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RACISM STRESS AND SELF-CONCEPT:
THE MODERATING ROLE OF ETHNIC-RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

by

AISHA WALKER

Under the Direction of Ciara Smalls Glover, PhD

ABSTRACT

Research suggests links between racial discrimination and a range of adverse outcomes, including psychological and physical health. Less is known about individuals' perceived stress related to discriminatory events and their self-concept (self-esteem and self-efficacy), particularly in emerging adulthood. A sample of 435 African American college students from a large ethnically diverse university participated in a study investigating the relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-concept and the role that ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) plays in buffering the association. Results indicated that racial discrimination stress did not predict self-concept and did not interact with ERS messages. Racial pride messages were associated with higher self-esteem and self-efficacy. This study emphasizes the importance of racial pride messages in supporting normative development for African American emerging adults. Further consideration of the measurement of racial discrimination stress and frequency are discussed. The implications of the findings for clinical practice and research are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Ethnic-racial socialization, Racial discrimination stress, Racism, Self-esteem, Self-efficacy, Emerging adulthood

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AISHA WALKER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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Aisha Noni Walker
2020

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December 2020

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the shoulders on which I stand.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Research has demonstrated that race-based discrimination is a stress-evoking experience for African American communities (Fisher et al., 2000; Harrell, 2000; Lanier et al., 2017; Major et al., 2003; Seaton et al., 2011; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Research links these stress-provoking events to a range of adverse outcomes, including psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders (Fisher et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2003). The effects of racism are not just psychological; discriminatory experiences are linked to adverse physical health outcomes for African Americans, including poorer cardiovascular health (Williams et al., 2003), and social outcomes, including academic achievement and restricted economic mobility (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). A consequence of racism for emerging adults that is implicated in other psychosocial outcomes is lower self-concept. Self-concept includes perceived self-esteem—an individual's perception of their worth—and self-efficacy—one's believed ability to achieve their desired goals through adversity (Bandura, 1994; Harris-Britt, et al., 2007).

Theories of normative development for African Americans suggest that racial discrimination is a phenomenon that impacts children and families directly and indirectly throughout the lifespan (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Murry et al., 2018). Research also demonstrates that ethnic-racial socialization messages (ERS) have the potential to protect African American youth from the negative consequences of racism by sharing coping messages and skills which promote normative development, despite systemic and interpersonal racism (Hughes et al., 2006; Murry et al., 2018). Self-concept traits, including self-esteem and self-efficacy, are negatively associated with several outcomes related to discrimination experiences, including depression and substance use disorders (Spencer- Rodgers et al., 2012). In contrast, ERS messages have been linked to a positive self-concept (Neblett et al., 2008). Thus, the current study sought to

understand how coping skills, like ERS, serve as a buffer against the impact on self-concept that the appraisal of discriminatory experiences as stressful may have on African American emerging adults.

1.1 Racial Discrimination Stress

Racial discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals based on their perceived racial characteristics (APA, 2013). For African Americans, racial discrimination is related to a range of adverse psychological (e.g., anxiety, depression, behavior problems, decreased well-being, and cognitive impairments; Barnes et al., 2012; Neblett et al., 2008; Priest et al., 2013; Sellers & Shelton, 2003), physiological (e.g., obesity, high blood pressure, poor sleep quality; Lewis et al., 2013), and social outcomes across the lifetime (e.g., lower school engagement and motivation; Benner et al., 2018; Greene et al., 2006).

Stress is, broadly, the adverse emotional, physical, and behavioral reactions one has following the appraisal of an environmental situation as harmful or unwanted (Carter, 2007). Racial discrimination stress, considered to be an essential facet of the experience, is when the response to an experience of prejudicial treatment provokes physical and psychological reactions (Harrell, 2000; Sawyer et al., 2012). Racial discrimination stress has also been demonstrated to activate physiological responses (e.g., blood pressure dysregulation, cortisol concentration, and poorer sleep; Lee et al., 2018; Lewis et al., 2013; Smart Richman et al., 2010). However, individuals may differ in their appraisal of and response to daily racist experiences, due to differences in the internalization of and coping with racial encounters, resulting in differences in psychological distress (Lazarus, 1999). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and others (Slavin et al., 1991) have proposed models of stress and coping, which specifically posit that there is an interplay between individual dispositional and cultural contexts in a situation and one's appraisal

of the event as stressful. Based on individual differences, people may perceive identical discriminatory situations to be stress-provoking to varying degrees.

Previous research considering the impact of racial discrimination on African Americans' well-being has primarily focused on the frequency of discriminatory experiences. However, the rate (*how often did I experience discrimination?*) and the evaluation (*how stressful was my experience?*) are needed to fully understand the impact of racial discrimination on psychological, physiological, and social outcomes (Carter, 2007; Paradies, 2006). The rate of discriminatory experiences is measured in either a sum or mean score. Summative scores are where individuals' respond to a binary or Likert-type scale which is added together, indicating the total number of events experienced in a given period. Individual sums are then averaged across participants to indicate the total number of types of discriminatory events in a given time period (e.g., Allen et al., 2019; Michaels et al., 2019; Ong & Edwards, 2008;). Alternatively, racial discrimination frequency can be measured through the mean frequency of events, where how often a number of events occurred in a given time period are averaged within and across participants reflecting the mean frequency of exposure to discrimination (e.g., Huynh et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2014; Scott, 2004; Volpe et al., 2020; Wang & Yip, 2020). The benefits of using the mean frequency of events is that it allows the interpretation of how often these events are occurring, rather than simply quantifying the total number of events experienced.

Across measurements of racial discrimination frequency, previous research has often presumed the inherent stress of racial discrimination in the reported frequency of the encounters (Carter, 2007; Kirkinis et al., 2019). This may not accurately reflect individual differences in the cognitive appraisal of racial discrimination and the potential to distinguish discrepancies in related outcomes. By focusing specifically on the stress of discriminatory encounters, research

can investigate the process through which racist messages are buffered or internalized (Jones & Neblett, 2006; Neblett et al., 2012). In the few studies that have examined both, researchers found that the frequency of racial discrimination had a greater negative impact on early adolescents' psychological well-being than did the stress (Lanier et al., 2017; Seaton et al., 2011). Evidence of the implications of racial discrimination stress have not yet been explored in emerging adulthood, where cognitive maturity—one's understanding of self, others, contexts, and consequences—is greater relative to early adolescent samples. This greater cognitive maturity may impact individuals' understanding of self and their context and influence their perception of racial discrimination as stressful (Arnett, 2007). Studies that have assessed individual differences in the appraisal of discriminatory experiences demonstrate varying association between the stress experienced and psychological outcomes (Lanier et al., 2017; Metzger et al., 2018; Seaton et al., 2011). The current investigation examined how stress appraisal in response to discrimination impacts self-concept, specifically self-esteem and self-efficacy, for African American emerging adults.

