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## What Black College Students Say About Race: An Exploration of Peer Racial Socialization

Alexandrea R. Golden

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What Black College Students Say About Race: An Exploration of Peer Racial  
Socialization

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my God and my village. To my God who sustains me, leads me, and gives me comfort. To all of the people who have come alongside me in this journey. To the friends and family who supported my passion at the start as well as the friends and the family that I found along the way. Your love and support have carried me through.

## **ABSTRACT**

In addition to the normative tasks of emerging adulthood and stressors of transitioning into the college environment, Black undergraduate students must also contend with race-related stressors (i.e., racial discrimination, racial stereotypes). Studies suggest that parent-child communications preparing youth for encounters of racism and instilling pride about their race (i.e., parent racial socialization) protect youth from the ramifications of racial discrimination (Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007). Although peers have been identified as another important resource in the racial socialization process (Lesane-Brown, Brown, Caldwell, & Sellers, 2005) as well as youth's ability to cope with discrimination (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Butler-Barnes, Chavous, Hurd, & Varner, 2013), the positive impacts of peers in the lives of Black youth have gone largely understudied. As such, additional study is needed to understand peer-specific race socialization practices among college students and their relation to Black college students' discrimination experiences and subsequent outcomes.

Using a multi-method qualitative approach, the current study sought to fill this gap by highlighting the contributions of peer racial socialization in the development of Black adolescents. Specific research questions are as follows: (1A) What is the process (i.e., thematic content, frequency, circumstances) of peer racial socialization messages between Black college students and their peers; (2) What is the concordance between peer racial socialization content and modalities and current conceptualizations of parent racial socialization; (3) How do peer racial socialization messages differ between males

and females. Participants included 35 (15 focus group; 20 individual interview) self-identified Black undergraduate students in the Southeastern region of the United States. Sixty percent of the population was female.

Results suggest, that similar to parents, Black college students communicate messages such as cultural messages and racial barrier messages; however, distinct from parents, they also communicate messages such as political division messages, academic messages, and messages about the everyday racial hassles experienced on the college campus. Findings have implications for the re-conceptualization of the impact of peers in the developmental processes of Black youth, identifying potential strengths in Black youth's microsystems, and informing peer-focused interventions for Black college students.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Emerging adulthood is a unique developmental stage in which individuals are fully exploring their identities, their relationships, and their developing independence (Arnette, 2000). While this developmental period includes greater responsibility than adolescence and less responsibility than adulthood, it is accompanied by various unique stressors as many emerging adults are moving away from home and into the college environment. More specifically, college is an important time of adjustment where youth may experience stressors such as navigating new social groups, identity exploration, and increased academic pressures (Dill & Henley, 1998; Archer & Lamnin, 1985; Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet, 2015; Shields, 2001).

Coupled with the normative stressors of transitioning and maintaining within the college environment, Black college students must also contend with race-related stressors (i.e., racial discrimination, racial stereotypes) both within the school environment as well as in the general public (Cokley, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). More specifically, in addition to experiencing discrimination in the general public, Black college students may also have to contend with being stereotyped, excluded, and/or aggressed against in the school environment (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). These experiences can be consequential for students' academic performance and persistence in the college environment as well as their

psychological functioning. Despite this, studies have noted racial socialization as a potential moderating factor in the relationship between racial discrimination, academic and psychological functioning. Although these studies have focused on the moderating role of racial socialization particularly for adolescents, these messages may be similarly important for college students experiencing race-related stress.

Studies have demonstrated that messages communicated about race can diminish or exacerbate the effects of race-related stressors (Neblett et al., 2008). Although positive associations have been noted between the racial messages that parents communicate to adolescents and their academic and psychosocial functioning, few studies have examined the impacts of racial messages on the functioning of college students. Furthermore, although peers have been identified as an increasingly important source of socialization throughout development, including racial socialization, research has neglected to investigate the impacts of peers as a source of racial socialization in addition to parents. This is particularly important given the current social climate in which numerous instances of racial harassment have been noted on college campuses across the United States as well as the racial tension that has increased following the 2016 presidential election. The media has taken note of the organizing and speaking out of Black students and Black student organizations in response to these incidents, yet there is still a dearth of research seeking to understand the messages that are being communicated among Black students that impact their coping with and responses to racism.

The current study sought to address this gap by exploring peer racial socialization, including the content of messages that youth communicate as well as the mechanisms through which they communicate those messages (i.e., modalities). This study also

sought to understand how racial socialization among emerging adults and their peers compares to the racial socialization process of parents.

The following literature review will first provide a conceptualization of racial socialization, discussing dimensions and practices as well as factors that influence racial socialization practices. Second, Spencer's (1997) Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems theory will be introduced as a guide for the current project. Third, the protective role of racial socialization will be discussed. Gaps in the existing literature will be discussed. Next, the importance of peer relationships will be reviewed to provide a greater understanding of the current study and racial socialization among peers will be discussed. Finally, the research questions and methodology of the current study will be presented.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Racial Socialization**

Race has been a longstanding topic of socialization within Black communities for centuries as a mechanism for preparing youth to cope with the racial oppression they will experience in a racially-stratified society and teaching them how to conduct themselves in that society (Coard & Sellers, 2005; Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004; Hamm, 2001). Indeed, numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of providing race-specific messages through identifying their negative association with racial discrimination (Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007; Hughes, 2003). Racial socialization is defined as the “specific verbal and non-verbal (e.g., modeling of behavior and exposure to different contexts and objects) messages transmitted to younger generations for the development of values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding the meaning and significance of race and racial stratification, intergroup and intragroup interactions, and personal and group identity” (Lesane-Brown, 2006, p. 403). While individuals receive racial messages from various sources (e.g., parents, peers, media; Boykin & Ellison, 1995), investigations of parent-to-child communications have been the primary focus of study and as such, have yielded most of the current knowledge about the phenomenon of racial socialization. Furthermore, little research has identified the effects of racial socialization on college students. Accordingly, this review of the mechanisms and themes of racial socialization yields from parent racial socialization literature

focusing on children and adolescents. In particular, the importance and impacts of racial socialization among Black college students will be discussed.

**Prevalence of Racial Socialization.** Racial socialization has been cited as an essential and normative practice among Black families (Hamm, 2001; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2008; Stevenson, 1995). Approximately 75% percent of Black parents report transmitting messages about race to their children (Stevenson, 1995; Thornton et al., 1990) although this number may be underreported due to parents' lack of awareness of engaging in this practice (Coard et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2008; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). Furthermore, this socialization process begins early in child development. This is important because although children do not ascribe meaning to race until late childhood (Quintana, 1998), children as young as three notice racial differences (Spencer, 1983) and understand the longevity of belonging to a racial group (Roberts & Gelman, 2015). While most studies focus on adolescents and pre-adolescents, Caughy and colleagues (2002) found that parents were transmitting racial messages to children as young as three years old. Furthermore, these messages continue and remain relevant into emerging adulthood (Barr & Neville, 2008; Mutisya & Ross, 2005; Rivas-Drake, 2011; Thompson, 1994).

**Mechanisms of Racial Socialization.** In accordance with other socialization practices (e.g., academic, social), racial socialization messages may be transmitted in various ways (direct or indirect; verbally or nonverbally) and may be diverse in the content domains communicated (Coard et al., 2004; Lesane-Brown et al., 2005). For example, direct messages may include parents' explicit verbal communications about the historical struggles and successes of people of African descent in America and how that

compares to the current struggles of Blacks. Parents may also introduce racial messages non-verbally through their behaviors. Coard and Sellers (2005) disaggregated non-verbal messages into two forms—exposure and modeling. Exposure is demonstrated in parents’ introduction and incorporation of cultural experiences such as attending Black museums and festivals and celebrating cultural holidays such as Kwanzaa. Modeling, on the other hand, refers to parents’ demonstration of certain behaviors that they encourage their children to emulate, such refraining from using—or allowing others to use—stereotypical remarks (Coard & Sellers, 2005). Additionally, studies demonstrate that racial socializations messages may be communicated for different purposes. In particular, Hughes and colleagues (2008) discussed how racial socialization messages may be provided in preparation for a racial event (proactive) or following a racial event (reactive).

**Domains of Racial Socialization.** Various scholars have noted the importance of racial socialization practices and have consequently explored the different messages that parents communicate about race. Hughes and colleagues (2006) review of race and ethnic specific socialization literature found that identified themes across studies may be categorized into five broad domains including *cultural socialization*, *preparation for bias*, *promotion of mistrust*, and *egalitarianism*, and *silence about race*. Furthermore, scholars have also noted additional race specific messages including *racial pride* (i.e., a sub-dimension of cultural socialization) and *religious coping* messages as well as more academic messages such as *self-development* messages. While the majority of this research has focused on racial socialization with children and adolescents, it can provide a foundation to investigate racial socialization about Black college students. The

following sections will provide a review of the various kinds of messages that may be communicated through these domains.

**Cultural socialization.** Cultural socialization messages are communications that provide information about youths' ethnic and racial history. Through cultural socialization, parents may intentionally or unintentionally enlighten children about the culture, heritage and history of their racial group (Hughes et al., 2008). For example, in Coard and colleagues' (2004) qualitative study, one participant expressed the importance of providing cultural knowledge to her children to help them prepare for the future. Notably, studies specific to Black families' communications have identified the transmission of *racial pride* messages specifically encouraging youth to be proud of their Black heritage. Parents in Coard and colleagues' (2004) study also discussed instilling racial pride about themselves and their culture to their children through statements such as "we are a mighty and strong people" and "You're black, black is beautiful and there's nothing wrong with that" (Coard et al., 2004, p. 286). Cultural socialization may also occur through seemingly inconsequential activities such as preparing cultural dishes or listening to music (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). Hughes and colleagues (2008) reported that while conducting interviews on racial socialization with families, interviewers observed one Dominican family engaged in cultural socialization through playing Spanish music in the home and speaking in Spanish when answering the door or telephone. This suggests that cultural messages may be communicated both intentionally as well as unintentionally through exposing youth to cultural practices.

Researchers have identified parents' communications about one's culture as one of the earliest and most frequent messages transmitted to youth (Caughy, O'Campo,

Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). In their mixed method study of parent racial socialization, Hughes and colleagues (2008) found that compared to other groups, Black and Latino parents more greatly valued cultural socialization. This may be due to parents' recognition of cultural education as an important element of socialization. Furthermore, parents may want their children to understand their cultural history to develop respect for who they are, to teach their children to value their culture, and to provide racial pride in preparation for coping with discrimination (Coard et al, 2008; Hughes et al., 2008; Thomas & Speight, 1999). In sum, parents' frequently, both intentionally and unintentionally, communicate messages about their cultural customs, history, and pride in order to educate and prepare their children to successfully navigate the world.

