

An Examination of Black Mothers' Racial Discrimination Experiences, Racial Ideology  
Beliefs, and Their Racial Socialization Practices

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A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the University of Virginia in the Candidacy for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Psychology

University of Virginia  
May, 2023

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### **Abstract**

The current study investigated the relationship between racial discrimination experiences, racial ideology beliefs, and racial socialization practices among 370 Black mothers (18-59 years). Guided by Garcia-Coll's and colleagues' (1996) Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children and Rowley's and colleagues' (2012) model on racial identity and parenting among African Americans, we sought to specifically examine whether racial ideology beliefs moderated the association between racial discrimination experiences and preparation for bias and cultural pride racial socialization. Using hierarchical linear regression analyses, we found that racial discrimination and racial ideology beliefs were significantly associated with Black mothers' racial socialization practices. More specifically, mothers who reported more experiences of racial discrimination experiences and higher endorsement of nationalist ideology provided more preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization messages to their children. Higher endorsement of humanist ideology was negatively associated with cultural pride socialization. These findings have implications for clinicians and interventions that work with Black mothers and families. The results suggest that it may be important for clinicians and interventions to help mothers process their racial discrimination experiences and their race-related beliefs since they have important influences for their racial socialization.

*Keywords:* racial socialization, racial identity, racial ideology, racial discrimination, Black mothers, racism

**An examination of Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences, racial ideology beliefs, and their racial socialization practices**

For decades, scholars have recognized that parental messages around race and ethnicity are “central and highly salient components of parenting in ethnic minority families” (Hughes et al., 2006, p.747; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Thomas & Speight, 1999). These processes, referred to as *racial socialization*, include behaviors such as teaching their children about their cultural traditions, instilling racial pride with their children, and preparing their children to cope with racial discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006). Scholars document the protective and promotive components of racial socialization for Black<sup>1</sup> youth's developmental outcomes (Cheeks et al., 2020; Dunbar et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2009; Stokes et al., 2020). For example, researchers found that pride and empowerment racial socialization, such as messages that communicate that their children should be proud to be Black, was associated with decreased depression symptoms among Black girls by increasing their levels of private regard, or their feelings about being Black (Stokes et al., 2020).

Scholars have also investigated how Black parents' race-related experiences and beliefs influence the racial socialization messages they provide to their children (Cooper et al., 2019; Holloway & Varner, 2021). For instance, researchers have shown that Black parents have different processes related to racial socialization based on their racial discrimination experiences and racial identity beliefs (Thomas et al., 2010). They found that parents who experienced racial

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article, Black and African American are used to describe parents' racial and/or ethnic identities. The term Black is used in the current study to describe mothers whose race is Black, but who may also identify as African American, Afro-Latina, African, or any other ethnic identity from the African diaspora. However, some of the research cited by this study describe their samples as African American. In those cases, the terminology by those authors may have been retained.

discrimination were more likely to communicate racial socialization to their children. In addition, parents who feel positively about being Black were more likely to communicate racial socialization messages to their children that included cultural pride and awareness of discrimination. Black parents' race-related experiences and beliefs may be precursors for their racial socialization with their children as they consider their own experiences when teaching their children to navigate a racially discriminatory society (García Coll et al., 1996; Hughes et al., 2006; Rowley et al., 2012).

Within the literature focusing on Black parents' racial socialization, more scholars have considered Black mothers' racial identity beliefs such as centrality, private regard, and public regard, and fewer studies have focused on their racial ideology beliefs, or the beliefs and attitudes that Black individuals have about how members of the Black community should act (Cooper et al., 2015; Cooper et al., 2019; Holloway & Varner, 2021; Sellers et al., 1998). As conceptualized by Sellers and colleagues (1998), an individual's racial ideology may influence how an individual appraises a situation and consequently, how they then behaviorally respond to the situation. Black mothers who experience racial discrimination may interpret their experiences differently based on the meaning they attach to being Black (their racial ideology beliefs). These varying interpretations may then influence their racial socialization with their children. For instance, Lalonde and colleagues (2008) found that parents who endorsed different racial ideologies varied in their perceptions that their children experienced racism. Thus, in the current study, we examine how Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences and racial identity beliefs influence their racial socialization practices.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children (García Coll et al., 1996), our society has a social hierarchy that is determined by an individual's race, ethnicity, and gender. Black families' developmental trajectories are influenced by this social hierarchy as it places them in segregated contexts. More specifically, Black families experience racism and discrimination through segregated contexts and promotive or inhibitive environments such as schools and neighborhood. According to García Coll et al.'s model, Black individuals' collective experiences of racism and discrimination inform family-level factors, such as Black parents' racial socialization practices (1996). For instance, many Black parents draw on their own race-related experiences and adaptive cultural traditions to prepare their children to cope with racial discrimination through their racial socialization practices (McNeil et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2010; Witherspoon et al., 2021).

Through this framework, researchers have found that parents in neighborhoods with high neighborhood involvement with children were more likely to communicate a combination of racial socialization to their children including cultural socialization, preparation for discrimination, and promotion of mistrust (Caughy et al., 2011). In addition, Witherspoon's and colleagues' (2021) study revealed that parents who lived in neighborhoods that experienced more racial discrimination communicated more racial socialization to their children. As highlighted in the Integrative Model, past research has shown how parents' environments and race-related experiences influence their parenting with their children (Caughy et al., 2011; Witherspoon et al., 2021). Thus, the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children (García Coll's et al., 1996) provides a framework to investigate how race-related experiences, such as racial discrimination, inform family-level processes such as Black mothers' racial socialization with their children

The present study was also guided by Rowley's and colleagues' (2012) conceptual framework on racial identity and parenting among African Americans. In their conceptualization of this model, authors acknowledged the importance of ecological models such as García Coll's and colleagues' (1996) model for Black family processes, which accounts for experiences of discrimination and segregation. However, they suggested that it is important to also consider how racial identity beliefs, such as racial ideology constructs, influence Black parents' racial socialization and other family level processes since parents' own beliefs may be instrumental in their subsequent behaviors. For example, authors found that Black parents' varying racial identity beliefs were related to different racial socialization behaviors (Rowley et al., 2012). Building on this literature, the present study will examine how Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences and racial ideology beliefs influence their racial socialization messages to their children.