1.2 Self-Concept

Self-concept refers to the broad construct of traits representing how individuals evaluate themselves generally and in domain-specific tasks (Judge et al., 1998). Research varies in defining these traits (e.g., self-perceptions and self-evaluations) and which are included in the broader construct. However, self-esteem and self-efficacy are consistently included as central evaluation traits associated with how people appraise situations across settings (Judge et al., 1998). Self-esteem is a positive or negative attitude toward oneself and one's worth (Simmons et al., 1973). Self-efficacy is one's belief in the capacity to produce effects or achieve desired goals, mainly through adversity (Bandura, 1994). Analyses identify self-esteem and self-efficacy as

related but distinct constructs. Self-esteem relates more closely to one's affect, and self-efficacy represents one's motivation or approach to tasks (Chen et al., 2004).

A meta-analysis conducted by Trzesniewski and colleagues (2003) demonstrated that self-esteem never completely stabilizes across the lifespan. Experience and stressors can impact self-perceptions, particularly in transitional life periods. Studies also suggests that emerging adulthood is a transition period of malleability, where life experiences can influence feelings of self-worth (Chung et al., 2014). Self-efficacy is also considered an essential trait in emerging adulthood, a period where young adults make independent career and personal decisions often for the first time. Motivation and belief in one's ability to achieve desired goals are critical for the future planning associated with this time (Buchanan & Selmon, 2008).

Research on self-esteem has found it to be positively related to several psychological and social outcomes, including lower anxiety and depressive symptoms (Davis et al., 2017), occupational satisfaction (Rodriguez & Loos-Sant'Ana, 2015; Trzesniewski et al., 2003), academic achievement (Chung et al., 2014), and psychological well-being (Paradise & Kernis, 2002). Global self-esteem is considered essential for the development and sustainment of psychological well-being. High levels of self-esteem support one's engagement in self-protective and enhancing processes, including positive coping practices (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Similarly, a strong sense of self-efficacy is related to problem-focused coping (Chwalisz et al., 1992), psychological well-being (Schonfeld et al., 2015), lower depressive symptoms (Tak et al., 2017), and higher life and job satisfaction (Duggleby et al., 2009; Judge & Bono, 2001; Pinguart et al., 2003).

Across types of discrimination, there appears to be negative relations between discrimination and self-esteem (Paradies et al., 2015; Schmitt et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2019).

Fisher et al. (2000) found higher distress responses to racism from peers and educational systems was related to lower self-esteem. For college students, racial microaggressions have been found to be related to lower self-esteem (Nadal et al., 2014). Theoretically, feeling efficacious may serve as a coping strategy, allowing individuals to confront situational demands in service of overcoming adversity. However, Hughes and Demo (1989) found that more frequent institutional and informal racial discrimination negatively impacted self-efficacy more than self-esteem. Recent research has found that racial discrimination is related to decreased domain specific self-efficacy, including career and academic efficacy (Alliman-Brissett & Turner, 2010; Alonzo, 2020). It has been argued that the most impactful consequence of racial discrimination is, in fact, lowered self-efficacy, as it has the power to influence future outcomes (Sanders-Phillips et al., 2009).

It is not clear, though, whether the differential relationship between racial discrimination and the two self-concept traits is related simply to the frequency of experiences or, more specifically, to individual differences in stress appraisal. Harris-Britt et al. (2007) found a negative relationship between racial discrimination frequency and self-esteem for African American adolescents. Research has not yet explored the relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-concept traits in emerging adulthood. The current study investigated the relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-efficacy. It sought to test the hypothesis that there is a negative association between racial discrimination stress and self-concept in emerging adulthood. Additionally, it addressed the need to identify which factors protect against these negative associations, such as ethnic-racial socialization.

1.3 Ethnic-Racial Socialization

Ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) is the verbal and non-verbal, explicit and implied messaging parents use to teach children of color how to interpret their status, opportunities, and restrictions related to living in a racialized America (Bowman & Howard, 1985). The context in which these messages are shared is either proactive—where parents include racial messages generally in how they raise their children—or reactive—where parents share messages in response to racialized events that have occurred either personally or in society (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Lesane-Brown, 2006). ERS messages are delivered in various methods, including verbal messages, modeling, role-playing, and exposure (Coard et al., 2004). Research has demonstrated that these messages can offer youth a positive perspective on their racial background and provide coping strategies to negotiate a racialized society (Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2012).

Previous research has identified several different ERS messages, primarily in three general categories: cultural messages, minority messages, and mainstream messages (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Lesane-Brown, 2005). Cultural messages are those that teach pride in one's racial/ethnic history and culture. These messages are referred to as racial pride or cultural socialization messages in the research literature (Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2005; McDermott et al., 2018). Minority messages are those that warn and prepare children for the prejudices faced due to their race. These include racial barrier—also known as preparation for bias—and promotion of mistrust messages. Mainstream messages include egalitarian messages, which encourage African Americans to co-exist within the majority society, and self-worth messages, which promote individual abilities and life skills. Messages that do not fit into the three main categories but are reported in the literature are negative messages, which denigrate

African Americans, and behavioral socialization messages, representing activities and actions that convey racialized messages to children (Lesane-Brown et al., 2006). Current literature on ERS messages most often focuses on cultural and minority messages, as these are the most frequently reported across studies and measures, leaving a gap in the literature on the context and impact of other ERS message shared (Anderson et al., 2019; White-Johnson et al., 2010).

