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## The Impact of African American Parents' Racial Discrimination Experiences and Perceived Neighborhood Cohesion on their Racial Socialization Practices

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### Abstract

Parental racial socialization is a parenting tool used to prepare African American adolescents for managing racial stressors. While it is known that parents' racial discrimination experiences affect the racial socialization messages they provide, little is known about the influence of factors that promote supportive and communal parenting, such as perceived neighborhood cohesion. In cohesive neighborhoods, neighbors may help parents address racial discrimination by monitoring youth and conveying racial socialization messages; additionally, the effect of neighborhood cohesion on parents' racial socialization may differ for boys and girls because parents socialize adolescents about race differently based on expected encounters with racial discrimination. Therefore, the current study examines how parents' perception of neighborhood cohesion and adolescents' gender moderate associations between parents' racial discrimination experiences and the racial socialization messages they deliver to their adolescents. Participants were a community sample of 608 African American adolescents (54 % girls; mean age = 15.5) and their primary caregivers (86 % biological mothers; mean age = 42.0). Structural equation modeling indicated that parental racial discrimination was associated with more promotion of mistrust messages for boys and girls in communities with low neighborhood cohesion. In addition, parental racial discrimination was associated with more cultural socialization messages about racial pride and history for boys in neighborhoods with low neighborhood cohesion. The findings suggest that parents' racial socialization messages are influenced by their own racial discrimination

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experiences and the cohesiveness of the neighborhood; furthermore, the content of parental messages delivered varies based on adolescents' gender.

### Keywords

Racial socialization; Racial discrimination; Parenting practices

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### Introduction

In response to recent social unrest over violence and harassment perpetrated against young African American people in the United States, there has been increased public and scholarly attention to how African American parents prepare their children for race-related encounters (e.g., Wallace 2014); racial socialization is a strategy that parents use to prepare their children for managing racial prejudice and discrimination and instill cultural pride and knowledge about their racial group (Hughes et al. 2006). It is recognized that the racial socialization messages that African American parents convey to their children regarding race, ethnicity, and cultural heritage are necessary and common parenting strategies utilized to help youth understand race and navigate interracial interactions (Lesane-Brown 2006; Stevenson et al. 2002). There is evidence that the racial socialization messages parents deliver to their children are informed by their own encounters with racial discrimination (e.g., Hughes 2003); however, less is known about how parents' perception of social supports in their neighborhood environment may shape parental messages aimed at helping their children manage racial discrimination. Perceiving social support in one's neighborhood context can help families manage stress and provide assistance in combating social stressors (e.g., Sampson 2008), such as racial discrimination. Parents' perception of neighborhood cohesion may partly determine the frequency and content of parents' racial socialization messages, and may account for variation in the degree to which parents' experiences with racial discrimination forecast their racial socialization messages. Thus, the present study investigates whether the effect of parents' racial discrimination experiences on the racial socialization messages they communicate to their children varies according to parents' perceptions of neighborhood cohesion and the gender of the child.

### Parental Racial Socialization Messages

Parents convey a variety of verbal racial socialization messages to youth, and many are considered beneficial for adolescents' psychological and developmental outcomes (Bannon et al. 2009; Caughy et al. 2002; Scott 2003). Three commonly reported racial socialization messages are cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust (Hughes et al. 2006). Cultural socialization messages teach children about the history and traditions of their racial group to instill a sense of pride (Lesane-Brown 2006). Preparation for bias messages communicate awareness about racial discrimination and often provide strategies on how to cope with experiences of racial discrimination (Hughes et al. 2006). Promotion of mistrust messages convey distrust and caution about interacting with other racial groups and emphasize racial barriers that can hinder success; mistrust messages typically do not offer guidance about how to cope with racial discrimination (Stevenson et al. 2002).

Considerable research demonstrates that cultural socialization messages mitigate the adverse effects of racial discrimination on youth's internalizing symptoms (e.g., anxious symptoms; Bannon, et al. 2009), externalizing behaviors (e.g., delinquency; Burt et al. 2012), and resilience (e.g., Brown and Tylka 2011). While the findings about the protective benefits of preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust messages are mixed (e.g., Caughy et al. 2002; McHale et al. 2006), many studies have shown the utility of messages preparing youth for racial discrimination. For example, among youth reporting experiences with racial discrimination, preparation for bias messages were associated with fewer delinquent behaviors (Burt et al. 2012) and better self-esteem (Harris-Britt et al. 2007). Given the significance of racial socialization messages for African American youth's adjustment, understanding factors that influence parents' racial socialization messages is important (e.g., Hughes et al. 2006).

### **Predictors of Racial Socialization**

The racial socialization literature suggests that parents' experiences with racial discrimination influence the type and amount of racial socialization messages they deliver (Hughes et al. 2006). For example, Hughes and Johnson (2001) found that the more racial discrimination parents reported, the more cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages they delivered to their children. Similarly, parents who experience racial discrimination in social, community, and occupational settings (e.g., Hughes 2003) deliver more frequent messages about racial bias to their children, possibly because they anticipate that their children will encounter racial discrimination. While it seems evident that parents' racial socialization messages are shaped, at least in part, by their own racial discrimination experiences, these messages also may vary depending on aspects of the neighborhood context that affect parenting. One such factor is neighborhood cohesion (Caughy et al. 2006).