**Preparation for bias.** In acknowledging that discrimination is an inevitable occurrence in the lives of Blacks, parents may convey messages warning youth of potential negative encounters they may have due to their race and, furthermore, preparing them to cope with those negative experiences (Hughes et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2006). Preparation for bias messages are comprised of direct messages to youth and may occur in preparation for discrimination (proactive) or in response to discrimination (reactive; Hughes et al., 2008). For instance, parents may prepare children to cope with discrimination by instructing youth on how they should behave in different settings and scenarios (Coard et al., 2004). More specifically, parents may urge their children to dress and speak in specific ways as to fit in with mainstream society (Coard et al., 2004). Another example includes parents' discussions with their sons on how to behave if they are pulled over by the police. Parents may also engage in discussions with their children



about stereotypes and prejudices they may experience due to their racial membership. This was seen in Hughes and colleagues (2008) study when one mother reported informing her son about how, by being black and a male, he is starting with two strikes against him. Furthermore, she discussed with him how that translates to society's expectations that he would not be more than a "street hoodlum" (p. 251).

Following cultural socialization, preparation for bias has often been cited as one of the most frequently-emphasized messages provided by Black parents when compared to parents of other racial groups (Hughes et al., 2008; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Phinney & Chavira, 1995), although this may vary by study (Coard et al., 2004). This infers that parents recognize the importance of providing youth with the skills to overcome racial oppression.

**Promotion of mistrust.** While some parents choose to communicate behavioral and awareness messages to prepare youth to cope with racial biases, other parents may extend messages that promote distrust of interracial interactions (Hughes & Chen, 1999, Thornton et al., 1990). In particular, these messages may include alerts about potential biases and barriers that youth may experience. Alternatively, they may be warnings promoting distrust in people of other racial groups (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Although preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust are similar in that they address the negative interactions youth may experience due to their race, they are distinct based on the intent of the messages. While preparation for bias messages are accompanied by advice on coping with discrimination, promotion of mistrust messages provide no advice for helping youth cope with instances of racial discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006).

Comparatively, promotions of mistrust messages are the least frequently communicated among racial socialization messages (Hughes et al., 2008; Thornton et al., 1990). Thornton and colleagues (1990) found that only 2.7% of parents provided messages about youth keeping their distances from Whites. Hughes and Chen (1997) similarly found that few parents in their study reported communicating promotion of mistrust messages. Furthermore, this dimension is less often investigated, perhaps due to the negative impacts these messages may result in. Overall, these studies suggest that while promotion of mistrust messages inform youth of the potential bias they may encounter, they may not prepare youth to adequately cope with these encounters. Despite the low frequency of promotion of mistrust messages, it is important to understand and be aware of the potential impacts of these messages.

**Egalitarianism.** Egalitarianism pertains to parents' emphasis on equality among people of different races (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Coard et al., 2004; Thornton et al., 1990). Egalitarian messages primarily feature themes in which parents teach their children that people should not be judged based on their racial membership. These messages are communicated for a variety of reasons including as an addendum to conversations about barriers, as intentional messages to promote self-development beyond race, or as intentional messages to promote appreciation for diversity (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1999; Hughes, 2008). For example, one Black parent in Coard and colleagues' (2004) study reported that they strive to teach their children to acknowledge the goodness of people rather than the color of their skin. Parents may also engage in behaviors that expose youth to diverse cultures to highlight the importance of various cultures (Hughes & Chen, 1999).

Egalitarian messages are some of the most salient messages to parents (Bowman & Howard, 1985) and the third most frequently reported racial socialization messages among Black parents. Bowman and Howard (1985) found that 12% of youth reported receiving egalitarian messages from their parents. In a much smaller sample of Black families, Coard and colleagues (2004) found that 86% (n=13) of parents reported emphasizing messages about equality. Although parents may communicate messages about racial equality to their youth, this dimension of racial socialization is more frequently excluded from investigations on youth development (Cooper & McLoyd, 2011; Cooper & Smalls, 2010; Davis & Stevenson, 2006; fischer & Shaw, 1999; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). This may be due to negative associations between egalitarian messages and youth outcomes (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Davis & Stevenson, 2006), which diverge from the overarching goal of identifying protective resources for youth experiencing discrimination. Additional to message about equality, studies have noted the potential impacts of a lack of messages communicated (i.e., silence about race). Although some scholars often integrate silence about race and egalitarianism into one dimension, here they will be discussed as distinct dimensions.

**Silence about race.** In addition to parents communicating messages about equality, studies have noted that some parents may not communicate any messages about race to their youth (Bowman & Howard, 1985). While this dimension of racial socialization more adequately denotes the *absence* of racial socialization among Black families, it is an important consideration for youth development (Bowman & Howard, 1985). Although not a highly surveyed dimension, a surprising number of parents report not providing racial messages to their youth. For example, Bowman and Howard (1985)

found that 38% of Black youth reported not receiving any messages from their parents about being Black or about interacting with Whites. Furthermore, this dimension of racial socialization is important because, although parents may relay not extending messages pertaining to race, they may unintentionally communicate racial messages to their youth that are not salient to them (e.g., attending cultural events, listening to music).

**Self-development.** Though not explicitly related to race, self-development (also known as racial achievement) messages have been identified as an important category of racial messages communicated from Black parents to their children (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Coard et al., 2004; Peters, 1985; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Stevenson, 1994; Thompson, 1994). Although not identified in all conceptualizations of racial socialization, this dimension emerged as a result of negative stereotypes associating Blacks with laziness and inferiority (Coard et al., 2004). More specifically, self-development refers to parents' communications about the importance of working hard, pursuing education, and building character and initiative. Moreover, these messages are communicated with the understanding that Black youth must work harder and attain more education than their White counterparts to overcome barriers to success. For example, participants of Bowman and Howard's (1985) study discussed presenting messages such as "You must work hard to get a good education" (p. 137). Parents in Coard and colleagues' (2004) study additionally cited the importance of their children building positive characteristics and life skills to aid in their developmental success. Notably, messages encouraging self-development do not always directly address racial barriers and are not always accompanied by specific coping mechanisms, yet maintain a tone acknowledging the struggles and potential solutions for Blacks pursuing success.

Although self-development is not always discussed in studies of racial socialization, this has been identified as relatively common message communicated, yet this may vary based on the population. For instance, Bowman and Howard (1985) reported that 14% of the parents in their study reported communicating self-development messages, whereas more than half of the population in Phinney and Chavira's (1995) and Coard and colleagues' (2004) studies reported conveying these messages to their children. As such, this suggests that while this dimension may not frequently be investigated, it is an important piece for preparing Black youth to survive in a racially stratified society.

Although the literature on domains of racial socialization have been studied exclusively among parents and their children and adolescents, this literature likely informs the communications between Black college students and their peers. In particular, due to the prevalence, frequency, and emphasis of messages such as cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages throughout the lifespan, these messages may be present in the racial identities and communications of Black college students. Furthermore, the current racial climate among college campuses and around the United States may magnify the frequency and importance of messages such as preparation for bias and self-development messages and result in the de-emphasis of messages such as egalitarian and silence about race. The current study illuminates the presence—or absence—of racial socialization messages communicated between Black college students and their peers.

## 2.2 Influences on Racial Socialization Practices

Studies suggest that a number of factors can influence the ways that Black college students are racially socialized. In particular, racial socialization messages that individuals receive may vary based characteristics of the parent, the child, and the contexts that both parents and children exist within. As the current study will focus on the transmission of racial messages among Black college students and their peers, characteristics of individuals and their contexts that influence the racial socialization process will be reviewed.

**Individual characteristics.** As Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model (1979) posits, children influence their environment, in addition to being influenced *by* it. This holds true in parent racial socialization practices in that children's characteristics play a role in the racial socialization messages they receive from their parents. Child's age has been identified as an influential factor in the ways that parents engage in racial socialization. Research suggests that in accordance with youth development, parent's racial socialization practices change in type and frequency over their child's development (Hughes & Chen, 1997; McHale et al., 2006) with peak socialization occurring in adolescence, a time where youth are more likely to experience and be cognitively aware of discrimination. For example, Hughes and Chen (1997) found that when comparing parents with children ages 4 to 14, parents' reports of racial socialization practices increased as the age group of their children increased. More specifically, parents of children ages 12 to 14 reported more frequent socialization messages than parents of children ages 9 to 11 who similarly reported more frequent socialization messages than parents of children ages 4 to 8. Furthermore, this study found similar trends when

comparing the frequency of specific racial socialization messages including cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust. This suggests that not only does racial socialization occur more frequently as children and adolescents mature, but that parents also selectively deliver socialization messages as children develop.

Gender has also been shown as influential in the messages that children receive from their parents (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes et al., 2008; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thompson, 1994). In particular, girls are more likely to receive cultural socialization messages, while boys are more likely to receive preparation for bias messages. This was demonstrated in Thomas and Speight's (1999) study of Black families in which parents reported providing more racial pride messages to girls and more messages about negative stereotypes, bias, and coping strategies to boys. These differences may be attributed to greater stereotypes of Black males as dangerous, which may lead to more detrimental physical and psychological consequences as a result of Black male youths' experiences with discrimination. This is supported by Hughes and Johnson's (2001) study, which found that parents of boys perceived more experiences discrimination from teachers and peers than did parents of girls. These gender differences may provide insight into differences among racial socialization processes of Black college students as males may be more inclined to confer with peers about racial barriers they have experienced while females may engage in more communication about cultural knowledge, traditions, and experiences.

**Contextual influences.** Research has demonstrated that parents gauge the racial climates that their children develop in (Spencer, 1983) in order to provide them with the messages that are needed to cope in the racial climate they are developing in (Kurtz-

Costes, Hudgens, Skinner, Adams, & Rowley, 2019). In Spencer's (1983) qualitative interviews with Black parents, parents acknowledged that the racial values they imparted to their children would be different based on the racial climate their children were raised in. Recent literature has also suggested that parents transmit messages based upon the racial climate that they perceive at that time (Kurtz, -Costes et al., 2019; Rowley, Varner, Ross, Williams, & Banerjee, 2012; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015). Similarly, the racial messages that are transmitted by Black college students may also be influenced by the racial climate, both of their institution and the larger climate of the country. This is particularly important at the current time due to the racial tension in America resulting in greater awareness and discussion of racial injustices and the state of being Black in America (i.e., racial socialization). Due to increased media attention of police brutality toward Black individuals, racist incidences occurring on college campuses, and racial tension following the 2016 presidential election, it is likely that communications regarding race is more frequent among Black college students and their peers.

