lessons they were taught about race during childhood and lessons taught to their own children. The first, individualistic/universalistic racial socialization practice underscores the message of hard work without emphasis on race. An integrative/assertive message is a group oriented approach which stresses the importance of black heritage and culture in addition to understanding how to interact with majority groups (i.e., racial pride messages). Cautious/defensive racial socialization parenting practices correspond with messages emphasizing the role of racism and acknowledging power difference between white and black people in society (i.e., racial barriers messages). The egalitarian category is comprised of messages that are absent of race specific lessons. Even with the differences in categorizations of racial socialization messages, there still remains a thematic thread linking the distinctions made by both Demo and Hughes (1990) and Hughes et al. (2006).

    Demo and Hughes' four categorizations of racial socialization messages overlap with the racial socialization themes identified by Hughes et al. (2006). Both Demo and Hughes (1990) and Hughes et al. (2006) make distinctions between racially salient socialization messages and socialization messages that are absent of race specific lessons (Hughes et al., 2006). Racial socialization messages described as racially salient (i.e., cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust integrative/assertive, and cautious/defensive) convey messages that support racial group membership in favor of one specific racial group over another. Racial socialization messages that are void of

race (i.e., egalitarian messages, individualistic/universalistic) support attitudes that focus less on race and lack racially explicit group references. This study categorized racial socialization practices of parents into three categories based on both Demo and Hughes (1990) and Hughes et al.'s (2006) findings. Racial barrier, racial pride, and egalitarian messages correspond to the dimensions named by Demo and Hughes (1990) which assesses the racial socialization practices of African American parents specifically and represents the most relevant socialization messages in the literature. While thematic distinctions in African American parents' racial socialization messages explains the content of the messages parents impart on their children, the themes do not discuss factors that may contribute to parents propensity to endorse those specific messages.

Beyond the thematic distinctions established in the racial socialization literature with regard to content, empirical evidence also suggests connections between racial socialization and other variables. This study discusses conceptual links between parent specific variables and their impact on racial socialization practices. The following sections will review empirical links between parent demographic characteristics, perceived discrimination, racial identity attitudes, and religiosity to uncover the ways in which parents lived experiences may impact the racial socialization process.

### **Demographic Factors and Racial Socialization**

Few empirical studies have focused on demographic correlates and parents' racial socialization practices. For example, Thornton, Chatters, Taylor and Allen (1990) found that age, education, gender, and neighborhood composition were among the demographic

variables associated with parental racial socialization practices. With regard to age and education, results indicated that older parents who had either some college experience or graduated college were more likely to socialize their children than younger parents who had less than a high school diploma. Results also indicated that mothers were more likely to engage in racial socialization practices than fathers. Finally, neighborhood composition was also a positive predictor of parental racial socialization practices. Specifically, mothers in neighborhoods with less than half African American residents were more likely to socialize their children than mothers who lived in neighborhoods with more than half residents being African American. Research from Thornton et al. (1990) provided information on the general context within which African American parents socialize their children; however, this work failed to extensively describe the ways in which demographic factors relate to parents' rationale concerning which specific racial socialization messages they communicated to their children (Lesane-Brown, 2006). Tanner-Smith, Lesane-Brown and Ezell (2007) found that education and warmth in the parent child relationship were significant predictors of racial socialization for African American parents. Similar to Thornton et al. (1990), Tanner-Smith et al. (2007) reported that parents with more education (i.e. some college or technical college) were more likely to engage in racial socialization than parents with high school education. Results also showed that African American parents who perceived a warm relationship between themselves and their children engaged in more racial socialization practices than parents who perceived less warmth. Demo and Hughes (1990) reported that African American parents' socioeconomic status (SES) and age were both associated with parents racial

socialization practices. Specifically, African American parents with high socioeconomic status were less likely to endorse socialization messages that discuss the role of racism in society than parents with low socio-economic status. Also, older parents were more likely to endorse racial socialization messages discussing hard work and the presence of racism than younger parents. Thornton et al. (1990), Tanner-Smith et al. (2007) and Demo and Hughes (1990) highlight the importance of investigating demographic factors as indicators of parents' racial socialization practices. While these studies provide information on African American parents' characteristics and the probability of them engaging in racial socialization Lesane- Brown (2006) suggests that future research investigating the relationship between parent characteristics and racial socialization move beyond assessing frequency of racial socialization practices and focus on describing the specific messages that parents instill in the racial socialization process. With the exception of Demo and Hughes (1990), research investigating demographic correlates of African American parents' racial socialization practices has not described i the racial socialization process. Therefore, researchers that seek to further explicate relationships between the demographic characteristics of African American parents and racial socialization practices must provide more in depth understandings of choices that parents make when preparing their children for a racially salient society.

The current study seeks to investigate the relationship between African American parents' demographic characteristics as they relate and their racial socialization practices. Specifically, this research will focus on the specific types of racial socialization messages parents endorse and how they relate to age, education and income. African American

parents' experiences with discrimination may also represent a distinguishing feature that influences the choices they make with regard to racial socialization messages.

### **Discrimination and Racial Socialization**

Discrimination has been defined as “actions or practices carried out by members of dominant racial or ethnic groups that have a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups” (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980, pp. 1-2). African Americans especially have been recognized as disproportionately affected by both blatant and less confrontational discriminatory experiences (Feagin, 1991; Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Swim et al., 1998). Specifically, African American adult populations are recognized in literature to report significant occurrences of discrimination compared to other ethnic groups. For example, in a large-scale national survey of 25-74 year olds, approximately 49% of Black respondents reported experiencing at least one major racist event (e.g., hassled by police, denied service/ received inferior service, discouraged by teacher from seeking higher education) in their lifetimes (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999). In another study focusing on day to day experiences of discrimination (e.g., being treated as inferior, called names or harassed, responded to with fear), 81% of Black adults reported that they had experienced at least one incident of day-to-day discrimination (Sellers et al., 2006). From more overt and blatant forms to discrete and subtle discriminatory encounters, African Americans report more accounts of racial discrimination across different domains such as the educational system, the workplace and the housing market compared to other minority groups (Deitch et al., 2003; Farkas,

2003; Feagin, 1991; Yinger, 1998). Based on the pervasive nature of discrimination in the social environments of African Americans, research on the varied ways that racial discrimination permeates the lives of African Americans may provide insight into its psychological effects. In addition, the presence of discriminatory experiences among African Americans adults likely informs their parenting practices.

