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Article

Strength Amid Strain: Coping, Racism, and Racial Socialization Stress in Black Caregivers

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Abstract

This study examined Black caregivers' experiences of being bothered by racial discrimination on racial socialization stress when having discussions about race and racism. The study also investigated how coping self-efficacy beliefs (i.e., problem-focused coping, suppressing unpleasant emotions and thoughts, and seeking support from family and friends) moderated the association between racial discrimination and racial socialization stress. The sample included a socioeconomically diverse sample of 680 Black caregivers ($M_{age} = 37$, 55% mothers). Black caregivers who were highly bothered by racial discrimination and who reported low problem-focused coping strategies had lower levels of racial socialization stress, in comparison to those highly bothered by racial discrimination and who reported high problem-focused coping strategies. Being highly bothered by racial discrimination and reporting high levels of stopping unpleasant emotions and thoughts as a coping strategy was associated with the lower levels of racial socialization stress in comparison to those with lower levels of stopping unpleasant emotions and thoughts. Black caregivers with higher levels of family and friend support under conditions of reporting being bothered by racism had lower levels of racial socialization stress. The findings highlight the need to support Black caregivers in building effective coping strategies and social support networks.

Keywords: racial socialization stress; racism; black caregivers; coping self-efficacy

Black Americans experiences in the United States are deeply rooted in a history marked by systemic oppression, racial discrimination, and prejudice. Despite significant progress made through the civil rights movement, Black Americans continue to face disproportionate barriers in various domains, including housing, employment, education, and the criminal justice system (Banaji et al., 2021; Paige, 2022). The mid-20th century witnessed the civil rights movement, which aimed to challenge and change the deeply entrenched racial prejudices in society. While the movement led to significant legislative achievements such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the deeper societal mindsets around race proved harder to shift. This period also saw the rise of the Black Power Movement, which focused on fostering Black pride and promoting Black cultural identity (Joseph, 2006).

Despite advancements, racial disparities continue to persist in various sectors such as economics, housing, education, health and general well-being among white and Black Americans (Kuhn & Ríos-Rull, 2025; Selvarajah et al., 2022; Swope & Hernández, 2019; Zheng et al., 2025). The rise of movements like Black Lives Matter is a testament to the ongoing struggle against racial prejudice and the need for societal reform, especially in Missouri. Within this context, Black parents face the complex task of preparing their children to navigate a world that may still harbor biases against them, making racial socialization an essential parenting practice (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019).

Racial socialization stress, a dimension of racial socialization competency, refers to the psychological and emotional challenges individuals face when navigating and responding to racism,

particularly in families or communities (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). Racial socialization involves transmitting messages about race, identity, and coping with racism, which can be a protective factor against racial stressor (Anderson et al., 2024; Jones et al., 2021a). However, for individuals tasked with teaching or learning these messages, the process can be stressful, especially when facing societal pressures, intergenerational differences, or personal uncertainties about how to address race-related issues (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Charity-Parker & Adams-Bass, 2023; Christophe et al., 2022; Jacob et al., 2022). This stress may arise from the difficulty of balancing positive affirmations of racial identity with preparing for discrimination, potentially affecting mental health and the effectiveness of racial socialization efforts (Anderson et al., 2024; Osborne et al., 2020; Wilson & Gentzler, 2021). For Black caregivers, this process of racial socialization represents a critical parenting practice (Jones et al., 2021b). The Racial Encounter Coping Appraisal and Socialization Theory highlights that a caregiver's skill and confidence in delivering racial socialization messages are crucial for fostering effective coping mechanisms in youth facing discriminatory racial encounters (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Galán et al., 2021). This theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of caregiver competence in racial socialization, aligning with cognitive-behavioral approaches that focus on emotional and self-perception processes to mitigate psychological harm from racial discrimination (Anderson et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2023). This includes equipping parents and support systems with the proficiency to articulate racial pride and adeptly guide Black children in managing racialized experiences (Charity-Parker & Adams-Bass, 2023). This competency involves not only the content of the messages but also the perceived skills, confidence, and stress associated with their delivery, all of which contribute to more optimal psychosocial outcomes in adolescents by interfering with the stressful transmission of negative behaviors and moods (Anderson et al., 2021).

In the present study, we investigate the experiences of Black caregivers regarding racial discrimination on their racial socialization stress when engaging in discussions about race and racism with their child. We also explore the moderating role of coping self-efficacy beliefs, which encompass problem-focused coping, suppressing unpleasant emotions and thoughts, and seeking support from family and friends. This inquiry is critical, as existing research indicates that parental experiences with racism significantly influence the efficacy of their racial socialization messages, particularly in relation to their children's emotional responses (Osborne et al., 2020).

1. Black Americans' Experiences With Racialized Challenges

Racial distress, also known as race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), refers to the emotional and mental harm caused by ongoing exposure to racism and discrimination (Carter, 2007). While it may result from a single traumatic event, it more commonly emerges as the result of cumulative experiences (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). Research shows that Black Americans experience higher rates of psychological distress than White Americans (Williams, 2018). For instance, 75% of Black adults report experiencing racism (Pew Research Center, 2024). These inequities are driven primarily by systemic and institutional racism, racial and intergenerational trauma, inequities in treatment, and vicarious exposure to racial violence trauma (Hankerson et al., 2022; Moody et al., 2022).

Existing literature consistently demonstrates that structural forms of racism, including poverty and socioeconomic disparities, are linked to elevated psychological distress among Black Americans. Mouzon et al. (2017) further found that individuals experiencing homelessness reported higher levels of psychological distress. Beyond material hardship, racial and intergenerational trauma also contribute to increased levels of psychological strain among Black adults. Hankerson et al. (2022) explain that racial intergenerational trauma can be transmitted across generations as a result of historical and ongoing systemic racism, and when this inherited trauma combines with present-day racial stressors, many Black Americans experience psychological distress, including chronic anxiety, hypervigilance, and depressive symptoms.

