Do Natural Mentors Moderate the Association Between Perceived Discrimination, Problematic Alcohol Use, and Academic Success Among Black College Students? A Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract

Black Americans are at greater risk of initiating substance use during emerging adulthood in relation to other developmental periods. Previous research has identified perceived experiences of discrimination as a key contributing factor to substance use among Black emerging adults. Experiences of discrimination are particularly prevalent for Black Americans in majority White settings and previous research suggests that Black emerging adults may engage in problematic alcohol use to cope with discriminatory experiences which may, in turn, yield negative consequences for academic performance. Research has demonstrated that the presence of a natural mentor (a non-parental adult from a youth's pre-existing social network who provides support and guidance) is associated with positive psychosocial and academic outcomes among emerging adults. The proposed study employed a mixed methods design. Study participants were Black college students (n=118) completing their first year of study at a predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Path analysis was used to determine if natural mentors may offset the potential negative effects of perceived discrimination on academic success via increased problematic drinking. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were administered to a subset of students (n=12) and their natural mentors (n = 10) in an attempt to better understand potential causal associations between perceived discrimination, problematic drinking, and academic performance as well as to better explicate the mechanisms through in which natural mentors may help offset these associations. Contrary to study hypotheses, quantitative findings revealed that students who reported greater experiences of perceived discrimination had higher GPAs. Qualitative findings indicated that students perceived a range of discriminatory experiences and found many ways to cope including processing the event, talking about it with friends, and working harder academically. Students

reported using perceived experiences as a motivator to excel academically. Natural mentors were also an important resource for students when they experienced discrimination. They imparted racial socialization messages unique to the academic context, as well as messages found in the racial socialization literature. The qualitative findings may help to explicate the lack of expected associations in the quantitative sample. The findings of the current study underscore the importance of access to supportive adults who can create a safe space for Black students at PWIs.

Keywords: black college students, natural mentoring relationships, academic success, problematic alcohol use, mixed-methods

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As Black youth transition into adulthood, they may increasingly find themselves immersed in predominantly White settings. The majority of Black undergraduates (84%), for example, receive their degrees from predominantly White institutions (PWI; Snyder & Dillow, 2012). During their time at post-secondary institutions, many Black students report perceived experiences of discrimination (Bynum, Burton, & Best, 2007; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). According to previous research, alcohol use may be a fairly prevalent strategy for coping with the stress of perceived discrimination (Guthrie, Young, Williams, Boyd, & Kintner, 2002; Mays, Cochran, & Barnes, 2007). Both laboratory- and community-based studies have identified experiences of discrimination as a possible contributor to increasing levels of reported alcohol use among Black Americans over time (Brody, Kogan, &Chen, 2012; Gerrard et al., 2012; Hurd, Varner, Caldwell, & Zimmerman, 2014).

Literature Review

During emerging adulthood (defined as ages 18-25; Arnett, 2000), Black Americans begin to match the rates of alcohol use of their White counterparts (French, Finkbiner, & Duhamel, 2002; Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, Schulenberg, & Miech, 2014) despite the fact that Black teens demonstrate lower rates of alcohol use in comparison to White teens. A possible contributor to the increase in alcohol use for Black emerging adults may be increased experiences of discrimination as they leave their parents' home and begin interacting more independently with the world (Hurd, Varner, Caldwell, & Zimmerman, 2014). Moreover, emerging adults may be leaving predominantly Black settings and entering into predominantly White settings, such as elite universities where experiences of racial discrimination may be more

frequent.

One ideology that may foster discriminatory treatment against Black students attending PWIs is the "anti-intellectual myth" which may be held by many students at the institution they attend (Cokley, 2003). This is the myth that Black Americans are not very smart, well-read or serious learners. They are, instead, seen as lazy and undeserving of opportunities in contrast to their White peers. The anti-intellectual myth may manifest itself through discriminatory treatment in several ways at PWIs. For example, when White students know that a group project will be graded, they are more reluctant to select Black classmates to work with them on group projects (Charles, Fisher, Mooney, & Massey, 2009; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Another way the anti intellectual myth may manifest is through White faculty members who act surprised when their Black students speak articulately or do exceptionally well on papers (Harper, 2012). This suggests that White faculty may hold lower expectations for their Black students relative to their White students.

Additionally, there are other ways that individuals within the post-secondary institution can engender feelings of perceived discrimination among students. At the most selective post-secondary institutions, affirmative action is strongly contested, thus creating a negative racial climate (Bowen & Bok 1998; Bowen, Kurzweil, Tobin, & Pichler, 2005; Katchadourian & Boli 1994). Strong feelings against affirmative action at these post-secondary institutions may have repercussions for Black students. Black students are presumed by their peers and faculty to otherwise have been unqualified for admission were it not for affirmative action, thus creating a negative racial climate for Black students (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The sum of perceived discriminatory experiences across sources (i.e., fellow students and faculty) may lead

students to feel disengaged in the classroom (Harper et al., 2011) and lower their self-concept (Griffin, Jayakumar, Jones, & Allen 2010). Specifically, perceived experiences of discrimination may lead to feelings of anger, shock, frustration, helplessness, and hopelessness (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) and lowered sense of belonging, which may then lead students to disengage in the classroom. Moreover, students who experience hostile racial climates, which may include perceived experiences of discrimination, at their post-secondary institution are less likely to persist in college and attain their degrees (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008). Thus, experiences of perceived discrimination at their post-secondary institutions may ultimately contribute to Black students' attrition.

As it has been demonstrated in both community and lab-based studies (Brody, et al., 2012; Gerrard et al., 2012; Hurd et al., 2014b), Black Americans may cope with perceived discrimination through alcohol use. Specifically, experiences of discrimination during emerging adulthood have been linked to increases in alcohol use over time (Hurd, et al., 2014b). A study conducted by Hurd and colleagues (2014b) demonstrated support for prospective links between discriminatory experiences and increases in alcohol use over time and failed to find prospective links between alcohol use and trajectories of perceived discrimination over time. These results suggest that the direction of influence is from discriminatory experiences to alcohol use as opposed to vice versa (i.e., those who drink more alcohol are more likely to perceive more discrimination over time). Hurd and colleagues' findings are corroborated by other research showing that Black Americans who report greater experiences of perceived discrimination also report subsequent greater alcohol use (Blume, Lovato, Thyken, Denny, & 2012; Hatzenbuehler, Corbin, & Fromme, 2011; O'Hara et al., 2014).

Exploring links between perceived discriminatory experiences and alcohol use may be

particularly needed among Black college students due to the ubiquity with which alcohol is available and consumed on college campuses. Relative to other Black emerging adults, Black college students may be even more likely to consume alcohol in response to discriminatory experiences due to its availability and social acceptance. Moreover, when Black students do consume alcohol in response to discriminatory experiences, they may be more likely to engage in binge drinking. According to the NIAAA (2014), about half of all college students who consume alcohol report binge drinking habitually. Notably, binge drinking is much more likely to cause harm in comparison to more moderate levels of alcohol consumption. Risks associated with binge drinking for college students include: missing or falling behind in class, health problems, and involvement with the police among others (NIAAA, 2014). Thus, engaging in binge drinking more frequently may be associated with higher risk.

Despite the negative health consequences associated with alcohol consumption, heavy drinking is viewed as normative during the college years (Borsari & Carey, 2003). While drinking may be seen as a normative part of the college experience, motivational models of alcohol use suggest that reasons to drink vary as a function of motivation and mood (Cooper, Frone, Russell, & Mudar, 1995). Moreover, motivational models suggest that there are two main reasons for alcohol use: drinking to enhance and drinking to cope. *Drinking to enhance,* the most commonly cited reason for drinking, is a proactive process to maintain, attain, or amplify positive affect. *Drinking to cope*, however, is a reactive process in which alcohol is used to escape or mitigate negative affect (Cooper, 1994). Despite the fact that Black adolescents drink less overall than White adolescents, research has found that drinking to cope is more prevalent among Black adolescents than White adolescents (Cooper et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, research on the drinking motivations of Black college students at PWI's is

lacking. However, among Black college students at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), research suggests evidence for enhancement motivations (similar to White college students) as well as for coping motivations (O'Hara et al., 2014). In a study conducted by O'Hara and colleagues, Black students at an HBCU completed a global drinking measure and then filled out a daily diary for 30 days on their drinking from the night before. Students who reported more instances of coping motives were more likely to consume a greater amount of alcohol. In addition, they were able to report one or more reasons for drinking. Out of all of the reported instances of drinking, 46% were for coping motives, 70% social motives, and 85% enhancement motives.

Academic Outcomes

Perceived experiences of discrimination may negatively impact not only alcohol use, but also academic success both directly and indirectly as a result of increased alcohol use. Directly, there is research suggesting that perceived experiences of discrimination are negatively associated with academic outcomes among Black adolescents. Since stressors can impact adaptation and engagement (Dubois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, & Hardesty, 2002), stressors such as perceived discriminatory experiences in school may play a direct role in academic engagement. In a study conducted by Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn (2008), perceived experiences of discrimination were negatively associated with academic success, such that perceived experiences of discrimination in the 8th grade predicted academic disengagement in the 11th grade. However, a study conducted by Cooper, Brown, Metzger, Clinton, & Guthrie (2013) found no association between perceived discriminatory experiences and academic engagement in their sample. Differences in findings may be attributed to the fact that Cooper et al. (2013) used a general measure of perceived discriminatory

experiences, while Chavous et al. (2008) utilized a perceived discriminatory measure specific to the school context. It may be that measurement of perceived discriminatory experiences within the school context are more closely associated with academic outcomes directly. Thus, the current study will examine the association between perceived discriminatory experiences in school and subsequent academic success. It may also be that survey measures may lead to the underreporting of discrimination. There is some research to suggest that individuals underreport perceived experiences of discrimination on quantitative measures compared to qualitative measures (Berkel et al., 2009).

Though there is a dearth of literature examining the association between alcohol use and academic success among Black college students, there is research on the association between alcohol use and academics in Black adolescents. However, the literature documenting the association between alcohol use and academic success in adolescents has been mixed. While some studies have found support for a negative link between alcohol use and academic achievement (Bryant, Schulenberg, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 2003; Haller, Handley, Chassin, & Bountress, 2010), others have found that high academic competence is associated with increased likelihood of engaging in alcohol use (Englund & Siebenbruner, 2012). Reasons for the mixed findings have included factors such as gender (Bryant Luden & Eccles, 2007), and differing measure of academic competence (Crum, Storr, & Anthony, 2005; Bachman, O'Malley, & Johnston, 1998). However, it may also be that for some, drink to cope while others drink to enhance. Doing well academically may confer social status and lead to more opportunities to engage in drinking, which may also explain the mixed findings.

For high achieving Black students at an elite PWI, the relation between alcohol use and academic achievement may be more straightforward in the context of perceived discriminatory

experiences. A Black student at an elite PWI may face many stressors that all college students face such as the pressure to adjust to a new environment as well as the pressure to succeed academically (Eccles, Lord, & Roeser, 1996). In addition, they may face unique stressors, such as perceived experiences of discrimination. The sum of these stressors may make them more susceptible to increased alcohol use. Given that Black students are less likely to complete college (Nichols, Eberle-Sudre, & Welch, 2016), and begin to increase their alcohol use during this developmental space, it is possible that problematic alcohol use is an indirect pathway through which perceived discriminatory experiences negatively impact academic success.

Given the negative consequences associated with alcohol use among Black college students, researchers have sought to identify protective factors that may offset the harmful effects of perceived discriminatory experiences on alcohol use. Though the literature on protective factors that may offset perceived discriminatory experiences among Black college students is scant, there is some literature available pertaining to Black adolescents who may be experiencing discrimination. In particular, has been found to potentially reduce the influence of discrimination on alcohol use (Gibbons, Gerrard, Cleveland, Wills, & Brody, 2004). Researchers have posited that supportive parenting in Black families is associated with decreased alcohol use among Black adolescents (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). However, as rates of alcohol use among Black emerging adults begin to increase (French et al., 2002), and they simultaneously grow to be more independent and less reliant on their parents, relationships with other adults may become increasingly important and may hold greater potential to promote more resilient outcomes in the context of discriminatory experiences. Thus, it is crucial to learn about other supportive relationships that may serve to offset risk associated with alcohol use (Arnett, 2000).

Natural Mentoring Relationships as a Protective Factor

While emerging adults become less reliant on their parents, they increasingly elicit support from adults other than their parents to navigate their new roles and responsibilities. Natural mentors can fulfill such a role and serve as a protective factor against perceived discriminatory experiences. Natural mentors are more experienced adults from an individual's pre-existing social network (Rhodes, Contreras, &Mangelsdorf, 1994). These non-parental adults may be extended family members (e.g., grandparents, aunts, and uncles), former high school teachers or coaches, or adults from an individual's current employment or educational setting (e.g., employer, college professor or advisor). Previous research has demonstrated that youth with natural mentoring relationships have more positive academic and health-behavior outcomes in comparison to their counterparts lacking these supportive relationships; findings have held among both adolescent and emerging adult samples (Hurd, Sanchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012; Hurd & Sellers, 2013; Zimmerman, Binenheimer, & Notaro, 2002). Research suggests that natural mentor presence is a protective factor against perceived discriminatory experiences on academic outcomes for Black youth (Cooper et al., 2013). Further, individuals with natural mentors are more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to engage in health-risk behaviors in comparison to their peers who lack natural mentors (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Zimmerman et al., 2002). Yet previous research examining the association between natural mentor presence and alcohol use has yielded inconsistent findings.

Though some studies have found associations between natural mentor presence and lower levels of alcohol use among Black adolescents and emerging adults (Zimmerman et al., 2002), other studies have failed to find associations between natural mentor presence and alcohol use (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010). The reason for inconsistent findings may be that the effect is not exerted directly but rather via moderating other

associations. Previous literature has found that natural mentors play a role in alcohol use, contingent on the type of mentor (familial vs. non-familial), such that the presence of non-familial mentors was associated with less cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use (Hurd, Stoddard, Bauermeister, & Zimmerman, 2014a).

Thus, it may be that natural mentors from PWIs can expose their mentees to other ways of coping with perceived discriminatory experiences outside of alcohol use. This is of particular importance as non-familial natural mentors have been found to expose their mentees to novel attitudes, behaviors and resources (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). Given that results have been inconsistent, researchers have recommended that future research pay more attention to potential mechanisms that may connect natural mentor presence to reduced alcohol use (Hurd et al., 2014a). Rather than examining the direct effects of natural mentoring relationships on alcohol use, the proposed study will examine whether differing aspects of the mentoring relationship may moderate associations between perceived discrimination and alcohol use.

Characteristics of the Natural Mentoring Relationship

Natural mentoring relationships may exert their influence on alcohol use and academic success, however, more research is needed on the specific aspects of the natural mentoring relationship that can contribute to decreased alcohol use and consequently, promote greater academic success. Focusing on the presence of the natural mentoring relationship does not take into account previous research that suggests that characteristics of the natural mentoring relationship and the content of interactions between mentors and mentees may determine the effectiveness of natural mentoring (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2014). Specifically, having conversations about race, and having a race-matched mentor may play a role in the effectiveness

of natural mentoring relationships in regards to buffering against the noxious effects of perceived discrimination.

Race-Matched Natural Mentors. The extant literature has found that youth are more likely to identify natural mentors of the same race/ethnicity (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2013; Klaw, Rhodes, & Fitzgerald, 2013). It may be that individuals with race matched natural mentors have more assumed commonalities, which may contribute to more positive outcomes for youth due to a shared understanding (Sanchez, Colon-Torres, Feurer, Roundfield, & Berardi, 2014). Thus, race matched natural mentors may be particularly important in the context of perceived discriminatory experiences. It may be that race-matched natural mentors are better able to understand the student and impart messages about ways to cope that they draw from their own experiences. Limited research has examined benefits of same-race vs. cross-race natural mentors.