### **Reviewing Racial Socialization Literature on Black Family Contexts**

Racial socialization is an important parenting strategy that Black parents use to equip their children with the tools to combat racism and discrimination and to pass down knowledge and history about their racial heritage (Hughes et al., 2006). Racial socialization messages generally include cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarian messages (Hughes et al., 2006). A meta-analysis conducted by Huguley et al. (2019) found that preparation for bias and cultural socialization are the two most studied racial socialization practices. Examples of preparation for bias messages include parents teaching their children how to cope and respond to discriminatory behavior from police and teachers (Scott et al., 2020). Cultural socialization examples include parents surrounding their children with

culturally relevant books and music, celebrating cultural holidays, and talking with their children about their cultural histories (Hughes et al., 2006).

Past research has shown that Black mothers' racial socialization practices has positive impacts for their children's social and psychological outcomes (Dunbar et al., 2015; Riina & McHale, 2012; Smalls, 2009). Dunbar et al. (2015) investigated various racial and emotion socialization profiles among African American mothers and found that mothers in profiles that included high cultural socialization and moderate amounts of preparation of bias also had children with lower levels of depressive symptoms. In addition, when African American youth experienced racial discrimination, they were protected from experiencing higher conflict and lower warmth with their mothers if they also received preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization from their mothers (Riina & McHale, 2012). These studies illustrate how racial socialization messages have an important influence on Black youth's outcomes.

To better understand what factors may inform parents' racial socialization practices, research has also examined precursors to Black parents' racial socialization including their income, child and parent gender, racial discrimination experiences, and racial identity beliefs (Dunbar et al., 2015; Holloway & Varner, 2021; Hughes et al., 2006; McNeil et al., 2016). For example, research has shown that African American mothers who experienced racialized interpersonal prejudice at work were more likely to report communicating preparation for bias and cultural socialization at home (Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014). In addition, qualitative research has noted that Black mothers' racial socialization is influenced by their own reflections on the sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape of the U.S., which consistently perpetuates negative stereotypes of and racialized violence against Black individuals (Author et al., 2020; Das et al., 2022; Harris & Amutah-Onukagha, 2019). Author et al. (2020) found that racialized

violence, such as the murder of Trayvon Martin, and that contexts, such as neighborhood racial composition and the nature of policing in those neighborhoods, were important considerations for their racial socialization messaging. Past research has also shown that African American parents who perceived a negative racial climate in the U.S. communicated increased preparation for bias messages to their children (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2019). Taken together, past research on Black mothers' racial socialization highlights how their race-related experiences and beliefs may be influential for their parenting (Author et al., 2020; Holloway & Varner, 2021; McHale et al., 2006).

### **Racial Discrimination and Black Parents' Racial Socialization Practices**

The relationship between Black parents' racial discrimination experiences and their parenting practices has been well documented by scholars (Anderson et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2006). More specifically, past research has shown that Black parents' own racial discrimination experiences are a predictor of their racial socialization with their children (Hughes et al., 2006; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). White-Johnson et al.'s (2010) study utilized latent class analyses to categorize Black parents in racial socialization profiles. They found that mothers in the multifaceted profile, or mothers who communicated the highest amount of racial socialization messages focused on African American culture, history, and potential obstacles, experienced more discrimination compared to mothers in the unengaged profile, or mothers who communicated fewer racial socialization except for negative messages about Black people. Mothers who experience racial discrimination may feel that their children will experience racial discrimination, and they may communicate racial socialization to their children to give them the ability to navigate their own racial discrimination experiences.



Furthermore, more current research focused on Black mothers also found an association between experiencing racial discrimination and communicating racial socialization messages to their children (McNeil et al., 2016; Saleem et al., 2020). For example, scholars who investigated racial socialization revealed that Black mothers who experienced more instances of racial discrimination were more likely to communicate preparation for bias and cultural socialization messages to their children (McNeil et al., 2016; Saleem et al., 2020). In a longitudinal study, Saleem and colleagues (2020) found that mothers who reported experiences with racial discrimination were more likely to report communicating cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages to their children since these messages may provide skills, such as increased pride in being Black and knowledge on how to navigate racial discriminatory experiences. Mothers who experience more personal racial discrimination may believe that their children are also at risk of receiving such treatment (McNeil et al., 2016; Saleem et al., 2020), and may consequently increase their racial socialization messages to their children. Overall, numerous studies document a positive relationship between Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences and their increased racial socialization with their children (Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014; Hughes et al., 2006; McNeil et al., 2016; Saleem et al., 2020; White-Johnson et al., 2010). While we know the direct influence of racial discrimination on racial socialization, less studies have examined what other factors may influence the relationship between Black mothers' racial discrimination and racial socialization practices, such as their racial ideology beliefs.

### **Racial Ideology Beliefs**

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) is a conceptual model that has been widely studied in the literature on Black individuals' racial identity beliefs (Butler-Barnes et al., 2019; Cooper et al., 2019; Sellers et al., 1998). The MMRI consists of four dimensions of

racial identity, which include racial salience, racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology (Sellers et al., 1998). Racial salience describes how an individual thinks of race as central to their self-concept and is dependent on contextual factors such as a particular situation. In contrast, centrality is not context dependent and remains stable in various situations, and it refers to how relevant race is to an individual's overall identity. Racial regard refers to the positive or negative feelings that an individual has or believes others have toward their racial group. Lastly, racial ideologies refer to the beliefs that an individual has related to how individuals in their racial group should act.