Additionally, inequities in treatment have been associated with elevated distress among Black adults. According to Moody et al. (2022) found that indirect exposure to race-based violence can result in heightened distress among Black adults. Collectively, this body of research demonstrates

that psychological distress among Black Americans is not isolated nor individualized, but rather the cumulative product of structural, interpersonal, and vicarious racial stressors. These ongoing stressors not only shape how Black adults function emotionally but also influence caregiving practices and the racial socialization strategies Black caregivers use to prepare their children to navigate racism.

2. Racial Socialization–Related Stress Among Black Caregivers

Racial socialization, the process through which parents communicate messages about race, cultural pride, and strategies for managing discrimination, is a vital parenting practice within Black families, yet it represents one of the most psychologically taxing aspects of raising children in a racially stratified society (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). While substantial research demonstrates that racial socialization serves as a protective factor for youth mental health and resilience, considerably less attention has been directed toward the psychological toll this parenting task places on caregivers themselves. Black caregivers must simultaneously process their own experiences with racial discrimination, manage anxiety about their children's safety, and deliver messages about both cultural pride and racial threat (Anderson et al., 2019; Murry et al., 2018). This constellation of demands creates racial socialization stress, the psychological and emotional strain that emerges when caregivers attempt to prepare their children for racism while contending with their own race-related distress (Anderson et al., 2019).

The roots of racial socialization stress lie in a fundamental paradox, caregivers must foster positive racial identity and self-esteem in their children while simultaneously preparing them to navigate a world where racial discrimination poses genuine threats (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). A longitudinal investigation conducted by Saleem et al. (2025) demonstrated an association between Black parental concerns regarding racial profiling and heightened stress levels experienced during discussions about race. Critically, this worry-related stress extended to greater internalizing symptoms in youth, suggesting that parental emotional dysregulation can be transmitted to children through family interactions (Saleem et al., 2025). Research examining mothers' responses to publicized incidents of anti-Black violence found that 68% of mothers of Black children predicted negative implications for their own children's wellbeing (Thomas & Blackmon, 2015).

The stress of racial socialization cannot be disentangled from caregivers' own ongoing exposure to racial discrimination and race-based trauma. Black adults who report higher frequencies of perceived racial discrimination also report elevated levels of stress and psychological distress (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). Research examining how discrimination-related distress influences parenting found that higher levels of multidimensional discrimination distress were associated with more maternal overcontrol, which can undermine the open, supportive communication necessary for effective racial socialization (Kazmierski et al., 2023). Additionally, structural racism creates the conditions that intensify racial socialization stress. Caregivers living under conditions of economic deprivation, housing instability, or involvement with surveillance systems experience compounded stress that limits their capacity to engage in effective racial socialization (Murry et al., 2018).

Racial socialization competency encompasses three dimensions, confidence (parents' beliefs in their ability to communicate effectively about race), skills (the proficiencies in delivering racial messages), and stress (the psychological burden associated with the process) (Anderson et al., 2019). Parents who report greater confidence and skill in preparing their children to recognize and respond to racism experience reduced psychological strain when confronted with racial stressors (Brooks Stephens et al., 2023). This relationship is reciprocal, as parents practice racial socialization and develop competence, their stress decreases and confidence grows. A parent's confidence and skills in discussing race can serve as a protective buffer, attenuating the transmission of parental anxiety to children.

Racial socialization stress is an emotionally intense, cognitively demanding process occurring within persistent structural racism (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Murry et al., 2018). Yet research demonstrates that this stress is not irreversible. When caregivers develop greater confidence, acquire

specific skills, and reduce emotional strain, they not only manage their own stress more effectively but also provide more protective effects for their children (Anderson et al., 2021; Brooks Stephens et al., 2023).

3. Coping Self-Efficacy: Problem Solving, Emotions, and Social Support

The capacity of Black caregivers to parent effectively in racially adverse environments depends not only on the presence of discrimination but also on their belief in their ability to manage related stress. Coping self-efficacy, defined as confidence in one's ability to handle stressful events (Bandura, 1997), is a key factor in understanding how individuals remain psychologically resilient when facing chronic stress. Drawing from social cognitive theory and health behavior models, self-efficacy is understood to influence whether individuals adopt adaptive coping methods, remain engaged during hardship, and recover from emotional strain (Glanz et al., 2008).

Coping self-efficacy is closely tied to stress appraisal. Notably, parental worries and emotional states can influence perceived efficacy. Caregivers who believe they can manage distressing thoughts, use problem-solving strategies, and lean on others for support may experience less emotional strain when engaging in racially charged parenting tasks such as racial socialization (Murry et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2022). Coping self-efficacy is understood as multidimensional, encompassing three domains that include problem-focused coping (e.g., addressing the source of stress), emotion regulation (e.g., managing feelings or thoughts), and perceived access to social support (Chesney et al., 2006). These domains are especially relevant when examining caregiver stress related to racism.

Problem-focused coping is often discussed as a dimension associated with favorable outcomes, yet in situations where racism is deeply embedded and difficult to change, these strategies can sometimes lead to frustration or a sense of ineffectiveness (Compas et al., 2001). In contrast, emotion-focused approaches such as reframing or controlling intrusive thoughts may help caregivers regulate their own responses and stay emotionally available during difficult discussions with children (Compas et al., 2001). These strategies are especially important for caregivers who must process their own experiences of bias while guiding their children through similar challenges (Anderson et al., 2021).

Alongside internal coping beliefs, support from others plays an important role in shaping how caregivers respond to racial stress and engage in racial socialization. Social support refers to the perceived availability of emotional, informational, or practical help from others (Thoits, 2011). For many Black caregivers, support networks may include chosen and extended family, friends, faith communities, and civic or cultural organizations. These networks can offer both emotional reassurance and a shared understanding of racial stress, while also reinforcing culturally grounded approaches to parenting (Murry et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2016).