Neighborhood cohesion refers to a sense of trust and feelings of kinship among community members, and provides a supportive social infrastructure of relationships and networks that often fosters feelings of inclusion and belonging (Sampson et al. 2002). Prior research indicates that parents' perceptions of social support and a positive neighborhood social climate are associated with increased parental efficacy (Izzo et al. 2000), which may influence parents' racial socialization efforts (Caughy et al. 2006). In the context of a supportive community, parents may expect that neighbors will help to look out for and monitor their children, provide aid in managing stressors, and help socialize children in the neighborhood. In fact, neighborhood cohesion, and related constructs such as social cohesion, collective efficacy, and collective socialization are negatively associated with neighborhood and family-level stressors (e.g., Armstrong et al. 2015), and positive neighborhood processes and support are protective against race-related stress for African American adults (e.g., Driscoll et al. 2014) and youth (e.g., Riina et al. 2013). Therefore, it is possible that parents who perceive their neighborhood as cohesive may consider and utilize their neighbors as a support for contending with personal racial discrimination and socializing their children to manage racial discrimination. It is not clear, however, whether neighborhood cohesion attenuates associations between parents' experience with racial discrimination and the racial socialization messages they provide to their children. It is

possible that parents may expect neighbors who witness or hear about their child's encounters with racial discrimination to intervene and convey racial socialization messages (Davis 2014). Thus, in a supportive neighborhood social climate parents may perceive support from neighbors including assistance in monitoring and socializing youth contending with racial discrimination and, as such, this may reduce the amount of direct racial socialization messages parents deliver (Caughy et al. 2006). This hypothesized effect of neighborhood cohesion may vary depending on whether parents' socialization efforts are focused on boys or girls.

Although parents may be concerned with both girls' and boys' encounters with race-related stressors, in less cohesive neighborhoods parents' perception of threat for boys may be heightened. There is evidence that African American boys may be at an increased risk of serious forms of racial discrimination, including being profiled and experiencing police-perpetrated violence (e.g., Goff et al. 2014). If their families are in neighborhoods with low cohesion, African American boys may lack the support and monitoring of community members who could intervene or provide racial socialization messages. Therefore, parents may provide boys with more preparation for bias and mistrust messages in less cohesive neighborhoods. On the other hand, the association between parents' racial discrimination experiences and their racial socialization messages may be less pronounced for girls in the context of low neighborhood cohesion because adolescent girls are more likely to engage in indoor social activities (Fairclough et al. 2009) and parents perceive that girls have a lower risk of being discriminated against compared to boys (McHale et al. 2006; Stevenson et al. 2002).

## Present Study

Few studies have considered how supportive factors in the neighborhood, such as neighborhood cohesion, interact with parents' racial discrimination encounters to influence the content of parents' racial socialization messages. Because parents expect that boys and girls have different experiences with racial discrimination and parents often tailor their socialization messages based on the gender of their child (Davis and Stevenson 2006), there may be differences in the moderating role of neighborhood cohesion for boys and girls. Therefore, the current study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to investigate whether the association between parents' racial discrimination experiences and subsequent racial socialization varied according to parents' perceptions of neighborhood cohesion and adolescents' gender.

## Methods

### Participants and Procedure

The data for the current study come from the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS). FACHS is a large-scale multisite study of 889 African American families living in Iowa and in Georgia (for a full description of the FACHS recruitment, see Cutrona et al. W2000; Gibbons et al. 2004; Simons et al. 2002). The current study used data from the third wave, collected between April 2002 and August 2003, and fourth wave, collected between March 2005 and August 2006, which will be referred to as time 1 and time 2. At the start of

data collection, each family had a self-identified African American child in fifth grade, between the ages of 10 and 12. The present sample comprised 608 adolescents and caregivers who reported their child's gender and at least one of the following variables: experienced racial discrimination variable at time 1, racial socialization variables at time 1, or neighborhood cohesion at time 1. At time 1 in this study, youth's mean age was 15.5 years ( $SD = .87$ ). Ninety-one percent of the primary caregivers (i.e., the person primarily responsible for the care and supervision of the target child) were biological parents of the child (86 % mothers, 5 % fathers); 5 % were biological grandmothers; 2 % were adoptive mothers or fathers; 1 % were biological aunts; and the remaining 1 % consisted of other guardians. All caregivers are referred to as parents throughout the current study. At time 1, parents' mean age was 42 years old ( $SD = 7.97$ ). Nineteen percent of parents had less than a high school education; 79 % had between a high school diploma and 3 years of college education; and 12 % had a Bachelor's degree or above.

## Measures

**Racial Discrimination**—Parent racial discrimination was assessed at time 1 using the Schedule of Racist Events (SRE; Landrine and Klonoff 1996), a 13-item scale used to evaluate negative experiences attributed to being African American (e.g., “How often have you been treated unfairly because you are African American?”). Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (several times) and were used as indicators of a latent variable. The coefficient a value was .90.

**Neighborhood Cohesion**—Parent perception of neighborhood cohesion was measured at time 1 using a modified version of the Social Cohesion and Trust Scale (Sampson et al. 1997). The modified measure contains 15 items used to assess community social cohesion and trust, informal social ties, and neighborhood social control (e.g., “People in this neighborhood can be trusted”). One item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (none) to 4 (six or more); 2 items were rated on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (often) to 3 (never); and 12 items were rated on a 2 point scale ranging from 1 (true) or 2 (false). The mean of the items was calculated to create a manifest variable. The coefficient a value was .82.