Similarly, there is scant research that documents the topics of discussions between natural mentors and mentees and the contents of those conversations. The proposed study aims to respond to researchers' recommendation of exploring what is happening in the relationship (Hurd et al., 2014) by exploring the content of conversations that natural mentors and mentees hold in the context of discriminatory experiences. Specifically, the protective effects of a natural mentoring relationship may depend on the content of their conversations.

Conversations with Natural Mentors: Discriminatory Experiences. The extant literature posits that conversations about race between parents and their children may emerge from a discriminatory event that has occurred or in preparation for a potential discriminatory event (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Umana-Taylor & Fine, 2004). However, as emerging adults become increasingly independent, they may seek out other supports to help them contend with perceived discriminatory experiences. Research has found that youth may allow

themselves to be more vulnerable with their natural mentors than with parents or peers (Darling, Hamilton, Toyokawa, &Matsuda, 2002), which may lead them to disclose more to their natural mentors. Thus, it is possible that Black college students seek out their natural mentors to have conversations about race. In particular, they may be more likely to disclose more about discriminatory experiences at the post-secondary institution particularly if natural mentors are more familiar with navigating PWIs compared to other adults. Natural mentors (particularly those at post-secondary institutions) may prepare their mentees to contend with discriminatory experiences. This may be similar to how parents prepare their children to cope with discrimination (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997). I will further explore the content of proactive and reactionary messages and examine which messages may be associated with more positive coping responses among students. These proactive and reactionary messages given by parents are known in the literature as racial socialization.

Racial socialization is the developmental process through which parents shape their children's knowledge about their own race as it relates to personal and group identity, intergroup and inter-individual relationships, and position in the social hierarchy (Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Racial socialization messages parents transmit to children are generally divided into four types: *cultural socialization, promotion of mistrust, preparation for bias,* and *egalitarianism and silence about race* (Hughes, et al., 2006).

Cultural Socialization is the promotion of cultural values, cultural knowledge education, and practice of cultural traditions. Cultural socialization has been shown to be the most prevalent form of racial socialization transmitted to children by their parents (Jackson & Gurin, 1997). *Promotion of mistrust* refers to the emphasis that one should be wary or mistrustful of interactions with other racial/ethnic groups. *Preparation for bias* encompasses parents' efforts to

warn children that they may experience discrimination from other racial/ethnic groups and prepares them to cope with such experiences. *Egalitarianism and silence about race* is the promotion of messages that encourage a focus on commonalities between groups rather than an emphasis on racial/ethnic differences. It also promotes the view that race/ethnicity is not an appropriate topic to discuss. This form of racial socialization may be harmful for those who perceive experiences of discrimination since it does not prepare them to contend with such experiences (Spencer, 1983) and they may be unsure of how to react. Given that Black parents are more likely to report preparing their children for bias compared to other racial/ethnic groups, it is likely that natural mentors may also engage in imparting these messages (Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Phinney & Chavira, 1995).

Conversations between Natural Mentors and Mentees

While there is some literature examining the racial socialization processes between parents and children, there is a dearth of research that examines the conversations about race between emerging adults and the important adults in their lives. Given the developmental period, it is possible that students will seek support from their natural mentors and have conversations due to an experience of discrimination. Natural mentors, too, may seek out their mentees in order to prepare them for the discrimination they may face, particularly at a PWI, where race may be more salient. Further, some students may only speak to natural mentors of their same race about discriminatory experiences. There is some literature to suggest that faculty of color play the role of natural mentors and validate the racialized experiences of students of color at PWIs by acknowledging their existence (Griffin, 2012; Griffin & Reddick, 2011; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008). In addition to validating students' experiences, it may be that natural mentors at

the institution may be able to direct students to resources to help them contend with such experiences.

However, it is possible that natural mentors may be a different race than their mentees, particularly given the average ratio of Black undergraduates to Black faculty is 43:1 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). It is also possible that for some mentees, it is not important whether the natural mentor shares his/her racial/ethnic minority status. Natural mentors of a different race may serve as important support systems in a context that may be otherwise isolating due to feeling like an outsider. For example, research on immigrant populations has found that immigrants who have support from both within their new country, as well as support from people in their country of origin (who share their background) received a protective effect from perceived discriminatory experiences (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola, & Reuter, 2006). In addition, in a study on transracially adoptive parents and their racial socialization practices, those parents with less egalitarian views were more likely to transmit cultural socialization messages to their children (Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, & Gunnar, 2006). That is, parents who endorsed 'colorblindness' at lower levels were more likely to teach their children about important people or events from the child's racial/ethnic background. Thus, it is possible that mentors of diverse racial/ethic backgrounds may attempt to engage in the racial socialization of their mentees in the context of perceived discriminatory experiences.

Although there appear to be benefits of racial socialization, the extant literature that has examined how racial socialization is associated with coping with perceived prejudice and racial discrimination is much more nuanced. In a qualitative cross-sectional study conducted by Brega and Coleman (1999), youth who received more of both cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages reported more discrimination compared to their counterparts who received less

cultural socialization and preparation for bias. In other studies, adolescents whose parents prepare them for bias demonstrate more effective coping strategies, such as seeking support or engaging in direct-problem solving strategies such as deciding how to problem solve on their own, without the help of others (Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Scott, 2003). As such, youth who receive more preparation for bias messages may be better able to cope with such experiences. Conversely, individuals may be more or less tuned in to experiences of discrimination and less able to cope with experiences of discrimination. Thus, youth who receive these messages from natural mentors may be better able to contend with experiences of discrimination.

However, because the study conduced by Brega and Coleman (1999) was cross-sectional, the directionality of these results is unclear. During adolescence, when race becomes more salient to racial/ethnic minority individuals (Phinney, 1992), parents and family members may have engaged in racial socialization in response to perceived discriminatory experiences, or in preparation for perceived discriminatory experiences. While Brega et al. (1999) included information from other family members in their analysis; they did not distinguish messages given by parents versus other family members in their results. Given that research has documented Black families' emphasis on intergenerational ties and fictive kin (Stack, 1974; Stewart-Williams, 2007), it is likely that some of the family members reported by youth could have been serving as natural mentors to their younger family members. It is possible that conversations Black youth have with natural mentors from the home carry over into college. This may be both in response to perceived discriminatory events and in preparation for perceived discriminatory events. Further, it is possible that natural mentors who are race-matched may emphasize racial pride, as studies have consistently found that parents most often engage in this component of racial socialization (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Jackson & Gurin, 1997).

On its own, racial pride may be beneficial and it is especially of value to members of stigmatized minority groups due to the likelihood of receiving messages from broader society that suggest inferiority of one's racial group. In particular, messages of racial pride may be more important when someone is experiencing either greater marginalization (due to being a numerical minority) or directly encountering messages of inferiority through other means such as discriminatory experiences. Thus, receiving messages of racial pride may be particularly helpful for students at a PWI who perceive experiences of discrimination.

Conversely, messages such as promotion of mistrust and egalitarianism or silence about race may not be particularly helpful for youth who receive these messages. Whereas preparation for bias messages contain advice for ways of coping with perceived experiences of discrimination, promotion of mistrust does not (Hughes et al., 2006). It may be that students who receive promotion of trust messages in a college context are wary of who they could trust due to potential experiences of discrimination, but may not be equipped to handle experiences of discrimination if they encounter them. Similarly, messages that promote egalitarianism or silence about race may leave students unequipped to contend with perceived discriminatory experiences. If a student is receiving messages that everyone is "equal" and are not treated as such due to their race, they may be unable cope. However, these two dimensions of racial socialization are not endorsed very often in both quantitative and qualitative research (Hughes et al., 2006).

Current Study

Given the previously established associations between perceived discriminatory experiences, alcohol use, and subsequent academic success (Brody et al., 2012; Gerrard et al., 2012; Hurd, et al., 2014), it is crucial to learn factors that may offset this association in order to develop supports for Black students at PWIs. Natural mentors may be uniquely positioned to

lessen the relation between perceived discriminatory experiences and alcohol use among emerging adults. Specifically, emerging adulthood may be a prime time for mentoring with adults other than parents since emerging adults may be particularly receptive to this advice as they are working to become more autonomous from their parents and identify other adults who can help them progress toward the fulfillment of their future selves. Research has demonstrated that youth may see their natural mentors as more wise than their peers and seek them out for advice and guidance (Beam, Chen, & Greenberger, 2002). Given that youth may be willing to share more personal information with their natural mentors relative to their parents (Darling et al., 2002), they may be more inclined to have conversations with their natural mentors about perceived discriminatory events. Thus, the proposed project sought to examine the content of conversations pertaining to perceived discriminatory experiences, alcohol use, and academic performance to elucidate whether and *how* relationships with natural mentors may buffer against the negative effects of discriminatory experiences on alcohol use and academic outcomes.

The proposed study used a mixed methods approach. Quantitative data were drawn from an ongoing longitudinal study to test associations between discriminatory experiences, alcohol use, and natural mentoring relationship characteristics among Black emerging adults attending a PWI. Semi-structured open-ended interviews were undertaken with a subset of participants who reported the *presence of a natural mentor* and who reported on their survey that they had *talked to their mentor about race* and *drank alcohol in the past 30 days*. However, I also recruited more broadly from the institution when I experienced challenges recruiting this specific subset of participants (more information provided in the *methods* section). In addition, students were asked for the contact information of their natural mentors so as to interview their natural mentors, as well. Triangulation assisted in achieving a deeper understanding of the conversations (Creswell,

2009). Thus, interviewing both the natural mentor and the student is the best approach to try and uncover the content of conversations.

Research Questions

The broader research questions driving the current study include:

1. Do perceived discriminatory experiences influence academic outcomes via problematic drinking among Black students?
2. Does the presence of any natural mentoring relationships or specific aspects of natural mentoring relationships such as race-match or willingness to discuss issues of race/ethnicity lessen the association between perceived discrimination and negative academic outcomes via greater problematic drinking among Black students?
3. How does the content of the conversations addressing both discrimination and racial socialization processes between natural mentors and their mentees influence problematic drinking and academic success in the context of perceived discriminatory experiences?

Hypotheses

1. I hypothesize that perceived experiences of discrimination will contribute to poorer academic performance via increased problematic drinking among Black students.
2. I hypothesize that natural mentors will protect against the negative consequences of perceived discrimination on students' problematic drinking and academic outcomes.
3. I hypothesize that racial similarity may be a proxy for more in-depth and beneficial conversations that would confer greater benefit to mentees.

4. I expect that whether mentees are having conversations about race with at least one natural mentor will predict whether natural mentoring relationships may buffer against negative effects of perceived discrimination on student outcomes.
5. I hypothesize that natural mentors of Black students at a PWI may prepare students for the possibility of discriminatory experiences, particularly given students' attendance at a PWI where they may be more likely to encounter experiences of discrimination.
6. I hypothesize that natural mentors will emphasize cultural socialization since it is the most common form of socialization (Jackson & Gurin, 1997).
7. I hypothesize that messages specific to preparation for bias and racial pride may be most helpful (relative to other race-related messages) in terms of coping with perceived experiences of discrimination.

Methods

Participants were part of a larger investigation aimed at learning more about the role of supportive non-parental adults in contributing to underrepresented students' academic success and psychosocial functioning at a PWI. The Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures. The proposed research employed mixed methods data collection and analyses. The use of mixed methods allowed for multiple approaches to gaining new knowledge (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). I collected the quantitative data with the goal of elucidating whether a natural mentor could offset experiences of discrimination, decrease problematic alcohol use and promote academic success. Quantitative analyses allowed for the assessment of the association among these variables among a larger sample of Black students. The quantitative portion also informed the selection of participants interviewed for the

qualitative portion. The qualitative portion helped to inform a more complete understanding of how natural mentors support mentees in the context of discrimination while also extending the range of inquiry. That is, the current study examined a largely unexplored area of research that helped to inform supports for Black students attending an elite PWI. Thus, the purpose for this design was expansion and complementarity (i.e., using qualitative data to expand the scope of the study and further clarify the quantitative results; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989).

The qualitative data brought forward information that could not be gleaned from the quantitative data. A sequential design was implemented wherein both quantitative and qualitative analyses were equally important and the quantitative data collection preceded the qualitative data collection (QUAN → QUAL). Given the dearth of literature on the conversations between natural mentors and their mentees, I used open-ended interviewing to more fully learn about the potential content of these conversations. This approach allowed me to glean information that would not be available to me through quantitative methods.

Participants & Procedure

As previously stated, quantitative data were drawn from an on-going longitudinal study that focused on the role of supportive non-parental adults in contributing to students' academic success and psychosocial functioning at a PWI. Students in the study were contacted during their first year at the PWI and are being followed for four years. Students were invited to participate through an email invitation during their first year at the PWI (study was only open to first year students and did not include transfer students). Students were invited if they fit any of the following criteria: economically disadvantaged backgrounds (defined as eligible for the full Pell Grant, which is need-based), first-generation college students, and membership in a historically underrepresented ethnic and racial minority groups (e.g., Black, Latino/Hispanic, Native

American). Selected students were sent a recruitment email describing the study and its purpose. Out of the 775 participants who were eligible to participate in the study, 340 participated (43.9% response rate). If students expressed interest in participating, they came to a lab space, gave their consent (or assent if under 18, after receiving parental permission) and completed surveys on an iPad at three time points: Fall 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015 (wave1, wave 2, and wave 3, respectively). Surveys took approximately an hour to complete and participants were compensated with a Visa gift card ($20 at waves 1 and 2, $25 at wave 3). Students were assigned a unique participant ID in order to ensure confidentiality.

Given the study's focus on the perceived discriminatory experiences of Black college students at a PWI, the current study focused on a subsample of the participants. Participants (n = 118; 74.5% female) for the proposed study have self-identified as Black (84%) or Biracial (with one Black parent; 16%). See Table XX for the full list of descriptives. Since the focus of the study is on perceived experiences of discrimination, the current study will utilize data from waves 2 and 3 for the quantitative analysis. Changes were made in waves 2 and 3 such that a specific time period was given for students to answer these questions, this was not the case for wave 1.

Measures

Perceived Experiences of Racial Discrimination in College. Perceived experiences of racial discrimination in college was measured using a 7-item measure that assesses occurrences of perceived experiences of racial discrimination at college (Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fisher, 2003). These items represent perceived college-based experiences of discrimination and higher scores reflected more perceived experiences of discrimination. Items include: *Walking around campus/grounds, how often, if ever, have you been made to feel uncomfortable or self-conscious*

because of your race or ethnicity? Responses ranged from 1 (*Never)* to 5 (*Very Often)*. Perceived experiences of discrimination were collected at all three time points. Reliability at wave 2 and wave 3 were .84, and .81 respectively.

Natural Mentor Presence. Natural Mentor Presence was measured by the question "Other than a parent or person who raised you, is there an adult who is older and more experienced than you who you go to for support and guidance? This could be an adult you knew before coming to [University] or an adult you have met since coming to [University]. Do not include friends or romantic partners (boyfriends/girlfriends)." If participants responded affirmatively, they were asked about the natural mentor's characteristics such as gender, race, and the role of the natural mentor in their lives (e.g., relative, former teacher, current professor, etc.). For the current study, students' reports of natural mentors at wave 3 were used as it was the most recent round of data collection and survey data were being used to identify participants for the open-ended interviews.

Conversations about race. Participants also responded how often they discussed *something related to your race/ethnicity* with any of their natural mentors. Responses ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5 (every day or almost every day). At wave 3, 77% of participants indicated that they spoke with at least one of their natural mentors about something related to their race/ethnicity.