Neighborhood characteristics have also been associated with the racial messages that that are communicated. Studies have found that parents living in racially mixed neighborhoods engage in greater racial socialization than families living in racially homogenous neighborhoods (Thornton et al., 1990). Furthermore, Caughy and colleagues (2006) found that parents who live in neighborhoods with different racial compositions tend to emphasize different racial messages (Caughy et al., 2006). Similarly, the racial composition of the institutions that Black college students attend may impact the racial messages that they receive and communicate to others. In particular, the racial climates of institutions have been noted to differ significantly based on the racial composition of the



school (Fries-Britt & Turner 2002; Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). For example, Fries-Britt and Turner found significant differences in Black college student's experiences with faculty and peer support with students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) perceiving more support than students from PWIs. Furthermore, Black students at HBCUs perceived higher of levels of cohesiveness and a greater sense of community. Comparatively, students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) report more experiences of racism and a lesser sense of belonging. For example, Black undergraduate students in D'Augelli and Hersherberger's (1993) study reported experiencing explicit discriminatory events such as verbal insults, threats, spitting, punching, property damage, and being followed. Similar experiences were found in Caldwell and colleagues' (2004) and Swim and colleagues' (2003) study of Black college students' experiences. Students also reported subtle instances of racism on the college campus. In Solorzano and colleagues' (1998) qualitative study of Black college students attending elite Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), students reported feelings of being 'invisible' in the classroom setting and frustrations with faculty members' unwarranted low expectations of them. Additionally, these students expressed that they felt that their experiences as Blacks were omitted, distorted, and stereotyped during classroom sessions and that they would, at times, feel pressure to give statements as representation on behalf of the Black population. This aligns with previous racial socialization literature that identifies the social climate as influential in the racial socialization process (Spencer, 1983). Furthermore, qualitative literature has identified the campus racial climate as a motivating force in the socialization practices of Black college students (Arpugo, 2017;

Harper & Quaye, 2007; Palmer, Maramba, & Holmes, 2011). This suggests that, although not well-surveyed, socialization among Black college students and their peers may be similarly influenced by factors that influence parent-to-child racial socialization. The current study will explore the messages and contexts in which racial socialization occurs for Black college students.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

In the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), Spencer (1997) extends Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979) through acknowledging that youth experience various forms of oppression in their environments, which may negatively contribute to their development. Specific to Blacks, Spencer (1997) identifies racism as a normative form of oppression that college students encounter that could lead to productive or unproductive outcomes. Youth may experience discrimination across various contexts that they frequent including their neighborhoods and schools (Byrd, 2015; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Riina, Martin, Gardner, & Brooks-Gunn, 2013). These experiences of discrimination transform contexts from positive or neutral into potential risk factors. For example, while the campus environment is intended to promote positive academic development, research has found that discrimination within this context is associated with diminished academic beliefs and behaviors, therefore instituting this context as a risk factor.

Notably, while many youth may be exposed to racism, not all will be confronted with negative developmental trajectories as a result of these adverse circumstances. Differences in trajectories are determined, in part, by an individual's vulnerability, which is comprised of the existence of both risk and protective factors. Furthermore, PVEST

posits that it is not only the objective experience of racism that contributes to outcomes, but also the interpretation of the event. In particular, drawing upon resilience theories, Spencer (1997) asserts that the interpretation of one's experience of racism contributes to particular adaptive or maladaptive coping mechanisms. These coping mechanisms are then employed in current and future encounters of racism for youth, which subsequently influences youths' developmental trajectories. Studies suggest that racial socialization is a resource that contributes to youths' ability to cope with racism as it influences the ways that youth interpret and respond to experiences of racism. While the adaptive or maladaptive nature of racial socialization depends on the messages that are presented to youth, many studies have identified that parents' racial messages pertaining to culture and tools that can be used to manage racist experiences have been beneficial for various outcomes for youth. These messages allow youth to interpret their experiences in a manner that may lead to adaptive coping. In the current study, PVEST (1997) was used to conceptualize the extension of racial socialization literature and address the gap of understanding the contributions of peers in the process of racial socialization.

#### **2.4 Racial Socialization as a Protective Factor**

Studies have begun to increasingly examine the moderating role of racial socialization in the context of adverse experiences. Although this literature largely highlights the protective role of racial messages in the positive outcomes of Black adolescents, a small body of literature has also identified the protective roles of racial messages among college students. Moreover, studies have identified specific racial messages, including cultural socialization and preparation for barrier messages, as messages that mitigate the negative effects of adverse experiences (e.g., racial

discrimination) on various developmental outcomes. These studies emphasize the significance of racial socialization in the lives of Black college students and, as such, will be reviewed.

Investigations exploring the moderating role of racial socialization have most frequently surveyed the impact of this phenomenon in the relationship between racial discrimination and psychosocial outcomes. In particular, studies have illustrated how racial messages may enervate negative outcomes associated with racial discrimination (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Blackmon, Coyle, Davenport, Owens, & Sparrow, 2016; Brown & Tylka, 2011; Bynum, Burton, & Best, 2007; Fischer & Shaw, 1999). In Brown and Tylka's (2011) study of Black young adults, results suggested that racial socialization buffered the relationship between racial discrimination and self-reported resilience. Similarly, Fischer and Shaw's (1999) study of young adults found that racial socialization moderated the relationship between racial discrimination and overall mental health. Even more, studies have identified the importance of racial socialization to the adjustment of Black college students (Anglin & Wade, 2007). Bynum and colleagues' (2007) study of Black college freshman found that cultural resource coping (i.e., preparation for bias) buffered the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological stress. This is particularly important given the significant stressors that college students may experience including increased loneliness, separation from their families, changes in social support, increased academic pressures, and more (Larose & Boivin, 1998; Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). These studies emphasize the importance of racial socialization for psychological adjustment of college students, however there is a dearth of research investigating the impacts of racial socialization on academic outcomes, which is

particularly important in the college environment. Despite this, it may be deduced from studies highlighting the moderating impacts of racial socialization on academic outcomes among adolescents (Dotterer et al., 2009; Neblett et al., 2008; Wang & Huguley, 2012) that this would also be important among college students. Furthermore, acknowledging the developmental context, the source of socialization (i.e., peers) may influence the outcomes associated with racial socialization among college students. As such, it is first important to gain a greater understanding of the racial socialization practices among Black college students and their peers.

## **2.5 Gaps in Racial Socialization Literature**

Literature has instituted racial socialization as an essential and valuable convention among Black families and, more so, Black youth development. However, this field is still developing and as such, has various gaps to be addressed. To date, a vast majority of the literature on racial socialization has focused on the impacts of messages about race transmitted from parents to their children. This literature highlights parent racial socialization as a common and important element in Black youth development that is associated with various positive outcomes. Furthermore, these studies identify parent racial socialization as a protective factor for youth who experience racial discrimination. Although these studies have called attention to the importance of racial socialization for Black youth, this field has been shortsighted in its prominent focus on parents as agents of racial socialization for Black youth. More recently, the focus of racial socialization literature has shifted to the processes and impacts within the school environment (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Thornhill, 2016). Despite the importance of the current work, racial

socialization literature largely neglects to explore the importance of racial socialization in the lives of individuals beyond adolescence.

Boykin and Ellison (1995) highlighted the importance of three sources of racial socialization additional to parents including the media, school, and peers. These informants have been noted in other investigations as important sources of racial socialization (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Byrd, 2015; O'Connor, Brooks-Gunn, & Graber, 2000; Stevenson, 1994), however this literature remains diminutive. For example, Byrd (2015) discussed the ways in which the school environment may communicate racial messages and principles through their curriculum, practices, and interactions. More important to the current investigation, peers have also been identified as an important source of communication and influence for racial socialization practices. As peers are a crucial source of support and socialization among college students, it is particularly critical to explore the contributions of peers in the process of racial socialization.

## **2.6 Peer Relationships and Emerging Adulthood**

In addition to parents, peers have been cited as critical source of influence in the lives of youth, particularly adolescents (Berndt, 1979; Brown & Larson, 2009; Derlan & Umaña-Taylor, 2015; Erwin, 1993; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). From a developmental perspective, adolescence includes the natural progression of youth building their peer support system in preparation for adulthood (Colarossi & Eccles, 2000; Richman et al., 1998) and have been noted as impactful for various developmental outcomes including educational and psychosocial (Bachanas et al., 2002; Brittian and Gray, 2014; Brody et al., 2006; Padilla-Walker and Bean, 2009). However, the

importance of peers does not end at adolescence, but continues into emerging adulthood. Fuhrman and Burhemester (1993) highlighted the increasing importance of peers over development in their study of four grade groups ranging from fourth grade to college. Researchers found that while parents were the most frequent sources of support in the fourth grade, peers became increasingly important sources of support throughout adolescence and into the college years where they were the most important support source during the tenth grade and college years. Similar findings were noted in Makiewicz and colleagues' (2006) study of relationship functions among mid-adolescence, late-adolescence, and emerging adulthood. Results of this study highlighted that while mothers were important as a secure base throughout each of these developmental stages, best friends and romantic partners became increasingly important as youth's safe havens through each developmental stage. These studies emphasize the importance of peers in the development of youth into the college years, yet few studies have looked particularly at the impacts of peers in the lives of college students.

Arnett (2000) identified emerging adulthood as a transitional stage between adolescence and adulthood in which youth more fully immerse themselves in identity exploration in preparation for adulthood. Many individuals experience this stage through leaving their homes and moving into the college environment, and as such peers become increasingly important for youth's decision making and social comparison. This stage is marked by significant stressors including not only the shift in one's environment, but also increased financial responsibility, increased independence and consequences for behaviors, changes in the peer relationship and increased academic demands (Dill & Henley, 1998; Archer & Lamnin, 1985; Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet, 2015; Shields,

2001). Further, Black emerging adults must additionally navigate racial stressors in addition to the typical stresses of the transition to college and emerging adulthood (Cokley, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). For Black emerging adults, these stressors can have both physical and psychological consequences including high blood pressure (Hill, Kobayashi, & Hughes, 2007), decreased self-esteem (Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken, 2014), anxiety, and depression (Hwang & Goto, 2008). Despite these risks, researchers have noted the importance of the support provided by peers in adjustment during the college stage (Apugo, 2017; Palmer, Maramba, & Holmes, 2011), despite difficulties with shifting peer dynamics (Lansu & Cillessen, 2012).

