"There is a Subliminal Attitude": African American Parental Perspectives on Independent Schooling

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INTRODUCTION

In predominantly White school settings, where African Americans are distinctly in the minority in the student (and faculty) population, African American students need a buffer from racial politics. Research has found that while the best learning varies in many public and private schools, racial stress remains problematic for Black students from preschool to college education settings (Advancement Project, 2005; Arrington, Hall, & Stevenson, 2003; Cole & Arriola, 2007; Gilliam, 2005; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). The burden of shouldering this perceived and actual hostility is not solely confronted by youth as many African American parents also worry about the emotional costs their children may pay as they develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally within predominantly White elite school settings. Many African American parents struggle with the decision of how to select the best learning environment for their children in terms of (resources, etc.) that is as congruent with their family’s cultural background as is possible.

This chapter will review the perspectives of parents concerned with the school experiences of African American students in predominantly White, independent elite schools (PWIS). Their stories were examined through the Success of African American Students (SAAS) study—a longitudinal, mixed-method, collaborative research project between a university research team and several independent elite schools in the Northeast. Data from focus groups, surveys, and individual interviews with parents, teachers, and school administrators will illuminate: (1) parental beliefs on the benefits and challenges of an independent school education; (2) the processes by which parents perceive, acknowledge and engage with the tension that can
arise from dynamics pertaining to race, racism, culture, and ethnicity in their child’s schooling; and (3) how parental racial/ethnic identity and racism is related to their socialization practices.

**Independent Schools as Contexts of Black Parental Choice and Racial/Ethnic Socialization**

Predominantly White educational contexts may be appropriately framed as racially dissonant contexts for Black students in that the racial composition ratios remain one-sided throughout their schooling experience with regard to student-peer and student-teacher relationships. The best schools in U.S. society are defined by economic resources, small student-teacher ratios, newer books, latest technology, and modern facilities. African American parents who enroll their children in the “best schools” want what all parents want for their children—an educational advantage that leads to access to the best institutions of higher learning (Gray-Little & Carels, 1997). Access to top colleges and universities in the United States is a key step toward future social and economic mobility. Many of the graduates of predominantly White, independent elite schools (PWIS) do continue their education at those institutions of higher education deemed most prestigious in U.S. society. Despite the educational advantages that exist in these settings, PWIS are similar to all school contexts in that they do not escape the trappings of institutional racism, the denial that accompanies it, and the interpersonal interactions that can thwart the psychological well-being of young African American students (Arrington, Hall, & Stevenson, 2003; Arrington & Stevenson, 2005; Hall & Stevenson, 2007; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009).

For decades, the socialization or cultural transmission of values has been a factor in understanding how African American families function differently than other families in U.S. society with respect to schooling (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes et al., 2006; Johnson, 1988; McAdoo, 2002; McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2003; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn & Sellers, 2006; Spencer, 1983, 1984; 1990). Racial/Ethnic socialization (R/ES) research developed in the 1990s and extended the racial awareness work of the doll studies of Clark and Clark and the Black racial identity work of the 1970s and 1980s (Bentley, Adams, & Stevenson; Stevenson, 2011). Recent agendas have illuminated the challenges and benefits of explicit Racial/Ethnic socialization (R/ES) as an invaluable mediator of developmental and child psychosocial competence (Neblett et al., 2008; Spencer, 1983; 2002; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). Parental R/ES is believed to hold protective buffering and reframing benefits for Black people, and particularly Black youth, for managing societal antagonism and racism, influencing racial identity and self-esteem (Johnson, Spicer, & Hughes, 2009; Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2009) and enhancing racial coping and agency (Stevenson, 2003). It is likely that future research will identify peers, authority figures, and youth, not simply parents, as powerful and reciprocal agents of
racial socialization, Furthermore, schools are no less powerful a stage for these communications and interactions to take place than youths’ homes or neighborhoods.

Parenting Black youth becomes even more complex when the larger societal context of race-based inequities is unconsciously perpetrated by well-intentioned authority figures such as teachers, and other school administrative staff. While these inequities are not consciously identified by children, they are most certainly impacted by them (American Psychological Association, 2008; DHHS, 2001). Perceived and actual racism experiences contribute to the justification of R/ES in the minds of many African American parents who wish to protect their children and themselves from negative physical and emotional health consequences (Stevenson & Davis, 2003; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000).