Frequency of Problematic Alcohol Use. Frequency of problematic alcohol use measures frequency of problematic outcomes due to alcohol use within the past 30 days

(Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2006). *During the PAST 30 DAYS, how many times did you have a hangover, feel sick, get into trouble with your family or friends, miss school or work, or get into fights as a result of drinking alcohol?* Responses range from 0 to 10 or more.

Demographics. Demographics such as age, gender, family income, and college generational status were collected for all participants. See *Table 1* for descriptives.

Interviews

One-hour-long semi-structured open-ended interviews with students were administered in the Spring of 2016 by the first author. Students were selected through stratified purposeful sampling using data from the quantitative data collection. Specifically, Black students who reported *a natural mentor*, those who indicated that they had *talked to their natural mentor about race/ethnicity,* and *students who reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days* on wave three of the SEASONS survey were eligible to participate in interviews, coming to a total of 31 students. Interviews were piloted with a random group of students before embarking on interviews with SEASONS participants. In total six pilot interviews were conducted; four student pilot interviews and two pilot mentor interviews. As a result of the pilot interviews, changes were made to the proposed scripts. Probing questions were added in the event that the student reported no perceived experiences of discrimination. In addition, questions about the ways in which perceived discrimination plays a role in academics, and a question about drinking to cope with perceived experiences of discrimination were added. Pilot participants were compensated with a $25 gift card or participant pool credit.

In the current study, the subsample of students was divided into strata and then participants were randomly selected from each stratum. Strata were comprised of differing levels

of self-reported perceived discriminatory experiences. Specifically, four students who reported *none,* four who reported *low* to *moderate,* and four who reported *high* levels of perceived discriminatory experiences were randomly selected, totaling 12 students. When unsuccessful in recruiting any of the students, a replacement student from the same stratum was contacted. In total, seven SEASONS students agreed to be part of the study, all part of the *low to moderate* strata. After exhausting recruitment efforts with SEASONS participants, students outside of the study were recruited through listservs designed for Black students and the psychology department participant pool. Students were eligible to join the study if they possessed a natural mentor with whom they talked about race. *See Appendix A for interview questions*.

Students were asked for names and contact information of a natural mentor with whom they discuss topics related to race/ethnicity. The natural mentors were contacted to schedule a one-hour interview either over the phone or in person. *See Appendix B for interview questions*. A total of 10 mentors agreed to participate in the study. Students were compensated with a $40 Visa gift card or class credit and natural mentors received a $30 Visa gift card. Additional consent was obtained for the qualitative portion of the proposed study and all transcripts and audio files were kept in a locked file to ensure confidentiality.

Quantitative Analytic Plan

First, bivariate correlations were assessed for the study variables of interest for the 118 participants. Next, I conducted path analyses to examine whether experiences of discrimination were associated with poorer grades via increases in problematic drinking and whether the presence of a natural mentoring relationship moderated the association between perceived discrimination and problematic drinking. My path model examined both concurrent and time-lagged associations among study variables using waves 2 and 3. Moreover, my model accounted

for the potential effects of gender, family income, and test scores on study outcome variables. To test my primary study hypotheses, I conducted several multi-group models including comparisons in models among 1) participants with at least one natural mentor compared to those without any natural mentors, 2) participants with at least one race-matched natural mentor compared to those without any race-matched natural mentors, and 3) participants who reported that they had talked about race with at least one of their natural mentors compared to participants who had not talked about race with one of their natural mentors. Path analyses and multi-group analyses were conducted in Mplus 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). Mplus was the ideal statistical software to conduct study analyses as it facilitates the testing of multiple direct effects simultaneously and allows for rigorous testing of moderation and mediation. Additionally, the Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) approach can be employed to reduce issues of bias associated with missing data that are missing at random. In order to assess the first two research questions (see below), I conducted a path analysis in MPlus 7.0 to test the hypothesized pathways (*see Figure 1*). Model fit and confidence intervals were used to assess whether constructs were related to each other.

1. Do perceived discriminatory experiences influence academic outcomes via problematic drinking among Black students?
2. Does the presence of any natural mentoring relationships or specific aspects of natural mentoring relationships such as race-match or willingness to discuss issues of race/ethnicity lessen the association between perceived discrimination and negative academic outcomes via greater problematic drinking among Black students?

Qualitative Analytic Plan

Audio recordings from the standardized open-ended interviews were transcribed and entered into the Dedoose software program. Analyses included codes generated from the previous literature as well as emergent codes in order to identify themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Data were analyzed through the lens of the main study hypotheses, informed by the racial socialization literature. Specifically, there was an examination of the presence of cultural socialization, promotion of mistrust, preparation for bias, and egalitarianism and silence about race messages through a thematic approach. However, I also searched for emergent patterns or themes that may offer further insight. Though conversations related to alcohol use were not discussed in the qualitative interviews, more general questions related to coping with experiences of discrimination were asked. Qualitative analyses were employed to answer the third research question of the proposed study:

3. How does the content of the conversations addressing both discrimination and racial socialization processes between natural mentors and their mentees influence problematic drinking and academic success in the context of perceived discriminatory experiences?

All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed by a transcription service. Interviews were analyzed by the first author and a second coder using thematic analysis, which were conducted with the assistance of Dedoose software. Thematic analysis identifies, organizes, and offers insight into patterns of meaning across a dataset. The second coder and I systematically identified the types of conversations students had with their natural mentors across study participants and subsequently made sense of the commonalities and patterns in the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). We started with a process of open coding using Dedoose software. Codes were created and applied based on Thematic analysis by both coders (Braun & Clark,

2006). The coders then met more frequently to discuss themes and revise the codebook. Once the initial codes were identified, the coders worked together to search for linkages across themes. In the event of inter-rater disagreement, we had discussions until we came to a consensus. For a more in depth description of the process, see below.

Stage One: ***Initial coding and beginning codebook.*** First, I coded six student transcripts sorting the data under the different types of messages imparted by natural mentors as well as perceived discriminatory experiences, factors contributing to perceived experiences of discrimination, and the type of coping with perceived discriminatory experiences. I created a first draft of the codebook, which included themes, tentative definitions, and exemplary quotes. I frequently referred back to the research questions to ensure that the codes I created and applied were relevant to the current study.

Stage Two: ***Refining codes.*** I met with the second coder to discuss the codebook, themes, and research questions. Based on our discussion, the second coder coded the six interviews that I previously coded in order to verify that the codebook was clear and allowed for the same codes to be applied to excerpts. The second coder and I met to discuss the coding and talked through disagreements in the application of codes. After all six interviews were discussed; the remaining six transcripts were split between the coders and were coded individually by the coders. We met to discuss all six of the transcripts that we coded, and clarified themes and definitions when necessary. In case of disagreement, we discussed and came to a consensus.

Stage Three: ***Addition of codes applicable to natural mentors.*** Once the student coding was completed, we moved on to coding the natural mentor transcripts. Similar to the student transcripts, we selected six interviews that we would both individually code. We agreed that we would keep the same codebook and create new codes if necessary. We then met to discuss the

codes we applied and found that we were very much in agreement in terms of the excerpts that we selected and the codes we applied. Though we asked natural mentors and students mostly similar questions, new themes emerged from the natural mentor interviews. The second coder and I came to an agreement in terms of new codes, definitions and illustrative quotes.

Stage Four: ***Refining codes.*** Once again, the second coder and I split up the remaining four transcripts to individually code and met to discuss the codes. We clarified themes and definitions when necessary. In case of disagreement, we discussed and came to a consensus.

Reliability, Validity, and Data Management

In order to ensure reliability and validity, I listened to recordings and made sure the transcripts did not have errors, made sure that the application of codes was consistent throughout, and kept track of changing definitions (Crewsell, 2009). I discussed my codebook and codes with my advisor, members of my committee, and other individuals knowledgeable in the area of qualitative analysis.

Reflexive Statement

My own relationship to this data is important to consider. I identify as a Hispanic and South Asian female who attended a PWI. As such, I may have been particularly attuned to students' descriptions of their experiences as students of color attending a PWI. In order to ensure balance, my second coder and I frequently consulted each other regarding our coding decisions and discussed interpretation of the data. I also discussed coding and interpretation of data with ethnically diverse researchers such as my advisor, individuals knowledgeable in qualitative analysis, and members of my committee. Through critical feedback on my interpretation from all of these individuals, I consider my findings to be more robust.

Results

Natural Mentors

Of the118 Black students who participated in the current study, 75 (64%) reported the presence of at least one natural mentor in wave 3, and they were able to report the presence of up to five natural mentors. It is possible that natural mentors may have changed over the three waves. As such, using the most recent wave of data helped to ensure that I was including natural mentors who were currently involved in participants' lives. Of all of the mentors reported by students, the largest proportion of natural mentors were relatives, or friends of family friends (43%). The next largest group of mentors was from the PWI (32%), followed by former teachers, coaches, or tutors (16%), and religious leaders, counselors, or employers (9%). Seventy-eight percent (*n*=135) of all natural mentors were gender matched and 74% (*n*=127) of natural mentors were matched by race. For descriptive statistics of all natural mentors reported, see *Table 2*.

Correlations and Path Model

Correlations between study variables are displayed in Table 3. Gender was related to perceived discrimination and GPA at waves 2 and 3. Perceived experiences of discrimination at wave 3 were related to wave 2 and wave 3 GPA. Problematic alcohol use at wave 2 was related to problematic alcohol use at wave 3. GPA at wave 2 was associated with GPA at wave 3. In order to test cross-lagged associations in the path model, variables at wave 2 and wave 3 were used. The path model fit the data well. The X^2 statistic was not significant, X^2 (6)= 7.45, p >.05. The CFI was .97, the TLI was .94 and the RMSEA was .05. Results of the path model can be seen in Figure 2. I found that problematic drinking at wave 2 was associated with GPA at wave 2. All variables at wave 2 were associated with their corresponding counterparts at wave 3. No other associations were significant (see Figure 2).

Multi-group Model

When participants were separated into subgroups, unfortunately, some groups ended up with sample sizes that were inadequately powered to test for model invariance in the path model. Thus, I will report on correlations by group to see whether trends in direction and strength of correlations may be consistent with my study hypotheses. In the comparison between participants with at least one natural mentor (*n*=87) vs. participants without any natural mentor (*n*=31), among students in the group without any natural mentors, there were no significant associations among study variables of interest. Conversely, perceived experiences of discrimination at wave 2 were positively correlated with GPA at wave 2 among students who reported the presence of at least one natural mentor. See Table 4 for all correlations. When comparing associations among participants who reported that they had talked about race with at least one of their natural mentors (*n*=58) vs. participants who had not talked about race with at least one of their natural mentors (*n*=16), among the participants who had not talked about race with at least one of their natural mentors, problematic alcohol use at wave 2 was negatively associated with GPA at wave 2 and wave 3. There were no significant associations for students who had conversations with their natural mentors. See Table 5 for all correlations. Among participants with at least one race-matched natural mentor (*n*=62) vs. those without any race-matched natural mentors (*n*=13), there was a negative association between problematic alcohol use at wave 2 and GPA at wave 2 for those without any race-matched natural mentors. Among participants with at least one race-matched natural mentor, wave 2 perceived experiences of discrimination were positively associated with wave 2 GPA. See Table 6 for all correlations.

Interview Data

The next section presents findings to address the questions: According to natural mentors and their mentees, *what is the content of their conversations about discrimination and racial socialization processes? How do natural mentoring relationships influence substance use and academic success in the context of perceived discriminatory experiences?* I first present student reports about discrimination more generally in order to demonstrate the range of perceived discriminatory experiences the students encounter, student reported racial climate at the university, and students' ways of coping with perceived experiences of discrimination. Following those sections, I present data pertaining to the role of natural mentoring relationships in shaping students' preparation for and responses to experiences of discrimination. I focus on racial socialization processes and conversations about perceived discriminatory experiences between natural mentors and their mentees. All participant names are pseudonyms. See Tables 7 and 8 for descriptive variables about students and their natural mentors.

Range of Discriminatory Experiences

The students were first asked to define discrimination and then asked if they had any experiences of discrimination at the institution. Generally, students reported that discrimination is "treating someone differently" based on race, religion, sexuality, and/or other characteristics. All students reported negative race-related experiences in one form or another. The three different types of negative race-related experiences at the university that students reported experiencing included an awareness of negative stereotypes held by other students about Black people, microaggressions, and overt discrimination.

Awareness of Negative Stereotypes. Students reported an awareness that their classmates perceived them negatively because of their race and reported concerns about confirming negative stereotypes held about Black people. Sean described how he feels as it relates to working in a group,

> …you show up a little late and it's just, like, all right, you don't want to create the idea of the group if you come five minutes late to meetings consistently. Alright. You're "the late Black guy" instead of just "the late person." You don't want to be that quiet in meetings because you don't want to be "the lazy Black guy in our group that doesn't pull any weight." The other person in the group that doesn't work could be just as quiet, but it's just "they're waiting to give their insights." It's a different vibe when you know you're the only person who looks like you in the group.

In this instance, Sean was describing the concern that his actions in the academic context will be used by his peers to confirm negative stereotypes about Blacks (e.g., Blacks are lazy). However, it's not something that has been explicitly communicated as he stated it's "an energy that we're feeling from other people." Christina feels similarly when she is sitting in the classroom wondering if her peers think, "I'm not smart or I shouldn't like be around or something" because she is the only Black student in her class. Sonia reported concerns that her peers would deem her intellectually inferior due to her race: "Oh, they're not going to think I'm smart because I'm Black." Michelle reported, "I'm one of the only Black students in my classes,… I do feel like I have to prove that I'm intelligent sometimes in class." Similarly, Teresa described how concern that her peers doubt her intelligence has given her pause before she participates in class "before I speak, I triple check in my mind that I know what I'm talking about just because it's already – when you raise your hand people are like, 'What is she going to say that's useful?' And then if

you get it wrong, it's even worse." She also described the feelings she gets from students "you can feel it and they look at you." In the academic context, students are reporting the feeling that their classmates do not think they are as intellectually capable as their non-Black peers due to their race.

Microaggressions. In addition to an awareness of negative stereotypes about Blacks, students also reported specific instances of microaggressions that Serena described as, "those little things that irritate your soul." Microaggressions are defined as brief, commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, that may be intentional or unintentional, that communicate derogatory or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (Sue et al., 2007). Most students (n=10) reported experiencing microaggressions. Lisa, a student athlete, described some racial slights from her teammates. Specifically she said her teammates have asked her,

> 'Do you shower every day? You can't wash your hair?' And I'm a person. I'm an actual person. I do regular things, like my hair may be different, but, I mean, it doesn't give you the right to question me so harshly. If you want to know about my culture and you want to know about how I do things, then go ahead and ask, but don't come at me in a way that's as if I'm some type of animal and I don't belong. It's kind of hard hearing those things, and I know that they don't mean it and I know that they just really mean it in a sincere way; they just want to know.

While Lisa thinks her teammates' intentions were not bad, she stated that, "there are better ways to do this."

Another form of microaggression students reported experiencing were comments from peers and professors in the academic context. Jermaine stated that he believes Whites expect him

to be inarticulate and they often express surprise at how (unexpectedly) articulate he speaks: "I don't sound like that guy that you heard about on the news, or if I don't sound like the guy on the rap video." He described reactions from peers and professors when he speaks in class " 'we love it when you speak. You're so well-spoken.' – That just kind of pisses me off." Relatedly, Vanessa reported receiving surprised reactions from her peers when she speaks in class, "they would just be like 'that was a really good answer' and I'm just like 'well, I did the readings.' She explained that students compliments about her in-class comments gave her the impression that her ability to thoughtfully engage with class material was something her peers did not think she was capable of doing. Teresa described having to explain to her friends why statements like those are problematic; she also commented on how other students equate being well-spoken with being White; implying that Blacks are not expected to be well-spoken "just explaining that attributing certain characteristics… to a race--- because I talk a certain way, that makes me talk White. No, I talk like I have an education". Participants often defended the perpetrators of microaggressions, stating that while they did not think the perpetrators intended to offend them, their comments reflected racist beliefs, which made participants feel uncomfortable.