The relationship between perceived discrimination and racial socialization has been explored specifically with regard to adolescent mental health and coping with discriminatory experiences. In a study on adolescents' coping with perceived discrimination, Lionel Scott (2003) found that most participants who displayed effective coping abilities, reported receiving messages about race from a parent or guardian. Results from this study also showed that reports of racial socialization had a direct relationship to adolescents' approach to coping<sup>3</sup> with perceived discrimination. In another study, Fischer and Shaw (1999) explored factors that moderate the relationship between adolescents' racial discrimination and their self esteem. This study focused on two aspects of racial socialization, racial socialization beliefs and racial socialization experiences. Results showed that racial socialization beliefs were correlated to perceptions of racial discrimination and that racial socialization experiences moderated the relationship between discrimination and adolescent self esteem. The outcome of this research not only showed that perceived racial discrimination is a major stressor among African American adolescents, but also showed that parental racial socialization practices offset the effects of perceived discrimination on the self esteem of African American

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<sup>3</sup> Participants actively engage in their stressors in an effort to resolve them (Scott, 2003).

adolescents (Fischer & Shaw, 1999). Another interesting note in this research is the bilateral relationship between discrimination and racial socialization among adolescents. Because parents racial socialization practices affect the impact of discrimination on adolescents, this argument could be extrapolated to investigate the ways in which perceived discrimination may inform racial socialization practices for African American adults. Together, these studies (Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Scott, 2003) illustrated two ways that discriminatory experiences relate to racial socialization messages directly. However, these studies do not explore discrimination and racial socialization among African American parents beyond the focus on African American adolescent outcomes. Examining the relationship between perceived discrimination and parenting practices among African American parents will inform literature focused on the ways in which discrimination permeates the lives of African Americans beyond individual experiences into the parenting process. Also, African American adults' experiences with racial discrimination may have implications on their identity as parents in the context of racial socialization. Sections to follow discuss the potential for African American adults' ideologies about membership in their racial group to modify the impact of discrimination on racial socialization practices.

### **Racial Identity: A Potential Moderator between Discrimination and Racial Socialization**

Within African American communities, few topics have been researched more than racial identity. Based on beliefs in a shared racial history (Anglin & Wade, 2007),

racial identity describes the levels at which a person perceives connections to a particular racial group and the importance that they attach to their racial heritage (Helms, 1990; Butler-Barnes, Martin, Dixon & Robinson, 2007). Currently, numerous conceptualizations and forms of measurement exist to assess racial identity (i.e., Cross, 1989; Parham & Helms, 1981; Phinney, 1993; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton & Smith, 1997). In the present study, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) assessed the racial identity attitudes of African American parents (Sellers et al., 1997). This model incorporates both historical and cultural aspects of African American life in order to investigate the ways in which African Americans define themselves in terms of race and the meanings they attach to their racial group (Sellers et al., 1998). The model uses four dimensions of racial identity (i.e., salience, centrality, ideology and regard) to determine the role of race in the self-concept among African Americans. This study will investigate two of the four dimensions, centrality and private regard. Centrality relates to how important or how central race is to the way an individual defines himself/herself. Private regard focuses on an individual's assessment of group membership, especially an individual's perceptions about their racial group. The dimensions of racial identity outlined above speak to both the intrinsic nature of race to the self concept of African American adults and the meaning they attach to their racial group membership. The present study investigates the dimensions of centrality and private regard of the MMRI as these aspects of racial identity have been conceptually linked to the parent child relationship (Caldwell et al., 2002; Caldwell, Sellers, Bernat & Zimmerman, 2004). For instance, when investigating the relationship between racial

identity, maternal support and psychological distress among African American adolescents, Caldwell et al. (2002) found that centrality and private regard dimensions of racial identity were positively correlated to more perceptions of maternal support. More specifically, adolescents who held race as a salient factor and who have positive feelings about their racial group also had positive perceptions of maternal support. In another study that investigates racial identity and parental support as protective factors against the effects of substance abuse on African American adolescents, Caldwell et al. (2004) corroborated results in their previous work discussing the correlations between centrality, private regard, and parental support. Additionally, results from this multivariate analysis found that interactions between parental support, private regard and centrality dimensions of racial identity account for additional variance in adolescent alcohol use. More specifically, private regard was associated with less alcohol use for adolescents who hold race as a more central component of their identity. Though results from these studies do not explicitly link racial identity to racial socialization, both studies argue that parental support constitutes an aspect of socialization that significantly contributes to the lives of adolescents. The authors note that identity is a positive indicator of parent support; however, the potential influence of parents' own racial identity attitudes on adolescents were not investigated. The aforementioned research warrants some inquiry into the link between racial identity and factors that compose parental support (i.e. racial socialization) for African American adults. Thus, African American parental identity reflects self-definitions based on race along with beliefs they attach to their racial group. Since this

identity is both personal as well as collective, the racial identity of African American parents may influence their racial socialization practices.

Parents' racial socialization practices make a significant impact on the developmental of children's self concept, specifically, the way children perceive themselves racially (Peters, 1985; Thomas & Speight, 1999). For African Americans, the socialization messages instilled during childhood have lasting impressions on development of self concept into adulthood. For instance, research with African American college students found that ethnic identity and experiences with racial socialization were meaningful to students' self perception (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990) and to academic adjustment (Anglin & Wade, 2007). Furthermore, the impact of African American adults' past experiences with racial socialization on their current racial identity is significant. Demo and Hughes (1990) explained that African American adults who received integrative/assertive racial socialization messages (i.e., messages that stress racial pride in addition to the importance of heritage and culture) reported a stronger identification to their racial group than adults who received other racial socialization messages. The aforementioned research demonstrates the link between racial identity and racial socialization messages among African American adults. Based on that connection, one can infer that an investigation into the relationship between racial identity and racial socialization may provide more insight into the nature of parenting practices within African American communities. In addition, as inquiries into the parenting practices of African Americans persist within psychological research, particular interest in racial

identity attitudes of African American adults may inform research on the choices that parents make when socializing their children.

Additional literature suggests that African American parent's own racial identity attitudes potentially affect their racial socialization practices. For example, Thomas and Speight's (1999) retrospective study on racial socialization and racial identity among African American parents found that parents who have experienced a racially salient event and indicated that they are comfortable with their racial identity also reported having a significant presence of racial socialization in the parent child relationship. Results from regression analysis showed that parents who have internalized their racial identity or fall within the internalization/commitment stage of racial identity, accounted for 19% of the variance in racial socialization (Thomas & Speight, 1999). In another study on the diverse perspectives of racial socialization practices among parents of color, Hughes (2003) looked at three unique groups of parents of color (i.e., Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and African Americans). Results from this study reported that parents of color are lead by different life experiences that affect racial socialization practices and messages used in the child rearing process, to include racial attitudes and cultural history. Parents' life experiences are a clear influence on their parenting practices (Hughes, 2003; Thomas & Speight, 1999). Specifically, Thomas and Speight (1999) implicate parent racial identity as an influential factor in parenting practices (i.e., racial socialization practices). Also, Hughes (2003) illustrates the ways in which ethnic identity may affect the frequency of racial socialization practices among parents of color. Given the theoretical links between racial identity and racial socialization, more research is

warranted to explore this connection and highlight variability within the African American parent population with regard to factors that affect parenting. Furthermore, empirical evidence from the above research describes racial identity and racial socialization as integral factors in the lives of African Americans independently and in combination. Therefore, more research is necessary to investigate the multifaceted relationship between the two variables and their relationship to parent's racial socialization practices.