Brown and Greenwood (2010) report that while increases in students (from 19% to 21.9%) and faculty of color (from 9.6% to 12.1%) has increased in National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) from 2001–2002 to 2007–2008, there are regional and type of school (boarding versus day types) that reveal a more telling picture. In fact, the greatest growth in student and faculty of color appears to be in the West, not in the Northeast. As in all schools, PWIS are racially socializing environments in dire need of illumination on “race matters” that differentially impact the functioning of African American students or other students of color as compared to their White peers (Arrington et al., 2003; Gray-Little & Carels, 1997).

We studied the relationships of parental racial identity and racism experiences to parental R/ES and emotional functioning. The major hypothesis here is that the more parents experience racism and are more racially conscious, the more they are likely to socialize their children around race. Another expectation from our work is that there would be variability among Black parents regarding their identification of racial politics as a problem within their child’s school.

METHOD

Participants

As a part of the Success of African American Students in Independent Schools study (SAAS; Arrington & Stevenson, 2005), both qualitative and quantitative data were collected over several years of exploring African-American student social and emotional adjustment. Two waves of parents were administered surveys at least 12 months apart in psychosocial adjustment, perceptions of child school experiences, and personal experiences with racism and racial socialization. The first cohort of 69 parents completed the surveys at Time 1 (T1). The average age of the T1 participants was 45 years old. Most of the participants were female (79.5%) and African American (90%), with a
minority of White parents (8.2%). Slightly more than half of the sample was married (57.7%) followed by single/never married (20.5%), divorced (13.7%), widowed (4.1%), and separated (2.7%).

About half of the sample had at least one other family member who attended an independent school. Only 12 percent of the mothers in the T1 sample attended an independent school while 15 percent of the fathers had done so. A sizable portion of the T1 sample reported over $105,000 in total family household income (41%). With regard to family composition, half of the sample was single-child households, while 33 percent had two children, and 17 percent had three or more.

A total of 59 Time 2 (T2) participants completed the surveys with 39 of those parents having also completed surveys at T1. Of these participants, 86 percent received at least a college diploma (with 35% completing a master’s degree and 12% a doctoral degree). As compared to the T1 cohort, 50 percent of the parents reported an income level above $100,000. Over 75 percent of the T2 parents were married, 13 percent never married or single, and 12 percent were divorced. Only 16 percent of the mothers in the T2 sample attended an independent school while 19 percent of the fathers had done so. With respect to family composition, 44 percent of the T2 sample was single-child households, 37 percent of the families had two children, and 19 percent had three children or more. Parents were compensated $20 for filling out each packet of measures with questions about their personal and family racial identity, coping, and socialization experiences, which were administered once in T1 and once in T2.

Measures

**Parent Experience of Racial Socialization (PERS, 2002)**

The PERS (follows the teenage version identified by Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor & Davis, (2002) which asks youth how often they have heard their family tell them how to handle racial issues.) The difference is that parents are the target about how much they deliver these messages to their children. The parents can answer “Never,” “A Few Times,” or “Lots of Times” to 40 statements on racial messages. The Overall Parent Racial Socialization Experience score was utilized in this study (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$ at T1 and .80 at T2).

**Perceived Racism Scale (PRS)**

The PRS is a 52-item, multidimensional measure of perceived racism for parents (PRS) and youth (PRS-A) (McNeilly, Anderson, Armstead, Clark, Corbett, Robinson, Pieper, & Lepisto, 1996). The PRS-A assesses work, academic, public and racist statements experiences including: frequency of exposure to types of racist incidents, affective responses to racism, and behavioral coping responses. The frequency items used a 6-point Likert scale ranging...
from “Not applicable” to “Several times a day” ($\alpha = .94$ for both last year and lifetime subscales). The emotional response to racism items used a 5-item Likert scale ranging from “Not at all” to “Extremely” ($\alpha = .83$ for school and public, $\alpha = .96$ for work, and $\alpha = .80$ for the racist statements domains). All parent racism variables including frequency of exposure to types of racist incidents, affective responses to racism, and behavioral coping responses were reliably assessed with $\alpha$ coefficients ranging from $.67$ to $.96$ for Time 1 and Time 2 variables.

**Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Adult versions (MIBI)**
*(Ham & Sellers, 1999)*

The MIBI is a reliable and valid measure of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) and covers three aspects of racial identity: how a person defines themselves in terms of race (centrality), how a person evaluates their racial group (public and private regard), and how they think members of the racial group should act (ideology). Only the centrality and regard scales were used in this study. Participants use a 5-point Likert scale to respond to items. The Parent version of the MIBI yielded reliability coefficients of .82 for centrality, .78 for public regard, and .70 for private regard at both Time 1 and Time 2, respectively.