Theories of normative development for youth of color posit that there are stressors experienced which are uniquely influenced by the historical and contemporary oppression and discrimination against communities of color in the United States (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Murry et al., 2018). These stressors, including racial discrimination, have been conceptualized to impact positive development and adaptation through individual and familial vulnerabilities, including intrapersonal factors and processes such as self-concept. The Integrative Model of Stress in Black American Families (Murry et al., 2018) recognized that most African American youth maintain typical developmental trajectories, despite unique historical and contemporary stressors that are consistently present for the African American community. Murry et al. (2018) theorized that several culturally grounded practices serve as protective and promotive factors of positive development, including ethnic-racial socialization. These practices are considered cultural strength-based coping assets, which theoretically mediate and moderate the negative association between environmental stressors and individual and familial vulnerabilities. Consequently, ERS and other culturally grounded coping assets protect and promote African American youth and their families' positive development.

In support of theories that identify ERS messages as a protective factor (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Murry et al., 2018), results from previous studies have demonstrated the potential benefits of ERS messages across developmental periods. Racial pride

messages have been positively associated with racial private regard (e.g., one's personal positive or negative assessment of being African American; Davis et al., 2017) and cognitive abilities and are negatively associated with internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Banerjee et al., 2011; Reynolds & Gonzales-Backen, 2017). Racial barrier messages are positively related to prosocial attitudes concerning social action engagement but are negatively associated with youth's racial private regard (Davis et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2012). In the limited research on egalitarian messages, these messages are associated with positive peer relationships and psychosocial outcomes (Graham et al., 2009), cognitive abilities (Banerjee et al., 2011), fewer behavioral problems, and psychological well-being (Neblett et al., 2008).

There are, however, discrepancies in the research literature regarding the impact of ERS messages. The outcomes related to the messages are not always linear, particularly when studying messages shared from parents to children (Frabutt et al., 2004; Harris-Britt et al., 2007). These discrepancies indicate that contextual factors such as the frequency of messages may impact the influence ERS has on youth development. Few studies have investigated the non-linear associations between ERS and various psychological outcomes, a potentially critical factor in understanding ERS messaging's protective role.

Previous research has investigated the protective role of ERS messages related to racial discrimination across youth developmental periods (Bynum et al., 2007; Lanier et al., 2017; Neblett et al., 2008; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Scott, 2003; Seaton et al., 2010). McDermott et al. (2018) investigated the influence of ethnic socialization (racial pride messages) on Latino youth's academic outcomes, exploring the role that self-efficacy plays in the relationship. Results demonstrated that racial pride messages increased youth's perceived self-efficacy, which in turn increased academic achievement.

Research has found that ERS messages have been related to higher self-concept in African American youth (Benner et al., 2019; Okeke-Adeyanju et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2019). Harris- Britt et al. (2007) investigated the moderating role of racial barrier and racial pride messages in the relationship between the frequency of racial discrimination and self-esteem for African American adolescents. Results indicated that racial pride messages weakened the negative association between perceived racial discrimination and self-esteem. Racial barrier messages also weakened the relationship. However, there was a curvilinear relationship, such that, at low and high frequencies of racial barrier messages, increased racial discrimination was associated with lower self-esteem. However, at moderate levels of racial barrier messages, discrimination did not significantly predict self-esteem.

These results supported a previous finding (Fischer & Shaw, 1999), which demonstrated that a moderate level of racial barrier messages serves as a buffer to psychological well-being and normative development in the context of discrimination. It may be that frequent receipt of racial barrier messaging intensifies perceptions of lack of control in response to racism. Overall, research demonstrates a negative relationship between the frequency of racial discrimination and self-concept perceptions (Hughes & Demo, 1989), and that ERS serves as a protective factor in this relationship (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Seaton et al., 2010). However, current research exploring the relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-concept in emerging adulthood is limited and inconclusive of ERS messages' potential protective role (Lanier et al., 2017; Seaton et al., 2010).

1.4 Current Study Rationale

The current study examined how ethnic-racial socialization interacts with racial discrimination stress on self-concept. The study's first goal was to explore individual differences

in racial discrimination appraisal as stressful on self-esteem and self-efficacy perceptions. The second goal of the investigation was to investigate how three distinct ERS message types (i.e., racial pride, racial barrier, and egalitarian messages) differentially impact African American emerging adults' self-esteem and self-efficacy. The third goal of the current study was to address the context in which ERS messages may serve a protective role on self-concept despite experiencing racial discrimination stress.

Theories of normative development for African American families identify racial discrimination as an everyday stressor which impacts positive development (Murry et al., 2018). Previous research, however, often focuses on the frequency of these events, insinuating the impact that these events have on adverse outcomes without explicitly measuring the perceived stress of the situation (Kirkinis et al., 2019; Neblett et al., 2016). Based on current research, it is unclear whether it is the frequency of discriminatory events or the stress that is most detrimental to psychological health of African American emerging adults (Williams & Mohammed, 2009).

With respect to self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy were focused on due to previous work which has documented the negative association between racial discrimination frequency and self-esteem (Fisher, 2000; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Hughes & Demo, 1989; Yang et al., 2019) and limited research of its impact on self-efficacy (Alonzo, 2020; Hughes & Demo, 1989; Rollins et al., 2006). Though there is some evidence of the adverse impact of racial discrimination frequency on self-concept, the appraisal of the racism as stressful has not yet been studied in relation to self-concept. As such, the current study sought to examine the role of racial discrimination stress on self-concept, above and beyond the frequency of experiences, in African American emerging adult.

Models of normative development for African American families recognize that, despite experiences of racial discrimination, ERS messages support positive development (Murry et al., 2018). A review of ERS literature found that, across 21 studies, the frequency of racial pride and racial barrier messages influences the strength of ERS messages as a protective factor for the mental health for African American youth and emerging adults (Reynolds & Gonzales-Backen, 2017). Based on the findings of previous research (e.g., Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Harris-Britt, 2007; Neblett et al., 2008; Reynolds & Gonzales-Backen, 2017) and guided by theories of normative development (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Murry et al., 2018), the current study examined the possible positive relationship between ERS messages and self-concept and the potential buffering effect of these messages on the relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-concept.

Racial discrimination frequency was included as a study covariate to address the research question that the appraisal of racial discrimination as stressful impacts self-concept above and beyond the frequency of experiences (Carter, 2003; Priest et al., 2013). Previous research found that individuals' age, gender, and socioeconomic status are associated with reported racial discrimination frequency (e.g., Assari et al., 2017; Assari et al., 2018; Brodish et al., 2011; Lee & Ahn, 2013; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Research also suggests that higher racial centrality—the extent to which one defines their identity by their race—is protective against negative outcomes associated with more frequent racial discrimination (e.g., Lee & Ahn, 2013; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Consequently, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and racial identity centrality were included as covariates in the current study. Of note, first generation college student status was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status. Specifically, those who identify as first generation collect students, by definition, come from families where neither parent

graduated from college. As educational attainment is often used as an indicator of socioeconomic status, it was interpreted that those in the current study who identify as first-generation college students would be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds than those who did not (APA, 2015; Rodríguez-Hernández et al., 2020).