In sum, to understand African American parents, specifically the strategies they use to socialize their children, it is imperative that researchers investigate how their racial identity and the importance they attach to their racial heritage inform parenting practices. This study uses a multidimensional model for racial identity that assesses racial identity attitudes from a historical and cultural perspective unique to the development of African American communities in the United States. In so doing, this assessment of racial identity attitudes links racism and discrimination to racial socialization. Caldwell et al. (2002) and Caldwell et al. (2004) use the same model to distinguish centrality and private regard dimensions of racial identity as potential moderators in the parent child relationship.

While racial identity describes the ties that African Americans have to their racial group, their religious practices may strengthen that relationship. For example, several authors note that religious institutions are a social refuge for African Americans where they reinforce cultural collective interests (Mattis, 2005; Taylor et al., 1987; Taylor et al., 2004). Coupled with racial identity, the religious practices of African American parents may encourage them to choose appropriate racial socialization messages that counteract

discrimination and other societal ills. Thus, including the religious behaviors of African American parents in an analysis of their racial socialization practices may provide a more detailed understanding of an additional, overlooked variable that enables parents to engage in particular racial socialization practices.

## **Religiosity**

Archival research on Black churches has consistently documented the significant and influential role the church as a contributor to the social and political development of African American communities (Ellison, 1991; Taylor, Thornton & Chatters, 1987). Scholars describe the Black church as a symbolic representation of a strong religious foundation within Black community (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Billingsley & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1998; McAdoo, 2007) and attribute its' significance in the Black community to its position as one of the primary institutions owned and operated by African Americans (Taylor et al., 1987). Many community efforts to improve social, political and economic development within the African American community emanate from the Black church. In fact, as argued by Taylor, Chatters and Levin (2004) the religious traditions within the Black church are grounded in the mission to positively impact the lives of African Americans through transforming social and political conditions. Black churches also facilitate the development of networks that help members cope with life's adversities (Ellison & George, 1994; Taylor & Chatters, 1987). For instance, the church is often referred to a place that facilitates the needs of religious

practitioners on an individual and group level by providing both opportunities to extend their social networks and access to resources (Ellison, 1993).

In an effort to explicate the extent to which African Americans value religion through their religious involvement in Black churches, several studies have described the ways this group engages in religious practice (Taylor et al., 1987; Taylor, Mattis & Chatters, 1999). Through their descriptions of the religious behavior of African Americans specifically, researchers define religious involvement as engaging in or participating in religious activities associated with a religious institution such as church membership or attendance (Taylor et al., 1999). The research associated with the religious behaviors of African Americans has consistently recognized this group as more religious than other ethnic groups (Gordon & Song, 1994; Lincoln, 1974; Markstrom, 1999; Moore 1991; Taylor, Chatters, Jayakody & Levin, 1996). Therefore, overlooking the relationship between Black churches and African American communities denies the relevance of a profoundly relevant institution. Through research on religion among African Americans adults, specifically religious involvement, scholars have begun to fully understand the impact of the Black church.

Research on religiosity among African American adults discusses both the prevalence of different forms of religious involvement (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, Taylor et al., 2004) and their relationship to mental health outcomes (Bierman, 2006; Ellison, 1993; Ellison, Boardman, Williams & Jackson, 2001; Levin, Taylor & Chatters, 1995). In their comprehensive analysis of literature on religious involvement among African Americans, Taylor et al. (2004) note that 70% of participants report attending church

regularly, 80% engage in daily prayer, 27% read religious books and other material and 21% watch or listen to religious programming. In addition to reporting the prevalence of various religious practices among African Americans, researchers have also discussed the links between religious involvement and psychological outcomes (Bierman, 2006; Ellison et al., 2001). For example, Bierman (2006) points out that religious service attendance was a significant and positive predictor of both negative and positive outcomes. Further, Ellison (1993) found that public and private devotional<sup>4</sup> religious activity were associated with self perception, more specifically self esteem, but not associated with personal mastery. Results from this study also contend that religiosity in the form of public religious activity (i.e., church attendance and participation in church activities) play a buffering role in the relationship between stress and self esteem. In another study, Ellison and colleagues (2001) found that church attendance had a direct effect on psychological distress and other health related stressors in that more frequent church attendance reduced indications of stress among African Americans. Collectively, the above studies discuss both the importance of religiosity and the different roles that it plays in the mental health of African American adults. In addition, results from Bierman (2006), Ellison (1993) and Ellison et al. (2001) place particular emphasis on public religious involvement as strong indicators of psychological well-being among African American adults. Religiosity is inextricably linked to the lived experiences of African American adults (Mattis, 2005).

Because of its central role in the development of African American communities as

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<sup>4</sup> Ellison's (1993) assessment of religious involvement makes a distinction between religious activity that is public (i.e. church attendance and participation in religious activity) and private devotional (i.e. reading religious books, watching religious television, personal prayer, etc.) to assess the net effect of religious involvement on self perception.

evidenced by a tradition of religious involvement, religiosity is likely an influential factor in the parenting process for African Americans.

### **Religion and Perceived Racial Discrimination.**

Few authors have investigated the connection between religiosity and perceived racial discrimination among African American adults. More recently, Bierman (2006) and Ellison, Musick and Henderson (2008) have focused on the buffering role of religiosity on the deleterious effects of discrimination among African American adults. Results from Bierman's (2006) study on discrimination and mental health outcomes find that among African Americans, participation or attendance in religious services moderated how discrimination impacted negative outcomes. To be precise, the effect of discrimination on negative affect decreases with an increase in religious attendance. In a longitudinal study on the impacts of racism on psychological distress, Ellison et al. (2003) found that religious involvement in the form of religious guidance buffered the negative impact of racist encounters on distress. These results suggest that participants with more recent racist encounters and more frequent religious attendance reported fewer feelings of distress than those who had less frequent religious attendance. The above authors contend that religiosity is an effective buffer against the effects of discrimination and that the shielding effect of religious involvement positively affects the mental health of African American adults. More specifically, religious involvement promotes positive mental health outcomes despite the presence of racial discrimination. The above relationship between religiosity and discrimination substantiates a need for further

inquiry into the ways in which religious involvement buffers against negative effects of a racist society on African American adults. More specifically, religiosity (i.e. church attendance, choir membership, and bible study attendance) may affect the impact of perceived racist experiences on African American adults during parenting.