**Racial Socialization**—Parents' racial socialization was assessed at time 2 using a modified version of the self-report racial socialization measure developed by Hughes and Johnson (2001). The measure contains 15 items examining the frequency of three different types of racial socialization messages. The 5-item Cultural Socialization scale contains items about racial and cultural knowledge and pride (e.g., “How often in the past year have you celebrated cultural holidays of your child's ethnic group?”; time 2  $\alpha = .88$ ). The 4-item Promotion of Mistrust scale comprised items that convey caution and suspicion when encountering individuals from other racial-ethnic groups (e.g., “How often in the past year have you encouraged your child to keep his/her distance from people of a different race or ethnicity?”; time 2  $\alpha = .80$ ). The 6-item Preparation for Bias scale includes items on teaching about discrimination and prejudice that youth may encounter (e.g., “How often in the past year have you told your child that people might try to limit him/ her because of his/her race?”; time 2  $\alpha = .92$ ). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1

(never) to 5 (10 or more times), and were used as indicators of latent variables for each subscale.

**Covariates**—Four constructs known to influence parents' racial socialization messages were included as covariates. Families' state of residence was included to control for the effect that regional context could have on exposure to racial discrimination and the messages parents provide (Thornton 1997). Families' socioeconomic status (SES) (i.e., education and income) was controlled because SES has been shown to influence parents' racial socialization (Caughy et al. 2002). Adolescents' experience of racial discrimination was assessed at time 1 using an adapted version of the SRE for younger respondents (Landrine and Klonoff 1996) because youth's racial discrimination can influence parents' racial socialization messages (Hughes and Johnson 2001). Parents' racial socialization messages at time 1 were measured to assess the effect of change in parents' racial socialization from time 1 to time 2 (Table 2).

### Data Analytic Strategy

We tested study hypotheses with a longitudinal structural equation model analyzed using *Mplus* 7.3 (Muthén and Muthén 1998). Within this model, we tested the association between a latent experienced racial discrimination variable at time 1 and three latent racial socialization variables at time 2; neighborhood cohesion at time 1 was included as a moderator of these associations. We controlled for data site, SES, and child racial discrimination at time 1 in the analyses (see Fig. 2). We included autoregressions between racial socialization variables in the model to control for stability from time 1 to time 2. We also included synchronous correlations between contemporaneous measurements of the racial socialization variables across time and correlations between the time 1 racial socialization variables and both time 1 neighborhood cohesion and time 1 parental racial discrimination. Additionally, the time 2 racial socialization variables were regressed on time 1 neighborhood cohesion within the base model. We used the XWITH function within *Mplus* 7.3 to construct the latent variable interaction within the model and multiple group analyses were performed to test this interaction separately across gender.

When specifying a model with latent variable interactions, *Mplus* 7.3 utilizes a random-effects model for which model fit indicators have not been established. As a result, we used a two-step approach detailed in Maslowsky et al. (2015). First, we assessed the Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) values in the model in which the interaction was not estimated and the hypothesized moderator was only included as a predictor variable. This is referred to as the base model throughout. CFI and TLI values above .90 and RMSEA values less than .08 represent acceptable fit (Hu and Bentler 1999). Once we established that this base model adequately fit the data, we compared the model with the interaction term and the base model using a log-likelihood ratio test. If the log-likelihood ratio test indicated that the model with the interaction term was a significantly better fit to the data than the model without the interaction, we concluded that the model with the interaction was a well-fitted model. In order to establish model fit for the target model that was split by gender and included in the interaction term between racial discrimination and neighborhood cohesion,

we compared the base model, split by gender, to a model with the interaction term, split by gender.

## Results

### Descriptive Information and Base Model

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations separated by gender for observed study variables are presented in Table 1. All prospective correlations between consecutive measurements of racial socialization were positive and significant across gender. All correlations between parent racial discrimination at time 1 and racial socialization were significant and positive across gender, except time 1 promotion of mistrust, which was not significant for either gender. Time 1 neighborhood cohesion was significantly positively correlated with time 1 cultural socialization for boys and significantly negatively correlated with time 1 parent racial discrimination for girls. The base model provided a good fit to the data  $\chi^2(647) = 1412.11, p < .001$ ; CFI = 0.95, TLI: 0.94, RMSEA = 0.043 (95 % CI = .040–.046).

### Base Model: Neighborhood Cohesion

This base model was compared to a model with the interaction term using a log-likelihood difference. The log-likelihood difference value between these models was  $D = 2527.27, df = 3$ . The log-likelihood ratio test was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the alternative model had a better model fit than the base model.

### Base Model: Neighborhood Cohesion x Gender

The base model, split by gender, was compared to a model with the interaction term, split by gender. The log-likelihood difference value between these models was  $D = 3228.77, df = 18$ . Based on the Chi square distribution, this log-likelihood ratio test was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the base model, split by gender, represented a significant loss in fit relative to the alternative model.

In order to assess the direct and moderated effects of racial discrimination and neighborhood cohesion on racial socialization, we examined the parameters of the neighborhood cohesion moderation model split by gender, the results of which are depicted in Fig. 1. Consistent with the bivariate correlations, there was stability of racial socialization from time 1 to time 2 for both the girl and boy models as evidenced by the significant path coefficients between adjacent measurements of each racial socialization message. In the model for girls, there were no significant pathways from parent racial discrimination at time 1 to racial socialization at time 2. The pathway from parent racial discrimination to promotion of mistrust was moderated by neighborhood cohesion as indicated by a significant neighborhood cohesion X parent racial discrimination  $\rightarrow$  promotion of mistrust parameter ( $b = -0.04, p < 0.05$ ). In order to interpret these interactions, we produced graphs and simple slopes within *Mplus 7.3* using the PLOT and MODEL CONSTRAINT commands. High and low levels of neighborhood cohesion were assessed at one standard deviation above and below the mean, respectively. We found that for those girls living in communities characterized by low neighborhood cohesion, there was a significant positive association

between parent racial discrimination and the provision of promotion of mistrust ( $b = .34$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $p < .01$ ), though this same association was not significant at high neighborhood cohesion. See Fig. 2 for the graph of this interaction.