1.5 Research Questions and Hypotheses

- 1) Are higher reports of racial discrimination stress associated with lower self-concept for African American emerging adults?
 - a. *Hypothesis 1a*: African American emerging adults who report higher racial discrimination stress will report lower perceived self-esteem.
 - b. *Hypothesis 1b*: African American emerging adults who report higher racial discrimination stress will report lower perceived self-efficacy.
- 2) Are more frequent reports of ERS messages associated with higher self-concept for African American emerging adults?
 - a. *Hypothesis 2a*: Those who report more frequent ERS messages (racial pride, racial barrier, and egalitarian messages) also report higher self-esteem.
 - b. *Hypothesis 2b*: Those who report more frequent ERS messages (racial pride, racial barrier, and egalitarian messages) also report higher self-efficacy.
- 3) Does ERS buffer the link between racial discrimination stress and self-concept?
 - a. *Hypothesis 3a*: The relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-esteem will be weaker among individuals who report higher levels of racial pride and egalitarian ERS messages.
 - b. *Hypothesis 3b*: The relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-efficacy will be weaker among individuals who report higher levels of racial

pride and egalitarian messages.

- c. *Hypothesis 3c*: The relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-esteem will be weaker among individuals who report moderate, but not low or high, levels of racial barrier ERS messages.
- d. *Hypothesis 3d*: The relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-efficacy will be weaker among individuals who report moderate, but not low or high, levels of racial barrier ERS messages.

2 METHOD

2.1 Participants

Data for the current study were collected within a larger study of African American emerging adults at a large, ethnically diverse public university in the Southeastern United States between the fall 2016 and spring 2018 academic semesters. As the ERS measure used in the study was validated on African American samples, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore any within-group differences in the frequency of reported messages received. One-way ANOVA analyses indicated that African Americans ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.59$) report significantly more pride messages than African-identifying students ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 0.65$; $F(1,597) = 9.16$, $p < .01$). As such, only African Americans were included in the analyses. The final sample used for analysis included 435 African American undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 25, where over half reported being 18 years old (55%), and another 34% reported being 19 years old. Most identified as female (81%), and 22% reported being first-generation college students. Participants reported that the most frequently occurring experience of discrimination was being stared at by strangers, where 20% reported the experience "once a week or more." This was followed by being considered exotic (11%) and overhearing offensive jokes (11%).

2.2 Procedure

Participants were recruited through the university's psychology research subject pool (SONA) for students enrolled in introductory psychology courses, after receiving institutional review board approval. Potential participants were screened for those who met the study inclusion criteria, which were: identifying as African American/Black, freshman or sophomore class standing, and between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Those meeting inclusion criteria were able to access the full online survey through Qualtrics. The survey contained demographic

questions and several measures related to the broader study research questions investigating African American/Black college students' health and academic success. Participants received course credit for their participation in the study.

2.3 Measures

2.3.1 Racial Discrimination Frequency & Stress

The Racism and Life Experiences Scale-Daily Life Experiences Scale (DLE; Harrell, 1997) is a 20-item self-report measure that assesses the frequency and appraisal of various everyday racial discrimination experiences that have occurred in the past year. Participants were asked first to report how frequently they experienced each type of discrimination ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 1.09$) on a 6-point Likert-type scale (0 = *never*, 1 = *less than once a year*, 2 = *a few times a year*, 3 = *once a month*, 4 = *a few times a month*, 5 = *once a week or more*). Participants were then asked to report how "bothersome"—stressful—they perceive each of the events to be ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.44$) on a 6-point Likert-type scale (0 = *has never happened to me*, 1 = *doesn't bother me at all*, 2 = *bothers me a little*, 3 = *bothers me somewhat*, 4 = *bothers me a lot*, 5 = *bothers me extremely*). Sample items include "Being observed or followed while in public places" and "Others expecting your work to be inferior." Mean scores were calculated, such that higher scores indicated greater racial discrimination frequency and stress (e.g., Seaton et al., 2012; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Scott, 2004; Volpe et al., 2020). Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .95 (frequency) and .95 (bother/ racism stress).

2.3.2 Self-Esteem

Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem scale was used to assess participants' perceptions of the positive or negative attitudes taken toward oneself. The self-report scale is ten items and uses a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) to indicate to what extent

each statement applies to the participant. Sample items include "I take a positive attitude toward myself" and "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." Total scores were averaged across items, where higher scores represented positive self-esteem. Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .85.

2.3.3 Self-Efficacy

The Self-Efficacy scale (Sherer et al., 1982) was used to assess participants' perceptions of their ability to achieve their goals in the face of adversity. The 17-item scale used a 5-point Likert-type response scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) to indicate to what extent each statement applied to the participant. Sample items include "Failure just makes me try harder" and "When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work." Mean scores were calculated where higher scores indicated higher levels of perceived self-efficacy. Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .85.

2.3.4 Ethnic-Racial Socialization

Lesane-Brown et al.'s (2005) Racial Socialization Questionnaire- Teen (RSQ) was used to assess the frequency participants recall having ever received ethnic-racial socialization messages from their parents. The 26-item measure includes six subscales of different types of ERS messages, where participants were asked to respond to the stem instruction "Please indicate how frequently your parents have done this." The current study included racial pride (e.g., "[Your parent] told you that you should be proud to be Black"), racial barrier (e.g., "Told you that Blacks have to work twice as hard as Whites to get ahead"), and egalitarian messages (e.g., "Told you that you should try to have friends of all different races") subscales in analyses. A 3-point response scale was used (1 = *never*, 2 = *once or twice*, 3 = *more than twice*) to indicate the

frequency that participants recall receiving each message from their parents. Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .79 (racial pride) .86 (racial barrier), and .77 (egalitarian).

2.3.5 Racial Centrality

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity-Teem (MIBI-T; Scottham et al., 2008) was used to examine racial identity strength. The current study included the 3-item racial centrality subscale, which measures the degree to which being African American is central to an individual's perception of oneself. A 7-point response scale was used (1= *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). A sample item is "I feel close to other Black people." Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .52.