Overt discrimination in physical and virtual spaces. Beyond racial slights that were communicated via microaggressions, students also reported experiencing blatant discrimination. Overt experiences of discrimination refer to experiences in which the student is being openly discriminated against; the event is blatant and indisputable. Many (*n*=7) students reported experiences of overt discrimination. Students reported being overtly discriminated against by professors and by peers in virtual and physical social spaces. Jermaine described an instance in which he received differential treatment by a professor, which he attributed to the fact that he was the only Black student in the class. He reported that the whole class lined up so that the

professor could shake everyone's hand; the professor shook everyone's hand with the exception of Jermaine's. He described the situation,

> I didn't see his eyes meet mine or anything. He just kept walking as if I wasn't there. I just got out of the line and left, and withdrew from the class and enrolled in another class. So, I didn't speak to him about it or anything like that. But, the idea that I could be invisible, shoulder to shoulder with everyone there –I just couldn't believe that there was any sort of mistake going on right there, and you knew that you shook the hand of every other person, and that somehow there was a gap right here, but there were no gaps anywhere else, and no one else got missed. So, that to me really exemplified a space where I was like, 'Okay. Well, I'm the only Black person in this class. Everyone else is White.' So, I think that was probably what happened right there. I can't think of anything else that was even anymore blatant in my mind than that.

Serena described an experience that a friend had in a class with a professor that was concerning to her. She reported that the professor came over to the group of Black students and said, "Oh wow, look at this little ghetto that we have here." Serena reported that when asked about his comment, the professor claimed to do that with other groups of students as well, "Oh, well I do that to all of the different students. To the Asian students I say little Asia." Serena reported that she heard that the professor later took diversity training due to the incident. However, Serena felt if she had to take a class with him, it would be difficult for her to feel comfortable,

> …if I were in that block with them, which I almost was, I would feel some type of way about my learning experience and how I can even function the rest of the semester with

> this professor who obviously already has an opinion in his head before I even do any type of work.

Outside of the academic context, students reported being discriminated against by peers at fraternity parties. During the first semester of her first year, Felicia described being overtly discriminated against while she was walking with a group of Black friends along fraternity row, "So we were walking to this place and then these boys on top of the roof, they were like; oh, look at those [n-word] over there." She described her reaction,

> I've never actually heard someone use the n-word. I wouldn't expect it from my peers because I would expect my generation to be better. Like, I'd expect it from some old man who like grew up with segregation and everything from down in the south. But these are – I would never expect anything so ignorant from an educated person.

Felicia's experience was not unique. Sean described a similar experience, "You get, obviously, the times you may be on fraternity row and somebody may say a racial slur or you try and get into a party and you get turned away because of how you look." Based on student reports, it appeared common knowledge that due to experiences like these and others, Black students do not generally go to fraternity row. Serena said, "that's why I feel like a lot of black students just don't even go to fraternity row anymore, because it's just not even worth it." Instead, they attend "Black parties." Teresa notes that parties for Black students are safe spaces, "… you feel comfortable because you know other people aren't judging you or looking at you funny because you're at the party and you're Black." Fraternity parties were not the only social spaces that students reported experiencing overt discrimination. They also reported these experiences in virtual spaces. Notably, experiences of overt discrimination in virtual spaces were particularly

triggered by an incident of excessive force employed by law enforcement against an unarmed Black student.

Incident of excessive force employed by law enforcement against unarmed Black student. In addition to personal experiences of perceived discrimination, many students commented on how an incident where law enforcement officials used excessive force against an unarmed Black student prompted an increase in more general discriminatory experiences (e.g., racist comments), particularly in virtual spaces. This event and the subsequent reactions by fellow students brought race relations to the forefront of students' minds and sparked protests and strife within the student body about race relations. Some Black students at the university engaged in protests in response to the incident. These protests were aligned with the #Blacklivesmatter movement that was sweeping the nation and gaining momentum based on numerous documented cases of excessive police force against unarmed Blacks. Simultaneously an anonymous social media platform called Yik Yak was rapidly growing in popularity across college campuses. According to Yik Yak's website (2016),

> Yik Yak is a location-based social network that helps people discover their local community, letting them share news, crack jokes, offer support, ask questions, and interact freely. It's home to the casual, relatable, heartfelt, and silly things that connect people with their community.

Yik Yak is unique in two ways: it is anonymous and it is geographically restricted such that posts can only be viewed within a 5-mile radius. Consequently, posts seen on Yik Yak can be presumed to be from fellow students at one's university. Posts can be "upvoted" (i.e., liked) or "downvoted" (i.e., disliked) and the net difference between upvotes and downvotes are displayed next to the posts (and more popular posts move to a higher position on the feed).

Thus, students can see anonymous posts from what are presumed to be fellow students and they also can get a sense of how popular these posts are among other users (also presumed to be fellow university students). Notably, 9 out of the 12 participants interviewed for this study reported encountering racist posts on Yik Yak in response to race-related events on campus. For example, Teresa said,

> I remember multiple times – the things that were on Yik Yak would make me cry because I was so hurt and confused and surprised by the things that people would say and the amount of people that would upvote and the things that people would think were funny. I'm thinking that there are only a few people that feel this way, but then you get on Yik Yak and see all these comments and things that aren't funny. They're just down right racist and prejudice and discriminatory. It's going up by the second, and you're just like, 'What?' And then that sort of made me, for a minute there, question all the – this is bad but – white people I know. This is anonymous. I don't know who said this. This could be someone who I thought was a close friend, and this is how they really feel. Yik Yak, you can voice – it's anonymous so you can say whatever you want and parts of you that you can hide around so-and-so. On Yik Yak, you can let it all hang out there. And so, no, I am not on Yik Yak.

Teresa reported no longer using the social media platform as a result of the racist posts she had seen. Other students expressed similar feelings about Yik Yak. Sonia said, "It just gives people an excuse to say racist things without getting caught for it." The anonymity made it so students weren't quite sure who they could trust. For example, Felicia said,

> …when I see this stuff and it's anonymous and it's coming from my peers it makes me think who is my ally? Other than black people, I don't know who my allies are. It makes

> me question every person that's not a person of color. It's like; were you the person that said that? Would you ever say that if I wasn't around? What do you do when I'm not around? What do you do when your friends say that?

Felicia and Teresa were not alone in this feeling. Veronica said,

> …being barred or looked down upon and it's just like – it just feels super hopeless and so I just I felt weird being in a community where you know so many people secretly hated you just because of the color of your skin.

Similar to Teresa, several students reported deleting the social media app from their smartphone or no longer using their account. Serena said, "I have it on my phone but I haven't been on it since the [incident of excessive force], because it was just disgusting" and Lisa stated that "I don't have Yik Yak anymore."

Increased Salience of Race

Students reported how the experience of being such a significant numerical minority of students on campus in addition to discriminatory experiences they faced led them to be more aware of their Blackness than they had been prior to attending the PWI. Several students commented on what it was like for them to see so few others who looked like them in their classes, on campus, and in faculty roles. Lisa reported, "But I do kind of feel out of place when I'm walking to class and I don't see anyone else that looks like me. In two of my classes out of my five, I'm the only black person in my class, which is kind of weird". Felicia echoed that statement, "I feel alone. I feel like it's like chocolate chip ice cream where there's all this vanilla and then – like the chocolate chip ice cream but like the Haagen-Dazs [kind] where there's like three chocolate chips." However, not only are there small numbers of Black students but also there are small numbers of Black faculty. Vanessa noted, "One thing that's also weird is not

having black professors here". Other students as well as natural mentors from the institution were in agreement that there was a lack of Black faculty. Natalie (Dominick's natural mentor) said, "even something as simple, I can go to the faculty dining room, which is open five days a week. More often than not, when I walk in there, I don't see any other African Americans sitting in there eating lunch". In addition, most (*n*=8) students reported having to acknowledge their Blackness in a different way than they had to in the past. Felicia said,

> I never had this race talk with anybody before, ever, until after I was called the N word. So that's when I first had to acknowledge that I was black. I never realized what it means to be black until I was called the N word.

Felicia reported being from a major city that is predominantly Black, so the salience of her race was likely heightened due to transitioning from being in mostly Black spaces to being in mostly White spaces. However, students who came from predominantly White high schools also reported this sentiment. Veronica, who attended predominantly White schools in the Midwest, also expresses similar feelings,

> I just feel like just this whole experience, being at this school has just been very stressful for me racially. I never, ever had to think about it in that kind of way before I came to this school and it's just like – it's kind of sad that I have to stress out so much about race, my race when it wasn't like this before I came to college. I mean racial things still happened, but it's just like – it wasn't troubling the way that it is here.

Nadia, Felicia's natural mentor, who works at the university, talked about how racial salience increases among Black students at the institution,

> And unfortunately, this place doesn't allow them to be here for very long before they realize that they have to – that they're black. You know, even if they come from these

> multi-cultural spaces, the [university] is still very southern in that way and it's very segregated in just how people mix and mingle. So even if it's like oh, there might be one or two black people who are a part of these major things but you don't see a whole, whole lot. And I don't know if that's by design; it could just be the way that things work themselves out. But the students feel that.

Tonya, Serena's natural mentor, a former student at the institution, also discussed how being at the university does not allow for ignoring race "like you go to [university] and you think about how lucky you are to go there, and how race doesn't necessarily play into things [but if you do that] you're kind of living in a false reality."

When probed about why she thought there were differences between her predominantly White high school and her current university, Veronica stated that she believed most of the White students at her institution had not had any exposure to Black people prior to coming to the university. Veronica reported that she felt that her White peers placed the responsibility on her to teach them about the "Black experience." She described her role as educator when the high-profile incident of excessive force happened to a Black student at her institution, "I didn't even talk that much with Black people about what happened. It was more so White people being like 'why are Black people so mad?' And having to educate them about it." Many (n=7) students reported being asked to educate their peers about racial issues or volunteering to talk about issues facing Black students because they felt their White peers did not care about or understand the challenges facing Black students. Felicia talked about having to educate her peers,

> But like, the way that I try to deal with it [experiences of discrimination] is by educating my peers and I'm going to annoy the shit out of them. Black, black, black, black – because I'm black, y'all and now I'm black, y'all and now I'm blackety, black, black.

> Eventually it's going to click and eventually you're going to get tired of it, but the more that I can – you know, the people who are your friends are the people who don't mind hearing about it.

Jermaine described an instance in which he was helping with admissions for a party with his fraternity brothers. They were in charge of deciding whom they would let in. He reported that his fraternity brothers did not admit a group of Black women, but subsequently admitted a group of White women. Jermaine reported challenging his fraternity brothers about their decision, as he believed that the decision reflected racial bias,

> So, they felt – they understood that that's why I was saying, but they also understood that I was not saying it just from a point of hatefulness or from wanting to belittle them. It was more so that I want them to rise to a greater point of excellence in how they deal with other people.

Additionally, students reported having to have a heightened level of awareness of both issues that all college students may be attuned to but also specific issues facing the Black community. Specifically, they talked about how increased racial salience also lead them to become more informed about broader racial issues that they had been less aware of previously. Teresa said, "I'm in a state of double consciousness. In high school and at home, I knew I was black, my friends knew I was black, but not in the same way that I'm aware now." Veronica discussed how discriminatory experiences at the institution may propel Black students to become more informed about racial injustice and also to advocate for change,

> So that's – I totally understand why some people at the school, some people have become very, very, very, very racially – racial – race activists. I understand because when you're put in a situation like this, it's so frustrating and so – it makes you so angry that you have

> to go and there's a term they call it being woke. Yeah. It's like when you're kind of asleep before and I guess I was asleep before…

Veronica and other students described how becoming more informed about racial issues (i.e., "being woke") was a part of their experience. Students may have increasingly sought information about racial issues as their race became more salient at the PWI. Felicia also described herself as 'woke.' She said, "I think people who are educated enough are woke—I'm so woke, I've got insomnia."

Negative Racial Climate at PWI

Many students described the university's racial climate as being negative. They reported that the incident of excessive force against a fellow Black student triggered a lot of negative responses within the university community and made students increasingly aware of the negative racial climate. In addition to reporting being mistreated, students reported that they felt as though the university as a whole did not value their perspectives. Students reported that the university's response to Black students' concerns reflected disinterest/apathy. Dominick said,

> Yeah, the school climate is, we're okay, as long as we're [Black students] not causing any problems. If we're not challenging anything, we're okay, and we're happy. But, if we have an issue, the concern is to hurry up, and the concern definitely seems to be not just from the administrators, but from the majority of the students. Let's hurry up and get this resolved, so we can go back to business as usual, instead of actually changing it, or fixing the problem. I was like, okay, let's Band-Aid this, and move on.

Students reported feeling that the university was disingenuous in their response to events that affected the Black community. For example, students reported feeling as if the university was not concerned with the "Black Lives Matter" movement, particularly when compared to the concern

over other movements on campus that address issues facing other demographic groups. This lack of concern also contributed to students' perceptions of a negative racial climate. Vanessa said,

> But then after that incident that happened last year [excessive force against Black student], it was really hard and I guess I was kind of sad because like when the [sexual assault incident][1] happened, like we stopped classes at the [student's school of study] and we all went to the rally together as a big class but when the Black rally was happening, we didn't stop classes for that, which hurt me a lot.

Vanessa went on to say that she did not feel as though this was something she could address with her professors "I didn't want to go to the professors and have them think of me as some radical Black activist person." This comment reflects statements made by students in regards to not feeling able to actively engage with perpetrators of discrimination or racial slights. Though students, on the whole, did not discuss taking steps to improve the racial climate on campus, they did talk about strategies they employed to cope with discrimination.

Primary Ways of Coping with Perceived Experiences of Discrimination

None of the students reported drinking as a form of coping with perceived experiences of discrimination; however, it important to note that students mentioned experiencing discrimination that prevented them from accessing alcohol. For example, students reported being denied entrance to fraternity parties or local bars due to their race and thus, given that they were under the age of 21, they did not have opportunities to access alcohol. Teresa stated, "I know countless friends who have been turned away, but also have had experiences where they're just like, 'We don't let N words in.'" Similarly, Teresa noted that "There's a history of going up with all your white friends and you being turned down. There's just so many racist stories at bars

[1] Similar to many college campuses around the country, there was a highly publicized case of sexual assault on campus.

basically with bouncers." Thus, it is unclear whether students may have been more likely to engage in problematic drinking to cope with discrimination if they had been able to have access to opportunities for drinking. Students discussed other methods of coping with perceived discriminatory experiences such as

- "just kind of process it in my head,"
- "talk to my friends,"
- "pray about it," and
- working harder academically to "prove them wrong".

Eight students reported that the way they first contend with a discriminatory event is to "just try to process." Dominick said, "So, a lot of times, I try to, first of all, vet it. I go through what I call a vetting process first, where I go home and I'm thinking it through, before I actually verbalize a lot of this stuff." Many students reported first processing the incident on their own, then seeking out friends, family, or their natural mentors to talk through perceived discriminatory experiences. Christina talked about coping with perceived discriminatory experiences through prayer, though Christina was the only person who reported doing so. Coping by working harder academically was the most common way of coping with perceived discriminatory experiences reported by students.

In particular, coping by working harder academically was a strategy the majority (n=9) of students utilized when they felt as though they were being discriminated against in the academic context. Serena talked about how such experiences made her work harder, "So, I try and make these experiences very, I try to turn them to the positive, so use it as almost motivation, so when my group members thought that I couldn't do certain things, basically proving them wrong in various situations…" Teresa was the only student who mentioned that experiences of

discrimination actually made her both work harder in some instances, but also become more disengaged in other instances. Teresa reported working harder in classes because "it's just a motivator to shut people up." For example, she described an experience in which a student had discriminatory things to say and how she worked hard so that she could use the course material to challenge the things the other student was saying in class,

> So wanting to shut her up and be able to properly explain why the things she was saying were discriminatory and didn't make sense and just wrong – I would always take notes on the reading and make sure I always got what whatever we were going to talk about because I couldn't take her just spewing out lies and nobody being able to retort to them.