In the model for boys, parent racial discrimination positively and significantly predicted cultural socialization ( $b = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and promotion of mistrust ( $b = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The pathway from parent racial discrimination to promotion of mistrust was moderated by neighborhood cohesion ( $b = -0.04$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the pathway from parent racial discrimination to cultural socialization was moderated by neighborhood cohesion ( $b = -0.03$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In order to interpret these interactions, we produced graphs and simple slopes within *Mplus* 7.3 using the PLOT and MODEL CONSTRAINT commands. As with the girls' graph, high and low levels of neighborhood cohesion were assessed at one standard deviation above and below the mean, respectively. We found that for boys living in communities characterized by low neighborhood cohesion, there was a significant positive association between parent racial discrimination and promotion of mistrust ( $b = .41$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and there was a significant positive association between parent racial discrimination and cultural socialization ( $b = .29$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The simple slopes were not significant for boys in neighborhoods characterized by high neighborhood cohesion. See Figs. 2 and 3 for the graphs of these interactions.

## Discussion

Prior research has highlighted the influence of neighborhood characteristics on parents' racial socialization messages (Caughy et al. 2006), and neighborhood cohesion is one protective factor for adolescents contending with racial discrimination (Riina et al. 2013). However, no studies have examined how neighborhood cohesion may alter the link between parents' racial discrimination experiences and the racial socialization messages they deliver to their children. Extending this literature, results from the current study suggest that neighborhood cohesion moderates effects of parents' racial discrimination experiences on some of the racial socialization messages they deliver to their children. The more parents experienced racial discrimination, the more cultural socialization messages they delivered to boys if they perceived low neighborhood cohesion. There were no associations between parents' experience of racial discrimination and cultural socialization for boys in neighborhoods high in neighborhood cohesion, or for girls. In addition, parents' experience of racial discrimination was associated with more promotion of mistrust messages for boys and girls who perceived low neighborhood cohesion. Parents' perception of neighborhood cohesion did not moderate the association between parents' racial discrimination and preparation for bias messages.

Parents provision of cultural socialization messages to boys in low cohesive neighborhoods may reflect their perception that these neighborhoods lack communal parenting and collective efficacy (Odgers et al. 2009); if so, parents may not expect that boys will receive the necessary support, monitoring, or socialization from neighborhood members to help boys manage racial discrimination. Relatedly, research documents evidence that African American mothers are particularly concerned with their sons being perceived as criminals or "thugs" due to their race (Dow 2016). Families residing in low cohesive neighborhoods



where community members know little about each other may increase mothers' concerns for how African American boys are perceived. Mothers' increased concern, particularly in their neighborhood, may influence their efforts to instill socialization messages that counter the "thug" image with their African American boys.

Because African American boys are more likely than girls to experience direct racial discrimination, such as being stopped by a police officer (Brunson 2007), and indirect racial discrimination, such as being followed in a store (Fisher et al. 2000), African American parents may find it essential to instill racial pride in their sons to reduce their internalization of racial discrimination, particularly in low cohesion neighborhoods where parents may be the only source of racial socialization. In contrast, in cohesive neighborhoods, parents may be less concerned about their sons' encounters with racial discrimination because they expect that neighbors will be supportive during times of distress (Sampson et al. 1997). Cohesion and support among neighbors can help build a collective identity and enhance communication about racial stressors; these may foster a communal responsibility to support parents' efforts to help adolescent boys manage racial discrimination by conveying cultural socialization messages.

In contrast to the findings for boys, parents' perception of neighborhood cohesion did not modify the association between parents' racial discrimination and the cultural socialization messages delivered to girls; this finding may be due to social norms that girls spend less time outside compared to boys (Howard et al. 2013) and are less likely to encounter racial discrimination compared to boys (McHale et al. 2006; Stevenson et al. 2002). Also, findings from the current study and previous studies indicate that parents, particularly women, provide cultural socialization messages to girls because they are socialized to transmit their culture to future generations (González et al. 2006; Phinney 1990). Therefore, some parenting strategies, such as providing cultural socialization to girls, may be based on gendered social norms and less influenced by neighborhood social processes or parents' experiences with racial discrimination.

Parents' experiences with racial discrimination predicted promotion of mistrust messages delivered to boys and girls when parents perceived low neighborhood cohesion. Our findings suggest that when parents perceive low cohesion in their neighborhood and are experiencing racial discrimination, parents convey messages to make adolescents cautious to trust people from different races or ethnicities, perhaps because of the racial and contextual stressors they have experienced. It is possible that parents who have experienced a lot of personal racial discrimination and are living in neighborhoods low in cohesion provide messages of mistrust because those types of messages are responsive and adaptive to their prevailing neighborhood social environment. For example, previous studies also have found that parental emphasis on issues associated with racism and mistrust of other racial groups was greater in neighborhoods characterized by disorder, fear of retaliation, and fear of victimization (Bennett 2006). Similarly, prior research has found that parental messages emphasizing racism and mistrust were positively associated with negative neighborhood social climate (Caughy et al. 2006). In contrast, neighborhoods high in cohesion and connectedness may foster fewer feelings of distrust toward community members, despite

parents' personal experiences with racial discrimination; thus, in these contexts, parents may be less likely to deliver messages about mistrust to their children.