### **Religion and Racial Socialization.**

Religion in African American communities can be linked to parenting practices among African American parents (Martin & McAdoo, 2007). For instance in one of the few dyad studies that investigates racial socialization and theological orientation<sup>55</sup>, Martin and McAdoo (2007) conclude that there is a significant amount of congruence between parents and their adolescents with regard to their perceptions of racial socialization messages. Specifically, parents' perceptions of theological orientation were positively related to their adolescents' perception of parents' racial socialization practices (i.e., racial barrier and racial pride socialization practices) indicating the relevance of religion to parenting practices. Surprisingly, however, the potential for parental religious involvement to shape the racial socialization practices has not been explored in research. While some researchers have mentioned the influence of spirituality and religion on the overall racial socialization practices of African American parents as it relates to coping (Stevenson, 1995; Fatimilehin, 1999; McKay et al., 2003) and academic achievement

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<sup>55</sup> The theological orientation, according to the Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), is an indication as to the types of religious doctrine practiced within that particular church. For example, a "this worldly" theological orientation is indicative of a religious doctrine that focuses on the importance of African American Culture. An "other worldly" theological orientation does not focus on race oriented messages but rather instills messages on transcending to the hereafter.

(Marshall, 1995), few have progressed from that point to investigate multidimensionality of religious involvement and its potential direct impact on the racial socialization practices of African Americans. In other words, racial socialization research fails to explain the ways in which religious involvement buttress the parenting practices of African American parents.

In conclusion, religiosity is fundamental to and enmeshed with the lives of African Americans. Through diverse aspects of religious involvement, African Americans carry the messages of the Black church as they engage in the praxis of life. Research has demonstrated the effects of religious involvement on mental health (Ellison, 1993; Levin, Taylor & Chatters, 1995; Ellison, Boardman, Williams & Jackson, 2001) and its role as a buffer against the negative effects of racial discrimination (Bierman 2006; Ellison et al., 2008). In addition, Martin and McAdoo (2007) have begun to uncover the links between religion and the racial socialization practices of African American parents demonstrating congruence between parent and child. Thus, these arguments support the purpose of this study, investigating both the direct effect of religiosity on the racial socialization practices of African American parents and the potential moderating role of religiosity in the relationship between discrimination and racial socialization.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Present Study**

Racial socialization practices among African American parents have been discussed as a complicated process that incorporates history, culture, and pride into important messages transmitted from parent to child (Demo & Hughes, 1990). Research on racial socialization has uncovered theoretical links with demographic factors (Thornton et al., 1990), racial discrimination (Fischer & Shaw, 1999), racial identity (Caldwell et al., 2004; Thomas & Speight, 1999), and religiosity; however, no empirical research has investigated these factors in combination. For example, demographic factors and racial socialization have been historically linked through the work of Thornton et al., (1990) and Taylor and Allen (1990) who discuss the differences in age, education, and income as they relate to varying racial socialization messages. Though not explicitly discussing African American adults, both Scott (2003) and Fischer and Shaw (1999) discussed the relationship between discrimination and racial socialization among adolescents, shedding light on the importance of investigating those relationships among African American adults. The work of Caldwell et al. (2004) tells us that the importance African Americans place on race and their perceptions of their racial group affects the supportive nature of the parent child relationship so much so that racial identity (i.e., centrality and private regard) affects adolescents' alcohol use (Caldwell, et al., 2002). Finally, religion and racial socialization are described by Martin and McAdoo (2007) when they discussed the links between the religious doctrine professed by a particular

religious institution and the racial socialization messages that parents ascribe to. The current study takes the theoretical ties discussed to this point a step further by uncovering the ways in which these variables work together to shape the racial socialization practices of African American parents.

### **Research Goals and Hypotheses**

The goal of the present study was to explore the complexity of the racial socialization process for African American parents by investigating the theoretical links between parents' perceived discrimination, their racial identity attitudes, religiosity and their racial socialization practices. This work attempts to understand whether parent's own racial experiences, attitudes and their religious practices impact parenting practices, specifically how they socialize their children about race. There were two main objectives: (1) to explore associations among the parent demographic factors, perceived discrimination, racial identity attitudes and religiosity to their racial socialization practices; (2) to explore the potential moderating role of racial identity and religiosity in the relationship between perceived discrimination and parents' racial socialization practices. Below are the hypotheses associated with the objectives of this study.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that parent age, education level and household income would each be associated with racial socialization practices (e.g. racial pride, racial barrier & egalitarian).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that perceived discrimination, centrality and private regard racial identity attitudes would predict salient racial socialization practices compared to egalitarian socialization practices.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that racial identity attitudes would moderate the relationship between perceived discrimination and racial identity attitudes such that centrality and private regard, respectively, would buffer the impact of discrimination on racial socialization practices.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that organizational religiosity would moderate the relationship between perceived discrimination and racial socialization practices such that organizational religiosity would buffer the impact of discrimination on racial socialization practices.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

#### **Participants and Procedure**

The current study used data from a cross sectional study on the African American church and the racial socialization practices of African American parents (Martin, 2001). A convenience sample of 205 self-identified African American parents was recruited from 20 African American churches in two major cities in a mid-western state. Questionnaires were administered in both group and individual sessions. The sample consisted of 173 mothers and 32 fathers. Approximately 23% were 20 to 39, 55% were

between the age of 40 and 49, and 22% were 50 and above. Parents' educational backgrounds ranged from some high school experience to earning a graduate degree (Masters, PhD, etc.). Twelve percent of parents graduated high school or earned a GED, 51% either attended technical college, some college or had an associate's degree, 21% attended college and 11% earned a graduate degree and 5% had some high school or less. Twenty-one percent of parents over \$75,000 a year, 23% between \$50,000 and 74,999, 18% between \$35,000 and \$49,999, 30% earned between \$15,000 and \$34,999 and 8% less than 14,999 per year.

## **Measures**

### **Demographics .**

Demographic information was obtained through a self-report questionnaire. Participants' age was assessed using a three point scale 1) 20 to 39 2) 40 to 49 and 3) 50 and above. Income was recorded using a 5-point scale ranging from \$14,999 and below to \$75,000 and above. Finally participants' reported education level as 1) having some high school or below, 2) high school diploma/ GED, 3) Technical College/ Some College, 4) College Degree and 5) Graduate Degree.