Specifically considering the experiences of minority students in the college environment (i.e., racial discrimination, racial prejudice), peer relationships may be especially essential for successful adjustment in this changing environment. In particular, peer relationships and support are essential for minority students' ability to adapt to both the general and racial stressors they experience in the college environment. For example, Apugo's (2017) qualitative study of Black women graduate students revealed that students valued peer relationships for their ability to provide support in the face of racial microaggressions and scarce support from their institutions. Furthermore, these students cited the importance of receiving peer support through the sharing of similar experiences. Furthermore, Palmer, Maramba, and Holmes (2011) highlighted the importance of campus organizations in providing support to minority college students. These studies identify that not only are peers important in the development of Black emerging adults,



but infer that racial socialization may be an essential component of relationships among Black college students.

## **2.7 Peer Racial Socialization**

Although there is not a sizable literature exploring the race socialization patterns and processes among Black youth, studies have alluded to peers being an important source of racial socialization (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Lesane-Brown, Brown, Caldwell, & Sellers, 2005; Stevenson et al., 2002). For example, in his study of Black youths' racial socialization beliefs, Stevenson and colleagues (2002) found that parents' messages only accounted for only a fraction of the variance in youths' personal racial beliefs. The author went on to assert that peers may be another important source for racial socialization that contributes to youths' own racial beliefs. Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) study of Black high school students support this assertion in revealing that adolescents communicated messages to one another pertaining to their beliefs on what behaviors Blacks do and do not engage in such as listening to certain music, going to the library, and so on. Lesane-Brown and colleagues' (2005) pilot evaluation of the Comprehensive Racial Socialization Inventory (CRSI) found that not only were peers a source of racial socialization for Black youth, but that they were equally important sources of racial socialization messages as parents for Black adolescents. Furthermore, this study suggested that peers may provide additional themes of racial messages when compared to parents. It may be that as youth come into the peer context with preexisting schemas due to parent socialization and media depictions, the negotiation of these messages in order to adopt or discard (Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Lesane-Brown et al., 2005) messages in the process of identity development is something that may occur within the peer context. As

such, exploring the five domains of racial socialization among Black college students and their peers will provide a greater understanding of where racial socialization domains converge and diverge within this population. As the current study will focus on the practices and impacts of racial socialization among peers, it is crucial to understand the importance of peers in the development of college students.

**Peer Racial Socialization and Campus Organizations.** Peers play an important role in the campus experiences of college students (Arpugo, 2017; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Sollito). Moreover, Black peers have been cited as especially important to the adjustment and persistence of Black students at PWIs (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Museus, 2008; Palmer, Maramba, & Holmes, 2011; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001) compared to HBCUs. Studies suggest that Black students more frequently assemble through cultural organizations rather than academic organizations, as seen in HBCUs (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001), thereby creating a cultural space for themselves in a predominantly White environment (Harper & Quaye, 2007). The Black community on campus provides a space for sharing culture, sharing experiences, gaining advice, reinforcing identities, and providing a sense of security (Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Lewis & McKissic, 2010; Museus, 2008). Within these interactions, studies have passively highlighted the experiences of racial socialization. For example, in Lewis and McKissic's (2010) qualitative study of the experiences of two Black students at PWIs, one participant reported the magnitude of small interactions with other Black students such as discussing past experiences with getting their hair done. The other participant also noted the comfort that Black student organizations provided through familiarities from home such as food, topics of conversation, and language used. Furthermore, both

participants attributed their persistence at their PWIs to the Black student community at their institution.

It is important to note that students are not passive participants in these organizations, but may view it as their social responsibility to steward more junior Black students through the college experience (Guiffrida, 2003). This suggests that the racial socialization that occurs within these organization is intentionally occurring throughout the generations of students. Although literature on Black campus organizations has revealed the necessary role of Black spaces for the experiences and matriculation of Black students on the college campus, this literature does not provide an in-depth understanding of the themes of messages communicated among Black students that encourage coping and persistence throughout their academic careers. The current seeks to address this gap by exploring the themes of racial socialization among Black college students and their peers.

## **2.8 The Current Study**

The current study was one of the first identified investigations to explicitly study the process of racial socialization among Black college students and their peers, thus extending and refining the theories of racial socialization. In particular, the current study was guided by the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997) which highlights the importance of both the interpretation of one's experience as well as the one has to successfully cope with racial racism. The messages that parents share with their children about race have been established as a protective resource for adolescents experiencing race related stress; however, the socialization process among peers has also been indicated as significant, specifically for

college students. Although peers become an increasingly important source of support and socialization in the lives of youth as they develop through adolescent and into adulthood, no studies have been identified that explored the racial socialization process among Black youth and their peers. The current study will utilize two qualitative methods to begin filling these gaps by exploring the process of peer racial socialization between Black adolescents and their peers. In particular, qualitative analyses will be utilized to gain a greater understanding of the understudied process of peer racial socialization.

**Research Question 1 (RQ 1):** (1A) What is the thematic content of peer racial socialization messages between Black college students and their peers? (1B) What are the modalities of message transmission for peer racial socialization messages between Black college students and their peers? (1C) Under what circumstances (i.e., reactive, proactive) are racial socialization messages communicated between Black college students and their peers?

Researchers have noted the various dimensions of racial socialization that parents communicate to their children (see Appendix E; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Stevenson, 1994). While no studies have been identified that examine the specific messages that college students communicate with their peers, it is expected that individuals would communicate similar dimensions and through similar modalities as they have experienced from their parents. However, it is believed that youth may extend additional messages to those identified with parents due to their developmental stage as well as the changing racial climate in their society. As such, while this research question is highly exploratory in its nature, it is hypothesized that Black emerging adults will primarily communicate cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages.

Furthermore, youth may communicate their messages through verbal expression as well as through modeling (e.g., music listened to, clothes worn, activities attended).

**Research Question 2 (RQ 2):** What is the concordance between peer racial socialization content and modalities and current conceptualizations of parent racial socialization?

Due to the lack of studies investigating the racial socialization messages communicated by parents compared to youth, this research question is exploratory. As such, no specific hypotheses were made pertaining to this research question. However, it is probable that the interviews will document thematic content and modes for sharing racial socialization messages that are more common among peers than parents. That is, it is expected that peer racial socialization will augment racial socialization of parents in thematic content.

**Research Question 3 (RQ 3):** How do peer racial socialization messages differ between males and females?

Previous literature suggests that males and females are racially socialized in significantly different ways. In particular, while females more often receive cultural socialization messages, parents more frequently provide messages to males preparing them to cope with racial biases (i.e., preparation for bias). As such, it is believed that these message patterns will be replicated among male and female college students with females placing more emphasis on cultural socialization messages and males producing more preparation for bias messages.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Study Design**

The current study utilized two qualitative methodologies to explore the content and modalities of peer racial socialization messages among Black college students and their peers: focus groups and individual interviews. The two complementary methods were used to facilitate triangulation in analyses and validate the overall findings. First, focus groups were conducted in which Black undergraduate students discussed with peers the ways that they engage in racial socialization among their peers and the messages that they transmit. This method of data collection allows for researchers to replicate the peer group process as well as identify a range of themes of racial socialization that may not be readily identified individually. Themes that emerge in focus groups were used to refine the questions used in the subsequent individual interviews. Following the collection of focus group data, individual interviews were conducted. Findings of the focus groups and individual interviews on peer racial socialization were compared with the parent racial socialization literature to identify corresponding and contrasting themes of racial socialization. Furthermore, data gathered from focus groups and individual interviews were compared to examine whether differing data collection methods may have informed the themes identified.

### **3.2 Study 1-Focus Groups**

*Participants.* Focus group participants included 15 self-identified Black undergraduate students from a Predominately White Institution (PWI) in the Southeastern region of the United States. Seventy-three percent of participants were female, 40% lived on campus, and ages ranged from 18 to 21. Additionally, the sample included approximately 27% freshman, 20% sophomores, 27% juniors, and 27% seniors.

The racial composition of the participating university is 76.7% White, 10.2% Black, 0.2% Native American, 4% Hispanic, 2.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3.2% Bi- or Multi-racial, and 3.3% other.

*Recruitment.* Focus group participants were recruited through a range of methods including flyers posted on campus, emails sent through university listservs, outreach to campus organizations, and snowball sampling (i.e., encouraging students on campus to tell others). Individuals who were interested in participating in the study completed a brief web-based screener (Appendix H) that assessed their eligibility for inclusion in the study. One hundred and twelve individuals completed the screener with 97% (n=108) meeting eligibility criteria and approximately 14% participating across four focus groups. Eligibility criteria included current undergraduate students at the participating university who self-identified as Black.

*Focus group procedures.* Focus groups were conducted during the 2017-2018 school year. Focus groups ranged in size from three to five participants across the four groups. The gender composition of the focus groups included two all-female groups and two co-ed groups. It should be noted that initial conceptualization of focus groups included a total of six focus groups including two all-male focus groups. Due to

scheduling conflicts and low commitment to attending all-male sessions, the two intended all-male focus groups were not conducted, which significantly altered the ratio of male to female participants. Challenges with recruiting Black men has been noted in the research literature (Byrd et al., 2011) and may reflect differences in male group processes and comfort levels or a historic mistrust for research programs.

Focus groups lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and were facilitated by the primary investigator and a trained assisting graduate student. Assisting graduate students included two self-identified Black students (one male; one female) to maintain cohesion in focus groups and prevent disruption of the discussion process due to potential discomfort experienced by undergraduate participants.

Participants met in the Psychology Department on campus and were given instructions on the nature of the study, the benefits and risks of the study, and the contributions of the study. After obtaining informed consent (see Appendix C), the facilitator helped participants identify and agree on ground rules to guide a respectful and productive discussion. Following the creation of ground rules, participants were asked questions pertaining to their verbal and non-verbal communications about race and how these communications differ based on friend groups and situations (see Appendix A). In particular, focus group questions began with introductory questions (e.g., “What kind of music do you listen to?”; “Where are you from?”), followed by core questions (e.g. “How important is it that you can talk with your friends about topics related to your race?” or “Tell me about a time when you and your friends had a conversation where race came up.”), and finally a closing question (e.g., Based on the things we talked about today, what is the most important thing that people should know about how Black youth and



their peers communicate about race with one another?”). During focus groups, the assisting graduate students took notes of themes that emerged during the discussions as well as group dynamics (e.g., who was and was not speaking) while the primary researcher facilitated the discussion among focus group participants. Focus groups were recorded using two audio recorders for later transcription and analysis.