Unlike cultural socialization and promotion of mistrust messages, parents' perceived neighborhood cohesion did not affect the relationship between parents' racial discrimination experiences and preparation for bias messages delivered. This finding may reflect the types of racial discrimination parents have experienced. For example, parents' experiences of overt versus covert racial discrimination may explain whether they provide more promotion of mistrust (i.e., emphasizing the possibility of being treated unfairly by other racial groups) or preparation for bias (i.e., warning about racial discrimination and providing coping strategies) messages regardless of their perception of neighborhood cohesion. Parents who have experienced overt experiences with racial discrimination may deliver more messages of mistrust given the clear and identifiable nature of overt racial discrimination messages (Hughes et al. 2006). Additionally, it is possible that regardless of parents' perceived neighborhood cohesion, parents provide some preparation for bias to evoke awareness of and methods to cope with racial discrimination (French and Coleman 2013).

### **Implications for Prevention and Intervention**

The findings from this research inform intervention efforts designed to increase racial dialog among family members, help parents prepare their children for racial discrimination, and utilize neighborhood cohesion as a protective mechanism to help families address racial discrimination. The results suggest that interventions to foster neighborhood cohesion may be beneficial for parents who have experienced racial discrimination; for example, neighborhood cohesion may facilitate opportunities to increase social interaction and social support, each of which can promote effective parent-adolescent communication strategies (Laursen and Collins 2009). Prior research has shown that interventions based in community settings such as churches and schools may increase perceptions of community support (McKay et al. 2003; Sampson et al. 2002), even when this is not their direct focus. Interventions to foster neighborhood cohesion and promote family communication strategies may further benefit families by enhancing how parents communicate about and respond to racial discrimination.

The different findings for boys and girls in this study are in line with prior research demonstrating differential effects of culturally specific interventions for African American boys and girls (e.g., ABAN AYA; Flay et al. 2004). These findings suggest that gender specific interventions may be necessary. Tailoring how parents discuss racial discrimination and its consequences for boys and girls may be increasingly relevant as youth develop and have different social expectations based on the intersection of their race and gender as maturing adults. Therefore, interventions focused on racial socialization may benefit from co-ed groups, with break out sections for older youth that discuss gender differences as necessary.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

A primary strength of this study was investigating how parents' perceptions of neighborhood cohesion and their racial discrimination experiences together influence the racial

socialization messages they deliver to their adolescents. Understanding processes that shape racial socialization is critical for the design of interventions to support African American families. The examination of a sample that includes African American families from rural areas and small urban cities, which often have unique racial climates, social ties, and racial compositions (Bouffard and Muftic 2006), was an additional strength, as studies typically focus on urban African American families.

These study strengths should be considered in the context of some limitations. Racial socialization messages were examined separately; however, parents generally do not give racial socialization messages in isolation (Caughy et al. 2011; Stevenson et al. 1997), and the combination of racial socialization messages delivered may have different consequences for African American adolescents' mental health (e.g., Caughy et al. 2011). Moreover, the combination of messages delivered may vary based on the context. For example, perceptions of the neighborhood climate may alter the effect of parents' racial discrimination experiences on the combination of racial socialization messages they convey to their adolescents.

In terms of measurement, the racial discrimination measure used in this study assessed the frequency of parents' personal encounters with racial discrimination, but not the timeframe (e.g., 1 month), severity (e.g., moderate), form (e.g., overt vs. covert) or context (e.g., work, neighborhood) of parents' racial discrimination encounters; such information likely informs the type and amount of the racial socialization messages parents give their children. Future studies will benefit from racial discrimination measures that have increased specificity in these areas. Also, because individuals may be more likely to report racial discrimination on qualitative measures compared to quantitative measures (Berkel et al. 2009), future studies would benefit from the use of mixed method approaches to examine parents' racial discrimination experiences and racial socialization.

It is important to note that there was a modest moderating effect of neighborhood cohesion; therefore, the findings should be interpreted with care. It is possible that the modest results are due to a weaknesses in variable measurement or because there are other influential variables that are not measured and accounted for in the analyses. One unmeasured variable that is important to consider is neighborhood racial/ethnic concentration because the concentration of ethnic minority populations in a neighborhood may influence parents' encounters and perceptions of their neighborhood climate. According to the literature describing neighborhood racial composition, there is a positive association between the amount of racial/ ethnic minorities within neighborhoods and risk factors such as crime and reported neighborhood disadvantage (Jones-Webb and Wall 2008; White and Borrell 2005). The racial/ethnic composition of a neighborhood could directly influence parents' experiences with racial discrimination, perceptions of neighborhood cohesion, and parents' racial socialization practices. Future studies would benefit from replicating this study on other samples of African American adolescents and considering neighborhood cohesion in the context of other variables neighborhood variables such as racial/ethnic minority concentration.

Finally, the majority of primary caregivers in the current sample were female, and most were biological mothers. Therefore, it is likely that the study results generalize only to African American female caregivers' racial socialization practices. The large majority of the racial socialization literature is based on mothers' self-report. Reliance on these predominately female samples only provides insight into how women socialize their children. Previous studies indicate that mothers and fathers provide different racial socialization messages (Cooper et al. 2015), and differently for boys and girls, highlighting the necessity of examining both mothers' and fathers' racial socialization messages.