**Qualitative Content Analysis**

To understand the parental perspectives of R/ES, the SAAS research team conducted five focus groups of parents of Black (including biracial) children and adolescents attending independent schools. These focus groups were conducted with parents of students from two participating SAAS schools. Most parents were Black though each focus group had at least one White parent. At both schools, Black faculty and/or administrators participated in the focus groups because their children attended the schools. Focus groups lasted approximately 90–120 minutes and were audiotaped and videotaped. The protocol for the focus groups consisted of questions that covered varied topics. Through analysis of the videotapes and resulting transcriptions, themes were identified.

**RESULTS**

**Qualitative Analyses of Parent Focus Groups**

Analysis of the parent focus groups confirmed the importance of the content of R/ES and the racial challenges within the school context. Parents discussed the tension between taking advantage of the educational opportunities independent schools provide and the concern they have about how attending
these PWIS impacts: (1) the way their children view themselves, and are viewed, as members of the Black community and (2) their social and academic success as students in independent schools. Whenever a few parents disclosed their concerns, the more the disclosures triggered repressed memories of discrimination for other parents. This recalling of repressed racial discrimination was identified with Black mothers socializing their preschooolers about racial awareness and coping (Stevenson & Abdul-Kabir, 1996). Participants slowly remembered experiences as they felt safe within the immediate interviewing context, perhaps because socially, we are less prepared to openly discuss racial hostility. In our review of the focus group transcripts, three R/ES and communication themes stood out: (1) buffering racial/ethnic identity through protection and affirmation; (2) reappraising racial/ethnic politics by teaching racial coping and agency strategies; and (3) awareness of independent schools as racially socializing environments.

The first theme identified as buffering racial/ethnic identity through protection and affirmation, reflected parental desires to socialize their children by adding what schools often leave out of their educational agenda, namely racial/ethnic pride and legacy teaching. The experience of discrimination politics was not just a phenomenon of early and late adolescent youth. Sometimes, seemingly “minor” discriminatory events stay with children and their parents for a long time. One parent remarks about needing to protect her child from a teacher’s insulting comment as they were rehearsing for an elementary school play.

Yeah, I had to have a real serious talk with my daughter. She had an incident with racism with one teacher, something about her skin color—there was a play about bears or something, she wanted to be a polar bear and [the teacher] said, well, you can’t be a polar bear because of the color of your skin. And it was a lot of other little things that were tied in with that incident.

One parent remarked “We need to provide the racial correctives at home.” Parents were aware of cultural discontinuities in the school and home environments and were not shy in discussing these mismatches of ways of being and knowing. One example of a protection/affirmation comes from a parent who wanted her child to internalize her African and African American heritage in order to promote her self-empowerment and self-appreciation.

And maybe it’s because I’m one of those people, but I had to start from the jump arming her with the fact that she was going to be a queen, a king, you know, if she wanted to be. I mean the fact that she didn’t necessarily ever have to view herself as subservient, you know what I mean. And there are certain times, she’s come to me when she’s let me know that I may be a bit on the militant, you know. [laughter] … and so we’ve been educating each other … and I mean this child’s been going to Africa since she’s been three years old and hasn’t gotten there yet … But I also try to show where people in our family, on their own scale—and she just has this mission as far as I’m concerned, I hope
she really internalizes it, that her mission is to do what they were always told, that each generation has to widen the path for the one that’s coming behind . . . you know, she’s just got to be positive and you know the color of her skin, you know, may be an impediment to some, but it’s definitely not for her . . . We’ve got to empower them because . . . It’s even one of those situations so far when she needs running to people who are not of color, not totally understanding things.

There are past, present, and future worries embedded in this parent’s rationale for R/ES that cover a spectrum of experiences from social rejection to self-actualization across within- and cross-race/ethnicity dimensions. Moreover, the definition of self is an “extended self,” one in which the daughter is representative of family and culture and in many ways both parent and daughter are being socialized by this communication process. Powerfully and in both A2 and fashion, protection and affirmation are integrated as parents attempt to buttress the tragedy of inevitable societal discrimination with the triumph of their children’s talent.