At the end of each focus group, debriefing occurred in which themes generated throughout the discussion were repeated back to participants for verification to allow participants to clarify or add on to any themes that were discussed during the course of the focus group. Additionally, in the case that participants experienced distress as a result of the discussion, all participants were given a typed list of resources for local therapy services and support groups that they could access if needed. No distress was reported by participants throughout the process of focus groups.

*Participant compensation.* As remuneration for their time, focus group participants received \$10 gift for their participation.

### **3.3 Study 2-Individual Interviews**

*Participants.* Individual interviews included 20 Black undergraduate students from the same institution. It should be noted that students who participated in focus group interviews were not allowed to participate in individual interviews to prevent bias from previous exposure to topic discussion. The sample population for individual interviews were comprised of 15% freshmen, 35% sophomores, 30% juniors, and 20% seniors. Fifty percent of the sample population was female.

*Recruitment.* Similar to focus groups, individual interview participants were recruited through a range of methods including flyers posted on campus, emails sent

through university listservs, outreach to campus organizations, and snowball sampling (i.e., encouraging students on campus to tell others). In addition to newly interested individuals during the second phase of recruitment, individuals who expressed interest in participation during focus group participant recruitment, but were unable to participate, were considered for participation in individual interviews. Individual interview participants completed a brief screener (Appendix H) that assessed their eligibility for inclusion in the study. Following the submission of the questionnaire, the primary researcher contacted eligible potential participants to schedule them for an interview.

*Individual interview procedures.* Individual interviews were administered following the completion of focus group interviews in order to refine interview questions based on emergent themes identified in the focus groups (see Appendix F for preliminary questions). Following focus groups, two additional interview questions were added to individual interviews based on the focus group process including “*What are the racial demographics of your friend groups*” and “*How does your ability to share your culture differ based on the race of your friends?*” No further adaptations were made to individual interviews based upon focus group interviews. After accepting the invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix D), participants were scheduled for a one-on-one semi-structured interview with the primary researcher in the Department of Psychology. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. After engaging in discussion with participants, the primary researcher concluded each interview by repeating themes that were noted throughout the discussion for validation and clarification by the research participant. Individual interviews will be audio recorded for later transcription and analysis.

*Participant compensation.* As remuneration for their time, individual interview participants received \$10 gift cards or course credit for their participation.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The current study used a two-step modified Grounded Theory approach (Kloos et al., 2005; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify distinct themes of peer racial socialization emerging from interview data (i.e., emergent coding) followed by a second analysis guided by existing theory to look for specific themes suggested by the parent racial socialization literature (i.e., deductive coding). This two-step approach to thematic coding was applied to both focus groups and individual interviews. Emergent coding was first employed to answer the first research question assessing the content, mechanisms, and circumstances of racial socialization messages among Black college students and their peers. Emergent coding was conducted as specified by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Subsequent to emergent coding, deductive coding (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) will ensue to help answer the second research question examining the concordance between peer racial socialization and parent racial socialization.

Deductive coding (see Appendix E) focused on existing theories of racial socialization (cultural socialization, racial barriers, etc.) and allowed testing of transferability of parent-to-child communications to understanding peer-to-peer communications (research question 3; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Deductive coding is a technique in which existing theories are used to guide the process of coding. In particular, expected findings based on existing theories are translated into a coding matrix and surveyed to assess whether the codes exist within the current dataset.

Finally, planned comparisons were conducted to better understand group differences between males and females that may arise in the data, thus answering research question three. Planned comparisons will be discussed in further detail later.

**Data Management.** Four research assistants were trained by the primary investigator to assist the primary researcher with qualitative coding. Research assistants were trained in transcribing audio recordings, qualitative coding, and confidentiality practices. In particular, to train research assistants for qualitative coding, researchers were provided with a research question and brief practice transcripts in which they were asked to code the research question. The primary investigator reviewed the themes that emerged from the practice transcripts and reviewed the themes with the group of coders to ensure their understanding of the process. Focus group and individual interview audio recordings were transcribed by trained assistants within three weeks of each interview. Transcripts were transcribed and double checked for accuracy by another undergraduate research assistant. Any conflicts in transcription were resolved by the primary researcher.

**Research Question 1.** To address the first research question exploring the thematic content, message modalities, and circumstances of peer racial socialization among Black college students and their peers, emergent coding was conducted. Following transcription of interviews, each interview were read in its entirety by research assistants so that they could become familiar with the content. Creation of a framework of themes emerging from participant interviews was constructed through open coding. This first step in emergent coding occurred where a subset of interviews were re-read for emergent patterns and themes pertaining to the research question of themes of peer racial socialization. As possible themes were identified, each reader made notations in the

margins of the transcript. A list potential emergent themes were compared among readers and reviewed by the team for consistency, coverage, and applicability across interviews. Once a framework of emergent themes was agreed upon and no new thematic content was identified in interviews, the coding criteria for the emergent codes was finalized. Once a coding framework was established, the actual coding of interviews for emergent themes was applied systematically to all interview transcripts to create the data set of selective coding. Two to three trained students applied the coding framework to all of the interviews and coding was complete when at least 70% agreement was reached between coders.

*Triangulation of Qualitative Findings.* Between-method triangulation was used to validate the findings of emergent coding between focus groups and individual interviews. To triangulate findings, data from both studies were merged during interpretation to identify how data converged. In the event that data did not converge and significant differences were located in focus groups and individual interviews data, post-hoc analyses were conducted. In particular, the primary researcher assessed whether significant differences were noted in the number of words and codes acquired in each group through planned comparisons.

**Research Question 2.** To address the second research question on the concordance between peer racial socialization and parent racial socialization, deductive coding was conducted. In particular, readers used codes created by researchers based upon theory of parent racial socialization through a process of deductive coding (see Appendix E; Elos & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsie & Shannon, 2005). Deductive coding is a coding technique in which an existing theory informs a coding structure that is used to

guide analyses. Codes were created for *cultural socialization messages* (which included racial pride), *preparation for bias messages*, *racial barrier messages*, *egalitarian messages*, *silence about race messages* as suggested in the literature review.

Additionally, readers coded for *verbal messages* as well as *non-verbal messages* (see Appendix E). Readers were trained in using this coding system and when 70% agreement was reached in coding of pilot interviews, readers applied the deductive coding framework to all of the interviews.

Following deductive coding, the primary researcher assessed the concordance between peer racial socialization and parent racial socialization messages. To do this, Cohen's kappa was used to assess the overall agreement between codes using the equation  $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of Agreements}}{\text{Total number of Agreements} + \text{Disagreements}}$  (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Research Question 3.** To address research question three, examining differences in peer racial socialization between males and females, planned comparisons were conducted. In particular, the primary researcher reviewed transcripts between males and females to assess differences and similarities between male and female participants in thematic content shared or modality of communication. Planned comparisons included the surveying of the categories of codes identified in transcripts by participants of different genders as well as by identifying differences in discussions of themes.

**Analyzing adequacy of coding.** Across emergent and deductive coding, each transcript was coded by at least two coders and checked for reliability using the formula  $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of Agreements}}{\text{Total number of Agreements} + \text{Disagreements}}$  (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the case that reliability was less than 70% between coders,

coders met to discuss differences in coding. Following discussion, coders re-coded transcripts and re-checked interrater reliability.

**Data cleaning.** Following the conclusion of coding transcripts, a data audit was be conducted by the primary investigator in which each transcript was reviewed to assess whether they had similar amounts of codes. Each coding category was reviewed for consistency of criteria. For transcripts that had less codes than expected, a negative case analysis was performed. In negative case analysis, the absence of a particular code is investigated to determine that the theme was not present rather than a mistake in coding (Kloos, et al., 2005).

**Planned comparisons.** Additional planned comparative analyses were completed to assess potential differences and similarities between males and females and to answer research question three. Planned comparisons were conducted through comparisons of codes noted in male versus female groups. Planned comparisons allowed the researchers to validate which themes were and were not present in the data by accounting for differences between participants.

**Investigator positionality.** In conducting qualitative research, it is important to consider the potential impacts of the investigator's positionality on the process of data collection and the subsequent results found in the study. Specific to the current study, the primary investigator was a Black female graduate student attending the university where data was collected. Although these identities not always explicit, these identities likely impacted the data collection process and discussion. For example, due to the sensitivity of the topic of discussion, it is likely that the investigator's race was influential in that participants felt more comfortable participating and engaging in sensitive discussions

around race. Furthermore, the investigator's race may have also impacted the depth of participants' discussions.

In addition to race, the investigator's sex and status as a graduate student likely influenced interactions with participants. Regarding sex, while the investigator's female status may have influenced female participants' to be more open, it may have influenced caution in the discussion of male participants. Regarding graduate status, this position was particularly important in that the power dynamics between participants and the investigator were not drastically skewed. This is important in that participants may feel that they could share their experiences without repercussions inside or outside of the classroom.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

Three qualitative research questions were investigated through focus groups and individual interviews with self-identified Black undergraduate students attending a Predominantly White Institution in the Southeastern region of the United States. The results of the analyses are presented for each study by research question followed by comparisons of findings. As such a total of nine sections will be presented. The first section will provide an expanded description of the participants and their backgrounds. The second section will discuss the thematic content of peer racial socialization messages identified in focus groups. The third section will discuss the modalities of peer racial socialization found in focus groups. Section four will address the circumstances of peer racial socialization. Section five will compare the thematic content of peer racial socialization messages to parent racial socialization messages for peer racial socialization messages among focus groups. Similar to sections two through five, sections six through eight will present findings for each of the three research questions based on data from individual interviews. Finally, section nine will present convergent and divergent findings. It should be noted that focus group participants' used pseudonyms in lieu of their real names to protect their privacy. Individual interview participants' names were not utilized during interviews to similarly protect their privacy.

## ***Study 1-Focus Groups***

### **Description of Sample Participants**

Focus group participants included 15 self-identified Black undergraduate students (see Table 4.1 for sample descriptives). Participants reported a range of majors with a total of 13 distinct majors being noted across participants. Eighty-seven percent of participants reported being part of a campus organization with 13 % participating in only cultural organizations, 27% participating in only non-cultural organizations, and 47% participating in a combination of cultural and non-cultural organizations. Regarding their racial demographic of their high schools, 23% of participants reported attending majority Black high schools, 38% reported attending majority White high schools, and 38% reported attending racially diverse high schools. Notably, three participants reported that although they attended racially diverse ( $n=2$ ) or majority Black high schools ( $n=1$ ), their classes were predominantly White as a result of being in honors classes.