Black parents who report less stress greater confidence and skill in preparing their children to recognize and respond to racism are also more likely to experience reduced psychological strain when confronted with racial stressors (Brooks Stephens et al., 2023). These competencies appear to shape not only how parents engage in racial socialization but also how they manage their own emotional responses. In contexts marked by persistent racial threat, caregivers who feel equipped to communicate effectively may be better able to remain emotionally present for their children. Social support may further reinforce this capacity. As described by Wills and Shinar (2000), support from others can interrupt the link between chronic stress and psychological distress. This pattern is particularly relevant for Black families, who often contend with the compounded demands of personal, cultural, and structural racism. Evidence suggests that when caregivers can rely on both internal resources and external support, they may be better positioned to carry out the complex emotional labor of racial socialization.

Even so, few studies have examined how coping self-efficacy and social support work together, or serve as moderators between racial discrimination and stress linked to racial socialization. Much of the existing literature has either focused on youth outcomes or explored coping and support as separate factors, rather than as interconnected elements within an ecological model of risk and

resilience. Given that racial socialization can itself be a source of stress for caregivers (Anderson et al., 2021; Brooks Stephens et al., 2023), it is important to understand how internal and external resources shape this process.

Coping is a crucial component of parenting for Black caregivers that influences how they manage their own stress and how they equip their children. When parents have high coping self-efficacy, they are more likely to confront racism proactively, maintain emotional equilibrium, and model effective coping for their children. When they lack confidence or tools, they may either avoid the topic or convey a sense of pessimism, which can leave children less prepared. Recognizing this, the current literature is increasingly focusing on empowering parents with coping skills and affirming their capacity to foster resilience. Coping self-efficacy stands out as a modifiable factor, something that interventions and supportive networks can potentially strengthen. The goal is to help Black parents not feel helpless but rather hopeful and competent in guiding their families through racial challenges.

4. Guiding Framework

This study draws on Murry et al.'s (2018) Sociohistorical Integrative Model for the Study of Stress in Black Families. The Sociohistorical Integrative Model for the Study of Stress in Black Families offers a culturally informed model for understanding Black family stress and adaptation. This approach foregrounds racism as a routine feature of daily life for Black families, rather than a rare or isolated occurrence. It also emphasizes the importance of community ties, cultural strengths, and context-specific strategies in shaping how families respond to stress. In the present study, we specifically investigate parents' reports of being bothered by racial discrimination and the impact on racial socialization stress. The moderating role of coping self-efficacy beliefs will be examined, particularly how these beliefs might buffer the adverse effects of discrimination on racial socialization stress. Using problem-focused strategies, stopping unpleasant emotions and thoughts, and seeking support from family and friends are all examples of coping mechanisms that help to mitigate the pervasive effects of racial stressors (Cooper et al., 2020), reducing the stress from parents' racially discriminatory experiences, thereby fostering greater well-being and adaptive parenting (Anderson et al., 2018, 2021; Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). More specifically, parental racial discrimination experiences can lead to worry, which in turn affects their racial socialization competency and adolescent psychosocial outcomes (Anderson et al., 2021). This framework further allows for the examination of how coping self-efficacy can reduce the negative impact of being bothered by discrimination on racial socialization stress.

5. Current Study

In the current study, we build on previous literatures by examining Black parents reports of being bothered by racial discrimination and the impact on how stressed parents feel when talking with their children about race and racism in America. Additionally, we examined the moderational role of coping self-efficacy beliefs (problem-focused coping, suppressing unpleasant emotions and thoughts, and seeking support from family and friends). Specifically, we investigate how parents' personal experiences with racial discrimination influence their perceived stress during racial socialization discussions, and how their use of coping self-efficacy beliefs may mitigate that stress. Based on previous literatures documenting the link between racial discrimination and stress, we hypothesize that increased experiences of racial discrimination will be associated with heightened parental stress during racial socialization (Anderson et al., 2018). Furthermore, we posit that higher coping self-efficacy beliefs among parents will moderate this relationship, reducing the impact of discrimination experiences on their stress levels during these crucial conversations (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). This investigation seeks to delineate the intricate interplay between parental lived experiences of racial discrimination and their subsequent engagement in racial-ethnic socialization

processes, specifically within the context of perceived stress and the ameliorative potential of coping self-efficacy (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019).

6. Method

The current study is part of an ongoing National Science Foundation (NSF) larger study, the (study masked) conducted by masked authors. The study is a community-based, three-year longitudinal study, starting with the first wave of approximately 682 Black families in the state of Missouri in 2022. The study is unique in several respects: The study is unique in several respects: It includes a sizable proportion of Black families from geographically diverse (i.e., rural and urban) areas in the state. The sample was also socioeconomically diverse and included a range of income and family education levels.

6.1. Participants

The present study examines the first wave of the BFRJS data set. A total of 682 families participated in Wave 1 of the study. The final sample for the present study included 680 parents ($M_{age} = 37$, 55% mothers) only with complete data for all the study variables. The percentage of missing data was 1%. In total 680 families out of 682 provided complete data for inclusion in the analyses. 98.4% of parents identified as African American, 1.3% identified as African, and 1 identified as biracial/multiracial, and 1 had missing information. The median household income level for the sample parents was on average, \$35,000 to \$50,000 per year and on average, indicated that parents completed an associate degree or some college ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .69$). Fifty-five percent of the sample were mothers.

6.2. Procedure

For the current study, wave one of Black parents completed surveys either online or in person. The surveys took approximately 45 minutes to one hour to complete, including demographic and individual surveys about their own racialized experiences and parenting. Parents provided informed consent. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study (#202112032). Parents were recruited over a six-month timeframe. Fliers were distributed to places of worship, school districts, family agencies and organizations, Black businesses (e.g., beauty salons, barber shops, and restaurants), National Panhellenic Organizations (e.g., Divine 9), the city's housing authority, and at local festivals (e.g., Juneteenth and African). Fliers provided information about the three-year study and contact information to address any questions or concerns about participation in the study. Parents followed the link on the flier, provided consent to participate, and completed the surveys online. Hard copies of the survey were provided for families upon request. The fliers were strategically placed in prominent locations within the community to maximize visibility and reach. Additionally, community leaders were engaged to help spread the word about the study and encourage participation among families.