A second R/ES theme identified includes communications regarding reappraising racial/ethnic politics by teaching racial coping and agency strategies. This theme promoted the experiences of parents having to help youth see or restate discrimination within school and neighborhood settings as the problem of the oppressor, not the oppressed. This reappraisal process helps parents to reframe the discrimination moment as an event to be managed, conquered, and transcended rather than one to be internalized. One parent remarked that a direct discrimination experience is the best way for youth to comprehend racism when she states, “I don’t think they have the same sensitivities until they get smacked in the face.” Still, as these moments are painful for youth and parent alike, they reflect a unique form of social rejection (Macdonald & Leary, 2005). Not only are parents led to protect and affirm youth, they are led to teach them how to survive and thrive amidst the dynamics of racism.

When we were looking for our first home . . . and having . . . a Caucasian person walking up the street with their animal and the kids going near it, having this person walk away and go the other way. And having a lot of other little incidents . . . and having our oldest son say, “are we going to get this house” and have us say, “no,” and explain to him that it wasn’t an issue of money or other factors, it was an issue of not being welcomed in this neighborhood, and why. And that was a serious conversation we had. And he cried.

Another parent remarked at how she and her husband used R/ES to protect the psyche of their child, but also to teach their son strategies of coping while reappraising the racial insult.

It’s pretty much around protecting his feelings. And sometimes he notices, well, this kid is able to do this and I’m not—little subtle things like that. So we pretty
much talk to him about how to protect his own feelings, how to handle dialogue, not to be personally afraid of the consequence, that his parents will always back him, you know, 100 percent, as long as he’s doing the right thing. Yeah, just he comes home a lot of times and his feelings are hurt and we pretty, not much clean up the mess, so to speak, but we try to avow him and try to build him up so he feels strong. We try to teach him how to go back and just tough it out and work on techniques and you know, pick up skills to combat scenarios and situations.

Other parents had concerns about stereotypes as demonstrations of the presence of racial hegemony and engaged in communication focused on alertness to discrimination and coping with antagonism. One parent convinced her son to keep achieving by stating, “You will make the status quo happy, if you are an academic failure, on drugs, in jail, or dead.”

Finally, there are often racial socialization comments about how to reappraise and cope with the ignorance of others about the differences in Black self-care and grooming. Two parents discussed how being on the swim team can be a socio-political experience for Black girls. One parent stated:

In lower school, she had an interesting experience where she was with some of her White girlfriends but they were talking about pouring water on their hair and they were trying to encourage my daughter to do it. And she came to us and said...what took place and she’s always felt it was important to keep her hair together and straight, together and looking right. And I said, if you do that, it will frizz up. Your hair is not like theirs. I said if you do that, you will have mom working on that hair for a long time, it won’t look the way it looks now, it’s just not the same as if you wet your hair the way they wet theirs.

The third racial socialization theme among the focus groups was that of understanding how PWIS are racially socializing environments. Parents are aware of how schools can project a fair and neutral stance on racial issues, but in reality are sending messages that they do not want to address those issues, what Arrington & Stevenson (2007) identify as the “niceness isn’t always kindness” motif. One parent described that process as “controlled diversity.” Another parent who was not one to racially socialize her lower school child began to wonder if it made sense as other parents were talking about its importance. It triggered a reflection of her childhood independent school experience which seemed to bring back memories of subtle racial intolerance—repressed, denied, or forgotten.

We came to school armed with what we needed to be there and to be able to survive there and succeed there...and I was going to private school during that time when I got everything I needed to know about being Black at home. And I didn’t need to go to school to learn any more about being Black. And, in fact, went to school because that was a refuge where I didn’t really have to be Black, I could just be there and forget about race, forget about color. And it was that, oh, we don’t see color here, type of thing...the private school was that refuge and you didn’t go
there to be Black . . . But then there were issues that came up. And it was an unreal world because that world that we were living in while we were there from 9 to 3 was not the real world at all.

Perhaps, the most salient R/ES influence of the schooling experience was the lack of African American presence. Arrington & Stevenson (2007) discuss the unique challenges of how density of African American students within independent school schools shape the learning and emotional safety climate within classrooms. These tensions influence their parents as well.

It breaks my heart that my daughter has been the only African American girl in her class since kindergarten and this goes to identity; even when there is a nurturing environment, there can still be a dominant pull . . . Until we have a critical mass, we will have a different dynamic; it affects not only my daughter but me also; there is a subliminal attitude postulating failure instead of success.

Other parents are clear that density determines if they expect to remain in the school environment and battle the racial politics or leave.

And I’ve been very up front and vocal about that, that we’re making a decision about whether to stay . . . He’s very happy, but I’m concerned about this loss in diversity as you go up [the grades]. And that would be a major reason why he wouldn’t stay.