### **Perceived Discrimination.**

The Daily Life Experience scale (DLE) self report measure was used to assess perceived discrimination among parents (Harrell, 1994). The measure calls for participants to assess the frequency at which they have experienced daily life hassles (micro-aggressions) that

result from racial discrimination on a five point Likert-type scale. Responses range from “never = 0” to “once a week or more = 5.” Higher scores correspond to more frequent experiences of discrimination. A sample item stated, “How often have you been treated as if you were ‘stupid’, being ‘talked down to’?” A composite measure of perceived discrimination was created based on the 17 item scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

### **Racial Identity.**

The 27-item version of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) measured African American adult racial identity attitudes (Martin, Wout, Nguyen, Sellers, & Gonzalez, 2005). For the purposes of the current study, only two dimensions were considered, centrality and private regard. The centrality subscale assessed the extent to which an individual regularly defined themselves in terms of race ( $\alpha = .80$ ). For example, a centrality question would read, “It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature.” The private regard subscale measures participants own feelings toward African Americans (e.g., “I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements”) ( $\alpha = .74$ ). Responses were recorded using a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

### **Religiosity.**

A modified version of the organizational religiosity dimension in the Multidimensional Measure of Religious Involvement for African Americans (Levin, Taylor & Chatters, 1995) was used to assess religiosity in this study. Levin et al. (1995) argue that

organizational religiosity consists of religious activities and behaviors that are exhibited within formal religious institutions. Similar to ‘public religious activity’ as described by (Ellison, 1993; Ellison et al., 2001), the two questions that composed this measure asked, “How often do you usually attend religious services” and “Besides regular service, how often do you take part in other activities at your place of worship” ( $\alpha = .67$ ). Both items were self-reported and measured on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) Nearly every day to (5) Never.

### **Racial Socialization.**

The Parent Version of Racial Socialization Scale (PVRS) (Martin, 2001) was used to assess the racial socialization practices of African American parents in this sample. The modified measure contained 35-items and was previously used in the National Survey of Black Americans database (NSBA) (Jackson & Gurin, 1987). It measured three classifications of racial socialization messages, integrative/assertive ( $\alpha = .83$ , racial pride), cautious/defensive ( $\alpha = .81$ , racial barrier) and individualistic/humanistic ( $\alpha = .58$ , egalitarianism). Parents were asked to assess their racial socialization practices using a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (All the time) to determine the frequency which they believe they provide these particular racial socialization messages. The racial pride socialization subscale discusses messages that promote pride and heritage among children and adolescents (Demo & Hughes, 1990). One sample item states, “I teach or model to my child that the achievements by African Americans or Blacks are as equally important as achievements from other ethnic groups.” The racial

barrier subscale included statements that promote an awareness and caution of racism and discrimination against African Americans. For example, one item stated “I teach or model to my child to not give White people or others special treatment.” Finally, the egalitarian racial socialization subscale contains statements void of race and assesses frequency of endorsing a non-racial orientation (Demo & Hughes, 1990). One sample item read, “I teach or model to my child, skin color is not a factor in his/her worth in American society.”

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

#### **Preliminary Analyses**

Preliminary analyses of the data included calculations of means and standard deviations of all independent and dependent variables included in this study. Parents reported relatively low scores on perceived discrimination ( $M = 1.53$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) indicating that on average they experienced racially motivated micro-aggressions between “once” and “a few times” over their lifetime. With regard to racial identity attitudes, on average parents had high private regard ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) and centrality racial identity scores ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = .77$ ). Parents indicated that they participated in religious service or other activities at their place of worship between 1 to 3 times per week ( $M = 2.15$ ,  $SD = .65$ ). Regarding parents socialization messages, parents reported endorsing egalitarian socialization messages ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .36$ ) more often than racial

pride messages ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) and racial barrier socialization messages ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = .72$ ). Specifically, parents in this sample were more likely to endorse messages without specific racial reference that focus on positive attitudes toward the self and excelling, than messages that discuss race as a salient issue. Means and standard deviations for each of the variables in the present study are presented in Table 1.

A power analysis was conducted using the software package, GPower (Faul & Erdfelder, 1992). The sample size of 205 was used for the statistical power analyses and a 9 predictor variable equation was used as a baseline. The recommended effect sizes used for this assessment were as follows: small ( $f^2 = .02$ ), medium ( $f^2 = .15$ ), and large ( $f^2 = .35$ ) (see Cohen 1977). The alpha level used for this analysis was  $p < .05$ . Analyses revealed the statistical power for this study was .52 for detecting a small effect, whereas the power exceeded .99 for the detection of a moderate to large effect size. Thus, there was more than adequate power at the moderate to large effect size level, but less than adequate statistical power at the small effect size level.

### **Correlation Analysis**

Zero-order correlations were conducted in order to assess the hypothesized relationships between demographic variables and racial socialization practices among African American parents (See Table 2). It was hypothesized that age, education and income were significantly associated with racial socialization practices. Age was significantly and positively associated with racial pride ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and racial barrier ( $r = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) socialization practices, however it was not significantly

associated with egalitarian racial socialization practices ( $r = -.07, p = .33$ ). Specifically, older African American parents were more likely to endorse racially salient socialization messages over those that promote racial equality. Education was also positively associated with racial barrier socialization practices ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ) but was not significantly associated with egalitarian ( $r = .09, p = .23$ ) or racial pride socialization practices ( $r = .11, p = .12$ ). These relationships show that parents who were more educated emphasized messages that discussed the power dynamic between white and black populations and the presence of prejudice in society as opposed to parents who had less education. Finally income was significantly and positively associated with both racial barrier ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ) and racial pride socialization practices ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ). Similar to results on parent age and education, income was unrelated to egalitarian socialization practices ( $r = .13, p = .06$ ).

Racial identity and religiosity variables in the study also had associations to parent's racial socialization practices. Although centrality racial identity attitudes had a significant and positive association to both racial pride ( $r = .22, p < .01$ ) and racial barrier socialization practices ( $r = .22, p < .01$ ), it had no relationship to egalitarian racial socialization ( $r = .04, p < .53$ ). The private regard racial identity attitudes had a significant positive relationship to racial pride ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ) racial barrier ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ) and egalitarian ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ) racial socialization practices. Organizational religiosity was the only variable with a significant negative association to racial pride socialization practices ( $r = -.18, p < .05$ ) indicating that parents who participate in religious activities within the church (e.g., church attendance, choir membership, etc.) are

also less likely to endorse racial socialization messages that promote racial pride. It should also be noted that perceived discrimination was unrelated to all three racial socialization practices (See Table 2). Regression Analyses

To test hypotheses 2 through 4, a series of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted for each racial socialization practice (i.e. racial barrier, racial pride & egalitarian). As a reminder, hypothesis 2 stated that perceived discrimination, centrality and private regard racial identity attitudes would be significant positive predictors of racially salient racial socialization practices (i.e., racial barrier and racial pride). Demographic variables (i.e., age, education and income) were entered in Step 1 of the model followed by perceived discrimination in Step 2 with centrality and private regard entered in Step 3. After controlling for all other variables, private regard was a significant predictor of both racial barrier and racial pride socialization practices. Results pertaining to Hypothesis 2 are presented in Table 3.