6.3. Measures

Demographics. Caregivers were asked to provide a range of socio-demographic information. They reported factors such as their age and gender, with all participants identifying as either male or female. Caregivers also indicated their relationship to the child, selecting either mother/stepmother or father/stepfather. Additionally, the number of children in the household was an open-ended item, and caregivers shared their educational level.

6.3.1. Racial Discrimination

Direct Racism. The Racism and Life Experiences Scales (RaLES) was used to assess parent experiences with racial discrimination (Harrell, 1997). The scale taps into how often one is bothered by their encounters of racial discrimination and ranges from (0 = never happened to me) to (6 =

bothered me extremely). There are a total of 18 racial hassles (e.g., in the past year, how much did it bother you...“ignored or overlooked,” or “treated suspiciously in a store?”). In previous research (e.g., Richardson et al., 2015), the alpha values ranged from .85 to .90. The items were summed and averaged across the 18-items. The alpha for the bothered by racial discrimination is .92.

Moderators

Coping Self-Efficacy. The Coping Self-Efficacy Scale assesses perceived self-efficacy in coping with life’s demands and stressors (Chesney et al., 2006). The scale measures three areas: the use of problem-focused coping strategies, stopping unpleasant emotions and thoughts, and access to family support and resources. The scale is comprised of 26 items and ranges from 0 = cannot do at all to 10 = certain can do (e.g., sort out what can be changed, and what cannot be changed). The three subscales were used and the alphas for problem-focused coping, stopping unpleasant thoughts and emotions, and support family and friends were .77, .76, and .66, respectively.

Socialization Outcome

Racial Socialization Stress. The Racial Socialization Competency Scale (Anderson et al., 2019) was used to assess parents’ racial socialization competencies. There are three subscales: confidence, skills, and stress. The scale is 28-items. In this study, we used the stress subscale to capture caregivers’ racial socialization stress. Items from the stress subscale were summed and averaged across the 28 items, with higher scores reflecting greater stress. Parents were given the prompt: stress (e.g., “I am/would be stressed to share my emotions about my experiences of negative racial encounters.”). Responses ranged from 1 = very unstressed to 5 = very stressed. In the current sample, the alpha is .94.

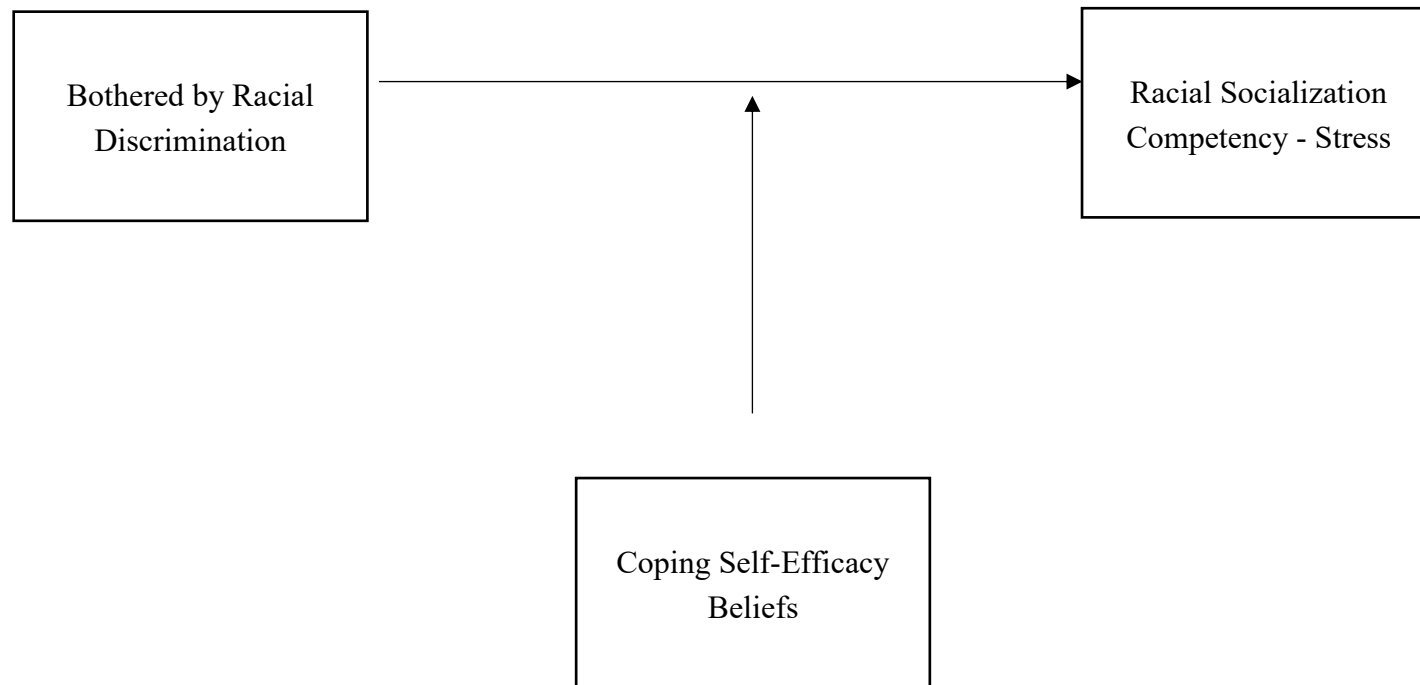


Figure 1. Conceptual Model.