According to the MMRI, racial ideology beliefs include four different type of ideologies such as nationalist, humanist, assimilationist, and oppressed minority ideologies (Sellers et al., 1998). These ideologies influence a variety of functions including political and economic activities, cultural and social participation, and relationships with others who share the same racial group membership (Sellers et al., 1998). For example, individuals who endorse a nationalist ideology believe that African Americans have unique experiences compared to other racial groups, and they are more likely to participate in African American organizations and social environments. Those who endorse a humanist ideology focus on the similarities between all humans and may deemphasize the importance of race as a component of identity. In essence, those who endorse a humanist ideology are likely "color blind" related to racial group membership. Individuals who endorse an assimilationist ideology emphasize the similarities between African Americans and other racial groups in the U.S. They may also believe it is important to interact with White people and to enter mainstream society (Sellers et al., 1998). While there are multiple types of ideological beliefs, individuals will likely endorse multiple racial ideologies depending on the situation. For example, one person could believe that it is

important to buy from Black-owned business (nationalist ideology) while also believing that it is important for the Black community to integrate with the White community and institutions (assimilationist ideology). In sum, the MMRI includes racial ideology beliefs to capture the content of an individual's racial identity, or the "texture and richness associated with African American racial identity that flows from the heterogeneity with the Black experience", which vary across situations and contexts (Sellers et al., 199, p. 26).

Past research on racial identity has focused extensively on how parents' racial socialization strategies are associated with ethnic-racial minoritized youth's racial identity development (Bañales et al., 2021; French & Coleman, 2012; Hugeley et al., 2019). For example, scholars found that Black parents' cultural pride socialization practices were associated with their children endorsing higher levels of nationalist and oppressed minority ideology beliefs, but lower levels of humanist ideology beliefs (Bañales et al., 2021; French & Coleman, 2012). Studies have also found that Black college students who endorse colorblind ideology beliefs, which is characterized by a denial of racism and race-related discrimination, were less likely to have parents who communicated messages such as preparation for bias, which focus on protection against racism (Barr & Neville, 2008). These findings provide support for the association between racial socialization practices and racial ideology beliefs, in that certain racial socialization practices may influence Black individuals' racial identity development.

While past studies have focused on Black children's racial identity development, fewer studies focus on the ways that parents' own racial identity beliefs may affect their racial socialization strategies. The studies that do focus on racial identity tend to focus on centrality and regard; however, racial ideology may be another relevant indicator of parents' socialization strategies since it goes beyond the *extent* (i.e., centrality) to which race matters to them and dives

into *how* (i.e., ideology beliefs) race matters for an individual (Lalonde et al., 2008; Sellers et al., 1998; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Deepening the field's understanding of how racial ideology beliefs influences Black mothers' racial socialization practices has important implications for the ways scholars and practitioners understand the processes behind parents' racial socialization and potential interventions related to racial socialization.

### ***Black Parents' Racial Ideology Beliefs and their Racial Socialization Practices***

Black parents' racial identity beliefs are a key factor that has been linked to their racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006). For instance, researchers have found that parents' racial ideology beliefs are differentially associated with racial socialization parenting profiles (Jones et al., 2021; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Jones et al. found that parents who endorsed higher levels of nationalist ideology were more likely to belong to the Negative, Stressed, and Less Competent (NSLC) profile of parents that communicated more negative messages about Black people or culture, than the Multifaceted and More Competent (MMC) profile that communicated a variety of messages such as racial pride, racial barrier, and egalitarian messages (2021). In contrast, they found that Black parents who endorsed higher levels of humanist ideology were less likely to belong to the NSLC profile compared to the MMC profile. Lastly, parents who endorsed greater assimilationist ideology beliefs were more likely to belong to the MMC profile.

The findings from Jones et al. (2021) contrasts with findings from White-Johnson et al.'s (2010) work that also focused on racial socialization profiles and found that Black mothers who were in the multifaceted profile of racialization (parents who communicated the most racial socialization messages focused on positive messages of African Americans and messages related to barriers related to being African American) were more likely to endorse greater nationalist ideology than parents in the unengaged profile (parents who communicated the least amount of

racial socialization messages compared to other profiles except for negative messages). However, they did not find any associations between endorsing higher levels of humanist or assimilationist ideologies and parents' racial socialization practices. The inconsistency in findings between this study and Jones et al. (2021) may be due to the type of profiles conducted by each study. Jones and colleagues (2021) included racial socialization content, such as preparation for bias and cultural pride messages, along with racial socialization competency, which involves parents' competencies regarding their ability to communicate racial socialization messages to their children, in their socialization profiles while White-Johnson et al. (2010) focused on only racial socialization content in their profile analyses.

Other studies have also examined Black parents' racial ideology beliefs in relation to their isolated (vs. profile) racial socialization practices (Thomas et al., 2010; Lalonde et al., 2008). Thomas and colleagues (2010) found that parents who endorsed higher levels of nationalist ideology were more likely to communicate adaptive racial socialization compared to parents who endorsed higher assimilationist and humanist ideologies. They did not find any associations between endorsing greater humanist ideology or assimilation ideology beliefs and parents' racial socialization practices. Researchers have also investigated the association between racial ideologies from the MMRI and racial socialization among Canadian Black parents due to a "shared cultural experience" and similar experiences of discrimination for Black Canadians and Black individuals in the U.S. (Lalonde et al., 2008, p. 130). Researchers found that parents who endorsed greater nationalist ideology or lower humanist ideology were more likely to communicate cultural socialization messages to their children (Lalonde et al., 2008). Since parents who have a higher endorsement of nationalist ideology or lower endorsement of humanist ideology are more likely to believe that African Americans have unique experiences

compared to other groups, they may more be inclined to racially socialize their children according to African American culture. Interestingly, parents who endorsed higher levels of humanist ideology beliefs were also more likely to communicate preparation for bias messages with their children (Lalonde et al., 2009). This finding was not expected considering that parents who endorse greater amounts of humanist ideology beliefs are more likely to deemphasize race in their evaluations of an individual's experiences; however, researchers believe their measure of racial socialization, which evaluated positive responses to racism compared to other measures, may have influenced this association since "focusing on the positive is one of the hallmarks of humanism" (Lalonde et al., 2008, p. 136).