Another parent chimes in, that

we keep losing these children. I just think that it speaks volumes of the kids when they come to this school and all the Black males they see are cleaning and they’ve got maybe two teachers, but the rest of them are cleaning. That sends a message not only to your Black male child but also to the White children.

Overall, the focus groups illuminated the depth of the importance of a variety of R/ES practices toward the successful coping of African American students in independent schools.

The Relationship of Parental Psychosocial Factors to Parental Racial Socialization

Racial Identity and R/ES

Parental racial identity factors at Time 1 were significantly related to R/ES. Parents who believed that the public held a negative view of African Americans as a racial group more frequently discussed discrimination alertness to their children ($r = - .24, p < .05$). As expected, parents who felt positively about being a member of the African American racial group, more frequently racially socialized. High private regard parents reported greater coping with antagonism ($r = .34, p < .01$), cultural pride ($r = .39, p < .01$),
and cultural legacy \( r = .44, p < .0001 \) socialization. Similar patterns were found for parents with high levels of racial centrality. That is, parents with high racial centrality reported higher scores in coping with antagonism \( r = .26, p < .05 \), cultural pride \( r = .30, p < .05 \), and cultural legacy \( r = .38, p < .003 \) socialization. Conversely, at Time 2, race centrality was inversely related to mainstream socialization \( r = -.30, p < .003 \). Parents who were more race-centric would less frequently socialize their children about the importance of racism discussions, cultural legacy, or education at PWIS.

**Emotional Responses to Racism and Racism Experience**

Overall, emotional responses to racism were influential in the higher reporting of parental racial socialization. Time 1 Parents who reported high scores on measures of feeling sad \( r = .32, p < .05 \) and ashamed \( r = .28, p < .05 \) in experiencing racism also scored higher in coping with antagonism socialization. Time 1 Parents who reported feeling hurt \( r = .27, p < .05 \) and strengthened \( r = .42, p < .001 \) when experiencing racism scored high in cultural pride socialization. Parents who reported feeling hurt \( r = .29, p < .05 \), powerless \( r = .26, p < .05 \) and hopeless \( r = .28, p < .05 \) when experiencing racism provided frequent mainstream fit socialization. Parents who reported feeling ashamed when experiencing racism provided frequent cultural legacy socialization \( r = .26, p < .05 \). Parents who reported feeling angry \( r = .29, p < .05 \) and ashamed \( r = .25, p < .05 \) when experiencing racism reported frequent alertness to discrimination socialization to their children when experiencing racism. Unexpectedly, racism within the last year or lifetime was unrelated to the racial socialization of parents, except for one finding. Time 1 Parents who reported more experience with racism within the last year scored lower in frequency of coping with antagonism socialization \( r = -.27, p < .05 \).

With respect to Time 2 analyses, parents who reported feeling sad \( r = .44, p < .004; r = .35, p < .003 \) and ashamed \( r = .43, p < .005; r = .37, p < .05 \) when experiencing racism scored higher on frequency of parental alertness to discrimination and cultural pride socialization. Parents reporting higher scores in feeling strengthened when they experienced racism also reported frequent cultural pride \( r = .34, p < .05 \) and mainstream \( r = .41, p < .01 \) socialization. Only parental alertness to discrimination was found to be positively related to frequency of racism experience within the last year.

The consistent finding across the T1 and T2 groups included the relationship between parents feeling strengthened when experiencing racism and frequent CPR socialization and parents feeling ashamed when experiencing racism and frequent alertness to discrimination socialization.

**DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, we identified the relationship of parental R/ES practices and several key psychosocial parental factors including experiences with and
emotional responses to racism, and parental endorsement of Black racial identity. Our goal has been to identify parental concerns about enrolling their children in predominantly White independent schools and how they cope with it. This study contributes to the R/ES literature by illuminating multiple avenues for future research in racially dissonant educational contexts.

The qualitative investigation of parental concerns about their children’s independent schooling reveals that their communications to youth have protective, affirmative, and reappraisal characteristics to ensure that their children’s emotional well-being is secured. Parents’ comments revealed that many maintain a keen eye on the school as an agent of R/ES, albeit a positive and/or negative one. These findings support assumptions of earlier research by Arrington, Hall, & Stevenson, (2003) on African American students in independent schools suggesting that schools are racially socializing contexts and when these dynamics are ignored, schools are unprepared for understanding the academic striving of Black students.

The density or presence of students of color within a particular school context can determine how comfortable they feel to achieve and succeed (Gray-Little & Carels, 1997). Ironically, Gray-Little and Carels’ notion of dissonance also referred to how social contexts vary with regard to other contextual factors that influence school achievement and self-esteem of Black and White students including “level of social support, the opportunities for friendship, and the number of people with a shared value system (p. 109).” Research on how parents feel about this dissonance is lacking.