6.4. Data Analyses Plan

SPSS 29.0 was used to analyze the data and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, in which racial socialization stress was regressed on demographic background: age, education, number of children in the household, household income, and gender and primary predictors (i.e., being bothered by racism). To test the primary study hypotheses, we examined how Black caregivers' being bothered by racial discrimination were associated with racial socialization stress. We were also interested in the moderational role of problem-focused coping strategies, stopping unpleasant thoughts or emotions, and support from family and friends

7. Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the primary study variables are presented in Table 1. Parents reported on average receiving an Associate's degree or attending some college/university (4-year college or university) and \$35,000 to \$50,000 per year. On average, parents had two children. Parents reported being bothered by racial discrimination. In addition, parents expressed varying degrees of coping self-efficacy strategies (see Table 1).

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	37.29	3.64
Education	4.29	.699
Income	2.20	.514
Number of Children	2.09	.737
Racial Socialization - Stress	3.45	.735
Racial Discrimination - Bothered	3.88	.535
Problem-Focused Coping	6.87	.747
Stop Unpleasant Thoughts & Emotions	6.88	.794
Support Family & Friends	6.88	.875

Note. Education = Associate degree or some college, Income = \$35,000 to \$50,000 per year, Number of Children = 2.

Correlations. There were statistically significant correlations between the independent, moderation, and outcome variables (see Table 2). Higher levels of being bothered by racial discrimination was correlated with higher levels of coping self-efficacy strategies. Being bothered by racial discrimination was also correlated with lower racial socialization stress.

Table 2. Correlations.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age								
2. Education	-.15**							
3. Income	-.07	.23**						
4. Number of Children	.31**	.28**	-.23**					
5. Racial Discrimination- B	-.18*	-.17**	.38**	-.49**				
6. Unpleasant Thoughts/Emotions	-.14**	.16**	.28**	-.13**	.29**			
7. Problem-Focused Coping	-.05	.28**	.24**	.02	.11**	.78**		
8. Support Family & Friends	-.09*	.17*	.21**	-.04	.17**	.68**	.69**	
9. Racial Socialization - Stress	.16**	.15**	-.45**	.42**	-.65**	-.40**	-.27**	-.30**

Note. B = Bothered. $p < .05^*$, $p < .010^{**}$.

Racial Socialization Stress

The outcome variable in the model was racial socialization stress. In block 1, age, education, number of children, household income, and gender. In block 2, bothered by racial discrimination was entered. In block 3, coping self-efficacy strategies: problem-focused coping, stopping unpleasant thoughts and emotions, and support from family and friends (moderators) was entered, and the three interaction terms were entered in block 4: racial discrimination x problem-focused coping, racial discrimination x stopping unpleasant thoughts and emotions, and racial discrimination x support from family and friends. The variables were centered before being entered into regression models, as advised by Aiken and West (1991), when testing interaction effects. Significant interaction effects were examined by plotting the slope of racial socialization stress regressed on coping self-efficacy strategies estimated at selected conditional values ($M + 1 SD$ and $M - 1 SD$) of being bothered by racial discrimination (Cohen & Cohen 1983).

Overall, the results showed that the first model was significant $F(5,674) = 68.39, p = .001, R^2 = .33$. Caregivers' education ($\beta = -.42, p = .001$), number of children in the household ($\beta = .26, p = .001$), household income ($\beta = .16, p = .001$) was statistically significant. The findings revealed that higher education levels was associated with less racial socialization stress. Parents who also reported more children and higher income was associated with higher levels of stress. The second model ($F(6,673) = 110.11, p < .001, R^2 = .49$), which included being bothered by racial discrimination ($\beta = -.49, p = .001$) showed significant improvement from the first model $\Delta F(1,673) = 211.75, p < .001, \Delta R^2 = .16$. Parents who reported higher levels of being bothered by racial discrimination reported lower levels of being stressed about having conversations about race and racism. In the third model, problem-focused coping ($\beta = -.06, p = .130$), stopping unpleasant thoughts and emotions ($\beta = -.12, p = .005$), and support from family and friends ($\beta = -.08, p = .029$) was added to the model. The model continued to significantly predict racial socialization stress ($\Delta F(3,670) = 25.78, p < .001, \Delta R^2 = .05$). Overall, higher levels of stopping unpleasant thoughts & emotions and support from family & friends was associated with lower levels of racial socialization stress.

Overall, the final model continued to predict racial socialization stress. The final step involved the addition of three interaction effects: racial discrimination x problem-focused coping, racial discrimination x stopping unpleasant thoughts and emotions, and racial discrimination x support from family and friends. All three interaction effects were statistically significant. The racial discrimination x problem-focused coping significantly predicted caregivers' racial socialization stress ($\beta = .23, p = .001$). The racial discrimination x support from family and friends significantly predicted caregivers' racial socialization stress ($\beta = -.07, p = .026$). The racial discrimination x stopping unpleasant thoughts and emotions significantly predicted caregivers' racial socialization competency stress ($\beta = -.20, p = .001$). Overall, the final model accounted for 27% of the variance ($\Delta F(3,667) = 14.49, p < .001, \Delta R^2 = .03$) (see Table 3 and Figures 2–4). In the racial discrimination x problem-focused coping, parents with low problem-focused coping reported higher racial socialization stress when being bothered by racism was low, but substantially lower stress when being bothered by racism was high. For parents with high problem-focused coping, racial socialization stress remained relatively stable across levels of being bothered by racism. Together, these findings suggest that problem-focused coping moderates the relationship between racism-related stress and racial socialization stress, such that differences in stress by being bothered by racism are more pronounced among parents with lower problem-focused coping (see Figure 2). As depicted in Figure 3, parents with higher support from family and friends reported slightly higher racial socialization stress when being bothered by racism was low, but substantially lower stress when being bothered by racism was high, compared to parents with lower support. The steeper decline among parents with high support suggests that family and friend support may amplify reductions in racial socialization stress as experiences of racism increase. Together, these findings indicate that social support from family and friends serves as a salient contextual resource in shaping parents' stress responses to racism. Lastly, Figure 4 revealed that parents who reported lower racial discrimination-related stress and higher emotional suppression reported higher racial socialization stress. Conversely, as racial discrimination concerns

increased, suppressing unpleasant emotions was associated with lower stress levels compared to parents with high racial discrimination concerns and low emotional suppression.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression for Racism, Coping and Stress.