Overall, past research has indicated that there is a consistent significant and positive relationship between endorsing higher nationalist ideology beliefs and Black parents' preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization (Lalonde et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Compared to the nationalist ideologies, the associations between endorsing more humanist or assimilationist ideology beliefs and parents' racial socialization are less clear due to the lack of or mixed findings (Lalonde et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Therefore, the current study will further contribute to the literature on Black parents' racial identity beliefs and racial socialization practices by illuminating the relationships between Black mothers' racial ideology beliefs and their racial socialization practices.

### ***Black Parents' Racial Ideology Beliefs and their Perceptions of Racial Discrimination***

Scholars have also investigated Black parents' racial ideology beliefs in relation to their perceptions of racism and concerns of stereotyping (Lalonde et al., 2008). They found that parents who had higher endorsement of nationalist ideology beliefs were more likely to perceive that their children experienced racism and were more concerned with the impact of stereotypes

on their children. Additionally, parents who endorsed lower levels of humanist ideology versus higher levels were more concerned with how stereotypes may affect their children (Lalonde et al., 2008). Black mothers who endorse varying levels of racial ideologies may interpret racial discrimination experiences differently (Sellers et al., 1998). Considering that racial ideology has an impact on individuals' perceptions of racial discrimination, it may influence the associations between racial discrimination and other outcomes, such as racial socialization.

For example, scholars have found that racial identity beliefs, such as centrality and regard, influence the association between racial discrimination and racial socialization (Holloway & Varner, 2021). More specifically, researchers found that African American mothers who experienced high racial discrimination and had higher public regard, or believed that others viewed African Americans positively, communicated more cultural socialization compared to African American mothers with low discrimination and public regard. In sum, previous literature supports the notion that Black parents' racial identity beliefs influences their perceptions of discrimination (Lalonde et al., 2008), which may affect the type of racial socialization messages they communicate to their children (Holloway & Varner, 2021). Thus, the current study sought to expand on previous literature by examining how Black mothers' racial ideology beliefs moderates the associations between their racial discrimination experiences and racial socialization practices.

### **The Current Study**

Guided by García Coll et al.'s (1996) Integrative Model for The Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children and Rowley et al.'s (2012) model on Black parents' racial identity and parenting practices, the present study will examine the associations between Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences, their racial ideologies, and their racial socialization

practices. This study will specifically address a gap in the literature by investigating how Black mothers' racial ideology beliefs influence the relationship between their racial discrimination experiences and racial socialization practices. Past research has primarily focused on racial identity beliefs such as centrality and regard (Cooper et al., 2019; Holloway & Varner, 2021), and studies that examined Black parents' racial ideology beliefs focused primarily on direct associations with either racial socialization or racial discrimination (Lalonde et al., 2008; McNeil et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2010). The current study will extend past research and examine the moderating effect of racial ideology beliefs on the relationship between racial discrimination and racial socialization.

The first research question of the study investigated how Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences were related to their racial socialization. We hypothesized that mothers who experienced more discrimination would also report communicating more racial socialization messages to their children, which is well-documented in past research (Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014; McNeil et al., 2016; Saleem et al., 2020). The second research question examined how Black mothers' racial ideology beliefs were related to their racial socialization. Based on previous literature (Lalonde et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010), it was predicted that Black mothers who endorsed higher nationalist ideology would report increased preparation for bias messages and cultural pride socialization compared to mothers who endorsed lower levels of nationalist ideology. The literature on humanist ideologies is quite mixed (Lalonde et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Due to this, hypotheses were made based on the conceptual definition of this ideology (Sellers et al., 1998). We predicted that mothers who endorsed higher levels of humanist ideology would communicate significantly fewer preparation for bias and cultural socialization messages than



mothers who endorsed higher levels of humanist ideology. We predicted that parents who endorsed higher levels of assimilationist ideology would communicate increased preparation for bias and cultural socialization compared to mothers who endorsed lower levels of assimilationist ideology based on one study that found endorsing an assimilationist ideology was related to being in the Multifaceted and More Competent profile of parents that communicated a variety of racial socialization (Jones et al., 2021).

Lastly, the final research question investigated whether Black mothers' racial ideology beliefs moderated the association between their racial discrimination beliefs and their racial socialization. It was hypothesized that mothers who endorsed a high nationalist ideology rather than a low nationalist ideology would report stronger positive associations between racial discrimination and their racial socialization practices. It was also predicted that mothers who endorsed higher levels of humanist ideology would report stronger negative associations between racial discrimination and racial socialization than mothers who reported lower levels of humanist ideology. For mothers with assimilationist ideologies, it was hypothesized that mothers who endorsed higher levels of assimilationist ideology compared to lower levels would report stronger positive associations between racial discrimination and racial socialization.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The current sample included 370 Black mothers (ages 18-59 years, mean = 32-38 years) in the U.S., who were recruited for a project investigating parenting practices (*Black Mothers Conscious Parenting Study*; PI: author blinded). Mothers primarily identified as African American ( $n = 313$ ), followed by biracial/multiracial ( $n = 19$ ), Caribbean ( $n = 19$ ), African ( $n = 18$ ) and other ( $n = 1$ ). The average household income was approximately \$40,000-\$49,000

(range: less than \$10,000 - more than \$150,000). The mothers were from a range of educational backgrounds, including less than a high school diploma ( $n = 6$ ), high school diploma ( $n = 71$ ), trade school/associate degree ( $n = 39$ ), some college ( $n = 71$ ), bachelor's degree ( $n = 119$ ), and a graduate degree ( $n = 64$ ).