2.4 Data Analytic Strategy

Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed for all study variables. The first hypothesis was tested using two multiple regression equations to examine the linear effects of racial discrimination stress on each self-concept construct independently. The first regression equation examined the role of racial discrimination stress on self-esteem; the second regression equation analyzed the effect of racial discrimination stress on self-efficacy. As mentioned previously, age, gender, SES, racial centrality, and racial discrimination frequency are related to racial discrimination and were included as covariates in each regression analysis conducted.

The second hypothesis regarding whether more frequent ERS messages are associated with higher self-concept was analyzed through two multiple regression equations. The first regression equation investigated the relationship between racial pride, racial barrier, and egalitarian messages on self-esteem. The second regression equation analyzed the relationship between racial pride, racial barrier, and egalitarian messages on self-efficacy. Hypothesis 3a and

3b addressed whether racial pride and egalitarian messages moderated the link between racial discrimination stress and self-concept. These hypotheses were tested using four multiple regression analyses. Two regression analyses examined the interaction effect of racial pride messages and racial discrimination stress on self-esteem and self-efficacy independently. Two additional regression analyses examined the interaction effect of egalitarian messages and racial discrimination stress on self-esteem and self-efficacy independently.

Hypotheses 3c and 3d sought to explore the potential interaction of racial barrier messages and racial discrimination stress on self-concept. To test this hypothesis, two polynomial regression analyses were conducted. The first regression equation analyzed the potential quadratic interaction of racial barrier messages and racial discrimination stress on self-esteem. The second regression equation analyzed the possible quadratic interaction of racial barrier messages and racial discrimination stress on self-efficacy. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software (Version 25).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Preliminary Analyses

Participants reported experiencing racial discrimination between once and a few times a year ($M = 1.40, SD = 1.09$). On average, participants reported very little to no stress related to discriminatory experiences ($M = 1.89, SD = 1.44$). The encounter reported to be most stressful by participants was "being treated as if you were 'stupid,' being 'talked down to'" where 36% of participants reported experiencing this as very bothersome. Descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses among key study variables are shown in Table 1. Tests were run to examine all study variables' variance inflation factors (VIF), which were all within the recommended ranges (less than five; Ringle et al., 2015). Pearson correlation coefficients indicated high bivariate correlations between racial discrimination frequency and racial discrimination stress ($\alpha = .75, p < .01$). Though the two variables were highly correlated, there was no significant evidence of multicollinearity ($VIF < 2.5$). Cases that contained missing data on all study measures were excluded from the analysis. Based on distance, leverage, and influence tests, there was no evidence of outliers in the dataset. There was evidence of negative skew for two racial socialization subscales (racial pride and racial barrier messages); transformations on the data were not conducted as similar means have been found with these subscales and analyzed across similar sample demographics (e.g., Neblett et al., 2013).

Independent sample t-test results revealed significant mean differences in discrimination stress by gender ($t(108.86) = -2.37, p = .02$), where females reported experiencing more discrimination stress than males. Significant gender differences were found in reported pride messages, with females reporting more frequent pride messages ($t(445) = -2.82, p < .01$). Females also reported higher racial identity centrality ($t(450) = -2.10, p = .04$). Those who

reported being the first person in their family to attend college reported higher mean efficacy levels than those who did not ($t(450) = -2.03, p = .04$). There were no significant mean differences between the participants' age and any of the study variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age											
2. Gender	-.13**	–									
3. Centrality	-.13**	.10*	–								
4. First Gen Status	.04	.12*	0.00	–							
5. Discrimination Frequency	.10*	.04	.03	.07	–						
6. Discrimination Stress	.06	.11*	.09	.09	.78**	–					
7. Pride Messages	-.08	.13**	.23**	-.06	.26**	.24**	–				
8. Barrier Messages	-.10*	.06	.18**	-.02	.26**	.27**	.62**	–			
9. Egalitarian Messages	<.01	.08	.08	.02	.11*	.09	.45**	.34**	–		
10. Self-Esteem	-.12*	-.01	.17**	-.02	-.15**	-.11*	.15**	.06	.13**	–	
11. Self-Efficacy	-.12**	.08	.20**	.09*	-.14**	-.10*	.18**	.11*	.06	.50**	–
<i>M</i>	18.65	–	5.47	–	1.40	1.89	2.52	2.51	2.20	3.20	3.70
<i>SD</i>	1.04	–	1.12	–	1.09	1.44	0.52	0.60	0.60	0.55	0.51
Min	18	–	1	–	0	0	1	1	1	1	2.17
Max	25+	–	7	–	4.65	5	3	3	3	4	4.78
Range	18-25+	–	1-7	–	0-5	0-5	1-3	1-3	1-3	1-4	1-5

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

3.2 Hypothesis 1

It was hypothesized that African American emerging adults who report higher racial discrimination stress would report lower levels of perceived self-esteem and self-efficacy. The overall model examining the relationship between racial discrimination stress and self-esteem was significant ($F(6,431) = 4.45, p < .01, R^2 = .06$), though racial discrimination stress did not predict self-esteem ($\beta = .003, p = .97$). Higher racial centrality ($\beta = 0.15, p < .01$) and less frequent racial discrimination ($\beta = -0.15, p = .05$) predicted higher self-esteem (see Table 2).

Table 2. Racial Discrimination Stress on Self-Esteem

Effect	β	SE
Age	-0.09	0.03
Gender	-0.03	0.07
First Generation Student	0.00	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.15**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.15*	0.04
Discrimination Stress	< .01	0.03

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The overall model examining the relationship racial discrimination stress has on self-efficacy was significant ($F(6,431) = 6.41, p < .01, R^2 = .08$; see Table 3), but racial discrimination stress did not predict self-efficacy ($\beta = -0.01, p = .88$). First-generation college student status ($\beta = 0.11, p = .02$), higher racial centrality ($\beta = 0.19, p < .01$), and less frequent racial discrimination ($\beta = -0.14, p = .05$) predicted higher self-esteem.