### **RQ 1: Content Themes of Peer Racial Socialization**

Systematic analyses of focus groups were conducted using modified grounded theory to provide a greater understanding of the content of peer racial socialization messages. In line with racial socialization literature (Lesane-Brown, 2006), racial socialization was identified and coded according to the verbal and non-verbal messages communicated pertaining to values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding race and racial stratification, identity (i.e., personal and group), and group interactions (i.e., intergroup and intragroup). Across focus group interviews, six themes were identified including: Culture, Support, The Black Struggle, Racial Challenges, Political Division, and Media,. Each theme will be described in further detail below.

**Culture.** Culture was a loaded dimension that was highlighted in every focus group. For participants, discussions and interactions around various aspects of their cultures, including foods, style, history, language, and music, were normative parts of their everyday lives and interactions with peers. While some of these interactions were intentional and explicit,

*“So, like to cook. And so, I’ll have friends over and they’ll help me cook macaroni and cheese the black people way as opposed to the Kraft way. Or we’ll fry chicken or we’ll try different recipes and stuff. And so, if they’re open to the experience, yeah, come on in, experience it.” (FG 1, page 28, lines, 1183-1186, Lauren)*

it was clear that some aspects of sharing one’s culture was an unconscious process for participants in their interactions with peers.

*“I have several dashikis, several head wraps just because I just like to wear those things. It’s not necessarily, an African statement or anything. But, it’s just like, when I do wear those things, my friends of other races, they have to ask, ‘Why are you wearing it? What’s going on? Like, is it a day? Is it a holiday, celebration or whatever?’ It’s just like, ‘No. it’s kind of how I want to dress. And it happens to represent my heritage.’” (FG 4, page 23, lines 971-976, Amari)*

This was seen across discussions of culture related to style, which was the most often discussed aspect of cultural expression for participants in focus groups. For example, regarding style, participants noted a significant unintentional difference between the events that they dressed up for compared to their white peers. In particular, football

games were a significant event that Black undergraduates, including participants, dressed up for, expressing their values and attitudes toward these cultural events.

*“But then they’ll come to a step show and be wearing like, shorts and a t-shirt; while, you know, we’ll go to the football games in like shorts and a t-shirt. But you go to the step show and everybody’s- in their heels and their dresses and like they’re slayed and all this that and the third. And so, it’s just really interesting, like the different types of social gatherings that we care to dress up for versus dressing down for.” (FG 1, page 27, lines 1155-1158, Lauren)*

However, this difference in style wasn’t only noted at events, but on an everyday basis around the college campus.

*Like, White males wear more cargo shorts with their button downs and black males you have your basketball shorts and your little t-shirt, [crosstalk] joggers, whatever. That whole thing. And then back to black people buying more expensive stuff; White people have that tendency too, but they have more of the Vineyard Vines, like those. (FG 1, page 26, lines 1110-1111, Jenna)*

While the clothing that participants chose to wear and the events that they chose to dress for was an important component of style, hair was also identified as important to participants. Moreover, discussions of hair (e.g., going natural, hairstyles) indicated that decisions around how to style one’s hair was intentional and well-thought out by participants prior to engaging in certain styles. This appeared to be due to perceptions that others had about their hair, the appropriateness of natural hair and hairstyles of Black

students in the workplace, and potential meanings that others would ascribe to students' choices in hairstyles.

*"Like, I might come out with bantu knots one day or if, oh, if I straighten my hair, then that's just when all the conversation just happens. 'Cause it's like, with my black friends, it's like 'Oh, so you think you're White.' And then with my White friends, it's like, 'Oh, it's about time you—you straightened your hair.'"* (FG 4, page 23, lines 977-980, Amari)

Further, hair was closely tied to participants' perceptions of themselves as well as their confidence.

*"I think cutting my hair was like a good expression of my race. When I did the big chop back in last October, I was really scared and I thought I was going to look ugly. I know that's kind of superficial, but I thought I was going to just look weird."* (FG 2, page 12, lines 504-506, Katrina)

One student even utilized the process of styling her hair as a way to expose her non-Black peers to her culture.

*"Because I've had friends come with me to go shopping for hair before; I get crochet braids. And like, they're not necessarily black, but like, they are open to the experience and so if they're open to it, hey come with me."* (FG 1, page 28, lines 1179-1181, Lauren)

It should be noted that all participants did not discuss hair at length as an expression of style; however, conversations regarding hair most frequently were accompanied by participants' considerations of how their hair would be viewed by others both socially and professionally. Furthermore, conversations around hair were most

frequently initiated and maintained by women in focus groups; particularly women with natural hair.

**Support.** While support is generally an important resource provided within the peer relationship, participants discussion of support also highlighted it as a specific theme of peer racial socialization. In particular, distinct from general social support, support messages conveyed understanding, empathy, and encouragement between Black undergraduates and their peers in the context of racial experiences. Demonstrations of Support messages occurred in a variety of ways including participants engaging in discussions about race-related experiences with Black (four of four interviews) and non-Black peers (three of four interviews) as well as the communication of encouragement through discussions and the use of technology (e.g., text messages, Instagram).

For example, one participant illustrated the ways in which her Black peers helped her process the experiences and emotions following a racial incident,

*“I’ll be like ‘Aww, they called me the N word.’ And then they won’t give me the reaction of ‘What’s the problem with that?’ They’ll give me a reaction of ‘I’m sorry, but I wish the world wasn’t that way. I really wish we could fix that.’ And they’ll give me advice on and views of the world and stuff. And try to make me happy about it.” (FG 2, page 21, lines 878-882, Katrina)*

Another participant demonstrated the ways in which Support messages may be used to encourage friends to push past barriers and proceed toward success.

*“I just think that everyone should know that Blacks as a whole are just hoping to power each other forward and they always want to see each other succeed. And they may not, every single one, but there will always be that*

*one that can help you to where you need to be. And they just want to embrace their Blackness and not just follow every rule that comes with it, but break those rules in a sense and break those chains that have been associated with being Black. And just redefine what it is to be Black in the same sense.” (FG 1, page 41, lines 1730-1736, Brenda)*

Overall, Support messages were identified as an important theme of racial socialization that helped facilitate the processing of race-related experiences, both generally and academically-related, and encourage Black undergraduates toward personal and academic success.

**The Black Struggle.** The Black Struggle calls attention to the daily challenges that Black undergraduate students experience on campus attending a PWI. Further, The Black Struggle was one of the most prominent themes of peer racial socialization among interviews indicating the importance and relevance of this experience in the lives and interactions of Black undergraduate students and their peers. While this theme captured communications about the overall struggles that participants faced being a minority on a majority White campus, it also encompassed various experiences including feeling misunderstood, feeling like an outcast on campus, and feeling pressure to defy stereotypes. Participants discussed the importance and comfort that resulted from the shared understanding among Black undergraduate students on the burdens and challenges associated with navigating the campus environment. For example, participants in every focus group expressed an urgency in acknowledging and defying stereotypes that others may ascribe to them due to their race. This was highlighted in Lauren’s recounting of a

discussion with a friend preparing him for being one of the only Black attendees at her lab's office party.

*"So, I had an office party with my lab and I'm the only black person who's in my lab. And so, my friend came with me and I was trying to explain to him. I was like, "I just want you to understand that, like, we are the Black representation. Like, we are all they get. So, we need to make sure that we are representing, not our race, well per-se, but this idea of just don't be the stereotype. And I wasn't concerned that he would be, or that that would happen, but still just having kind of this disclaimer of, we're all they're going to see, and so we need to make sure that we represent our race well."*

*(FG1, page 33, lines 1402-1409, Lauren)*

While participants discussed resisting and defying stereotypes in casual settings they also underlined the importance of resisting stereotypes as an important struggle in representing their culture, maintaining their safety, and striving for success.

*"I consistently feel like I'm fighting being a statistic. There's a lot of Black men that don't go to college, so I'm fighting that for because a lot of Black men dropped out of college and that Black men end up getting shot, etcetera. I'm constantly fighting not being a statistic, not being a headline, not being a "Oh yeah", I don't want to end up being a number on being somebody's statistic sheet that they're showing to whoever they need to show them to. Like I don't want- that's not what I want."* (FG 3, page 17, lines 733-738, Luke Cage)



Along with identifying and engaging around discussions of how they resist stereotypes, participants in every focus group also identified the difficulties of engaging in interactions with their White peers, whom they frequently felt did not understand their perspectives and experiences (i.e., White fragility). In particular, a sense of frustration and hopelessness was often communicated in these race-related discussions.

*“I don’t feel like they’ll ever be able to understand. You can talk to them all day, but they can’t fully understand and feel it. They’re never going to be able to comprehend it. They’re always going to feel like you’re making a big deal out of nothing. Or it’s not what you’re making it out to be. But they just- I feel like it just goes over their heads so what’s the point of wasting my time talking about it?” (FG2, page 8, lines 334-338, Skylar)*

Although some participants ( $n=7$ ) chose to refrain from engaging in race-related conversations altogether due to the frustration and hopelessness associated with these experiences, others chose to continue engaging in race-related discussions among their close friends. However, for one participant, there remained a sense of concern that those conversations would be shared beyond the immediate social circle to less familiar individuals and potentially taken out of context.

*“Personally, if I’m going to talk about race or I’m going to bring it up, it’s going to be a one-on-one thing. And in fact, sometimes my White friends don’t understand why. So, if I make a joking comment about race and they’re like, “Oh, I can’t believe you said that. Let me tell my six other friends right here!” and I’m like, “No, no, no, no, no. Let’s not, because then I have to have to*

*explain and they don't get that I'm joking. They don't know me." (FG3, page 23, lines 984-989, Malcolm)*

It should be noted that participants willingness to continue engage in race related discussions with non-Black peers was influenced by the topic of conversation (e.g., politics, racism).

**Racial Challenges.** Race-related experiences, including racism and microaggressions, on and around the college campus fueled many of the interactions and discussions among Black undergraduates and their peers. Participants in every focus groups discussed personal or vicarious experiences of discrimination. Some of these experiences pre-dated students' college experiences, but others were experienced in and around the college campus, often in the presence of Black peers.