### **Racial Identity predicting Racially Salient Socialization Practices.**

As seen in Table 3, racial identity attitudes were significant predictors of both racial barrier and racial pride socialization practices respectively. Model 1 explained 18% of the variance in racial barrier socialization practices ( $F(6, 182) = 6.67; p < .001$ ). Age ( $\beta = .17; p < .01$ ) and income ( $\beta = .17; p < .05$ ) were significant positive predictors of African American parents' propensity to endorse racial barrier socialization messages. Older parents with higher household incomes were associated with racial socialization messages that emphasize differences in power dynamics between whites and blacks as

compared to parents with lower household income. Among racial identity attitudes, only private regard was found to be a significant predictor of racial barrier socialization practices ( $\beta = .20; p < .01$ ). Model 2 explained 18% of the variance in racial pride socialization practices ( $F(6, 183) = 6.65; p < .001$ ). In this model both centrality ( $\beta = .15; p < .05$ ) and private regard ( $\beta = .27; p < .001$ ) racial identity attitudes were significant predictors of parents' propensity to endorse socialization messages that underscore African American heritage and culture. Similar to the previous model, older parents were also likely to endorse racial pride messages ( $\beta = .19; p < .01$ ) than younger parents. The third model was included to investigate racial identity variables predicting non race specific socialization practices, specifically egalitarian racial socialization. Model 3 explained 8% of the variance in egalitarian racial socialization practices ( $F(6, 183) = 2.50; p < .05$ ). Like Model 1, in Model 3 income was found to be a significant predictor of egalitarian racial socialization practices ( $\beta = .20; p < .05$ ) such that parents with higher household incomes were more likely to endorse socialization messages that were void of the implications of race than parents with lower household incomes. Only private regard racial identity attitudes served as a significant predictor of egalitarian racial socialization practices ( $\beta = .20; p < .01$ ).

Hypothesis 3 and 4 tested centrality, private regard and organizational religiosity individually as moderators in the relationship between perceived discrimination and racial socialization practices. In these models age, education, income were entered in step 1, followed by perceived discrimination in step 2, moderating variable in step 3 (i.e.,

centrality, private regard, organizational religiosity) and the interaction terms (discrimination x centrality, discrimination x private regard and discrimination x organizational religiosity) were entered in step 4. As discussed in Aiken and West (1991) and Baron and Kenny (1986), criterion and moderating variables were centered to assist with interpretation and counteract the effects of multicollinearity in the model. None of the interactions effects explored in hypothesis 3 and 4 approached significance. Thus, hypothesis 3 and 4 was not supported. Step 4 of the model for each racial socialization practice is presented in Table 4.

**Racial Identity Attitudes and Religiosity as potential Moderators in the relationship between Perceived Discrimination and Racial Socialization Practices.**

Table 4 presents results from several models investigating centrality, private regard and religiosity as moderators in the relationship between perceived discrimination and racial socialization practices. The interaction between perceived discrimination and centrality was not a significant predictor of racial pride ( $\beta = .00; p = .97$ ), racial barrier ( $\beta = -.08; p = .29$ ) or egalitarian racial socialization practices ( $\beta = .04; p = .64$ ). Similarly, the interaction between perceived discrimination and private regard was not a significant predictor of racial pride ( $\beta = -.02; p = .73$ ), racial barrier ( $\beta = -.07; p = .32$ ) or egalitarian racial socialization practices ( $\beta = .00; p = 1.00$ ). Finally, the interaction between perceived discrimination and organizational religiosity was not a significant predictor of

racial pride ( $\beta = -.07$ ;  $p = .35$ ), racial barrier ( $\beta = -.02$ ;  $p = .75$ ) or egalitarian racial socialization practices ( $\beta = .09$ ;  $p = .25$ ). Although moderating relationships were not supported, the models in Table 4 provide information on the contributions of organizational religiosity to predicting racial pride racial socialization practices ( $\beta = -.15$ ;  $p < .05$ ). More specifically, these results show that African American parents who report more religiosity were less likely to endorse racial pride socialization messages than parents who are less frequently engaged in these particular religious activities (i.e., church attendance and involvement in church activities). As evidenced by Table 4, although racial identity attitudes and religiosity are independent contributors to the racial socialization practices of African American parents, in the presence of discrimination they do not have a significant impact.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

Racial socialization is an intricate part of the parenting process for African American parents (McAdoo, 2002; Peters, 1985; Stevenson, 1994). This study investigated factors that potentially affect the racial socialization practices of African American parents including their demographic characteristics, experiences of perceived discrimination, racial identity attitudes and religiosity. Results from this study confirm parent age, education and income as positive indicators of their racial socialization practices (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Tanner-Smith et al., 2007; Thornton et al., 1990). Centrality and private regard racial identity attitudes were positive indicators of racially

salient socialization practices (i.e., racial barrier and racial pride) indicating that how parents define themselves racially had a significant impact on the messages they taught their children about race. Parents' ideologies surrounding their racial group and their religious behaviors represent a sustained social and cultural support system in the face of challenging social contexts (Mattis, 2005; Sellers et al., 1998), thus they have a direct relationship to racial socialization practices. Results also showed that perceived discrimination was not associated with parents' racial socialization practices. In addition, African American parent's racial identity attitudes and religiosity did not function as a protective factor between perceived discrimination and racial socialization. These results can be attributed to the racial composition of the neighborhood within which parents in this study reside. For example, as cited in Thornton et al. (1990) neighborhood composition is an important factor in determining the context within which parents engage in racial socialization practices. In addition, parents within this study live in one of the most hypersegregated cities in the United States, thus limiting exposure to majority ethnic groups and incidences of racial discrimination (Massey & Denton, 1989). In other words, because the population in this study reside in a city that is more than 60% African American (Census, 2010), personal experiences with racial discrimination may be limited due to hypersegregation and restricted exposure to White/Caucasian ethnic groups. In sum, results from this study further conclude that the racial socialization process for African American parents is complex and impacted by various contextual factors.