Table 3. Racial Discrimination Stress on Self-Efficacy

Effect	β	SE
Age	-0.08	0.02
Gender	0.05	0.06
First Generation Student	0.11*	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.19**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.14*	0.04
Discrimination Stress	-0.01	0.03

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

3.3 Hypothesis 2

The second set of analyses tested the hypothesis that ERS messages are positively associated with self-concept. The first multiple regression analysis tested whether ERS messages (racial pride, racial barrier, and egalitarian messages) were positively related to self-esteem (see Table 4). The overall model was significant ($F(8,427) = 5.55, p < .01, R^2 = .09$). Specifically, more frequent racial pride messages ($\beta = 0.17, p < .01$), younger age ($\beta = -0.10, p = .05$), higher racial centrality ($\beta = 0.12, p = .01$), and less frequent racial discrimination ($\beta = -0.18, p < .01$) were associated with higher self-esteem.

Table 4. ERS Messages on Self-Esteem

Effect	β	SE
Age	-0.10*	0.03
Gender	-0.06	0.07
First Generation Student	0.03	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.12**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.18**	0.03
Racial Pride Messages	0.17**	0.07
Racial Barrier Messages	-0.06	0.06
Egalitarian Messages	0.10	0.05

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The second multiple regression analysis tested whether ERS messages were positively related to self-efficacy (see Table 5). The overall model was significant ($F(8,427) = 7.13, p < .01, R^2 = .12$). More frequent racial pride messages ($\beta = 0.20, p < .01$), first generation college students ($\beta = 0.13, p < .01$), higher racial centrality ($\beta = 0.15, p < .01$), and less frequent racial discrimination ($\beta = -0.20, p < .01$) predicted higher self-efficacy.

Table 5. ERS Messages on Self-Efficacy

Effect	β	SE
Age	-0.07	0.02
Gender	-0.03	0.06
First Generation Student	0.13**	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.15**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.20**	0.02
Racial Pride Messages	0.20**	0.06
Racial Barrier Messages	0.02	0.05
Egalitarian Messages	-0.03	0.04

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

3.4 Hypothesis 3

The analysis testing the interaction of racial discrimination stress and racial pride messages on self-esteem was significant ($F(8,427) = 5.21, p < .01, R^2 = .09$), where more frequent racial pride messages ($b = 0.21, p < .01$), higher racial centrality ($b = 0.05, p = .02$), and less frequent racial discrimination ($b = -0.09, p = .03$) were related to higher self-esteem. However, the interaction between racial pride messages and racial discrimination stress was not significant ($b = .05, p = .30$; see Table 6).

Table 6. Interaction Analysis: Discrimination Stress & Racial Pride Messages on Self-Esteem

Effect	b	SE
Age	-0.05*	0.03
Gender	-0.07	0.07
First Generation Student	0.04	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.05*	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.09*	0.04
Discrimination Stress	-0.01	0.03
Racial Pride Messages	0.21**	0.05
Discrimination Stress X Racial Pride Messages	0.05	0.04

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

When testing the relationship between discrimination stress and racial pride messages on self-efficacy, the overall model was significant ($F(8,427) = 7.09, p < .01, R^2 = .12$). More frequent racial pride messages ($b = 0.21, p < .01$), higher racial centrality ($b = 0.07, p < .01$), first generation college student status ($b = 0.16, p < .01$), and less frequent racial discrimination ($b = -0.08, p = .02$) were related to higher self-efficacy. The interaction between racial discrimination stress and racial pride messages, however, was not significant ($b = 0.03, p = .42$; see Table 7).

Table 7. Interaction Analysis: Discrimination Stress & Racial Pride Messages on Self-Efficacy

Effect	b	SE
Age	-0.04	0.02
Gender	0.03	0.06
First Generation Student	0.16**	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.07**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.08**	0.04
Discrimination Stress	-0.01	0.03
Racial Pride Messages	0.21**	0.05
Discrimination Stress X Racial Pride Messages	0.03	0.03

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

In testing the interaction between discrimination stress and egalitarian messages on self-esteem, the overall model was significant ($F(8,429) = 5.20, p < .01, R^2 = .09$). More frequent egalitarian messages ($b = 0.14, p < .01$), age ($b = -0.05, p = .04$), higher racial centrality ($b = 0.07, p < .01$), and less frequent racial discrimination ($b = -0.08, p = .03$) predicted higher self-esteem (Table 8). The interaction between racial discrimination stress and egalitarian messages predicted higher self-esteem ($b = 0.06, p = .03$). However, due to the small bivariate correlation

between racial discrimination stress and egalitarian messages found in the current sample ($r = .09$), the interaction should be considered with caution. To interpret this interaction, the simple effect of racial discrimination stress among low and high frequency egalitarian messaging (1 SD above and below the mean) was assessed. At high levels of egalitarian messages, the slope of racial discrimination stress and self-esteem was not significantly different than zero, $b = 0.05$, $p = .18$. Similarly, at low levels of egalitarian messages, racial discrimination stress was not significantly related to self-esteem, $b = -.05$, $p = .20$.

Table 8. Interaction Analysis: Discrimination Stress & Egalitarian Messages on Self-Esteem

Effect	b	SE
Age	-0.05*	0.03
Gender	-0.05	0.07
First Generation Student	0.01	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.07**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.08*	0.04
Discrimination Stress	< 0.01	0.03
Egalitarian Messages	0.14**	0.04
Discrimination Stress X Egalitarian Messages	0.06*	0.03

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The overall model testing the interaction between discrimination stress and egalitarian messages on self-efficacy was significant ($F(8,429) = 5.01$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .09$; see Table 9). Specifically, higher racial centrality ($b = 0.09$, $p < .01$), first-generation college students ($b = 0.13$, $p = .02$), less frequent racial discrimination ($b = -0.07$, $p = .04$) predicted higher self-efficacy. Racial discrimination stress, egalitarian messages, and the interaction of the two did not significantly predict self-efficacy.

The second part of the third hypothesis investigated whether there was a relationship between racial barrier messages and discrimination stress on self-concept, focusing on a potential curvilinear relationship. First, to determine whether a curvilinear relationship was present between racial barrier messages and self-esteem, a regression equation with a racial barrier message quadratic term was tested. Results demonstrated no significant curvilinear relationship

between barrier messages and self-esteem ($\beta = -0.02, p = .81$). Evidence of a curvilinear relationship was also not present with self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.04, p = .59$).