*"I think the last time we talked about race was, like she said, when I was at Five Points, they didn't even check the White people's IDs. That is a common thing I've heard of. And if they do check IDs, they'll just like glance at it, they won't even look at the pictures. So, you could just look like someone that looks kind of like you. As long as they're blonde, they're remotely the same skin color as you, you can still use their ID. We talked about how if you were Black, you probably couldn't do that. And you'd have to get your own ID of that kind and how just there's still a chance that they might call the police on you. So, you might just want to play it safe and just stay in your room; not even try to go out." (FG 2, page 25, lines 1066-1074, Carolina).*

The insidious nature of discrimination sometimes sparked conflicting feelings of students wanting to speak out about their experiences, while also recognizing the potential repercussions of protesting discriminatory treatment. This led students back to considerations of their limits in helping one another cope through racial incidents.

*“I wouldn’t say, like, “Alright, so this this White man did this to me. What are we going to do about it?” Like, I don’t know. Cause it’s like if we do something about it it’s going to be something huge. So, I, I just feel like we just use our friends as a, a vent, not necessarily a cope.” (FG 1, page 38, lines 1617-1620, Jenna)*

Discussions of racial challenges extended beyond experiences of discrimination to experiences of being stereotyped. Among focus groups, participants noted that stereotypes came up in several ways. First, participants discussed how they and their peers interacted around and navigated the stereotypes that peers and professors, knowingly or unknowingly, subscribed to about Black colleges students.

*So, we were just having like regular conversation and somebody brought up, um, my son’s dad. He’s, so he’s not the African—African American stereotype where he’s not around his kid, or whatever. And I was like, um, something [inaudible], his dad was supposed to pick him up. And then like my White friend was like “Oh, he’s not going to come” blah blah blah. And I was just like “Do you want to fight right now? ‘Cause this is something serious. This is my life. Like, don’t play with this.” (FG 4, page 17, lines 708-713, Amari)*

Participants across all focus groups also noted communications pertaining to racial stereotypes among same-race peer interactions in the form of jokes. Importantly, these stereotypes were never discussed by participants in a negative manner, but highlighted the differing ways in which stereotypes occurred.

*“And when it is it’s jokingly and we all know it’s jokingly. It’s not something negative or anything. And so, I don’t feel like it’s something we harbor on. I know, personally, like, fitting into certain stereotypes that are negative, I don’t like to talk about it because it’s, like, kind of is personal. [...] Well, as I see it, there’s someone that’s going to, like, say something about it, but we’re just like all going to say it jokingly. And, like, there’s no real, like, ill will to it.” (FG 4, page 8, lines 318-326, Zachary)*

Although jokes pertaining to stereotypes appeared benevolent, they are noted as a racial challenge for the negative impacts of these interactions that have been documented in the literature (Douglass et al., 2016).

In addition to the traditionally considered racial challenges of discriminations and stereotypes, racial challenges in the current study also included exchanges regarding instances when White peers crossed racial boundaries through inappropriate behaviors and language. For example, two topics that occurred across focus group discussions with participants included the use of the N word and White colleagues crossing the boundary of uninvited and intrusive touching of participants’ hair. Participants’ discussions on hair, across three focus groups, were consistent in highlighting the intrusiveness of uninvited hair touching and the importance of boundaries surrounding Black hair. Comparatively, participants’ discussions of the N word, across four focus groups, were more dynamic in

that their views on non-Black peers' use of the N word varied. More specifically, although all participants cited the use of the N word as an issue, one participant identified that they made exceptions for close friends.

*“But like, my issues always whenever I’m around my White friends they think it’s okay to say it because they’ve known me for a certain amount of time, but like my whole thing is I’m okay with it, but sometimes they’ll add like the ‘er’ and they’ll think it’s funny and I’ll be like but that’s not funny”*  
(FG 3, page 12, lines 483-486, Cameron)

**Political Division.** Politics were both a catalyst and a theme of peer racial socialization messages among focus group participants and their peers. Present in half of the focus group discussions, participants' discussions of the growing racial tensions in the country and on the college campus, resulting from the 2016 political election, highlighted the ways in which the political climate was an impetus for racial socialization regarding participants attitudes and beliefs regarding race and politics. Furthermore, political division was identified as a specific theme of racial socialization in which participants' provided messages about their beliefs and behaviors regarding intergroup interactions with peers whose political beliefs did not match their own.

As not only the racial minority, but also the political minority on campus, participants experienced various situations, related to the intersecting political and racial climate, which were the catalysts for further discussions of participants, beliefs, and behaviors regarding race and intergroup interactions. For example, participants highlighted how interpersonal challenges experienced on campus mirrored the larger racial and political climate of the country. Furthermore, participants discussed how the

political rhetoric used during and following the election seemed to give permission to some students to engage in discriminatory acts. One example highlighted the resulting dialogue among a participant and peers regarding their attitudes on these experiences.

*“Like him becoming president validated that like they could do all these things that are happen. Like saying the N word whenever they want and just blatantly committing violence against African American people. So, we talk about that a lot.” (FG 2, page 23, lines 955-58, Katrina)*

These interactions held significant implications for the overall racial and political climate experienced on the university campus and led to the communication of racial socialization messages on the political division noted at large as well as among personal relationships on the college campus (i.e., intergroup interactions). More specifically, political division racial socialization messages communicated beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors regarding navigating experiences with peers of different races *and* political ideologies. For example, one participant highlighted her values and behavioral considerations regarding her associations with peers of differing political ideologies.

*“So, just seeing people’s true colors and their reasonings behind supporting him, or stuff like that. And I’m just like, how can I even be friends with you if that’s what you think. You know? It was more than just me not liking them because they’re a Republican. I don’t like you because you’re standing behind somebody who is out here with all of this hate rhetoric. And, at the end of the day, if it’s a Republican and I like what they’re saying, I have no problem voting for them if that’s what I believe. But, I’m like, but if this is a person that y’all are choosing to represent y’all’s party you’re standing behind him, why should*

*I be friends with you? Because he doesn't respect me and then you're supporting him not respecting me. So, there's no point of us being friends. So, it just puts strain on my relationships I have with my friends who weren't Democrats." (FG 1, page 11, lines 462-472, Alisha)*

As demonstrated by this example, participants also questioned their friendships with others based on differences in political beliefs. These discussions centered on more than one's political affiliation and also centered on the betrayal that participants felt as a result of peers voting for a candidate whom they felt was intolerant of and disrespectful toward their culture and influenced their intergroup interactions.

Additionally, participants in three out of four focus groups discussed how the political election emboldened some students to make insensitive and racist remarks on campus, further widening the chasm of communication between participants who identified as Democrats and their White Republican peers.

*"So, I, my roommate, and then two other people, we all just hid out in our rooms because we were just the only four that voted for Hillary. And we didn't want to hear 'Oh Trump.' And the day after he got elected, this is the worst part, they made slave jokes at me. And I wasn't really cool with that. I don't know how they thought that was appropriate, but they thought it was." (FG2, page 16, lines 654-664, Carolina)*

Overall, politics were the impetus for Black undergraduates and their peers' exchange of racial socialization messages highlighting their beliefs and values about racial division resulting from politics (i.e., political division) as well as considerations of how to navigate and act on these values (i.e., political division; peer racial socialization).

**Media.** While media did not elicit extensive discussion pertaining to racial socialization, discussions of the media across all four focus groups indicated that it was an important impetus for racial messages transmitted among Black youth and their peers. Similar to the discussion of politics, media was both a catalyst and a theme of peer racial socialization messages. As a theme of peer racial socialization, Media emphasized the ways in which current events and broadcastings were utilized to communicate messages about race. Focus group discussions highlighted three ways that the media was a theme of peer racial socialization including movies and television, the news, and discussions of instances of police brutality and shootings.

Discussions of movies and television shows highlighted not only the movies and television shows that participants enjoyed watching with predominantly Black casts, but also current trends in the film industry that was sparking profound race-related conversations among Black youth and their peers. For example, the movie Black Panther was brought up among co-ed focus groups in various ways. While participants of focus group three simply mentioned that engaging in this film was a way that they and their friends engaged in interactions around race, focus group four participants had in-depth conversations about the film including the ways that they engaged in the experience of watching the film and the ways in which it mimicked the current Black experience. Furthermore, this was the impetus for further discuss among these participants and their peers on the nuances of how individuals perceived the film and the meaning behind those different perceptions. For example, one participant discussed the relevance of the film to the current political and racial climates:



*“And then you have this movie that seems like it’s tailored to all the political views and racial issues that we’re having right now. So, that’s why it’s so big.” (FG 4, page 21, lines 883-884, Zachary)*

As another example, a different participant discussed how the movie highlighted historically unspoken tensions between Africans and Black Americans

*“So, basically what, like, Black Panther stands for is, like, basically how Africa views all the countries. And Africans don’t like the Black people here.” (FG 4, page 21, lines 904-905, Isaac)*

Although Black Panther was discussed by multiple participants across groups, other movies and television shows were noted, yet not discussed in as much detail as Black Panther garnered.

Finally, in addition to movies and television, participants in two focus groups also highlighted police brutality and shootings in the media as the topic of peer discussions and interactions. As a catalyst for racial socialization, police brutality and shootings in the media were followed by ongoing discussions with participants and their peers about their perspectives and values on racial inequalities and institutional discrimination. Participants even connected these current events to personal feelings of fear and unsafety related to their own experiences with police.

### **Modalities of Peer Racial Socialization Message Transmission**

Analyses were conducted to identify the modalities of message transmission utilized in the peer racial socialization process. Analyses of modalities used in the current study were based upon previously existing modes of message transmission identified in literature on the parent racial socialization process. One additional mode of message

transmission was included in analyses to compensate for changes in communication styles (i.e., technology) since early conceptualizations of racial socialization. As such, modalities of peer racial socialization focused on non-verbal modalities, including modeling, exposure, and social media/tech, and verbal modalities of message transmission.

**Non-verbal.** Analyses indicated that all non-verbal modalities of message transmission were utilized in each focus group to communicate peer racial socialization messages. In particular, Non-verbal modeling messages and verbal messages were used by participants to communicate messages about race to their peers. Modeling messages included participants' demonstration of a behavior. This was seen in participants' discussions about natural hair and hair management.

The use of exposure as a modality included instances in which participants introduced and incorporated cultural experiences into their peer interactions in order to increase racial knowledge of peers who were unfamiliar with participants' culture. This technique was noted in only half of the focus groups which appeared to be a result of the composition of friend groups. In particular, participants whose peer groups were multi-racial were more likely to engage in exposure as a modality of racial socialization. This was noted with Lauren in focus group one, who discussed various instances of exposure with her friends. For example, she discussed exposing her friends to her hair management process.