	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	<i>p</i>
Model 1			
Age	.01 (.01)	.01	.656
Education	-.60 (.04)	-.42	.001***
Number of Children	.35 (.04)	.26	.001***
Income	.32 (.06)	.16	.001***
Gender (1 = Mothers, 0 = Fathers/Stepfathers)	-.08 (.06)	-.04	.201
Model 2			
Age	.01 (.01)	.01	.843
Education	-.37 (.04)	-.26	.001***
Number of Children	.11 (.04)	.08	.013*
Income	.19 (.06)	.09	.001***
Gender (1 = Mothers, 0 = Fathers/Stepfathers)	-.05 (.05)	-.02	.319
Bothered by Racial Discrimination	-.89 (.06)	-.49	.001***
Model 3			
Age	-.07 (.01)	-.02	.386
Education	-.32 (.04)	-.22	.001***
Number of Children	.12 (.04)	.09	.004**
Income	.29 (.05)	.15	.001***
Gender (1 = Mothers, 0 = Fathers/Stepfathers)	-.12 (.05)	-.06	.019*
Bothered by Racial Discrimination	-.78 (.06)	-.43	.001***
Problem-Focused Coping	-.09 (.05)	-.06	.130
Stop Unpleasant Thoughts & Emotions	-.15 (.05)	-.12	.005**
Support from Family & Friends	-.09 (.04)	-.08	.029*
Model 4			
Age	-.11 (.01)	-.38	.155
Education	-.30 (.04)	-.21	.001***
Number of Children	.13 (.04)	.09	.002**
Income	.27 (.05)	.14	.001***
Gender (1 = Mothers, 0 = Fathers/Stepfathers)	-.11 (.05)	-.05	.029*
Bothered by Racial Discrimination	-.78 (.06)	-.43	.001***
Problem-Focused Coping	-.12 (.05)	-.09	.028*
Stop Unpleasant Thoughts & Emotions	-.13 (.05)	-.10	.014*
Support from Family & Friends	-.06 (.04)	-.05	.162
Racism x Problem-Focused Coping	.55 (.09)	.23	.001***
Racism x Stop Unpleasant Thoughts & Emotion	-.16 (.07)	-.07	.026*
Racism x Support from Family & Friends	-.50 (.09)	-.20	.001***

Note. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$

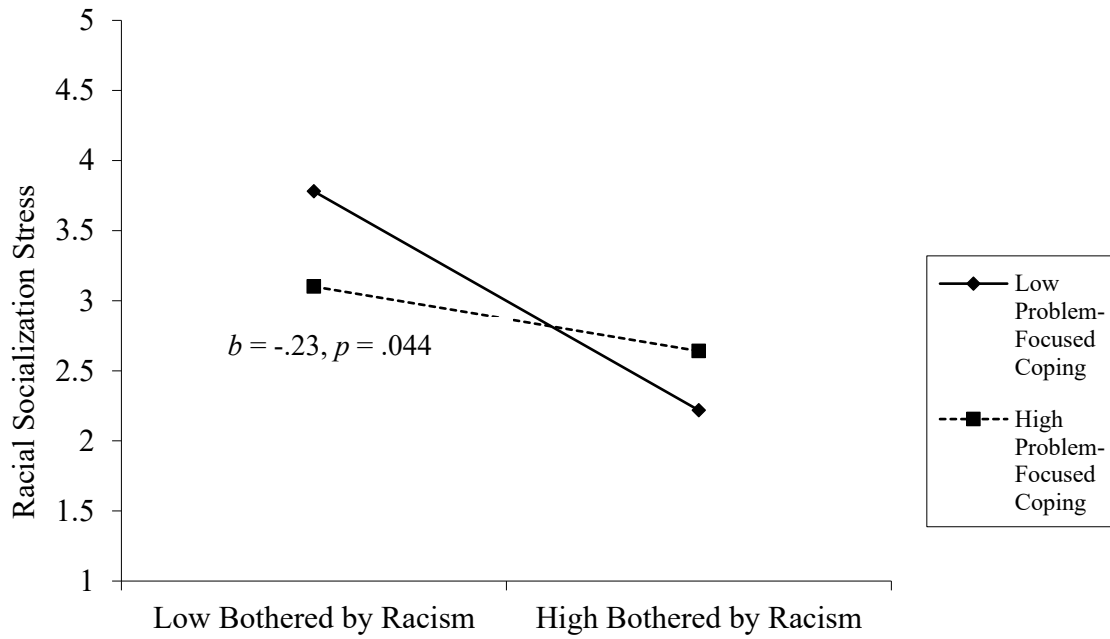


Figure 2. Racism x Problem-Focused Coping Interaction Effect.