Table 9. Interaction Analysis: Discrimination Stress & Egalitarian Messages on Self-Efficacy

Effect	b	SE
Age	-0.04	0.02
Gender	0.05	0.06
First Generation Student	0.13*	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.09**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.07*	0.04
Discrimination Stress	< -0.01	0.03
Egalitarian Messages	0.05	0.04
Discrimination Stress X Egalitarian Messages	< -0.01	0.03

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

A polynomial regression interaction was performed to test whether there was a significant interaction between racial discrimination stress and racial barrier messages on self-esteem, based on trends in previous research (Harris-Britt et al., 2007). Results indicated that the overall model was significant ($F(9,426) = 3.28, p < .01, R^2 = .06$), where higher racial centrality ($b = 0.07, p < .01$) was a predictor of self-esteem (Table 10). The interaction between racial discrimination stress and the squared racial barrier messages term was not significant ($b = -0.05, p = .18$).

Table 10. Interaction Analysis: Discrimination Stress & Racial Barrier Messages² on Self-Esteem

Effect	b	SE
Age	-0.05	0.03
Gender	-0.05	0.07
First Generation Student	0.02	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.07**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.07	0.04
Discrimination Stress	-0.01	0.03
Racial Barrier Messages	0.08	0.07
Racial Barrier Messages ²	-0.01	0.08
Discrimination Stress X Racial Barrier Messages ²	-0.05	0.04

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The overall model testing the interaction of racial discrimination stress and racial barrier messages on self-efficacy was significant ($F(9,426) = 5.20, p < .01, R^2 = .10$; Table 11). First generation college students ($b = 0.15, p = .01$), higher racial centrality ($b = 0.08, p < .01$), less

frequent racial discrimination ($b = -0.07, p = .04$), and more frequent racial barrier messages ($b = 0.15, p < .01$) predicted self-efficacy. However, a significant interaction between racial discrimination stress and the squared racial barrier messages term was not found ($b = -0.02, p = .48$).

Table 11. Interaction Analysis: Racial Discrimination Stress & Racial Barrier Messages² on Self-Efficacy

Effect	b	SE
Age	-0.03	0.02
Gender	0.06	0.06
First Generation Student	0.15**	0.06
Racial Centrality	0.08**	0.02
Discrimination Frequency	-0.07*	0.04
Discrimination Stress	-0.01	0.03
Racial Barrier Messages	0.15**	0.06
Racial Barrier Messages ²	-0.05	0.07
Discrimination Stress X Racial Barrier Messages ²	-0.02	0.04

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

4 DISCUSSION

The present study's goal was to investigate the negative impact racial discrimination stress has on self-concept in African American emerging adults and the role that ERS messages play in buffering this relationship. Contrary to hypotheses, racial discrimination stress did not predict lower self-esteem or self-efficacy. The expectation that ERS messages would buffer racial discrimination stress on self-esteem and self-efficacy was not supported. Results did reveal that racial pride messages had a positive role on feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy in emerging adulthood.

4.1 Racial Discrimination Stress

In this study, racial discrimination stress was conceptualized as how bothersome participants perceived racist experiences to be. Multiple regression analyses indicated that racial discrimination stress did not predict lower levels of self-esteem or self-efficacy. The results of these analyses are contrary to the predicted relationships which was based on previous research supporting the notion that racial discrimination is stressful in a way that impacts psychological health (e.g., Hunter et al., 2017; Utsey et al., 2000). The findings indicate that the cognitive appraisal of discriminatory experiences as stressful were not linked to the psychological well-being of African American emerging adults.

The means reported by participants indicated lower levels of stress in response to experiences of discrimination than was expected. It may be that discrimination stress was underreported due to several potential coping strategies; strategies which have the potential to minimize the reported bother by participants in response to racial discrimination. These factors may include the Strong Black Woman Schema, John Henryism, social support seeking, anger suppression, and experiential avoidance (Abrams et al., 2014; Bonham et al., 2011; Brondolo et

al., 2009; Griffin & Armstead, 2020; Martínez et al., 2020; Sellers et al., 2003). These coping factors may have impacted individuals' ability to recognize and express the stress associated with experiences of racial discrimination retrospectively. This includes avoiding thoughts about the experience as well as coping-driven response biases. It is possible that emerging adults in this sample did not report heightened stress in response to experiences of discrimination due to engaging in these coping strategies which modulated or suppressed their stress perception (Griffin & Armstead, 2020; Scott & House, 2005). Further research considering the way in which coping strategies the reporting of racial stress is needed to better understand this null result.

It was predicted that greater cognitive maturity, or awareness of one's context and consequences, would be associated with greater racial discrimination stress. Though it has been theorized that greater cognitive maturity is present in African American emerging adults compared with adolescents (Hochberg & Konner, 2020), findings indicated that this higher level of reasoning did not influence the appraisal of discriminatory experiences as stressful. This supports previous research where increased cognitive reasoning abilities did not predict greater reported victimization for African Americans youth experiencing individual discrimination (Fisher et al., 2000; Seaton et al., 2010). Alternatively, there are unique factors related to the emerging adulthood developmental phase which may more strongly influence reporting than cognitive maturity, such as feelings of optimism and invincibility (Arnett, 2007). It may be that in emerging adulthood, though there is increased cognitive maturity, individuals have a sense of optimism about the future and invincibility to negative events (Arnett, 2005; Arnett, 2007). This optimistic perspective supports the belief that negative experiences, like racial discrimination, in

the present will not impact the future. This may allow young adults to dismiss discriminatory experiences without causing significant stress.

Results of the current study support previous research which found that more frequent experiences of racism are negatively associated with self-concept (e.g., Alliman-Brissett & Turner, 2010; Paradies et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2019). The frequency of discriminatory experiences, a covariate in the analyses, was a significant predictor of self-concept across analyses. The mean frequency of discriminatory experiences was low, where participants reported experiencing racism infrequently. These lower levels of reported racial discrimination are consistent with the literature on reported perceived racial discrimination (Kaiser & Major, 2006; Volpe et al., 2020). Yet, these infrequent experiences continue to predict lower psychological and physical wellbeing, including self-esteem and self-efficacy in the current sample (Fisher et al., 2000; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Hughes & Demo, 1989; Lanier et al., 2017). Though racial discrimination stress did not significantly predict self-concept above and beyond the frequency of the experiences, this study's findings contribute to continued understanding of racism's insidious impact on normative development for African Americans into emerging adulthood.