### **Procedure**

After obtaining university IRB approval (#4348), the PI used a Qualtrics panel service to recruit participants and collect survey data. The eligibility criteria included being a Black or African American mother with at least one child between the ages of 1-17 living in the U.S. The PI utilized the Qualtrics panel service to recruit participants, as well as social media groups on Facebook that focused on Black mothers. These social media sites had over 50,000 members combined. Mothers provided informed consent before starting the survey. Quality checks for survey responses included three items where participants had to correctly answer two out of the three questions (e.g.,  $2+2 = 4$ ), as well as time checks which removed participants who took less than half of the anticipated survey time (20-30 minutes).

### **Measures**

#### ***Racial Discrimination Experiences***

We assessed mothers' racial discrimination experiences using the Multiculturally Sensitive Mental Health Scale (MSMHS; Chao et al., 2010). The MSMHS included items such as, "I feel that people look at me through their negative racial stereotypes of Black people," "I think the legal system has unequal standards for Blacks and Whites," and "I would have fewer difficulties in school or work if I were a White person." Participants responded based on a 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree) scale, and reliability was good at  $\alpha = .88$ .

#### ***Racial Ideologies***

We assessed mothers' racial ideology beliefs using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1997). The nationalist, humanist, assimilation, and oppressed minority subscales were used to measure racial ideology. Examples of items from each subscale included, "It is important for Black mothers to surround their children with art, music, and literature from their racial background," (Nationalist) "Being part of the human race is more important than being part of the Black race," (Humanist) "Black people should act more like White people to be successful in this society," (Assimilation) and "There are other racial groups that experience discrimination similar to Black people" (Oppressed Minority). Mothers responded to these items on a 1 (Strongly agree) to a 5 (Strongly disagree) scale. The reliability of the nationalist ( $\alpha = .82$ ), humanist ( $\alpha = .68$ ), and assimilation ideologies were good ( $\alpha = .63$ )<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Racial Socialization***

We assessed mothers' racial socialization messages using adapted items from Bentley-Edwards and Stevenson Jr.'s (2015) Cultural and Racial Experiences of Socialization (CARES) and Kurtz-Costes et al.' (2019) Racial Attitudes and Ethnic-Racial socialization measures. We focused on mothers' preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization messages. The preparation for bias subscale included three items. Example items included, "I talk with them about racism and how it can affect them," "I talk to my children about racial discrimination in current events or news," and "I teach them how to respond to racial discrimination" ( $\alpha = .79$ ). The cultural pride socialization subscale included six items such as "I do things to celebrate Black history with my child(ren) (i.e., Black cultural events)," "I immerse them in supportive

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<sup>2</sup> The Oppressed Minority subscale was excluded from analyses because of low reliability ( $\alpha = .45$ ).

Black communities (i.e., families and friends),” and “I teach my children to love their skin and hair” ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Mothers responded to these items on a 1 (Never) to a 4 (Often) scale.

### **Analytical Strategy**

To examine the relationship between mothers' racial discrimination experiences and their preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization, hierarchical linear regressions were conducted in STATA version 17 (StataCorp, 2021). We also investigated the moderating effects of mothers' racial ideology beliefs. Separate regression models were conducted for each racial socialization message to investigate how mothers' racial discrimination and racial ideology relate to their preparation for bias and cultural pride messages specifically. For the first step in each model, mothers' ages, mothers' highest level of education, household income, and their children's gender were included as control variables. These variables were selected based on previous theory and literature that have shown associations between these variables and the family-level processes being evaluated in the current study (García Coll's et al.'s, 1996; Hughes et al., 2006). Racial discrimination and the racial ideology variables (nationalist ideology, humanist ideology, and assimilation ideology) were added in step 1. In step 2, two-way interaction variables between racial discrimination and each racial ideology belief (e.g., racial discrimination x racial ideology belief) were added to the model, including racial discrimination x nationalist, racial discrimination x humanist, and racial discrimination x assimilationist. Two-way interactions between racial discrimination and each racial ideology belief were created to test for the moderating effect of racial ideology on the relationship between mothers' racial discrimination and racial socialization (preparation for bias and cultural pride racial socialization). The continuous predictor variables were centered before being entered in the model.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Correlation analyses were conducted between study variables (Table 1). Results indicated that endorsing an assimilationist ideology was positively related to endorsing a nationalist ( $r = .53, p < .001$ ) and humanist ( $r = .24, p < .001$ ) ideology. Endorsing a nationalist ideology was not related to endorsing a humanist ideology. Additionally, endorsing a nationalist ( $r = .34, p < .001$ ) and assimilationist ( $r = .52, p < .001$ ) ideology was significantly and positively related to preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization. Parents who endorsed higher levels of nationalist or assimilationist ideology were more likely to indicate giving more preparation for bias and cultural socialization messages to their children. For parents who endorsed a humanist ideology, their ideological endorsement was unrelated to their socialization messages. Mothers' ages were significantly related to endorsing greater nationalist ideology beliefs ( $r = .16, p < .01$ ) and communicating increased preparation for bias socialization ( $r = .19, p < .001$ ), such that older mothers were more likely to endorse a nationalist ideology and to communicate preparation for bias messages. Lastly, higher levels of education were positively related to cultural pride socialization ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ).

### Racial Discrimination and Racial Ideology Beliefs as Predictors of Black Mothers' Racial Socialization Practices

#### *Preparation for bias (Table 2)*

Step 1 of the hierarchical linear regression revealed that mothers' racial discrimination experiences ( $\beta = 0.22, p < .001$ ) and endorsement of greater nationalist ideology ( $\beta = 0.11, p < .05$ ) were significantly related to their preparation for bias socialization,  $F(9, 359) = 9.34, p < .001, R^2 = .19$ , with the variables in step 1 accounting for 19% of the variance in preparation for

bias socialization. For mothers in this sample, a 1 unit increase in racial discrimination was associated with a .22 increase in preparation for bias messaging. In addition, a 1 unit increase in mothers' endorsement of a nationalist ideology was also associated with a .11 increase in giving preparation for bias socialization to their children. In step 2, inclusion of the two-way interactions between racial discrimination experiences and endorsement of each racial ideology did not significantly contribute to the variance in preparation for bias socialization for mothers in this sample as indicated by a non-significant  $R^2$  change value for step 2 of the model. In addition, none of the two-way interactions were significantly related to preparation for bias socialization.