Although Teresa described coping by working harder academically and speaking up in class to challenge incorrect ideas of other students, she also described how a negative racial climate has led her disengage in class at times. In particular, she described how she had not done as well as she could have in some classes due to lack of participation.

> I know there have been classes where I've gotten bad participation grades just because I don't want to talk. Not that I'm afraid – well, I guess that is fear – just because I don't want to talk because I'm the only Black person in the room, and it's already uncomfortable in that sense. It's annoying, I think, to have your statement or opinion questioned or have people look at you funny if they disagree. For a lot of my classes, material is to where you can disagree. You can take your own opinion away from this, but it's annoying and frustrating. Not frightening, but I would rather just get the bad participation grade than have to deal with all that.

Other students talked about "not being able to focus on school" after the incident of excessive force against a fellow Black student. Veronica said, "Well, but especially – sorry I keep going

back to the [incident of excessive force], but that was probably the biggest thing I can think of. It was really difficult, especially right after it happened. It was almost impossible to concentrate in class. All day, I couldn't – I was barely paying attention. I was so scared [of being Black]. Yeah. It was just hard." Vanessa expressed similar feelings,

> Yeah, it was really hard for me to focus on school that week or that two weeks. I just – I couldn't tell the professors that I'm crying because of this [significant profiling] incident because they'd be like 'bad things happen to people' and that was a very polarizing event, I think, for [university].

Vanessa felt her professors would dismiss the event and not be able to see it as an incident of racial injustice. It seemed she would rather not seek out professors as opposed to seeking them out and being dismissed or misunderstood.

Natural Mentoring Relationships in the Context of Discrimination

Students were asked how, if at all, natural mentors help them in the context of perceived experiences of discrimination. Students reported that natural mentors helped them in several ways including telling them to

- ignore it and just focus on themselves and their schoolwork: "just do you,"
- being proud that they've overcome discrimination and are still succeeding,
- educate others, and
- find others like them to help insulate them from discriminatory experiences: "make Black friends"
- persist

Serena discussed how Tonya, her natural mentor, generally tries to give positive advice. "Like, it's very just like, 'Those people are crazy.' It's whatever. Basically, 'Just do you.'" In this

instance, Tonya is telling Serena that those individuals do not matter and that Serena should continue on with her academics. Jermaine stated that his natural mentor, Uncle Gus, has told him that he should "be more proud of yourself that you had to overcome them," which may be a way of reframing how one makes sense of discriminatory experiences. Students also described how their natural mentors gave them advice about how to succeed academically and not let the negative racial climate cause them to fail. Sean described the discussions that he and his natural mentor, Monica have as it pertains to a space that wasn't "built for people who look like us,"

> Talking about how we kind of navigate the space in order to effectively try to be in that percent that does have [job] offers after graduation. That's what a lot of us came here for, to seek employment and get a great education, a premium education.

Vanessa also described the actions that she recalls her natural mentor, Janay, saying she should take,

> Make black friends. You don't have to be by yourself and also don't be afraid to talk about it with non-black people because it's not like it's just a Black issue. So, if I just talk to black people about it, we'll talk about it to ourselves and then we'll be angry and then nothing will happen. It's kind of like make Black friends, of course, to have that area where you still have something but then also not to be afraid to talk about it with people who may not even – who may not agree.

Vanessa was describing two actions that Tonya advised her to take: make friends of your race but also, do not be afraid to engage in conversations about racial issues with non-Blacks because improving the racial climate is not something Black students can do on their own. Janay told her that by making Black friends, Vanessa would have a support system and that by talking to non-Blacks, she may be able to help change the racial climate on campus.

Natural mentors were also asked how, if at all, they helped students in the context of discrimination. Natural mentors reported advising students to "give them [the perpetrators of discrimination] the benefit of the doubt," not react emotionally, and educate others.

Gus and Nadia spoke about "giving them [perpetrators of discrimination] the benefit of the doubt" and not automatically assuming that the act was discriminatory. Nadia stated that the reason to do this is that "even though everybody doesn't always deserve the benefit of the doubt, I think it's the easiest way to kind of diffuse the situation." Another strategy imparted by natural mentors was to remain calm. Omar spoke about how "reacting isn't always the best thing to do" and Yvonne thought that it was best "not being emotional right away." Yvonne described telling her mentee what she does in similar situations which was trying to be "open minded about it and not being angry right away, and just trying to see how I can better the situation, or how I can learn from the situation." Janay stated that she advises her mentee, Vanessa, to educate others

> we have a role in education. Again, people are gonna have questions. It's frustrating but you know, I get it. I just happen to be the one to explain things. But that is unfortunately your role in a society where you're not the majority.

Students reported that they were very thoughtful about whether or not to reach out to the natural mentors they nominated for the study to talk about experiences of discrimination. In some cases, students reported not telling their natural mentors about discrimination they experienced due to their desire to protect the natural mentor. For example, when asked if she talked to her natural mentor about discrimination she experienced, Teresa said, "No, not really, just because I don't want to hurt or – not disappoint. I didn't do anything – but sadden or heavy their hearts." Similarly, Dominick expressed a desire to protect Natalie,

> Really, I try not to, because I feel like it would be – I don't wanna depress her, I don't wanna be negative every time I see her. So, I try to keep it fresh. A lot of times, I'm like, okay, let's tell you about something, even if we're talking about race. Because we talk about race a lot, still keeping it on a more 'ha-ha' level. Like, ha-ha, you saw what happened? Ha-ha!

Students also talked about a network of natural mentors beyond just the one natural mentor they nominated to participate in the study. For example, Jermaine talked about identifying the other natural mentors who could help in the specific way he needed help,

> But, if it's something like I felt like I was discriminated against, I don't really need immediate help with that, nor do I think that he [Uncle Gus] can immediately help me. So, in those sorts of situations [campus resource for Black students] might be a much better resource than my uncle. Would he give reassuring words? Yeah. But, I don't really have problems with being depressed or stuff like that, so the reassuring words are great, but I'm more so if something happened and I need remediable action, he can't help with that.

Christina echoed a similar sentiment since her natural mentor was her older sister who lived in Kenya. They communicated through a mobile chat application but there was a significant time difference, which made it difficult for Christina to get an immediate response from her mentor when she needed it. Christina said,

> In the moment I mostly just take the time to process it in my head before talking to anybody. If it's something really big and it's something that I get really mad about hearing then I'll probably text somebody where I can get an instant reply, so maybe like my best friend. Or just like pray about it I guess.

Students and natural mentors alike also discussed messages of persistence in the context of discriminatory experiences. Persistence messages acknowledge that discrimination may happen, but that it is important to continue to work hard and persevere in the face of discrimination. These messages pertain to not allowing experiences of discrimination or marginalization to distract or prevent students from succeeding academically. Most students (*n*=8) reported receiving messages of persistence from their natural mentors. Lisa described advice Omar has given her in persistence, "You're at [university] for a reason. Focus on school. Focus on what you want to do when you grow up, and you'll get there either way, with or without the stigma." Similarly, Jermaine recalled a time his Uncle Gus gave him this message:

> …You should expect that these things [experiences of discrimination] will happen again in the future, but they shouldn't deter you from continuing to do as well as you've done, and continuing to strive for complete excellence. These things are going to happen in life. Consider them hurdles. Consider them milestones. But, they're not hurdles or milestones that you can't overcome.

Most natural mentors (*n*=7) reported having conversations about persistence with their mentees. Nadia, Felicia's natural mentor (and also a mentor to many Black students on campus according to Nadia), also spoke about messages of persistence that she gave to many students,

> They're on Yik Yak and they're on these other social media outlets and they were like frustrated, and they're angry and they're distracted. And they're like, 'oh, I can't turn my paper in'. And I'm like, 'this is not the way to do this. Because the people who are making those comments, it's chilling. They're doing their work. They're not thinking about you, and you need to not be thinking about them, too. Because otherwise, you're the one who is taken away from the work that you actually came here to do. And so then

> if you really do believe that these things are racist and meant to kind of keep you down, that's exactly what they're doing; you're giving them that power in your life, and we need not do that.'

Nadia reported delivering this message not only to Felicia, but also to many students who were feeling discouraged and unable to get their work done. Her message was to persist and not let these discriminatory experiences prevent them from completing their schoolwork.

In addition to conversations in the context of perceived discriminatory experiences, natural mentors and students engaged in varying conversations about race. See Table 9 for a full list of students' reported discriminatory experiences, their ways of coping, and natural mentor's messages in the context of discrimination.

Racial Socialization Messages from Natural Mentors

As hypothesized, the different messages present in parental racial socialization were also present in the conversations between students and their natural mentors.

Cultural socialization. Cultural socialization is the promotion of cultural values, cultural knowledge education, and practice of cultural traditions (Hughes et al., 2006). Cultural socialization was the most commonly reported form of racial socialization. Half of the participants who were interviewed (n=6) reported receiving cultural socialization messages from their natural mentors. Cultural socialization messages included talking about important people and events from Black History and having conversations that were directly meant to instill racial pride. Dominick reported being able to talk to his natural mentor about the historical relevance as it relates to current events when others do not necessarily realize that events like the civil rights movement were not that long ago, "having her remind me of, okay, this is founded in historical relevance, and you're not making it up." Dominick reports that these conversations happened in

particular because of microaggresions in the classroom. Christina talked about how her relationship with Yvonne, her natural mentor who is her older sister, helped to instill racial pride, "So for me like, I like my skin color as well. I'm like super happy and some people don't, which is really sad. I'm like proud of where I come from and who I've become. I've definitely become more confident than I was and I think a big part of that has to do with my sisters just because they are the same way." She reported being happy with her skin tone due to modeling by her older sisters.

Half of natural mentors reported having conversations wherein they emphasized cultural socialization messages. Natalie, Dominick's natural mentor was able to reach many students with messages about important people and events in Black history via a weekly newsletter that she contributed to through her position in the [African American Affairs Resource Office; AARO], "And so every week that the [name of electronic newsletter] comes out, we pick some events from history from that week. And so it's just kind of a capsuled way to kind of sneak in the learning." Monica, Sean's natural mentor, also reported engaging in cultural socialization practices as it relates to music by Black musicians and how that influenced the Black community,

> …we talk about who really changed hip hop? Who made it better for us? We talk about how do you feel about Hendrix and Marley? Bob Marley is one of our favorites. So we're always discussing like he talked about a lot of things people didn't want to really talk about. And everybody didn't like everything he had to say and stuff like that.

Similarly, natural mentors who were not part of the university also imparted messages of cultural socialization. Jermaine's natural mentor, Uncle Gus, reported talking to Jermaine about important topics in Black History,

> So we have, since Jermaine has been a very young man, always discussed the impact of the Civil Rights movement, in particular some of the leaders. I told Jermaine, when I was a freshman, my research paper was 'Dr. King got us to the lunch counter, but we couldn't pay for the meal.' And it was one of those aspects of looking at the fact that desegregation was such a big part of Dr. King's message, and the economics of it didn't come into play until the very end.

Giving back. The theme of giving back emerged during interviews with 3 natural mentors. Giving back refers to conversation that the natural mentor and student have about how students should give back and bring others from their racial group up with them. Giving back messages appear to be an extension of broader cultural socialization messages and reflect adherence to collectivist over individualist values (Hunter & Joseph, 2010). Natalie, Dominick's natural mentor said,

> I stand on the shoulders of many, many people just to have the ability to be here at [university]. And I really respect that. And that is something I don't forget. So one of the things that I talk about with them (students, Dominick, and everyone) is how are you going to pay it forward? You have a responsibility to bring somebody along. It is not good enough for you to come to the [university], and you graduate and have your piece of paper and place to go, and you haven't made some sort of space or helped maintain a space that's been here.

Natalie described telling Dominick to remember to help others in the same way that he had been helped. Monica also reported similar conversations with her mentee, Sean, "All about giving back to our community, and Sean is really big on that. Like never forget your roots. You never

forget where you came from, and you always – they tend to call us crabs in a barrel[2]. But we have to kind of reverse that standard and give back rather than just like oh, we made it on our own."

Monica elaborated by saying that by being "at the table" you will be able to "create change" such that you will be in the position to "bring others up with you" and change the narrative. These conversations mentioned by Natalie and Monica take the idea of giving back and frame it such that an individual shouldn't forget their more humble beginnings once they become successful. Natural mentors suggested that one way to demonstrate a connection to one's own humble beginnings was by reaching out to help others from one's own community who also are experiencing disadvantage. Research has found that "standing on the shoulders of others" and a desire to build shoulders for others have been named as strategies for coping with perceived experiences of discrimination (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Natalie describes that "because of the nature of the system" other students may go through the same things as they did, but by giving back, they can "make it better for others."

Preparation for bias. Preparation for bias refers to messages informing youth that they may experience discrimination from other racial/ethnic groups. These messages are provided before a discriminatory event has happened and are intended to help youth cope with such experiences. A few (*n*=3) students reported receiving preparation for bias messages from their natural mentors. Vanessa described what her natural mentor told her in preparation for her time at the PWI. Her natural mentor was an older cousin who had attended a PWI. Vanessa reported being warned by her natural mentor about experiencing bias at the university, "She was like be prepared for this. Be prepared to be the only Black girl in class and whatever you say could be

[2] The idea that people in a marginalized community would bring someone who is becoming successful down because of jealousy.

either watched a lot more than usual or just disregarded, not disregarded but seen as less serious."

Six natural mentors reported imparting preparation for bias messages to their mentees. Omar described a conversation he had with his mentee, Lisa, about negative stereotypes that others may hold against her in the academic context, "…– how being a minority can affect your performance in the classroom a lot of times just because you're not really expected to ... excel as much as other students being a minority." Tonya, a former student from the institution, also reported preparing her mentee, Serena, for biased experiences she would likely face at school,

> well, I remember the first time I met her, it was before we got to school. And she was asking me, I guess, what it's like being at an all white school and going – I guess, interactions between Black and White students. And I was just honest and upfront with her and I told her, it's not the case for everyone but how I feel, especially within my friend group, is that in the beginning I had some white friends and by the end of second semester it was kinda just like they were off doing their own thing and they just kind of like grew apart or they'd start blowing me off or whatever happened.

Expectations and Consequences. Similar to messages of preparation for bias, some context specific messages that I have termed *expectations and consequences* emerged**.** Expectations and Consequences messages aimed to warn Black students that their actions may be judged by different standards and that any risky behavior they engage in may be accompanied by harsher punishments. A few students (*n*=3) reported receiving these kinds of messages from their natural mentors. Jermaine recalled a message from his Uncle Gus,

> It might be Tuesday night, and everyone else is getting drunk, but don't think that's something that you should do also. Just because they're all happy and going out together,

> and you think it's all great, they can show up the next morning and go to class, and no one will look at them any differently. That may not be the same result for you."

Five natural mentors reported delivering messages about differential expectations and consequences to their mentees. Nancy, Michelle's mentor, reported, "We do have conversations about basically you can't do the same things. You can't expect to get away with some of the same things. Not that she would try, because she's very good. But, you know, just be very conscious of yourself." Nadia, Felicia's natural mentor who worked at the university, also reported imparting similar messages to her students,

> …it could be from, you know, thinking about what's business casual. It's like okay, if this is business casual attire, you want to make sure that you're dressed appropriately; like you don't have the same – you can't show up in a skirt with and a button-up with flip flops on. That's not going to be received the same way that maybe some of your classmates might.