4.2 Ethnic Racial Socialization

African American emerging adults reported, on average, receiving racial pride, racial barrier, and egalitarian messages about once or twice from their parents. Adding to the growing research of the benefits of racial pride messages (Banerjee et al., 2011; Davis et al., 2017; Reynolds & Gonzales-Backen, 2017), the results indicated that racial pride messages were positively related to self-esteem and self-efficacy. This finding adds to a collection of literature

that asserts the benefits of parents sharing messages that endorse themes of pride in one's racial/ethnic culture to African American children and young adults (Wang et al., 2020).

Racial barrier messages were not found to predict self-esteem or self-efficacy. This adds to an inconclusive body of research related to the impact of these messages on psychological well-being for African Americans; specifically, that this message type has positive, negative, and null associations with psychological well-being (Davis et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2012; Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). It may be that unmeasured contextual factors, such as parenting, familial, and neighborhood contexts influenced the null findings reported in the current study (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). Though previous research found a curvilinear relationship for racial barrier messages in relation to racial discrimination frequency and self-esteem (Harris-Britt et al., 2007), a similar trend was not found in the current study measuring racial discrimination stress above and beyond the frequency of the experiences. The results of this study add to a body of literature that suggests the imprecise influence that racial barrier messages have on the psychological well-being of African American children and young adults (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Hughes et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2020).

Contrary to predictions, egalitarian messages did not predict self-esteem or self-efficacy. This result adds to a small literature base which demonstrates mixed findings related to the correlates of egalitarian messages and psychosocial outcomes (Wang et al., 2020). Though previous research has found that egalitarian messages predict higher self-esteem (Villegas-Gold & Tran, 2018), current results indicated null associations. As there is not a lot of previous research looking at this message type, there remains an opportunity to grown in understanding what factors impact how and when egalitarian messages influence normative development for African Americans. Hughes and colleagues (2016) suggest that community diversity and inter-

ethnic relationship may influence correlations between egalitarian messages and outcomes in a diverse sample of adolescents. However, additional research is necessary to better understand the link between egalitarian messages and self-concept for African American emerging adults (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). Taken together, results echo the negative influence that experiences of racial discrimination have on the self-concept of African American emerging adults (Carter, 2007; Hughes & Demo, 1989; Paradies, 2006). Results, nonetheless, offer support of the importance of sharing messages which promote racial pride to youth and young adults, in support of psychological wellbeing.

4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

The study asked emerging adult participants to report the frequency and stress of interpersonal racial discrimination. Research, however, indicates that interactions with institutional and vicarious racial discrimination may also impact the psychological wellbeing of African Americans (Williams et al., 2019). As such, stress may not only be experienced in response to direct experiences of discrimination. It may be that vicarious and systemic interactions with racial discrimination are also influencing the accumulated stress of racial discrimination. Future research may consider including different types of experiences of racial discrimination and investigating if these differences are related to varying self-reported stress responses.

There were differences in the reports of racial discrimination stress by gender, where women reported experiencing greater bother in response to experiences of racial discrimination. This difference may have had implications in predicting self-concept perceptions in the current sample. Though previous research indicates that men are more likely to report experiencing racial discrimination (Greer et al., 2009), results in the current study indicated that women were

reporting more distress in response to these experiences. By focusing only on broad individual experiences of racism, the current study was unable to investigate the nuanced understanding of how intersectional identities result in unique contexts for discrimination. Future research may consider investigating how the intersection of race and gender influences perception of and reports of stress in response to discrimination for African American emerging adults and what implications these differences have on reported self-concept (Kwate & Goodman, 2105).

The current study operationalized racial discrimination frequency as the average regularity of exposure to a range of discriminatory instances in the past year. This calculation indicated more regular exposure to racial discrimination is associated with lower self-esteem and self-efficacy. Results suggested that, though discriminatory experiences are happening about once a year, they are negatively impacting African American emerging adults. This analysis modality did not, however, answer how the cumulative number of experiences of racial discrimination in a year relates to self-concept. By considering the method of measuring racial discrimination, researchers may glean clarity on whether it is *how often* (mean) or the *total number* (sum) of discriminatory experiences that are most impactful on outcomes of interest (Allen et al., 2019; Wang & Yip, 2020). As such, future research may consider the appropriateness of measuring racial discrimination as the sum of the types of discriminatory events in a given period as an alternative to the average frequency of these events occurring. This calculation of an index of experiences may offer an alternative narrative of the cumulative nature of racial discrimination experiences on psychological wellbeing.

The data used to test the hypotheses in the current investigation were cross-sectional. As such, causal relationships cannot be determined. It was hypothesized that more frequent ERS messages would increase emerging adults' self-concept. However, it may be that those with

higher self-concept are more receptive to ERS messages from their parents and can then recall these messages more readily. Since it is plausible that the relationship between ERS messages and self-concept is bidirectional, research using longitudinal methods to examine the continuity and change in ERS message frequency and associated self-concept may clarify how they interact with one another across adolescence and emerging adulthood developmental stages.

4.4 Study Significance

The study contributes to our current understanding in three important ways. of Results found that more frequent racial pride messages predicted higher self-esteem and self-efficacy. This knowledge echoes research demonstrating that messages which discuss the cultural traditions and positive history of African Americans supports positive self-concepts of worth and motivation through adversity for emerging adults. Second, the findings provide continued evidence of the negative consequences of racial discrimination. Though the frequency of racial discrimination reported in the sample was low, it still had an impact on self-concept for African American emerging adults. In recognizing this low threshold, researchers and practitioners can better attune to how seemingly infrequent experiences of discrimination have the potential to shape how African American emerging adults think of themselves and how these experiences impact how these young adults engage with the world.

The findings also have implications for clinical practice. Notably, the data demonstrate the importance of considering experiences of racial discrimination and ERS messages in the clinical context. The results provide evidence of the negative consequences of frequent discriminatory experiences as well as the psychological importance of racial pride messages. Clinically, researchers are beginning to promote the inclusion of ERS messages in interventions (Anderson et al., 2019). The results offer additional evidence of the importance of culturally

grounded strength-based factors, including racial pride messages, in drafting case conceptualization and treatment plans to address racial discrimination stress and increase perceived self-concept for African American individual and family clients. Overall, though racial discrimination stress was not found to be associated with self-concept, results echo the importance of considering racial discrimination frequency and ERS messages as factors which impact normative development for African American emerging adults.

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