## Conclusion

Although previous studies indicate that parents' racial discrimination experiences affect the racial socialization messages they provide to their children (Hughes and Johnson 2001; Hughes 2003), few studies have investigated how aspects of the neighborhood social climate that promote communal and supportive parenting influence the association between parents' racial discrimination experiences and the racial socialization messages they give their children. The results of this research revealed that parents' racial socialization messages are influenced not only by their own racial discrimination experiences but also their perception of neighborhood cohesion and the gender of their adolescents. Results from this research suggest that parents' perception of neighborhood cohesion may influence the extent to which parents expect neighbors to help families socialize their children about and assist them in managing experiences with racial discrimination. Because neighborhood cohesion can impact the amount of communal parenting, monitoring, and managing of race-related stress in the neighborhood, interventions should focus on increasing the racial dialog among family and community members in ways that foster neighborhood cohesion, increase social support, and improve communication among families and community members.

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## Biographies

**Farzana T. Saleem** is a clinical psychology doctoral student in the Department of Psychology at The George Washington University. Her research examines the effects of racial discrimination and neighborhood stressors on African American youth, with a focus on racial socialization and other factors that protect against negative psychological consequences and promote well-being.

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**Sharon F. Lambert** is an associate professor of clinical and community psychology in the Department of Psychology at The George Washington University. Her research focuses on neighborhood and race-related stress, and their role in the development and course of internalizing problems among urban and African American adolescents.

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**Frederick X. Gibbons** is a professor of psychology in the Department of Psychology at The University of Connecticut. His research interests include the study of health with a focus on the effects of racial prejudice. Other interests include health decision-making among adolescents and young adults, long-term health effects of interpersonal stress, and the effects of gene by environment interactions on health.