Nadia told her students that certain types of attire selections would be perceived more negatively if worn by Black students in comparison to White students.

Promotion of mistrust. Promotion of mistrust refers to messages that one should be wary or mistrustful of interactions with other racial/ethnic groups. Very few (*n*=2) students reported receiving promotion of mistrust messages from their natural mentors. Teresa described a message given to her from her aunt, "Just being careful, I guess, around White people just because – I don't know. Just with everything that's going on, I think, in any context with race relations pretty much anywhere, things are still intense." Teresa's aunt warned her to be careful around White people in the context of broader racial tensions across the nation. Though a couple of mentees mentioned receiving messages about mistrust from their mentors, none of the natural

mentors reported imparting promotion of mistrust messages to their mentees, however I was not able to interview Teresa's natural mentor.

Egalitarianism and silence about race. Egalitarianism and Silence about race messages encourage a focus on commonalities between groups rather than an emphasis on racial differences. These types of messages also promote the view that race/ethnicity is not an appropriate topic to discuss (i.e., silence about race). Sonia is the only student who reported receiving egalitarian messages from her natural mentor. Sonia also is the only student who reported no experiences of discrimination. Sonia's mentor, Kristen (the only White natural mentor nominated for the study), was her boss. Sonia described their conversations about race that have been helpful for her "I mean, like, it's almost like when we talk about it, it's almost like we're color blind kind of like, because we both feel the same way about some of the stuff, and she, I mean, it's nice to know that she doesn't have any stereotypes in her head about Black people." No natural mentors reported imparting egalitarian messages to their mentees or being silent about race, however I was not able to interview Kristen, Sonia's mentor.

In addition to the four types of messages of racial socialization that have been documented in the literature, another unique racial socialization theme emerged. For the current study, I've named this theme *shared understanding*.

Shared understanding. Shared understanding was a component of conversations between students and their natural mentors that was present throughout. Shared understanding refers to the absence of explicit racial messages in conversations due to a shared understanding of racial issues between natural mentors and their mentees which facilitates connection. When a shared understanding exists, race can become part of their conversation implicitly. Six students reported a shared understanding of racial issues with their natural mentors. Serena said, "So I

don't know if we talk about race very up-front. I feel like it may be something that we talk about and we don't even realize it."

Similarly, six mentors reported a shared understanding with their mentees. Nadia said, "Because I think being black, we're always talking about race, even when we're not talking about race". Monica also felt the same way in her conversations with Sean,

> I mean, I think a lot of stuff comes up. And it's not even – its just part of our every day like this is our conversation. I mean, we don't really use the phrase like *the man* or something, but you know we're concerned about it, and we're on a common ground like we know what happened. You know how that went and that kind of mentality about it. And we talk about it.

Role of Natural Mentoring Relationships

Role modeling. Natural mentors played many different roles in the students' lives. One way in which students discussed benefiting from relationships with natural mentors was through viewing them as role models. Felicia said,

> Just her presence and like the position of power that she's in herself makes me want to – being herself is like the best advice for me because she's from [a large Northeastern city] but on the Black side so it's not that fancy. And she has a PhD, working at [University], the first in her family. So I'm just like; if she can do it I can do it.

Similarly, Vanessa stated that Tonya, her natural mentor "living the life that like I possibly want to live and she is like an inspiration for me" and Sean said of Monica, "I look up to her."

Source of Understanding. In addition to being role models, most students (*n*=9) reported that the adult they nominated was someone who "gets it." Different from his parents, Jermaine explained that, "In talking to my dad, he's doing more of the talking, and I'm doing

more of the listening. With my uncle, I can sometimes talk more, and he'll listen more. It will be a more even exchange of dialogue". Felicia reported that because she is a first generation college student, her mom "she'll have the same frustration but because she doesn't have the educational background she'll just be like; oh, that's just the way things are. But she doesn't understand why things are the way they are." However, with her natural mentor, Nadia, she was able to talk about "social constructs that impact us."

Dominick also felt as though he could have conversations that were more academic with Natalie, his natural mentor, "with Natalie, I can talk on a more academic level. With my Dad, he has some college experience. But, I'm talking more on a, just a regular type vernacular type of conversation." Similarly, Sean noted that he and Monica's perspectives are more alike than that of him and his mother or grandparents, "I would say racial conversations with my grandparents or my mom are more 'be appreciative conversations.' The conversations I would have with Monica are more proactive, 'how do you move now?' conversations." Sean reported that because his mother and grandparents did not have "certain freedoms or liberties" that he possesses, they stressed the importance of appreciating the freedoms he has. With Monica, Sean was able to talk about what else can be done to move things forward for the Black community.

Connecting with Resources. Natural mentors also helped connect students with other important university resources specific to Black students. Serena talked about the most valuable resource that her natural mentor provided her in her first year,

> So when I was entering the university, I had a lot of questions about what to do, because I was a first year and I had no idea what was going on. But her introducing me to the AARO and their resources and what they could do for me, honestly I don't know where I would be if I didn't know [AARO] at all, because that's literally been probably one of the

> most influential things, like, during my time here at the university. And a lot of the organizations and the opportunities that I get come from [AARO].

As a first year Black student, Serena didn't know what resources were available to her. Tonya, her natural mentor who was an older Black student, was able to direct her to a place that could offer her resources and opportunities. Natural mentors also directed students to off-campus resources. Dominick and Felicia stated that their natural mentors helped them to seek out mental health services. Dominick said,

> …she helped me to make that decision too. To actually go to counseling. Because, for an African American, counseling, you're seen as defective, if you go to counseling. So, just being able to have those moments, saying look, we need to be able to – you've been through a lot. Talk to somebody that's qualified in that particular thing.

This seemed especially true in the first year, but students reported that natural mentors remained as resources throughout the students' time at the university. Sean said of his natural mentor, Monica,

> …she more so tries to make sure, although she wasn't in the [same major], so from a literal pointing to resources academically. She's not an academic advisor in a sense, but it's like, alright, if you feel this way reflecting on what are you doing to make you not feel this way. Have you spoken to your professor? Have you gone to student services? If you're not getting something, don't let that insecurity of not getting it make you stay in a box because you feel like everybody else gets it. This is your education and your life. You've got to take advantage of it, so access everything you've got.

In this instance Sean was describing how Monica helped direct him to resources, particularly when he was having difficulty in classes or feeling insecure.

Natural mentors also acknowledged that they directed students to resources. Yvonne, Vanessa's natural mentor, said "I always told her if she has a question or is not sure of what she should do, she could always talk to me and we can look into it together, and we can find a way to resolve the issue." Monica, Sean's natural mentor, stressed the importance of being seen at the AARO, "I definitely promoted going to see those, even if you don't have a problem. Just let them know who you are, and you're safe, and get, like, you know, seen around." This was of particular importance in case of "trouble… they know who you are and have a face with the name." Two of the institutional natural mentors, Natalie and Nadia, described actively directing their mentees, and many other Black students on campus, to particular resources, "I refer students to resources all the time. So definitely, I'm sure I've encouraged all of them."

Discussion

During emerging adulthood, Black Americans are at greater risk of initiating alcohol use relative to other developmental periods (Johnston et al., 2014). Previous research has identified perceived experiences of discrimination as a contributing factor to this trend (Guthrie et al., 2002; Mays et al., 2007). As Black emerging adults find themselves in increasingly White settings, they may be susceptible to increased experiences of discrimination, and thus, may be more likely to engage in frequent problematic alcohol use as a way to cope with experiences of discrimination. For Black college students at an elite PWI, this may be associated with decreased academic success. Research has demonstrated that the presence of a natural mentor is associated with academic success and reduced engagement in risky health behaviors for many youth (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Zimmerman et al., 2002). The purpose of the current study was to determine whether and how natural mentoring relationships might influence Black students'

alcohol use and academic success in the context of discriminatory experiences, via a mixed methods approach.

Overall, the findings did not support the study's hypotheses. Contrary to previous research (O'Hara et al., 2014), I did not find any associations between perceived discriminatory experiences and problematic drinking. Instead, I found tentative evidence that students' perceived experiences of discrimination were positively associated with GPA in multigroup correlations but only among students who had a mentor (compared to those who did not have a mentor), as well as for those students with at least one race-matched mentor (compared with those students who did not have any race-matched mentors). That is to say, the positive association between perceived experiences of discrimination and GPA only existed among students who had a mentor, and that association appeared to be driven by students with at least one race-matched mentor.

Fortunately, the way I designed my mixed methods study allowed me to use the findings from my quantitative analyses to inform the interview questions I used in the qualitative portion of the study. Thus, I was able to ask questions aimed at directly understanding why students who experienced more discrimination may be doing better academically and why this appeared to only be true among Black students with at least one Black mentor. Interviews with many (n=9) of the students who experienced discrimination reported that perceived experiences of discrimination served as "motivators," urging them to work harder academically to "prove [others] wrong" as a coping mechanism. Also, much of the advice that students received from their Black natural mentors in regards to dealing with discrimination had to do with not letting it be a distractor, staying focused on schoolwork, celebrating their accomplishments and ability to

succeed in the face of challenges, and connecting with other people and resources who could help insulate them from additional discriminatory experiences.

Another important finding that emerged from the open-ended interviews pertained to a possible explanation for why students were not engaging in problematic drinking to cope with discriminatory experiences. The open-ended interview questions about students' experiences of discrimination allowed students to talk more in-depth about a variety of discriminatory experiences. The survey questions just asked about frequency of feeling uncomfortable due to one's race in various contexts; however, through the open-ended interviews, students were able to elaborate on specific discriminatory experiences. Interestingly, the most frequent experiences of blatant discrimination happened in virtual and physical social spaces. Students reported being denied access to fraternity parties or local bars due to their race. Given that study participants were mostly under 21, their only way of accessing alcohol was via parties where alcohol was being served (or using fake identification to gain access to bars). This finding was somewhat unexpected but may be one possible explanation as to why students in this sample were not drinking to cope. I had incorrectly assumed that Black students would have just as many opportunities to drink as their White counterparts and given previous research documenting that alcohol use is ubiquitous among college students (NIAAA, 2014), it seemed reasonable to examine problematic drinking as a coping response to discrimination among Black students. Instead, I found that Black students were experiencing discrimination that may have prevented them from being able to access alcohol. Thus, my finding that students were engaging in low levels of drinking overall and were not reporting using alcohol as a means to cope with discrimination may just be explained by an inability to access alcohol.

Importantly, students described a variety of different negative race-related experiences including an awareness of negative stereotypes held about Blacks, microaggressions (especially in the academic context), and blatant racial discrimination (especially in virtual and physical social spaces). Though students did not report drinking to cope, they did provide extensive information about other ways in which they coped with discrimination such as internally processing the event, talking to supportive others (e.g., natural mentors), and working harder academically. Natural mentors were important sources of support in the context of perceived discriminatory experiences, though many students also drew upon an extended network of support in order to contend with these experiences. Beyond conversations that were held with natural mentors in the context of specific instances of racial discrimination, natural mentors and their mentees reported actively engaging in conversations about race where natural mentors were able to intentionally engage in racial socialization processes. Whereas previous research has found that the presence of natural mentoring relationships has been associated with higher levels of racial identity development among Black adolescents (Hurd et al., 2012), this was the first study to explicitly examine whether natural mentors intentionally engage in racial socialization practices with their mentees. Findings indicate that natural mentors provide messages consistent with those documented in the literature on parental racial socialization practices (Hughes et al., 2006), but also impart unique messages (see below for further elaboration). Moreover, students reported several other ways in which natural mentors served a key function in promoting their academic success including serving as role models, sources of understanding and validation, and connecting students to other key resources. Below, I discuss each of these findings in detail.

Qualitative findings revealed varied experiences of perceived discrimination among study participants that were not well captured in the quantitative findings. These results support

previous research that has found that participants are more likely to report experiences of discrimination in qualitative interviews as compared to on quantitative survey measures of perceived discrimination (Berkel et al., 2009). More notably, students were able to elaborate on specific experiences and the profundity of these experiences. Upon arrival at the elite PWI, students reported becoming more aware of their Blackness and negative stereotypes that others hold about Blacks. Finding themselves repeatedly in situations where they were the only or one of very few Black faces in a crowd of Whites led the salience of their race to increase dramatically. Students reported that increased racial salience also corresponded to them developing a greater critical consciousness and awareness of issues facing the Black community (i.e., "staying woke"). Students descriptions of increased racial salience along with their descriptions of developing a greater critical consciousness may correspond with the "encounter" phase in Cross' Nigrescence Theory (Cross, 1991). The encounter stage posits that individuals face an event or series of events that may lead them to question the role of race in American society. As described by students in the current study, the context of a PWI appeared to make encounters more likely. In addition, during emerging adulthood individuals are engaged in racial/ethnic identity exploration (Phinney, 1992). Thus, contextual and developmental factors may be intersecting and contributing to students' increased racial salience and development of critical consciousness.

Students reported frustration and feelings of isolation because of the underrepresentation of Black students and faculty. Previous research suggests that a lack of students and faculty of color contributes to students perceiving a negative racial climate and experiencing "onlyness" (Harper et al., 2011). According to Harper et al., (2011), "onlyness" refers to the psychoemotional burden of navigating a space that is occupied by limited numbers of an

individual's racial/ethnic group. In the current study, students reported frustration that appeared to stem from a sense of onlyness, as well as other factors that contributed to their perception of a negative racial climate at the university.

One such factor included students' reports that the PWI's administration was disingenuous in its response to issues pertaining to Black students. Administration's disingenuousness became most salient to students after the occurrence of a significant incident of excessive force used by law enforcement against a fellow Black student. One student reported the sense that the university wanted to "get back to business as usual, instead of actually changing it or fixing the problem." Students and mentors alike noted that due to the university's entrenchment in southern history and traditions, the seemingly insincere response from the university was to be expected. Thus, students seemed to be equating "southern traditions" with slavery or other notions of racial inequality. In turn, students reported feeling negatively about the legacy and traditions that are fundamental to the university system as a whole. Embedded within the institution's traditions is the historical mistreatment of Black Americans, which students reported goes largely unacknowledged, thereby enhancing students' sense of administration mistrust and negative climate. Indeed, previous research has indicated that the historical legacy of a higher learning institution plays an important role in campus climate (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). The negative racial climate at the students' university was a commonly cited stressor for participants. Beyond the negative racial climate, students reported many specific experiences of discriminatory treatment in academic and social spaces. Students reported being completely shocked by the many overt displays of discrimination they encountered, particularly on Yik Yak where they felt many of their fellow White students seized

the opportunity to air their prejudiced perspectives about the inferiority of Blacks. Students reported being highly distressed by the discrimination that they were exposed to at the PWI, many of them stating that they had never previously had such experiences prior to enrolling at the PWI.

Students coped with discriminatory experiences in many different ways. Students reported coping with perceived experiences of discrimination by internally processing the event, talking to others, and working harder academically. The most commonly reported method of coping with perceived discriminatory experiences was to work harder academically to "prove them [others] wrong." Researchers have termed this the "prove them wrong" syndrome (Moore, Madison-Colmore, & Smith, 2003) and found it to be a motivating factor for Black students' academic achievement (Cokely, 2003; Griffin, 2006). It may even be that working harder academically in the context of perceived discriminatory experiences contributes to reduced instances of problematic drinking. In order to be academically successful, students may have felt less able to engage in normative college behaviors, such as binge drinking (NIAAA, 2014). Further, messages of *expectations and consequences* from natural mentors may have also contributed to fewer instances of problematic drinking. It has been documented that the consequences for engaging in alcohol use are much graver for Black Americans as compared to their White counterparts (Greenfield, 1998; Zapolski, Pederson, McCarthy, & Smith, 2014). Thus, natural mentors' messages about different expectations and consequences for Black emerging adults may be due in part to mentors' awareness of the risks associated with alcohol consumption for Black Americans. Natural mentors' messages pertaining to differential *expectations and consequences* may have contributed to fewer instances of problematic drinking and helped to contribute to the students' academic success in the context of perceived

discrimination. However, I do not feel that I was properly able to test this hypothesis given students' lack of access to opportunities to engage in problematic drinking.