Parental racial identity and its multiple facets continue to mediate the stressful experiences that parents and societal institutions raise for youth (Sellers et al, 1998). Newer research is isolating how various facets of public regard, private regard, and centrality are differentially influenced by R/ES processes (Rodriguez, Umana-Taylor, Smith, & Johnson, 2009; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). Profile analysis strategies may be helpful to understand how parents and students use a combination of racial/ethnic stereotyping, protective, affirmative, reappraisal, and competence teachings to manage the complexity and tension of diversity conflicts within PWIS educational and social settings. Not all of these settings are ignorant of racial/ethnic politics or unprepared for the need for support. Where parents are on the racial identity continuum appears to influence how frequently they find it necessary to engage in racial socialization. Race-centric parents may feel that they have to provide more racial coping strategies along with their children’s educational experiences, no matter how elite those experiences and opportunities.

The quantitative analysis demonstrated that the trauma of confronting racism as a Black person and talking about racial matters with one’s children appears to affect the emotions of Black parents. The more parents reported feeling ashamed, helpless, sad, hurt, and hopeless when faced with racism, the more they reported delivering all of the racial socialization types at both Times 1 and 2. The one discrepancy was for parents who felt strengthened...
when experiencing racism; they tended to report greater cultural pride socialization at Times 1 and 2. In general, racial socialization is stressful for parents and this area of study demands much more exploration in future R/ES research (Stevenson, 2011). Future research might consider how parents who experience the practice of R/ES as stressful can receive support for such practices. Moreover, explaining to parents the potential emotional consequences of R/ES, practicing how to accomplish these communications with therapeutic support until parents feel competent, and therapeutic emotional processing of the multiple trauma concerns for their children can be very useful strategies to minimize the stress of R/ES.

Parents are not static participants in the R/ES process as they watch their children undergo tragic and painful discriminatory experiences (Coard & Sellers, 2005). It appears parental experiences with racial discrimination over time promote greater communication regarding racial exclusion and bias. Hughes and Chen (1997) found similar results when parental experiences of racial bias in the workplace promoted more racial communications to their children. Parents who do not personally encounter racial discrimination may take an “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” approach to the R/ES process. The challenges to this approach may be not protecting or preparing youth to deflect indirect and subtle communications of Black inferiority.

Tracking parental racial socialization across time seems to yield stable results that demonstrate how these practices continue to be influenced by parental racism experiences and racial identity (Hughes & Chen, 1997).

The limitations of this research include the small sample size of parent and children pairs, the potential variability in mission and philosophy of the selective sample of independent schools, and the lack of long-term qualitative interviewing or ethnographic observation of parent and youth experiences with racial/ethnic challenges and triumphs in raising a child of color within a PWIS. Despite these limitations, this research represents an initial step into the world of Black student emotional and interpersonal adjustment in PWIS settings.

This study investigated how African American parents responded when their children experienced racial challenges in independent schools. Under stress, parents teach youth to expect, seek out, and attach to their own sources of racial pride and support. The analysis of parental R/ES processes supports theoretical models that unite identity to context and parental teaching to child racial/ethnic emotional and coping outcomes. We believe that tacit racial socialization processes occur all the time, but that explicit processes are necessary to balance out negative stereoty whole Blackness. Ultimately, a model that appreciates the stress appraisal, self-efficacy, and racial negotiation competence of parents and youth can close the gap of ignorance and ambivalence when racially tense conflicts occur within the school context (Stevenson, 2011). If parental R/ES practices are influential in how children make meaning of racial tensions and uplifts, then it is possible that their own personal life triumphs with racial stress play a major role. Future work should explore how
these parental coping strategies may contribute to the academic adjustment of Black youth.

It is strongly encouraged from the summary of research that the emotional development of African American youth is enhanced when they are taught how stigmatization processes undermine their emotional well-being. While there has been critique of bringing stereotype dynamics to the awareness of individuals because of its potential to increase the belief in stereotypical myths (Pinel, 1999), we believe that research has understudied the role of racial/socialization as a buffer of protection and affirmation of racial identity or as a mediator of reappraisal and competence in racial/ethnic negotiation (Stevenson, 2011). The implications for intervention development that integrates parental racial/ethnic socialization to counter stereotypes implicit within schooling politics and build racial negotiation social skills are promising.

REFERENCES


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