## **Demographic predictors of Racial Socialization Practices**

Demographic findings for this study contribute to the research on the racial socialization practices of African Americans beyond existing literature. Specifically, results from this study show that parent age, education and income are explicitly associated to racially salient socialization practices (endorsing racial barrier and racial pride messages) as opposed to endorsing messages void of race. This finding is surprising given that on average the population in this study reported endorsing more egalitarian racial socialization practices than racially salient practices. However, the social context for African American parents during child rearing may explain differing perspectives on racial socialization practices. This point is somewhat supported by Thornton et al. (1990) who concluded that neighborhood composition had a significant impact on the probability of parents to racially socialize their children. Although African American parents are the primary socializers of their children, their community and the social environment surrounding their family life may impact their racial socialization practices. Understanding the ways that demographic characteristics of African American parents are associated with specific racial socialization practices provides a more detailed perspective of the context within which socialization takes place for their families.

## **Discrimination and Racial Socialization Practices**

Although previous research found a link between discrimination and racial socialization among African American adolescents (Fischer et al., 2000; Scott, 2003), this

study found no such link among African American adults. Parents' experiences with perceived discrimination did not have a significant relationship to their racial socialization practices. African American adults may have previously developed strategies to cope with discrimination over time thus its impact may be decreased.

The lack of significant relationship between perceived discrimination and racial socialization may also be attributed to the specific characteristics of the population under research. Parents within this sample self identified as religious and were a part of a larger study on the religious practices of African Americans. Bierman (2006) and Ellison et al. (2008) have suggested that increased religious involvement buffers the effect of discrimination, thus, within this particular population of parents perceptions of discrimination may be subconsciously affected by their increased levels of religiosity. In addition, results from Ellison (1993) concluded that increased church attendance and other public religious participation inversely affect the impact of acute stressors on African American adults. The religious practices of African American parents have an effect on the way they cope with life stressors, particularly discrimination. Thus, for African American adults a supportive religious environment may assist in gauging their racial socialization practices.

### **Racial Identity as a predictor of Racially Salient Racial Socialization Practices**

Parents' centrality and private regard racial identity attitudes were significant predictors of racial socialization practices. Specifically, parents who hold their race as a central component of their identity and hold their racial group in high regard tended to

endorse racially salient socialization messages. Similar findings are illustrated by Demo and Hughes (1990) and Thomas and Speight (1999) who found a significant relationship between racial identity and racial socialization among African American Adults. These results speak to the importance of racial group membership in the lives of African Americans. For African American parents their self concept specifically how they identify with their racial group informs their parenting practices. In other words, the meaning parents ascribe to their membership in a racial group is translated into specific socialization messages that emphasize the existence of prejudice in society and reinforce cultural pride. These findings conclude that how parents define themselves racially impacts the choices they make in teaching their children strategies to navigate race in society.

### **Religiosity and Racial Socialization**

Results from this study suggest that religiosity had an inverse relationship to racial pride socialization messages. More specifically, parents within the sample who had high frequencies of religious service attendance and took part in activities within the church were less likely to endorse messages on racial pride to their children. This finding represents the first step to understanding how religious involvement may impact African American adults parenting practices. Taylor et al. (2004) discuss the need for multidimensional assessments of religious behavior to understand the ways that religion is operationalized in African American communities; however, Martin and McAdoo (2007) speak directly to the racial socialization process and argue that researchers need to

look beyond religious involvement and practices. They argue that the diverse religious doctrines (i.e., theology) that are communicated within Black churches may influence parental practices and may represent a better indicator than traditional indices of religious involvement (e.g., church attendance and engagement in church activities). Therefore, the differing theological perspectives may confound the effect of religiosity on parental racial socialization practices. In other words, the distinct theological perspectives endorsed by churches may help parents to justify and rationalize the importance of particular racial socialization messages. Consequently, for African American parents who are involved in their religious institution their theological orientation may be an important extraneous variable when investigating parenting practices.

### **Limitations**

The present research supports future understandings of the complexity involved in the racial socialization process among African American parents; however, there are some limitations. Sample uniqueness, and invariability within the sample presents boundaries to the generalize ability of results. The parents in this study were drawn from a purposeful sample of Protestant congregation members within a predominantly African American city. Samples that are more representative of the diversity within African American parents will present a more clear perspective of characteristics that impact racial socialization practices. In addition, because the sample was highly religious African American mothers, exogenous factors beyond observed variables may have influenced statistical relationships. Also, disproportionate representation of mothers over

fathers and potential similarities in religious practices within the sample may have inversely affected the probability of significant differences between parents. Finally, self reported data presents significant parameters to the generalizability of this research.

### **Significance and Future Research**

While it is evident in research that African American parents believe racial socialization is integral to child rearing (Thomas & Speight, 1999), the racial socialization process is still unclear. Research on racial socialization attempts to understand the child rearing process for African American parents through investigating the impacts of larger societal issues on the African American community. This study takes existing research a step further by defining the racial socialization process for African Americans in terms of the impact of parents' lived experiences associated with perceived discrimination, racial identity and religiosity and its effects on socialization messages they imparted on their children.

Existing research presents a much needed understanding of how racial socialization impacts adolescent resilience (Miller & MacIntosh, 1999) and other developmental outcomes, however very little conclusive evidence discusses how parents define the racial socialization process for themselves based on the ecological contexts where child rearing occurs. Results from this study support the assertion that African American parents' racial identity attitudes and religiosity are central to the racial socialization process. In addition, parental demographics have a direct impact on the racial socialization messages they endorse. Efforts to move forward in research

concerning the African American parents and the developmental process should continue to investigate the impacts of social position on racial socialization and the developmental process for African American children (Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, Wasik et al., 1996).

Future directions for research on racial socialization practices should focus on representativeness of samples under investigation in an attempt to account for intrinsic and extrinsic factors (i.e. Gender of children and TV/News media) that may impact the parenting process. Specifically, consideration should be taken by researchers to investigate the ways that changes in the socio-political landscape for African Americans impact the racial socialization process. Furthermore, though research supports the prevalence of racial socialization practices among African American parents generally (Thornton et al., 1990) to fully understand the racial socialization process, representation of both mothers and fathers' socialization practices must be analyzed. Additionally, longitudinal research models would better assess how changing social contexts impact parents racial socialization practices. Specifically, analyzing how parents' and children's life experiences impact their choices in socialization messages over time may be inform research on the complex parenting process for parents of color.