### ***Cultural socialization (Table 2)***

In step 1 of the hierarchical linear regression, mothers' racial discrimination experiences ( $\beta = 0.20, p < .001$ ), endorsement of greater nationalist ideology ( $\beta = 0.25, p < .001$ ), and endorsement of lower levels of humanist ideology ( $\beta = -0.05, p < .05$ ) were significantly related to their cultural pride socialization,  $F(9, 359) = 18.45, p < .001, R^2 = .34$ , with the variables in step 1 accounting for 34% of the variance in cultural pride socialization. For mothers in this sample, a 1 unit increase in racial discrimination experiences was associated with a .20 increase in cultural pride socialization. Additionally, a 1 unit increase in endorsement of a nationalist ideology was associated with a .25 increase in mothers' cultural pride socialization with their children. However, for every 1 unit increase in endorsement of a humanist ideology, mothers gave .05 less cultural pride socialization. In step 2, inclusion of the two-way interactions between racial discrimination experiences and endorsement of each racial ideology did not significantly contribute to the variance in cultural pride socialization for mothers in this sample as indicated

by a non-significant  $R^2$  change value in step 2 of the model. Lastly, none of the two-way interactions were significantly related to cultural pride socialization.

### **Discussion**

The current study investigated the associations between Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences and their racial socialization practices with their children, with a particular focus on Black mothers' racial ideology beliefs. The results add to previous literature (Jones et al., 2021; Lalonde et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010), and suggest that Black mothers communicate different racial socialization messages based on their racial discrimination experiences and racial ideology beliefs. Previous studies have found that parents who endorsed higher levels of nationalist ideology were more likely to communicate racial socialization compared to parents who endorsed higher levels of humanist and assimilationist ideologies (Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson; 2010). Regarding those who endorsed greater humanist and assimilationist ideology beliefs, studies have found that these ideological beliefs were not a significant predictor of parents' racial socialization (Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010), while others have found significant associations between endorsing more humanist or assimilationist ideology beliefs and parents' racial socialization practices (Jones et al., 2021; Lalonde et al., 2008). Our results partly support past research (Jones et al., 2021; Lalonde et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010), in that the current study showed that mothers who endorsed greater levels of nationalist ideology beliefs were more likely to communicate preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization while greater assimilationist ideological endorsement was not related to mothers' racial socialization. The findings also extend previous work (Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010)

regarding how greater humanist ideology endorsement informs Black mothers' racial socialization practices.

Yet, none of the hypothesized moderating effects of Black mothers' racial ideologies were significant. This is contrary to our hypotheses based on previous work (e.g., Holloway & Varner, 2021) demonstrating that racial identity dimensions, such as racial centrality and racial regard, influence the association between racial discrimination experiences and racial socialization. We expected that mothers' racial ideology beliefs would have influenced their interpretations of their racial discrimination experiences. Therefore, based on their perceptions of their racial discrimination experiences, mothers would have also communicated different racial socialization messages to their children. For instance, parents who endorse higher levels of nationalist ideology are likely aware that African Americans have distinct racialized experiences in the U.S. and that they and their children may face racial discrimination; however, parents who endorse higher levels of humanist ideology are more likely to deemphasize race or be color-blind, which would result in these individuals being potentially unaware of racial discrimination they encounter (Sellers et al., 1998). With this in mind, we expected that Black mothers' racial socialization messages would vary based on their levels of racial ideology endorsement.

One reason for the lack of significant interactions in the present study may be due to important contextual factors present during the time of data collection. One of the guiding frameworks for this study, the Integrative Model for The Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children, highlights the importance of "current contextual demands" on the racial socialization of Black families (García-Coll et al., 1996, p. 1905). Data collection occurred during the summer of 2020 during the height of the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement and protests in response to the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (Burch



et al., 2020; Kelly et al., 2020). Black mothers may have been contending with what it means to mother their children in a society with a clear disregard for the health, safety, and wellbeing of Black people (Clendinen & Kertes, 2022). Because of this, the mothers in our sample may have been acutely aware of the importance of communicating messages on race and racism to their children during this time, regardless of the interaction between their interpersonal discrimination experiences and their racial ideology beliefs.

### **Black Mothers' Racial Discrimination Experiences and Racial Socialization Practices**

As hypothesized, Black mothers who experienced more racial discrimination reported more preparation for bias racial socialization. According to the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children, racism and discriminatory practices and behaviors create segregated environments which affect the family-level processes of Black families such as racial socialization (García-Coll et al., 1996). This occurs through racial discrimination experiences that Black parents and children may encounter in various environments such as schools, the workplace, or neighborhoods (García-Coll et al., 1996; Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014). This finding aligns with previous studies that have found that Black mothers report more preparation for bias when they experience more racial discrimination (Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014; McNeil et al., 2016; Saleem et al., 2020). Black mothers who experience more instances of racial discrimination may be aware that their children will also encounter racial discrimination. This awareness of racial discrimination in their children's lives may lead to Black mothers in this sample to communicate more preparation for bias messages to their children (Thomas et al., 2010).

Mothers' experiences of racial discrimination were also associated with their cultural pride socialization. For the mothers in our sample, the more a mother experienced racial

discrimination, the greater number of cultural pride messages she communicated to her children. Previous research with Black mothers provides support for this finding (McNeil et al., 2016, Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014, & Saleem et al., 2020). Mothers who experienced racial discrimination may be communicating more cultural pride messages to their children to help protect them from the potential negative consequences of experiencing racial discrimination. Scholars have found that African American youth who receive pride messages are protected from the negative effects of racial discrimination on their self-esteem (Harris-Britt et al., 2007). Therefore, Black mothers in this sample may be aiming to provide their children with positive messages about their racial group to combat their experiences with racism that are detrimental to their children's self-images.