According to student reports, natural mentors served as important resources who helped students to contend with experiences of perceived discrimination at their PWI. Natural mentors engaged in forms of racial socialization that were specific to the academic context. For example, Omar, Lisa's natural mentor said, "Focus on school. Focus on what you want to do when you grow up, and you'll get there either way, with or without the stigma." Messages of *persistence* emerged as the most commonly endorsed point in the context of discrimination by both natural mentors and students. Discussions around *persistence* centered on disregarding experiences of discrimination in order for students to attain the goal of earning a college degree. Students reported discussing with their natural mentors the ways in which they could "navigate the space" that was not built for "people who may look like us." Interestingly, these conversations did not happen in response to a specific discriminatory event students reported but as a larger dialogue that students and their natural mentors engaged in regarding a shared understanding that discrimination exists and that students must not let it prevent them from succeeding.

Consistent with previous research, students viewed their natural mentors as role models (Rhodes, 2005). For students with natural mentors at the institution, having Black role models in positions of power was particularly important. Seeing successful Black faculty and staff showed students "if [my natural mentor] can do it, I can do it [be successful in their field of study]." In addition to role models, students also reported natural mentors as being someone who "gets it" which is also consistent with research (Rhodes, 2005). In particular, students reported that natural mentors shared similar views on current racial issues, which differed from their parents' views. For some of the students, their natural mentors were individuals with whom they could

relate about academic issues, something they could not do with their parents, particularly for students whose parents had less formal education. Importantly, natural mentors also played a pivotal role in connecting students with additional resources. Previous research has speculated that one mechanism through which natural mentoring relationships may help students to better cope with stressors is by connecting them with additional resources that they can leverage to not succumb to the toxic effects of stressors (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010). Findings from the current study support this notion and suggest that connecting students with additional resources is a central function of natural mentoring relationships, particularly in regards to promoting Black students' academic success at a PWI.

Although natural mentors consistently served as an important source of support for students, they were neither the only source of support, nor were they usually the main support. Students were savvy in utilizing all of their networks to garner assistance in navigating the experiences at the PWI. In the present study, students who reported that they were not regularly reaching out to natural mentors discussed alternative approaches to coping with perceived experiences of discrimination. Strategies included processing the event, seeking out other supportive adults, talking to friends, and utilizing resources on campus. Processing events internally and talking about events with friends seemed to be especially common for students when they recalled ambiguous discriminatory situations (e.g., microaggressions).

Students and natural mentors reported either receiving or engaging in all four types of messages of racial socialization as found in the parenting literature: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism or silence about race (Hughes et al., 2006). Though content of the messages were mostly consistent, there was a difference in the frequency in which natural mentors and students reported engaging in these conversations. As

expected, students (n=6) reported cultural socialization, or practices that instill racial pride, as the type of racial socialization messages that their natural mentors emphasized the most. However, this is discrepant with natural mentors' (n=6) reports that preparation for bias, or the preparation for discriminatory experiences, is the form of racial socialization that they most often reported using.

It may be that the discrepant frequencies of different racial socialization messages as reported by natural mentors and students are due to natural mentors imparting of messages unbeknownst to the students. This is in line with research on parental racial socialization in which children may miss or misinterpret some types of racial socialization messages from their parents (Hughes, Rivas, Foust, Hagelskamp, & Way 2008). It may be that students are not currently aware of the racial socialization messages, but as they get older and/or receive similar messages more consistently, they may become more attuned to their relevance. Because natural mentors are older and more experienced adults (Rhodes, et al., 1994), they may impart messages that have been helpful in their own lives while students may not realize the importance of these messages until later in their lives. It is also possible that different messages hold different salience for mentors versus mentees. Natural mentors may remember certain messages as being more powerful or central to the conversations they have with mentees whereas mentees may have been more strongly influenced by other themes or topics of conversation.

Among the least frequently reported messages by students were messages of promotion of mistrust, egalitarianism, and silence about race. Natural mentors did not specifically report endorsing these messages. However, the natural mentors of the two students who did report messages with such content were not interviewed. It may be that these messages may have emerged if those natural mentors had been able to participate in the study. Notably, the only

student who nominated a White mentor and reported conflicting feelings about her racial identity was the student who reported receiving messages of egalitarianism from her mentor.

In addition to racial socialization messages found in the parenting literature, natural mentors and students engaged in other forms of racial socialization messages. Natural mentors imparted messages that I have named in the present study *shared understanding* and *giving back*.

According to student and natural mentor reports, *shared understanding* refers to the ability to communicate about race-related issues without having to explicitly talk about them. As part of shared understanding, students and natural mentors have conversations where they both understand the meaning of race and its role in life events, and are able to connect because of some things being implied (not explicitly stated). Additionally, shared understanding may also include conversations that build on a shared understanding, so less needs to be said explicitly; however, the meaning is still conferred.

Natural mentors may also have been relying on the message to emerge implicitly through their own example. Giving back is included as a form of racial socialization since natural mentors described a sense of shared responsibility for other members of one's racial group in these messages. Similar to research that has found that older Black students may intentionally seek out younger Black students to help them navigate the climate (Harper, 2013), a few (n=3) of the natural mentors nominated in the study were older students who sought out these students and helped them navigate the university context. These mentors, along with older mentors who were affiliated with the institution, were intentional with their emphasis of messages pertaining to *giving back* to other Black students.

In discussing messages of *giving back*, natural mentors also mentioned that they stood "on the shoulders of many" in their guidance of the student mentees. In other words, by

mentoring students, they were serving as bolstering shoulders for the students to stand on. Natural mentors reported hoping that students would continue this practice by becoming shoulders for others, as many mentors reported having received such assistance previously themselves. The extant literature indicates that "standing on the shoulders of others" and the associated desire to build shoulders for others have been named as a strategy for coping with perceived experiences of discrimination (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). According to student and mentor reports, it is known by students and faculty alike that students experience discrimination as part of a negative racial climate at the university; thus "standing on the shoulders of others" may be a way to help students navigate this context.

Limitations

Several limitations of the current study should be noted. The sample size for the quantitative portion of the study was relatively small (n=118) and underpowered for the more sophisticated multi-group analyses that I wanted to examine. However, I was intentional about exploring the experiences of Black students at a PWI since Black college students at an elite PWI are an understudied group and I was limited to the subsample of Black students from a larger study focusing on underrepresented students at the university. As rates of Black college student enrollment increase but graduation rates remain much lower than those of their White peers (Nichols, Eberle-Sudre, & Welch, 2016), it is important to learn more about Black students' experiences as they can inform efforts to boost their graduation rates and close the Black-White gap in college completion. Due to the relatively low sample size, the current study combined all Black students in the sample making no distinctions between ethnic groups (e.g., Kenyan, Biracial, Haitian, etc.). Notably, the students of African-immigrant parents (i.e., second generation students) in the study reported similar discrimination experiences to the African American participants suggesting that race may have been a more central factor than ethnicity in

terms of experiences with discrimination. With the focus of the present study being on perceived experiences of discrimination, the second generation students reported that their experiences of discrimination from out-group members was more immediately related to their race than their ethnicity.

Another limitation of the present study lies in the measurement of problematic alcohol use. As a single item measurement, it may not fully capture drinking behaviors that serve as coping strategies for perceived experiences of discrimination. However, measuring problematic drinking is developmentally appropriate, in line with research finding that college students are likely to engage in frequent problematic drinking (NIAAA, 2014). It is likely that a larger limitation was my failure to anticipate the role of racial discrimination in preventing students from being able to access alcohol. An additional limitation was that I was not able to interview students across a frequency of reported discriminatory experiences (i.e., none, low to moderate, high). However, given that participants report differently on qualitative interviews compared to quantitative measures, it is unclear whether or not these differences would emerge across different frequencies of reported discrimination. Additionally, women were overrepresented in both the quantitative and qualitative sample; however, this mirrors the enrollment of Black men and women in American colleges (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Future Directions

This study is one of the first to consider content of conversations between Black college students and natural mentors as they relate to race. I build on previous research that examines how racial socialization messages from parents can offset perceived experiences of discrimination (Fisher & Shaw, 1999). Based on the study's findings there are several potential avenues of future research that emerged. First, future studies should examine the effects of perceived discrimination among Black college students over a more extended period of time. The

current study examines a short period of time in student's lives, and it is important to note that even if some students are motivated to achieve in the face of perceived discrimination, there may be longer-term detrimental effects. Previous research suggests that perceived experiences of discrimination in late adolescence are associated with growth in substance use over more extended periods of time (Hurd et al., 2014b). In the current study, we may see spikes in alcohol use among participants once they reach legal drinking age and have greater access to alcohol. Additionally, it is important to consider outcomes other than problematic drinking and academic success. Perceived experiences of discrimination have been linked to poorer mental and physical health over the lifespan (Hudson, Neighbors, Geronimus, & Jackson, 2015; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Thus, future research should consider alternate health-related outcomes, as well as examining factors over a longer period of time. Though students may be succeeding academically, they may be experiencing decreases in their mental and physical health.

Additionally, qualitative interviews provided a nuanced understanding of Black students' perceived discriminatory experiences at an elite PWI. Future studies should employ qualitative methodologies in addition to standard quantitative measures so as to capture the full range of instances of discrimination that students perceive. Previous research demonstrates that participants are more likely to report experiences of discrimination in qualitative interviews in comparison to quantitative measures of perceived discrimination (Berkel et al., 2009). Although there are valid and reliable scales that measure experiences of discrimination (Williams, Yu, Jackson, & Anderson, 1997), they were not created with the intention for use by Black students at an elite PWI, and thus may not reflect these students' college experiences. In order to learn more about students' discriminatory experiences, more specific instruments may need to be

developed. Further, if universities are interested in fostering the most efficacious supports for Black students at PWIs, an accurate assessment of their discriminatory experiences is warranted and it appears that qualitative interviews are more able to fully capture students' experiences. In the current study, I learned that all students reported experiencing discrimination in virtual spaces. Notably, the survey measure I used did not capture incidents of discrimination in virtual spaces. Thus, information from open-ended interviews can be used to create or revise closed-ended approaches to measuring students' discriminatory experiences. Future research that includes daily diary studies of students' discriminatory experiences and drinking habits may further our understanding of both of these constructs among Black college students at elite PWIs. Previous research has found that daily diary studies of discriminatory experiences and drinking habits are more accurate than retrospective accounts (Hoggard, Byrd, & Sellers, 2015; O'Hara et al., 2014). The frequent reflection involved in daily diary measures allows for more accurate capturing of daily events.

Conclusions

The graduation rate of Black students at the PWI in the present study is among the highest in the nation (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2016). Thus, students in the current study may not be representative of Black students at other PWIs. Though students in the current study were able to succeed academically in the face of discrimination (some even suggesting that discriminatory experiences motivated them to achieve more), this may not be the case for many other Black students attending PWIs. Moreover, though students in the current study were continuing to do well academically, they also reported experiencing substantial distress as a consequence of a negative racial climate and personal experiences with discrimination. This discrimination-related distress coupled with high-effort coping in the academic context may be detrimental to their mental and physical health. Coping characterized

by determination to succeed by working harder in the context of stressors has been termed John Henryism (James, 1994). John Henryism has been associated with negative mental and physical health outcomes among Black Americans over time (Jackson, Knight, & Rafferty, 2010; James, Keenan, Strogatz, Browning, & Garrett, 1992).

Beyond a moral obligation that colleges and universities have to promote the safety and well-being of *all* of their students, institutions of higher education may want to consider how creating a more inclusive environment will also promote increased academic excellence. Considering the success that the students in the current study have experienced in the face of substantial racial stressors, one can only imagine the greatness these students would accomplish if these barriers were removed. As suggested by students, increased numbers of Black students and faculty could help to create a more welcoming environment for Black students. Additionally, institutional efforts to reduce discrimination and promote a more inclusive campus environment are desperately needed. Though natural mentors can play a meaningful role in helping students to navigate a hostile racial climate, inarguably their efforts would be better served if they could focus on enhancing students' academic success without also contending with a hostile racial climate.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants (*N* = 118)

Variable	*n*	%	*M*	*SD*
Age			18.07	.36
Sex				
Male	29	25		
Female	89	75		
First Generation	33	28		
Family Income				
Below $65,000	47	40		
Above $65,000	71	60		
GPA				
Wave 2	114		3.01	.60
Wave 3	106		3.08	.67
Perceived School Discrimination				
Wave 2	106		1.82	.64
Wave 3	99		2.01	.69
Problematic Alcohol Use				
Wave 2	74		1.61	1.15
Wave 3	80		1.51	1.26
Natural Mentor Presence				
Wave 2	89	75		
Wave 3	75	64		
Talked About Race with Natural Mentor				
Wave 2	53	70		
Wave 3	58	77		

Table 2
Natural Mentor Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	%
Frequency of Contact about Race in the Past 30 Days		
Not at all	16	13.6
Once or twice	34	28.8
About once a week	13	11.0
Several times a week	9	7.6
Every day or almost every day	2	1.7
Total	74	62.7
Number of Natural Mentors	Mean: 2.71	SD: 1.37
Wave 3 Natural Mentor Type		
Relative, family friend, neighbor	74	43
Former teacher or extracurricular activity coach/leader or tutor	28	16
Religious Leader, therapist, counselor, employer	16	9
UVA-affiliated adult	56	32
Total	172	
Wave 3 Gender Matched Natural Mentors		
Matched	135	78
Not matched	37	22
Total	172	
Wave 3 Race Matched Natural Mentors		
Matched	127	74
Not matched	45	26
Total	172	

Table 3

Correlations among study variables (N=118, includes all participants who identify as Black or Biracial with at least one Black Parent)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1							
2	.05						
3	-.30**	.07					
4	-.31**	.03	.41**				
5	.20	.07	-.03	-.03			
6	- .01	.05	-.07	-.03	.64**		
7	-.29**	.07	.11	.27**	-.17	-.05	
8	-.21*	-.06	.18	.21*	-.18	-.11	.55**

Note: 1. Gender; 2. Family Income; 3. Wave 2 school-based disc mean; 4. Wave 3 school-based disc mean;
5. Wave 2 problematic alcohol use; 6. Wave 3 problematic alcohol use; 7. Wave 2 GPA; 8. Wave 3 GPA

Table 4

Correlations among study variables among youth with one (or more) natural mentor(s) (n=87, top) and without any natural mentors *(n=31, bottom)*

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
1	-	-.05	.22	.29*	-.29	-.05	.36**	.38**
2	.25	-	-.1	.03	.09	.06	.12	-.06
3	.52**	-.04	-	.43**	-.003	-.04	.19	.20
4	.38*	.04	.41*	-	-.09	-.09	.30*	.24
5	-.28	.35	-.10	.13	-	.65**	-.27	-.23
6	.08	.35	-.11	.27	.58*	-	-.14	-.14
7	.09	.23	.11	.26	-.24	.15	-	.52**
8	-.15	-.15	.18	.17	-.13	-.16	.55**	-

Note: 1. Gender; 2. Family Income; 3. Wave 2 school-based disc mean; 4. Wave 3 school-based disc mean;
5. Wave 2 problematic alcohol use; 6. Wave 3 problematic alcohol use; 7. Wave 2 GPA; 8. Wave 3 GPA

Table 5

Correlations among study variables among youth with at least one race-matched (n=62, top) and without any race-matched natural mentors (n=13, bottom)