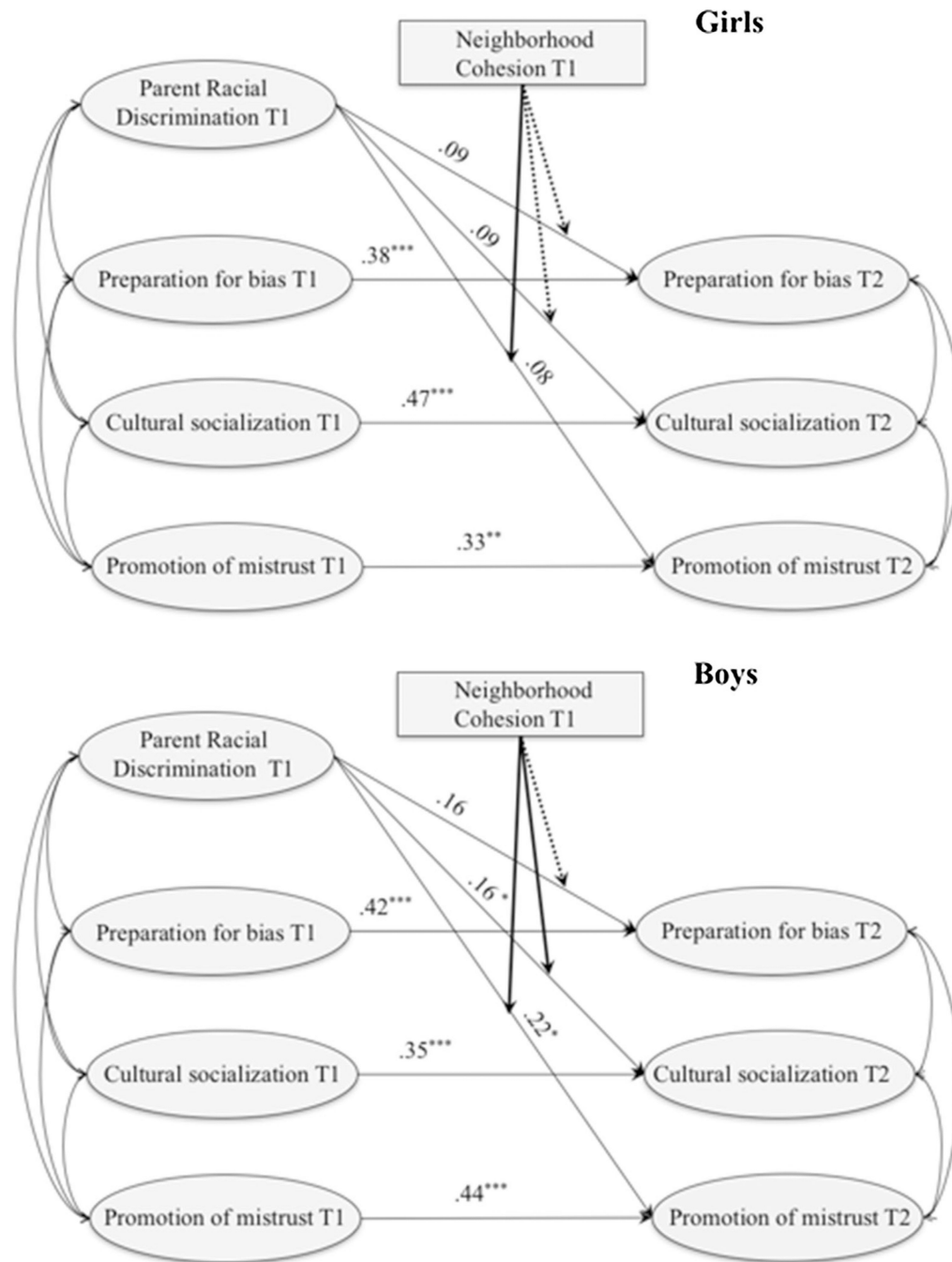
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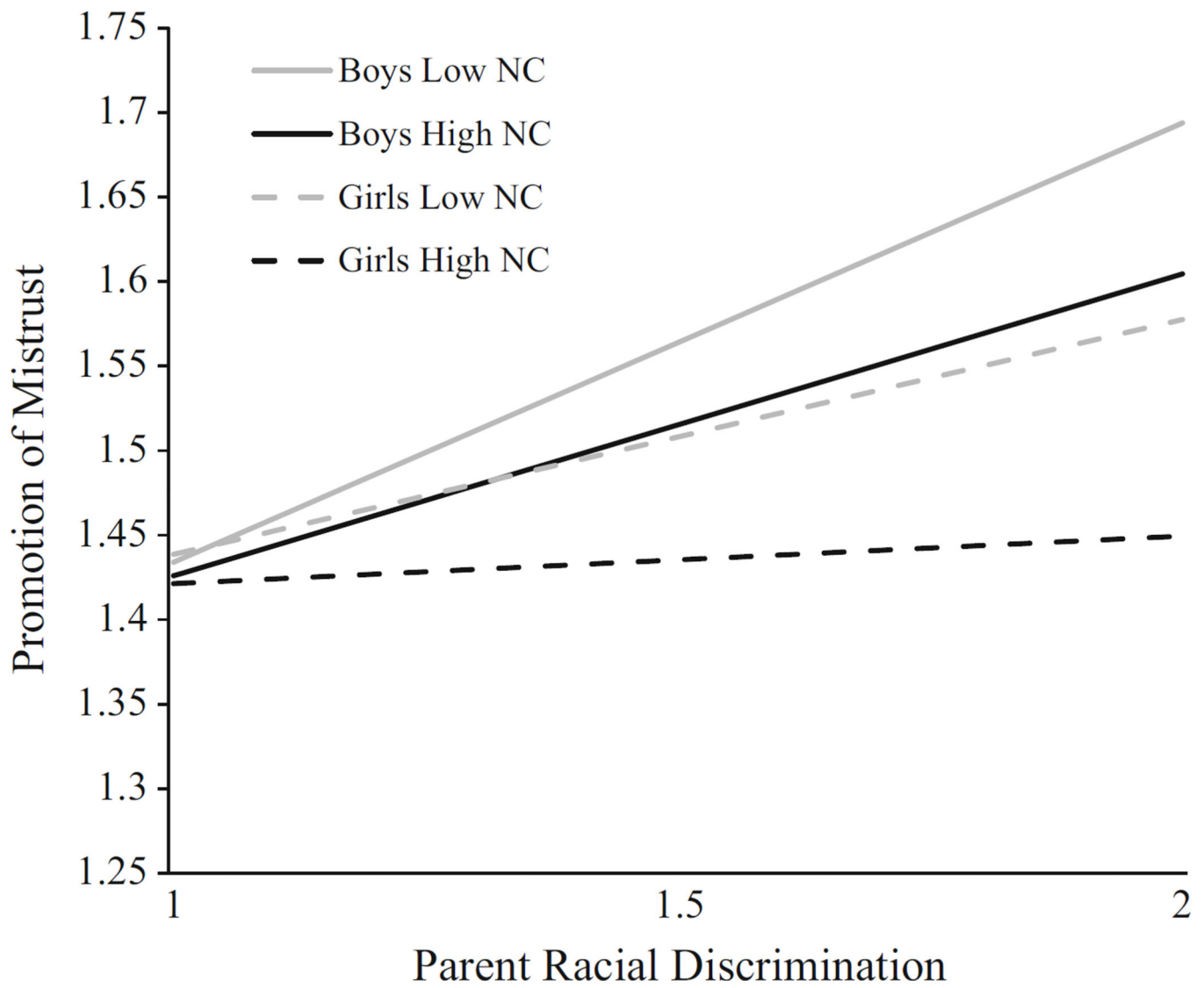
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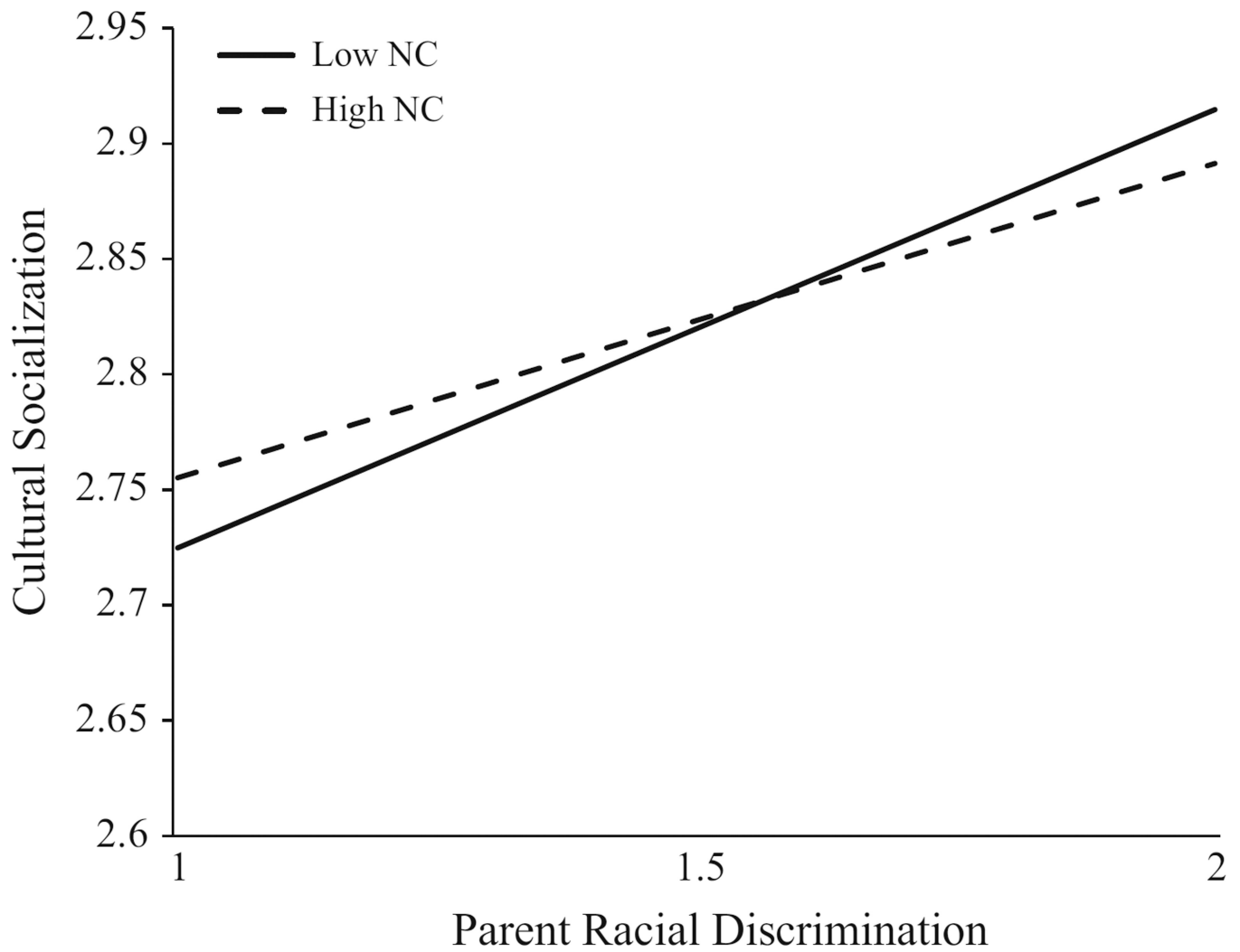