### **Black Mothers' Racial Ideologies and Racial Socialization Practices**

#### ***Nationalist Ideology***

Black individuals who endorse nationalist ideology beliefs are characterized as viewing the experiences of African Americans as different than other groups, and they are aware that African Americans continue to live within a racist society that oppresses the Black community (Sellers et al., 1998). In line with this, we found that Black mothers who reported higher endorsement of nationalist ideology beliefs were more likely to communicate preparation for bias messages to their children. This finding is supported by previous research demonstrating that Black parents who endorse greater nationalist ideology are also more likely to communicate racial socialization messages related to awareness of racial barriers and discrimination (preparation for bias socialization) to their children (Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Mothers in our sample who endorsed greater nationalist ideology are more inclined to believe that their children will face oppressive circumstances as Black individuals in the U.S, and

therefore, they provided more preparation bias messages to their children to provide an awareness of and ability to cope with discrimination.

Additionally, endorsing higher levels of nationalist ideology beliefs was positively related to cultural pride socialization. Mothers who reported higher levels of nationalist ideology also reported that they communicated more cultural pride messages to their children. This is in line with previous evidence that Black parents who endorsed greater nationalist ideology beliefs were more likely to communicate racial socialization messages to their children (Thomas et al., 2010). Conceptually, mothers who endorse higher levels of nationalist ideology believe in the importance of participating in African American culture and social events (Sellers et al., 1998). This may explain why Black mothers who endorsed greater nationalist ideology may also communicate messages about pride in one's racial group membership and the importance of supporting Black businesses and participating in Black cultural events. In addition, the associations between endorsing a greater nationalist ideology and Black mothers' increased preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization may have been particularly strong considering the contextual demands of that time. During data collection for this study in the summer of 2020, conversations and protests concerning structural racism and its impacts on the Black community were highly visible in news sources and other media (Asmelash, 2020; Buchanan et al., 2020; Neighmond, 2020). Mothers in our sample who endorsed a greater nationalist ideology, which emphasizes a distinct African American culture and experience in the U.S., may have been cognizant of these conversations in their racial socialization with their children.

### ***Humanist Ideology***

Individuals with a humanist ideology “do not think in terms of race, gender, class, or other distinguishing characteristics” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 28). Regarding preparation for bias messages, there were no significant associations between endorsing a humanist ideology and mothers’ racial socialization. These findings align with previous literature on racial ideology beliefs and Black parents’ racial socialization that showed no significant associations between endorsing a humanist ideology and communicating messages on race to their children (Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). However, Black mothers who endorsed greater humanist ideological beliefs reported communicating significantly fewer cultural pride messages to their children than Black mothers who reported lower humanist ideological beliefs. Black mothers who endorsed higher levels of humanist ideology are less likely to think of race as a defining feature of themselves and their children. To this end, they may see less value in cultural events for the Black community and in messages emphasizing pride for oneself based on racial group membership. Our findings extend previous work on racial ideologies by highlighting a significant, negative relationship between endorsing a humanist ideology and Black mothers’ cultural socialization with their children (Lalonde et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Considering the importance of cultural socialization for Black youths’ healthy mental health outcomes (Dunbar et al., 2015), clinicians and those who develop interventions and parenting programs should be aware of Black parents’ ideological beliefs as this may have vital implications for some parents’ lack of socialization with their children.

### ***Assimilationist Ideology***

Individuals who endorse an assimilationist ideology emphasize the similarities between African Americans and the dominant culture and believe that African Americans should participate in the mainstream culture (Sellers et al., 1998). Contrary to our hypotheses, there

were no significant associations between endorsing an assimilationist ideology and communicating preparation for bias or cultural socialization messages. These findings align with previous literature on racial ideology beliefs and Black parents' racial socialization practices that showed no significant associations between endorsing an assimilationist ideology and communicating racial socialization (Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Other researchers have also examined how Black parents' racial socialization practices influenced their children's racial ideology beliefs (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). Researchers found that mothers' mainstream fit socialization practices, which included messages related to the emphasis on mainstream culture and values, were related to their children endorsing higher levels of assimilationist racial ideology beliefs (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). This finding suggests that there may be an association between racial ideology beliefs and racial socialization practices that was not able to be captured with the racial socialization subscales (i.e., preparation for bias and cultural pride socialization) used in the current study.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

While our findings add to extant literature on racial discrimination and racial socialization practices within Black families, there are a few limitations worth noting. First, the cross-sectional research design prevented us from making casual inferences about the findings. Future studies that incorporate a longitudinal design would be able to make inferences about the directionality of the associations between racial discrimination, racial ideology beliefs, and racial socialization (Saleem et al., 2020). We also examined mothers' racial ideology beliefs as independent constructs. As noted by Sellers et al. (1998), Black parents may endorse multiple ideological beliefs about race simultaneously. For instance, someone could endorse higher levels of both nationalist and assimilationist beliefs by believing that it is important to surround their

children with Black music and Black art (nationalist belief) and that it is also important for their child to adhere to mainstream societal norms to be successful (assimilationist belief). Previous researchers have examined racial identity profiles in relation to emotional responses to racial violence and to depressive symptoms among those who have experienced discrimination (Blackmon & Thomas, 2015; Seaton, 2009). This profile approach allowed researchers to examine the nuance of racial identity among individuals and how the unique combinations of racial identity beliefs influenced their outcomes and behaviors. Future research would benefit from using person-centered approaches to examine how Black mothers' racial ideology beliefs influence their racial socialization practices.