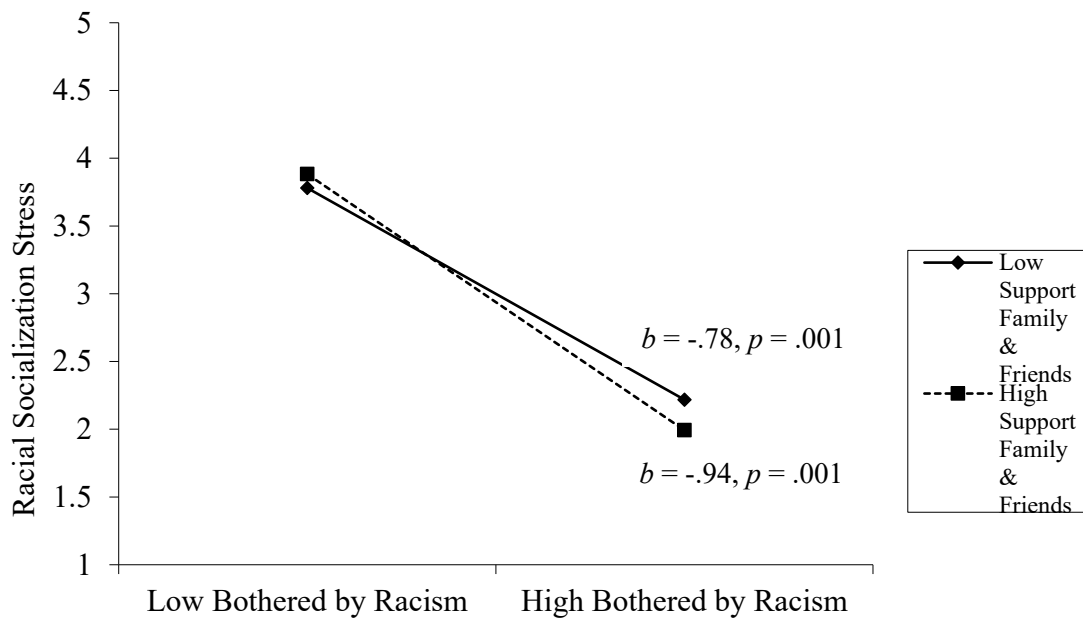


Figure 3. Racism x Support from Family and Friends Interaction Effect.

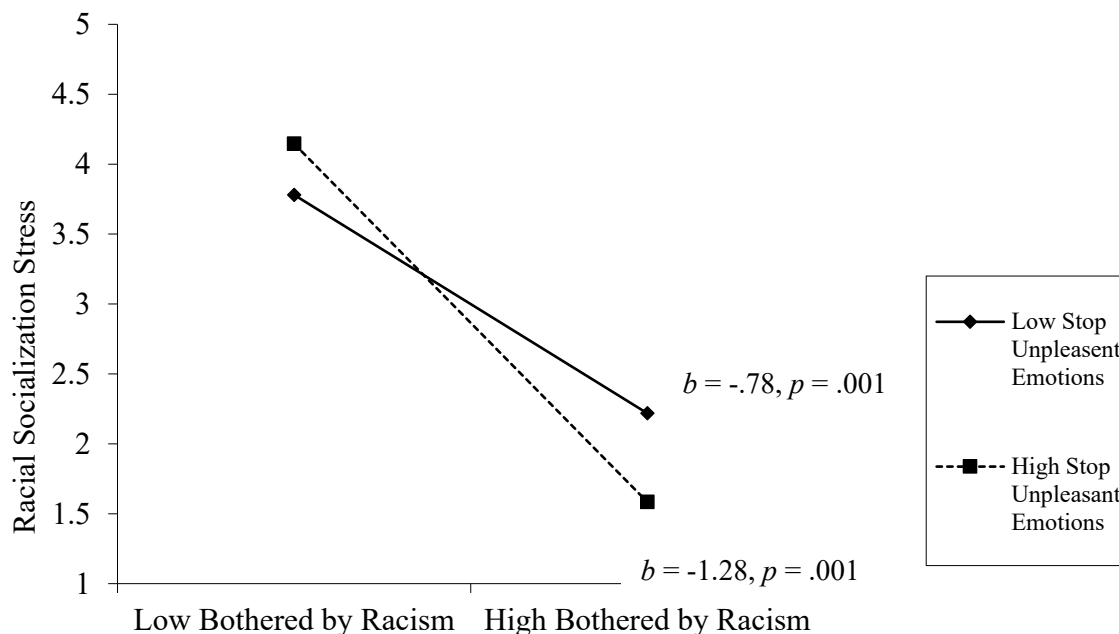


Figure 4. Racism x Stopping Unpleasant Emotions and Thoughts Interaction Effect.

8. Discussion

The current study examines whether perceptions of coping self-efficacy (i.e. problem-focused coping, support from family and friends, and stopping unpleasant emotions) moderated the relationship between being bothered by racism and racial socialization stress among Black American parents. Results from correlational analyses suggests an inverse relationship between being bothered by racism and reported racial socialization stress, therefore, being highly bothered by racism may decrease Black parental stress around preparation for bias racial socialization by providing a relevant exemplar through which to discuss strategies to navigate racial harm with their children (Thomas & Blackmon, 2015). Moderation analyses illuminated how self-efficacy regarding coping strategies differentially predicted racial socialization stress when parents were highly bothered by racism. Feeling more efficacious at seeking support from family and friends and stopping unpleasant emotions were associated with less racial socialization stress when parents were highly bothered by racism. Conversely, feeling efficacious at problem-focused coping was associated with comparatively more racial socialization stress when parents were highly bothered by racism. In the following discussion, we situate each of these findings within the extant literature, acknowledge the strengths and limitations of the current study, and offer implications for research, practice, and policy.

8.1. Problem-Focused Coping Self-Efficacy

The first interaction analysis examined whether problem-focused coping self-efficacy moderates the relationship between being highly bothered by racism and racial socialization stress. Findings indicated that feeling highly efficacious about one's ability to use problem-focused coping was associated with more racial socialization stress when compared to those who felt less efficacious. These findings highlight the limit of individual problem-focused coping in highly bothersome racial contexts, providing further evidence of the goodness-of-fit coping hypothesis which suggests that problem-focused coping is most efficacious when the conditions are highly controllable (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Park et al., 2012). Racism may or may not be perceived as a controllable stressor and parents' general ability to use problem solving may not aid them when they experience racism or when they need to communicate helpful strategies to their children. Further, racial socialization may

be a form of familial problem-focused coping response, in which parents prepare Black children and adolescents for racism based on their own experiences (McNeil Smith et al., 2016).

8.2. Support Seeking Self Efficacy

The second interaction analysis found that racial socialization stress was lower for parents who felt they could rely upon their social support networks when they were highly bothered by racism. These findings suggest empirical support for the Black American cultural adage, “It takes a village to raise a child” —wherein Black American parents embedded in supportive kin networks share child rearing burdens. Interestingly, previous studies have largely found that social support is most advantageous at lower levels of stress exposure (Brondolo et al., 2009). Still, social support is a commonly used strategy for navigating racial stress. A systemic review of Black Americans and Canadians coping with racism found that social support was the most frequently used strategy for addressing racial stress in qualitative studies (Jacob et al., 2023). In practice, feeling like one has access to support from family and friends may help to alleviate stress as parents/caregivers realize that both collective challenges and resources are shared.