**Fig. 1.** Model results for girls (*Top*) and boys (*Bottom*). T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2. Parameter estimates for control variables not shown. Solid pathways from neighborhood cohesion indicate significant moderation. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$  (2-tailed)



**Fig. 2.** Interaction of parent racial discrimination and neighborhood cohesion on promotion of mistrust for boys and girls. NC = Parent-reported Neighborhood Cohesion



**Fig. 3.** Interaction of parent racial discrimination and neighborhood cohesion on cultural socialization for boys. NC = Parent-Reported Neighborhood Cohesion

**Table 1**

Correlations and descriptive statistics of study variables by gender

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Neighborhood cohesion <sup>a</sup>	–	-.14*	-.02	.07	-.01	.01	.06	-.06
2. Parent racial discrimination <sup>a</sup>	.00	–	.34***	.24***	.10	.36***	.27***	.22***
3. Preparation for bias <sup>a</sup>	.05	.28***	–	.58***	.38***	.38***	.31***	.24***
4. Cultural socialization <sup>a</sup>	.17***	.25***	.61***	–	.26***	.32***	.43***	.19***
5. Promotion of mistrust <sup>a</sup>	.02	.10	.40***	.26***	–	.06	.02	.23***
6. Preparation for bias <sup>b</sup>	.05	.41***	.42***	.32***	.13*	–	.58***	.46***
7. Cultural socialization <sup>b</sup>	.11	.33***	.24***	.36***	.06	.64***	–	.29***
8. Promotion of mistrust <sup>b</sup>	-.01	.28***	.20***	.19**	.29***	.55***	.45***	–
Girls' mean (SD)	26.69 (4.67)	1.86 (.64)	2.38 (1.00)	2.78 (1.06)	1.43 (.61)	2.27 (1.13)	2.40 (1.00)	1.49 (.69)
Boys' mean (SD)	27.17 (4.7)	1.77 (.68)	2.48 (1.06)	2.69 (1.07)	1.43 (.64)	2.44 (1.19)	2.31 (.98)	1.58 (.83)
<i>t</i> test	1.25	-1.69	1.20	-1.07	.18	1.87	-1.19	1.58

Correlations for girls are above the diagonal; correlations for boys are below the diagonal

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed)

<sup>a</sup>Time 1

<sup>b</sup>Time 2

**Table 2**

Correlations and descriptive statistics for control variables

Variable	Correlations		<i>t</i> test
	SES	Child racial discrimination <sup>a</sup>	Data site
1. Neighborhood cohesion <sup>a</sup>	-.13***	-.05	-4.43***
2. Parent racial discrimination <sup>a</sup>	.02	.19***	6.66***
3. Preparation for bias <sup>a</sup>	-.02	.22***	4.49***
4. Cultural socialization <sup>a</sup>	-.03	.14***	1.57
5. Promotion of mistrust <sup>a</sup>	.03	.08	1.14
6. Preparation for bias <sup>b</sup>	-.03	.05	-.90
7. Cultural socialization <sup>b</sup>	.01	.05	-1.57
8. Promotion of mistrust <sup>b</sup>	-.01	.02	-.28
Range	1.00–6.50	1.00–3.77	1 = Iowa 2 = Georgia
Mean (SD)	0.00 (.64)	2.74 (1.00)	1.53 (.50)

\*  $p < .05$ \*\*  $p < .01$ \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed)<sup>a</sup>Time 1<sup>b</sup>Time 2