Also, we excluded the oppressed minority subscale from our analyses due to low reliability ( $\alpha = .45$ ). Previous studies have found adequate or good reliability with the oppressed minority ideology subscale (Jones et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2010; White-Johnson et al., 2010). The low reliability among our sample may be due to the nature of the two items that measured oppressed minority, which included 1) "There are other racial groups that experience discrimination similar to Black people" and 2) "People of all minority groups should stick together and fight discrimination." As previously discussed, the data for this study was collected during the summer of 2020, when Black individuals were witnessing police brutality against Black people, the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement (Burch et al., 2020; Kelly et al., 2020). This may account for the inconsistency in reliability between our current sample and past samples that have completed the racial ideology subscales. Black mothers may not have felt the experiences of other minoritized groups were similar to the experiences of Black individuals who contend with racism and

discrimination considering the visibility of anti-Black violence in the U.S. during the summer of 2020 (Burch et al., 2020; Kelly et al., 2020).

Additionally, our measure of racial discrimination focused mainly on personal encounters. In previous studies, scholars have found that different types of racial discrimination experiences, such as vicarious and anticipated racial discrimination, may also influence Black mothers' racial socialization practices (Holloway & Varner, 2021). For example, vicarious racial socialization includes witnessing or hearing about someone else's discrimination experiences from sources such as the media and other people. Anticipated racial discrimination is a "cognitive experience" which encompasses the fear that one will experience racial discrimination in the future (Holloway & Varner, 2021, p. 782). These may be vital discrimination experiences to consider for Black parents' racial socialization considering the rise of social media and coverage of police brutality and other racialized violence. Furthermore, the inclusion of vicarious and anticipated racial discrimination would better capture the "macrosystem" of racism (i.e., structural racism and sociopolitical conditions) that may influence Black family processes (Rogers et al., 2021, p. 276). Thus, future studies should include multiple measures of racial discrimination to better capture the multiplicity of Black parents' racialized experiences.

## **Conclusion**

The current study investigated the role that racial discrimination experiences and racial ideology beliefs may have in Black mothers' racial socialization practices with their children. The results suggest that Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences and racial ideology beliefs, particularly nationalist ideology, influenced their racial socialization messages to their children. Mothers who experienced more racial discrimination and endorsed higher levels of nationalist ideology beliefs communicated more preparation for bias and cultural pride

socialization to their children. In addition, mothers who endorsed higher levels of humanist ideology beliefs communicated fewer cultural pride socialization messages to their children. This provides support that Black mothers' racial discrimination experiences and racial ideology beliefs are important considerations for their racial socialization practices with their children. The findings may inform future research on Black mothers' race-related experiences and beliefs and how they influence their racial socialization with their children. Future research may consider the importance of racial ideologies in shaping Black parents' racial socialization, along with racial centrality and regard, and can expand to focus on person-centered analyses to capture the nuance of Black parents' racial identity beliefs. In addition, our findings offer important insights for clinicians and interventionists in helping Black families process and cope with their racial discrimination experiences and beliefs in ways that optimize their health and wellbeing.



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**Table 1***Correlations Among Study Variables*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. Preparation for Bias	-	-			
2. Cultural Pride	.68***	-			
3. Racial Discrimination	.35***	.46***	-	-	-
4. Nationalist	.34***	.52***	.52***	-	-
5. Humanist	-.01	-.10	-.05	-.02	-
6. Assimilationist	.24***	.31***	.30***	.53***	.24***

Note.  $N = 370$ .

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .00$



**Table 2***Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Racial Discrimination and Racial Ideology**Beliefs Predicting Preparation for Bias Socialization*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Racial Discrimination	.22***	.06	3.61
Nationalist	.11**	.05	2.25
Humanist	-.02	.03	-.54
Assimilation	.07	.05	1.65
Mother's Age	.08	.03	3.33
Mother's Education	-.004	.03	-.11
Household Income	.0004	.01	.03
Child Gender: Girls	-.02	.09	-.17
Child Gender: Mixed Gender	-.03	.09	-.28
Household			
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.18		
<i>F</i>	9.34***		
Racial Discrimination	.23***	.06	3.71
Nationalist	.13**	.05	2.69
Humanist	-.02	.04	-.44
Assimilation	.08	.05	1.78
Mother's Age	.09	.03	3.45
Mother's Education	.002	.03	.05
Household Income	.001	.01	.06
Child Gender: Girls	.004	.09	.04
Child Gender: Mixed Gender	-.02	.09	-.21
Household			
Racial Discrimination X Nationalist	.07	.06	1.23
Racial Discrimination X Humanist	.05	.05	1.02
Racial Discrimination X Assimilation	-.04	.05	-.72
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.19		
$\Delta R^2$	.01		
<i>F</i>	8.22***		

*Note.*  $N = 370$ . Child gender was dummy coded with boys as the reference group.

*SE* = robust standard errors.

\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 3***Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Racial Discrimination and Racial Ideology**Beliefs Predicting Cultural Pride Socialization*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Racial Discrimination	.20***	.05	3.90
Nationalist	.25***	.04	6.15
Humanist	-.05*	.03	-1.99
Assimilation	.04	.03	1.19
Mother's Age	-.03	.02	-1.67
Mother's Education	.04	.02	1.53
Household Income	.005	.01	.47
Child Gender: Girls	-.02	.07	-.31
Child Gender: Mixed Gender	.02	.07	.34
Household			
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.34		
<i>F</i>	18.45***		
Racial Discrimination	.20***	.05	3.95
Nationalist	.27***	.04	6.54
Humanist	-.05	.03	-1.90
Assimilation	.05	.04	1.33
Mother's Age	-.03	.02	-1.56
Mother's Education	.04	.02	1.67
Household Income	.004	.001	.47
Child Gender: Girls	-.006	.08	-.8
Child Gender: Mixed Gender	.03	.07	.41
Household			
Racial Discrimination X Nationalist	.05	.05	1.03
Racial Discrimination X Humanist	.05	.04	1.20
Racial Discrimination X Assimilation	-.05	.04	-1.12
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.34		
$\Delta R^2$	.005		
<i>F</i>	17.13***		

*Note.* *N* = 370. Child gender was dummy coded with boys as the reference group.

*SE* = robust standard errors.

\**p* < .05. \*\*\**p* < .001.