8.3. Stopping Unpleasant Emotions Self-Efficacy

In the final interaction analysis, we examined whether one’s perception of their ability to stop unpleasant emotions moderated the relationship between being bothered by racism and racial socialization stress. Findings indicated that those who felt they were more efficacious at stopping unpleasant emotions reported less racial socialization stress when highly bothered by racism when compared to those who did not feel efficacious. This finding may best be conceptualized in terms of one’s feelings about their ability to emotionally regulate or utilize avoidance coping. Although limited, existing studies suggests that emotional regulation may act as either a moderator or mediator between exposure to racism and mental health outcomes (Cole et al., 2024; Graham et al., 2015). In one study examining the relationship between exposure to racism and anxiety in a sample of Black Americans, researchers found that poor emotional regulation skills significantly moderated the relationship between frequency of racist events and anxious arousal such that those with fewer emotional regulation skills were also more likely to report anxious arousal. Notably, there was no significant relationship for those with strong emotional regulation skills—suggesting a buffering effect (Graham et al., 2015). Further, a 2024 study found difficulties in emotional regulation to explain the relationship between perceived racial discrimination and racial trauma and PTSD symptoms among a sample of Black and Latine undergraduate students (Cole et al., 2024). Alternately, one study found avoidance coping (i.e. denial or disengagement) to be associated with negative mental health outcomes among Black women (West et al., 2010) Therefore, the findings related to stopping unpleasant emotions in the current study are more akin to those related to emotional regulation rather than avoidance coping.

8.4. Implications

One major implication of the current study is the need to support Black parents. Drawing from the integrated model for the study of stress in Black families and existing scholarship (Murry et al., 2018), the impact of stress on parental psychological functioning and subsequent parenting practices has the potential to influence the mental health functioning of the family. Therefore, ensuring that parents are socially supported may help them to navigate the complexities of racially socializing contemporary Black American children. The current study demonstrates one example wherein parents who knew they would receive support if they sought it were less stressed by racial socialization. Practitioners who have the opportunity to support Black parents may further support clients by encouraging them to lean more heavily on their social networks for support, deepen existing relationships, or seek out new friendships based in mutual respect and care. Policy makers may further support these efforts by advocating for and recognizing anti-racist, affirming third spaces

in order to facilitate relationship building among community members. Future research examining support seeking among Black American caregivers might utilize different methods, such as social network analysis to determine the quality and utility of relationships within Black American kin networks.

The current study also suggests that feeling like one can stop unpleasant emotions may be an important aspect of coping when highly bothered by racism. Implications for practitioners suggest the need to utilize clinical treatment tools such as EMBRace (Anderson, 201?) that aid parents in learning emotional regulation skills they can model and teach to their children to use in racially challenging situations. EMBRace has shown early promise in helping contemporary parents deepen their own socio-emotional development with implications for further facilitating parental psychological functioning and promotive parenting practices. Policymakers seeking to support the emotional regulation of Black parents might support initiatives that help to relieve parenting burdens. For example, supporting policies that allow for paid mental health days for employees or encourage screening patients regarding their coping skills in clinical settings may serve as a way to support parents.

Another major implication of the current study is the importance of continuing to seek to end racism and other systems of oppression. Policymakers are tasked with the complex task of navigating an increasingly hostile policy environments. Therefore, advocating for policy changes that benefit Black Americans may require more fortitude, innovation, and cross-sector collaboration than recent eras. It may be helpful to engage with local and state politics until the federal policy environment becomes more amenable to equity-minded initiatives. Policies may be more likely to be supported further when they are framed through the lens of interest convergence or rather when dominant group members can be persuaded that equity can benefit them.

8.5. Strengths and Limitations

A strength of the current study is in its novelty in considering how coping self-efficacy moderates the relationship between subjective parental experiences of being bothered by racism and self-reported racial socialization stress. The finding that problem-focused coping self-efficacy was associated with greater racial socialization related stress is particularly novel as it suggests that feeling effective at solving problems generally does not always translate into coping with all racialized stressors. Although there are many strengths of the current study, it is not without its methodological limitations. First, we analyzed only one wave of data. This limited our ability to determine causation between the variables. Thus, future studies may employ longitudinal methods to better understand how temporality influences the relationship between these variables. Second, while the measure we used to examine coping self-efficacy proved useful, we did not specifically ask how parents in the sample coped with racism specifically. As self-efficacy is largely domain specific, one's perception of their ability to cope with daily stressors may not be indicative of their ability to navigate and overcome racial stressors. Therefore, future studies may examine racialized coping self-efficacy specifically to better understand how Black parents appraise their ability to cope with racial stressors.

9. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the study corroborate previous studies in documenting the negative impact of racial discrimination on parenting stress, particularly as it relates to Black families engaging in conversations about race and racism with their children. Another significant finding in this study was the role of coping self-efficacy, more specifically, stopping unpleasant thoughts and emotions, using problem-focused coping strategies, and seeking support from family and friends. The findings underscored the varied ways that coping self-efficacy is utilized and the way that it operates in the context of race-related stress. Moving forward, it is important to continue to understand the multitude of ways that parents are using their internal processes to address racial discrimination experiences and engaging in conversations with their children about race and racism. Our findings

contributed to this literature by noting the unique role of specific coping self-efficacy strategies in the context of race-related stress. Moving forward, understanding and being intentional about racial coping self-efficacy and how Black parents engage in strategies that promote or inhibit positive developmental competencies will further help in developing interventions and creating safe spaces to learn about other coping strategies that are used when parents are encountering racism. Furthermore, future research should explore how culturally specific protective factors and moderators can attenuate the influence of racial discrimination on parenting stress and psychological distress within larger samples of caregiver-child dyads (Willis et al., 2024).

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