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
1	-	-.23	-.21	.32	-.79**	-.04	.86**	.58*
2	-.05	-	-.07	.04	.20	-.02	-.28	-.58*
3	.24	-.09	-	.42	.42	-.40	-.50	-.07
4	.23	.01	.43*	-	-.19	-.46	.12	-.01
5	-.20	.10	-.08	-.07	-	.14	-.87**	-.61
6	-.11	.07	-.06	-.11	.71*	-	.05	-.44
7	.26*	.13	.27*	.34*	-.16	-.16	-	.60*
8	.27*	-.05	.18	.27*	-.16	-.20	.53**	-

Note: 1. Gender; 2. Family Income; 3. Wave 2 school-based disc mean; 4. Wave 3 school-based disc mean;
5. Wave 2 problematic alcohol use; 6. Wave 3 problematic alcohol use; 7. Wave 2 GPA; 8. Wave 3 GPA

Table 6

Correlations among study variables among participants who reported having conversations about race with their natural mentor(s) (n=58, top) and those who do not have conversations about race with their natural mentors (n=16, bottom) in the past 30 days

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
1	-	-.08	.24	.46	-.70*	-.38	.82**	.58*
2	-.05	-	.05	-.37	.45	.36	-.14	.08
3	.15	-.10	-	.48	.09	-.36	-.05	.12
4	.17	.09	.40**	-	-.37	-.32	.33	.42
5	-.10	.10	.03	-.001	-	.71*	-.90**	-.86**
6	.04	.08	.02	-.10	.66**	-	-.45	-.33
7	.14	.14	.19	.24	-.05	-.06	-	.84**
8	.19	-.07	.16	.12	-.05	-.12	.33*	-

Note: 1. Gender; 2. Family Income; 3. Wave 2 school-based disc mean; 4. Wave 3 school-based disc mean;5. Wave 2 problematic alcohol use; 6. Wave 3 problematic alcohol use; 7. Wave 2 GPA; 8. Wave 3 GPA

Table 7
Demographic Characteristics for Qualitative Sample

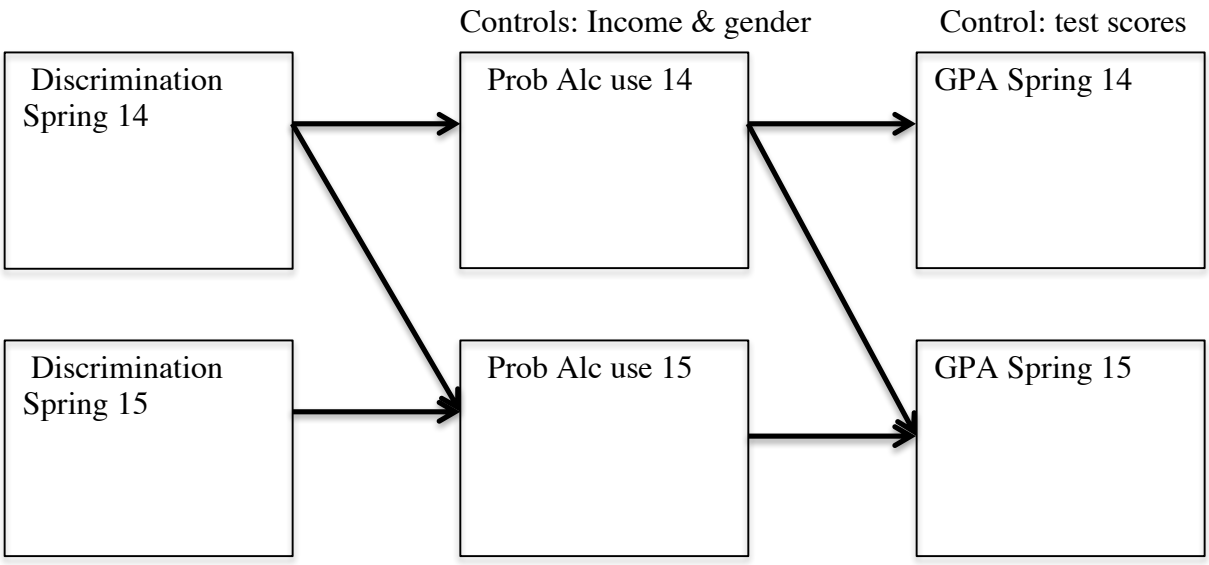
Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Female	9		
Male	3		
First Generation	3		
Family Income			
Below $65,000	4		
Above $65,000	3		
GPA			
Wave 2	7	3.27	.48
Wave 3	7	3.23	.51
Perceived School Discrimination			
Wave 2	7	1.57	.37
Wave 3	7	1.89	.51
Problematic Alcohol Use			
Wave 2	7	1.67	.81
Wave 3	7	1.71	1.11

Table 8
Student and Natural Mentor Demographic Information for Qualitative Sample
*T Denotes transfer student

Student	Student Gender	Student Ethnicity	Year at UVA	Natural Mentor	Natural Mentor Gender	Natural Mentor Ethnicity	Relationship to Student
Jermaine	Male	African American	3	Gus	Male	African American	Uncle
Dominick	Male	African American	4T	Natalie	Female	African American	Academic Advisor
Sean	Male	African American	4	Monica	Female	African American	Fraternity Brother's girlfriend
Christina	Female	Kenyan	3	Yvonne	Female	Kenyan	Sister
Serena	Female	African American	3	Tonya	Female	African American	Former Peer Advisor
Sonia	Female	African American/White	3	Kristen	Female	White	Boss
Michelle	Female	African American	3T	Nancy	Female	African American	Sister
Veronica	Female	African American	3	Kim	Female	African American	Former RA
Lisa	Female	Nigerian	3T	Omar	Male	African American/White	Neighbor
Teresa	Female	African American	3	Maritza	Female	African American	Aunt
Vanessa	Female	Nigerian	3	Janay	Female	Nigerian	Cousin
Felicia	Female	African American	3	Nadia	Female	African American	Academic Advisor

Table 9 *Student Reported Experiences of Discrimination, Ways of Coping, Natural Mentor Messages*

Names (Student & Natural Mentor)	Reported type of Discrimination	Ways of Coping with Discrimination	Natural Mentoring Message in the Context of Discrimination
Jermaine & Gus	Microaggressions, Overt	Process, Talk	"Consider them hurdles. Consider them milestones. But, they're not hurdles or milestones that you can't overcome."
Dominick & Natalie	Microaggressions, Overt	Process, Talk, Work Harder	Does not talk to natural mentor about it in order to "keep it light"
Sean & Monica	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes, Microaggressions, Overt	Process, Talk, Work Harder	"How certain spaces weren't really built for people who may look like us. How to kind of combat that, not in a militant way but mentally"
Christina & Yvonne	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes, Microaggressions	Process, Talk, Religion, Work Harder	**"**It's obviously going to affect you, but then it's important to keep in mind like who you are and have people with you that are supporting you"
Serena & Tonya	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes, Microaggressions, Overt	Talk, Work Harder	"Just do you", "Those people are crazy"
Sonia & Kristen	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes	Talk	Does not talk to her about discrimination. They endorse a colorblind mentality.
Michelle & Nancy	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes	Work Harder	Does not talk to her about discrimination. Race is not a central part of the student's identity.
Veronica & Kim	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes, Microaggressions, Overt	Process, Talk	Do not talk about discrimination specifically; race is present throughout their conversations, though not explicitly stated.
Lisa & Omar	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes, Microaggressions	Talk, Work Harder	"You're here for a reason Focus on school"
Teresa & Maritza	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes, Microaggressions, Overt	Process, Talk, Work Harder, Disengage Academically	Does not tell her so as to not "heavy her heart"
Vanessa & Janay	Awareness of Negative Stereotypes, Microaggressions	Process, Talk, Work Harder	"Educate them", "Make Black Friends"
Felicia & Nadia	Microaggressions, Overt	Process, Talk, Work Harder	"I wouldn't say so. Just her presence and like the position of power that she's in herself makes me want to – being herself is like the best advice for me"



Proposed Model for Analyses
Figure 1

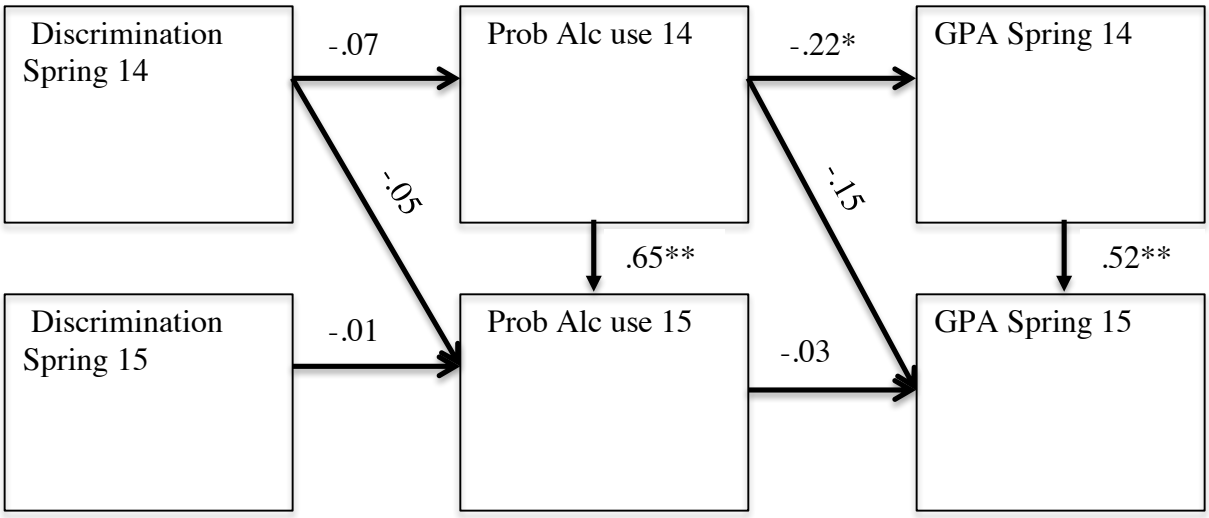


Figure 2
Results of Structural Model for the Quantitative Sample

Appendix A

Student

In this interview, I will be asking you questions about a supportive adult and conversations you may have had with this adult generally and about race-related issues. I will also be asking you questions more generally about race-related experiences. Can we get started?

1. On your SEASONS survey you named [mentor] as an important adult in your life, describe your relationship with [mentor] for me.
    - Prompt: What do you usually talk about with [mentor]?
2. Tell me about your most recent conversation with [mentor].
    - (This is meant to get them talking about their mentor, it shouldn't last too long)
3. Thank you for sharing that. Now I'd like to focus on conversations you and your mentor have had about race.
    - a. Prompt: Some adults talk about race while others do not. Can you tell me more about what [mentor] does with you?
    - b. Last time you talked about race with [mentor], who brought it up?
4. What did you talk about during your most recent conversation about race with [mentor]?
5. How comfortable were you with having this conversation?

    Probe: What made you feel comfortable or uncomfortable (depending on answer to previous question) having this conversation with him/her?
6. How typical was this conversation of the types of conversations you have with [mentor] about race?
7. [Now think about convos on race you've had more generally w/[mentor]], when you talk about race with [mentor], what are some other things you have talked about?
    - [This question may be touched on when they answer number 3. "You talked a little about this earlier, but can you tell me more?"]

8. There has been increasing national and local attention to violence against unarmed Black men, women, and children. Have these events prompted any conversations about race with [mentor]? If so, tell me about this/these conversation(s).

9. Tell me about any conversation that you and [mentor] have had about race that has been particularly *helpful* to you.

    - Prompt: why was it helpful?

10. Has there been a time when [mentor] said things that *weren't* helpful about race? [If they say yes, ask] Tell me about that time. What did he/she say, and why was it unhelpful?

    - Probe: What, if anything, do you wish [mentor] had said/done differently?

11. Some adults talk to young people about important people or events from Black history, while some adults do not. Can you tell me more about what [mentor] does with you?

12. How do conversations you have with [mentor] compare to conversations you have about race with other adults, such as your parents?
    - Prompt for content, etc.
    - Prompt for how they are the same and different

13. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about potential experiences with discrimination you may have had at UVA… How do you define discrimination?
    Probe: What does discrimination mean to you?

14. What types of experiences, if any, have you had with discrimination since being a student at UVA? [Ask for the 'play by play' of a particular experience], what happened? What did you do?
    -skip 14-17 if no disc experiences reported. Probe for if the student has EVER experienced discrimination. If yes, probe for more info about this experience.
    Probe: If someone makes derogatory remarks about your race, do you consider that to be a form of discrimination?
    Probe: If someone acts as if they are afraid of you, do you consider that to be a form of discrimination?
    Probe: If someone acts surprised at your intelligence, do you consider that to be discrimination?
    Probe: If you are treated with less respect than other people, do you consider that to be a form of discrimination?

15. Students deal with experiences of discrimination in lots of different ways. Some students say they drink or party, or talk to friends, family, or other adults about it… How do you deal with these experiences?

    --Was there ever a time you drank to deal with discrimination? If yes, Ask student to describe.

    -Was there ever a time you talked to family, friends or other supportive adults? If yes, ask student to describe.

    -If you didn't have [mentor] how might you cope with these experiences?

16. Do you think these experiences of discrimination affect your academics?
    - Prompt: In what way?
    - Do you think by being more academically oriented by succeeding in the classroom, do you experience more discrimination or less?
    - Are there any ways in which experiencing discrimin motivates you to work harder?

17. Do you ever talk to [mentor] about experiences of discrimination like the one you just talked about? [If answers yes] Tell me about the kinds of advice [mentor] gives you for dealing with discrimination.
18. How, if at all, does [mentor] support you academically when you experience discrimination?

19. Some adults try to prepare young people for experiences of discrimination *before* they happen and some adults don't do this. Can you tell me more about what [mentor] does with you?

    - How do you feel about these conversations?

20. Can you tell me a little bit about what the school climate is like for you as a Black student at UVA?

21. Is there anything else you think I should know about your relationship with [mentor]? (prompt for more info)[if say yes and give only a brief answer,] Interesting, can you tell me more?

Thank you so much for your time! We greatly appreciate your involvement in this study!!

Appendix B

Mentor

In this interview, we will be discussing issues around race, Black history, and discrimination and the ways in which [student] gets support from you.

1. [Student] named you on their SEASONS survey as an important adult in their life, describe your relationship with [student] for me. What do you usually do with [student]? What do you usually talk about with [student]?

2. Tell me about your most recent conversation with [student].

3. Who initiated this conversation?

4. Some adults talk about race while others do not. Can you tell me more about what you do with [student]?

5. In general, when you talk about race with [student], what do you talk about?

6. How typical was this conversation of the types of conversations you have with [student] about race?

7. Tell me about a conversation that you and [student] have talked about in terms of race that you think has been the most meaningful to them.

   Now we're going to talk about current events and Black History.

8. Tell me about conversations that you have with [student] prompted by the increasing national and local attention to violence against unarmed Black people.

9. Some adults talk to young people about important people or events from Black history, while some adults do not. Can you tell me more about what you do with [student]?

10. Now we're going to talk about experiences around discrimination… Do you ever talk to [student] about experiences of discrimination? Do you ever give [student] advice about dealing with discrimination? If so, what kinds of things do you tell them?

11. Do you ever talk to [student] about experiences of discrimination? Do you ever give [student] advice about dealing with discrimination? If so, what kinds of things do you tell them?

12. Some adults try to prepare young people for experiences of discrimination and some adults don't do this. Can you tell me more about what you do?

13. Tell me about a time that you experienced discrimination and how you managed it.

   a. Probe for info about how this may have been shared with the student/how this may influence how they model their behavior for student

14. Is there anything else you think I should know about your relationship with [student]? (prompt for more info)[if say yes and give only a brief answer,] Interesting, can you tell me more?

Thank you so much for your time! We greatly appreciate your involvement in this study!

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