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Table 1  
*Means and Standard Deviations of the Study Variables*

Variable	Mean	S D	Minimum	Maximum
Perceived Discrimination	1.53	0.81	0.00	3.71
Racial Identity Attitudes				
Private Regard	5.57	0.67	3.43	7.00
Centrality	4.03	0.77	1.40	6.50
Religiosity				
Organizational Religiosity	2.15	0.65	1.00	4.50
Racial Socialization Messages				
Racial Barrier	2.54	0.72	1.00	4.00
Racial Pride	3.20	0.71	1.00	4.00
Egalitarian	3.63	0.36	1.86	4.00

Table 2

*Correlations of Demographic, Perceived Discrimination, Racial Identity, Religiosity and Racial Socialization Variables*

	Age	Education	Income	Perceived Discrimination	Centrality	Private Regard	Religiosity	Egalitarian	Racial Pride	Racial Barrier
Age	1.00									
Education	0.03	1.00								
Income	0.11	0.44 **	1.00							
Perceived Discrimination	0.11	0.22 **	0.06	1.00						
Centrality	0.03	0.21 **	0.26 **	0.15 *	1.00					
Private Regard	0.08	0.20 **	0.08	0.14 *	0.16 *	1.00				
Religiosity	-0.01	-0.07	-0.11	-0.07	0.00	-0.04	1.00			
Egalitarian	-0.07	0.09	0.13	-0.06	0.04	0.18 *	-0.02	1.00		
Racial Pride	0.22 **	0.11	0.18 *	0.11	0.22 **	0.30 **	-0.18 *	0.32 **	1.00	
Racial Barrier	0.19 **	0.23 **	0.28 **	0.09	0.22 **	0.25 **	-0.08	0.17 *	0.48 **	1.00

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

Table 3

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Perceived Discrimination and Racial Identity Predicting Racial Socialization Practices*

Model 1: Racial Barrier													
Variable	Block 1			Block 2			Block 3			Block 4			
	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	
Age	0.20	0.08	0.18 **	0.20	0.08	0.18 **	0.20	0.08	0.18 **	0.18	0.08	0.17 **	
Education	0.10	0.06	0.14	0.10	0.06	0.13	0.09	0.06	0.12	0.06	0.06	0.09	
Income	0.11	0.04	0.19 *	0.11	0.04	0.19 **	0.09	0.04	0.16 *	0.10	0.04	0.17 *	
Perceived Discrimination				0.04	0.06	0.04	0.02	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.01	
Centrality							0.11	0.05	0.14 *	0.09	0.05	0.12	
Private Regard										0.21	0.07	0.20 **	
R <sup>2</sup> Δ				0.00			0.02			0.04			
R <sup>2</sup>	0.12	***		0.13			0.14 *			0.18 **			
Model 2: Racial Pride													
Variable	Block 1			Block 2			Block 3			Block 4			
	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	
Age	0.23	0.08	0.21 **	0.22	0.08	0.20 **	0.22	0.08	0.20 **	0.20	0.07	0.19 **	
Education	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.01	-0.01	0.06	-0.01	-0.04	0.06	-0.06	
Income	0.08	0.04	0.15	0.09	0.04	0.16 *	0.07	0.04	0.12	0.07	0.04	0.13	
Perceived Discrimination				0.06	0.07	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.06	0.02	
Centrality							0.14	0.05	0.19 **	0.11	0.05	0.15 *	
Private Regard										0.28	0.07	0.27 ***	
R <sup>2</sup> Δ				0.00			0.03			0.07			
R <sup>2</sup>	0.08	**		0.08			0.11 **			0.18 ***			
Model 3: Egalitarian													
Variable	Block 1			Block 2			Block 3			Block 4			
	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	
Age	-0.02	0.04	-0.04	-0.02	0.04	-0.03	-0.02	0.04	-0.03	-0.02	0.04	-0.04	
Education	0.00	0.03	-0.01	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	-0.01	0.03	-0.04	
Income	0.05	0.02	0.20 *	0.05	0.02	0.19 *	0.05	0.02	0.18 *	0.05	0.02	0.20 *	
Perceived Discrimination				-0.02	0.03	-0.04	-0.02	0.03	-0.04	-0.02	0.03	-0.06	
Centrality							0.01	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.03	0.00	
Private Regard										0.11	0.04	0.20 **	
R <sup>2</sup> Δ				0.00			0.00			0.04			
R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	**		0.04			0.04			0.08 **			

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

Table 4

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Investigating Moderators in the relationship between Perceived Discrimination and Racial Socialization Practices*

Centrality											
Variable	Racial Pride			Racial Barrier			Egalitarian				
	B	SEB	$\beta$	B	SEB	$\beta$	B	SEB	$\beta$		
Age	0.22	0.08	0.20 **	0.20	0.08	0.19 **	-0.02	0.04	-0.04		
Education	-0.01	0.06	-0.01	0.09	0.06	0.13	0.00	0.03	0.00		
Income	0.07	0.04	0.12	0.10	0.04	0.17 *	0.05	0.02	0.18 *		
Perceived Discrimination	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.07	0.02	-0.02	0.03	-0.03		
Centrality	0.14	0.05	0.19 **	0.11	0.05	0.15 *	0.01	0.03	0.02		
Discrimination X Centrality	0.00	0.06	0.00	-0.06	0.06	-0.08	0.02	0.03	0.04		
R <sup>2</sup> $\Delta$	0.00			0.00			0.00				
R <sup>2</sup>	0.11			0.01			0.04				
Private Regard											
Variable	Racial Pride			Racial Barrier			Egalitarian				
	B	SEB	$\beta$	B	SEB	$\beta$	B	SEB	$\beta$		
Age	0.21	0.08	0.19 **	0.19	0.08	0.18 **	-0.02	0.04	-0.04		
Education	-0.03	0.06	-0.05	0.07	0.06	0.09	-0.01	0.03	-0.03		
Income	0.09	0.04	0.16 *	0.12	0.04	0.20 **	0.05	0.02	0.19 **		
Perceived Discrimination	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.07	0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.06		
Private Regard	0.30	0.07	0.29 ***	0.23	0.07	0.22 **	0.11	0.04	0.20 **		
Discrimination X Private Regard	-0.03	0.09	-0.02	-0.09	0.09	-0.07	0.00	0.05	0.00		
R <sup>2</sup> $\Delta$	0.00			0.00			0.00				
R <sup>2</sup>	0.16			0.17			0.08				
Religiosity											
Variable	Racial Pride			Racial Barrier			Egalitarian				
	B	SEB	$\beta$	B	SEB	$\beta$	B	SEB	$\beta$		
Age	0.21	0.08	0.20 **	0.20	0.08	0.17 **	-0.01	0.04	-0.03		
Education	0.01	0.06	0.01	0.10	0.06	0.13	0.00	0.03	-0.01		
Income	0.08	0.04	0.14	0.11	0.04	0.19	0.05	0.02	0.17 *		
Perceived Discrimination	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.06	0.04	-0.02	0.03	-0.03		
Religiosity	-0.17	0.08	-0.15 *	-0.05	0.08	-0.05	-0.02	0.04	-0.04		
Discrimination X Religiosity	-0.10	0.10	-0.07	-0.03	0.10	-0.02	0.06	0.05	0.09		
R <sup>2</sup> $\Delta$	0.00			0.00			0.01				
R <sup>2</sup>	0.11			0.13			0.04				

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$