*“Because like I’ve had friends come with me to go shopping for hair before; I get crochet braids. And like, they’re not necessarily black, but like, they*

*are open to the experience and so if they're open to it, hey come with me"*

*(FG 1, page 28, lines 1179-1181, Lauren).*

In addition to exposure, social media/technology was another modality that was utilized for communicating messages about race. Although the use of social media and technology was noted across all focus groups as a mode of message transmission, it was not noted as an important mode of message transmission for participants across groups. Social media/tech was more frequently utilized to express messages related to the themes of Culture, Support, and News. For example, social media was a platform that was frequently utilized to exchange messages with peers about race. One participant exhibited this in his discussion about peers providing support regarding academics and future goals.

*"But also, like, any- if anything happens social- in the social media world, that comes up...like, I got a message from a friend who was, like, he sent me a picture of all these African Americans that just graduated med school and at Harvard, I think. And it was, like, this picture of, the [inaudible] thing. Black excellence and stuff. And I feel like I have a lot of friends who in general like anything that has to do with black excellence. I see it because of me following them or being friends with them." (Interview 4, page 37, lines 1608-1614, Zach)*

**Verbal.** The verbal modality was one of the most frequently used modalities for transmitting peer racial socialization messages. Participants across all focus groups highlighted the utility of discussions among themselves and peers in communicating about race. Discussions about race ranged across identified themes of racial socialization and called attention to the importance of verbal communications regarding topics related

to race. More specifically, participants emphasized the importance of verbal communication in the transmission of messages pertaining to culture, racial challenges, support and more. Alisha in focus group one provided an example in discussing the ways in which friends supported her through racial incidents.

*“Like, having someone to talk to. Like, having someone who relates to it the same way. It just helps us not feel alone. Especially being away from home. Just knowing that, “Hey! You feel the same way that I feel,” it’s comforting.” (Interview 1, page 31, lines 1304-1306, Alisha)*

These results suggest that the verbal modality is an important mode of message transmission for peer racial socialization messages.

#### **RQ 1C: Circumstances of Peer Racial Socialization**

Systematic analyses were conducted across focus groups to better understand the circumstances by which peers transmitted racial socialization messages. Based upon existing literature, two circumstances were coded to assess for their presence or absence in interviews including proactive and reactive messages. Analyses revealed that reactive messages were communicated across all focus groups ( $n=4$ ) by participants, suggesting that all participants engaged in racial socialization following the occurrence of an event. Similarly, proactive messages were also communicated across all four focus groups; however, these messages were often communicated in the context of warning peers about potential bias they may experience and communicating messages about culture.

#### **RQ 2: Peer Racial Socialization versus Parent Racial Socialization**

Systematic analysis was conducted across focus groups to explore the second research question; understanding the similarities and differences in peer racial

socialization as compared to parent racial socialization. In particular, deductive coding was conducted on all focus groups utilizing existing frameworks of parent racial socialization. These frameworks highlight five consistent racial socialization messages that parents transmit to their children including cultural messages, preparation for bias messages, promotion of mistrust messages, egalitarianism messages, and self-development messages.

**Culture.** Similar to the parent racial socialization literature, culture was a profuse theme in the interactions and discussions of participants and their peers. Noted in every focus group, culture was discussed in a variety of ways including style, music, food, history, and expression of language. Furthermore, this theme occurred across all focus groups and, similar to parent racialization, included both intentional and unintentional dialogue and participation in cultural activities, rituals, and practices. For example, participants discussed hip hop and the ways that hip hop has been adopted and encoded into mainstream culture, yet still maintains its history.

*“I would say music, but hip-hops has kinda become pop music. Like, you turn on any radio station or if you listen to Pandora or Apple Music or whatever you’re gonna get a lot of hip-hop or a lot of hip-hop influences. So, and that started off as a Black thing, but now it’s just kind of what’s popular music right now. So, it’s part of the share that in a special way.”*

*(FG 3, page 16, lines 704-707, Luke Cage)*

Participants also discussed traditional foods that were shared among their families and sometimes compared them to traditional foods of other cultures. Furthermore,

participants identified food as an important mechanism for sharing their culture with their friends.

*“We made sorrel, which is a Jamaican Christmas drink. And they’re really open to trying it and they did like it and a bunch of people from my section did like it too.” (FG 2, page 13, lines 525-526, Carolina)*

**Preparation for Bias.** Analyses across focus groups indicated that, while preparation for bias was noted throughout each of the four focus groups, it occurred rarely in discussion of peer interactions, with the exception of one focus group. Although participants discussed instances of discrimination, it appeared that these discussions frequently occurred following an event rather than in preparation for potential discriminatory events. Due to this, participants often processed the emotions following the event with one another but did not discuss how they might effectively address these issues in the future. As such, preparation for bias was infrequently encountered among focus group participants’ discussions.

**Promotion of Mistrust.** Promotion of mistrust messages are communicated to inform others of the potential discriminatory experiences that they may experience without the accompaniment of advice for coping with discrimination. Similar to Preparation for Bias, Promotion of Mistrust messages were infrequently noted among participants’ discussions of interactions with their peers. In particular, promotion of mistrust messages was the least identified parent racial socialization message among participants’ discussions and occurred in only two of the four focus groups among 5 total participants. One participant demonstrated Promotion of Mistrust messages in her warning of the bias one may experience as a minority in majority environments.

*“We are a minority. So, it’s just something that like you always have to be aware of. Because either you’re going to get treated different or maybe you’re not. Maybe you are going to get treated the same, but there’s not going to be a lot of you in certain aspects of your life.” (FG 2, page 5, lines 196-199, Katrina)*

**Egalitarianism.** Although rarely (16 codes across four focus groups) noted in the discussion of racial socialization messages among peers across interviews, egalitarian messages did emerge in three out of four focus group discussions of participants’ interactions with their peers. Despite this, egalitarian messages were presented differently than those transmitted from parents to children. More specifically, while parents’ expression of egalitarian messages often appears to more subtly emphasize equality and equitable treatment and status among various different groups, participants’ expression of egalitarian messages were more explicit in discussions of equality and equitable treatment. These dialogues focused on how Black undergraduates and their peers engaged in dialogue pertaining to their struggles for achieving equality among all people in a society that is frequently biased toward minority groups, including groups beyond the black-White dichotomy.

*“I feel like among me and my friend it’s we are very open-minded, and we see equality as something that shouldn’t just be expressed between White and black people but females, Muslims, like other um, like religious backgrounds or racial backgrounds.” (FG 3, page 25, lines 1073-1075, Jen)*

**Self-Development.** Self-development messages was one of the most frequently noted parent racial socialization message to be found to overlap with peer racial socialization among focus groups. Self-development messages were found across all focus groups and highlighted the ways in which participants encouraged one another to pursue higher education and opportunities. Similar to parent racial socialization messages, self-development messages transmitted among peers frequently maintained racial undertones, encouraging peers to succeed in spite of racial barriers and to better themselves as Black emerging adults.

*“Yeah. Cause it’s like, it just be small stuff, but my friends, like, they are very good students, very positive people. I just be like, ‘Ya’ll, like, I’m the only White per-, like, [MUMBLES: I’m the only White person], Black person in this class.’ And they be like, ‘But guess what? You’re here.’ Like, ‘Look, you’re here, Amari.’ Like, ‘Yeah, you’re at a PWI and you’re doing this. You’re on the Dean’s list. You’re doing these things. Like, you’re here for a reason.’ It’s kind of like, ‘Ok, thanks.’ But it’s like, that’s how the conversation goes. So, like, just remember why you’re here and don’t let that, don’t let anybody get to you because you’re here at a PWI and you’re Black.” (FG 4, page 37, lines 1607-1615, Amari)*

Furthermore, in the context of actively pursuing a college education, participants viewed academic success as not only a personal accomplishment, but also as an accomplishment for their community, which was also sometimes viewed as a burden.

*“‘Cause when I left my neighborhood, I was the first person in my neighborhood to go to college. So, everybody was looking to me to make it*



*for the rest of them. And I just I didn't want to make it for them; I wanted to make it for me. And so, it's kinda just hard having to answer for the Black community or represent the Black community.” (FG 2, page 17, lines 699-703, Skylar)*

## ***Study 2-Individual Interviews***

### **Description of Sample Participants**

Individual interview participants included 20 self-identified Black undergraduate students (see Table 4.1 for sample descriptives). Participants' represented a diverse range of majors with 19 distinct majors being noted across participants. Ninety-five percent of participants reported participation in a campus organization with 20% participating in only cultural organizations, 25% participating in only non-cultural organizations, and 50% participating in a combination of cultural and non-cultural organizations.

Participants exhibited diversity in their neighborhood demographics where 47% of participants reported growing up in a mostly Black neighborhood 16% reported growing up in mostly White, and 16% reported growing up in a racially diverse neighborhood.

Regarding the racial demographics of participants high schools, 35% of participants attended majority Black schools, 40% attended majority White schools, and 25% attended racially diverse schools. Notably, one participant reported attending a majority White class despite the school being majority black. Individual interviews also captured data on the racial composition of participants' friend groups. The majority of participants (60%) reported a mostly Black friend group, 40% reported a racially mixed friend group, and none of the participants reported a majority White friend group.

Table 4.1. Sample Descriptives

	Focus Groups (N=13)	Individual Interviews (N=20)
Diversity in Majors	13	19
Organizations		
None	2 (13%)	1 (5%)
Cultural	2 (13%)	4 (20%)
Non-cultural	4 (27%)	5 (25%)
Both cultural and non-cultural	7 (47%)	10 (50%)
H.S. Racial Composition		
Mostly Black	3 (23%)	7 (35%)
Mostly White	5 (38%)	8 (40%)
Racially Diverse	5 (38%)	5 (25%)
Friend Group Racial Composition		
Mostly Black	-	12 (60%)
Mostly White	-	0
Racially Diverse	-	8 (40%)

### RQ 1: Content Themes of Peer Racial Socialization

**Culture.** Similar to the Culture theme identified among focus group participants, Culture was one of the dominant themes identified in individual interviews. This theme emphasized the ways in which participants discussed expressing and sharing their Black culture with their peers. Culture was noted as a significant theme of peer racial socialization across every individual interview and was highlighted in several ways. Specifically, sub-themes of culture included Black heritage, language, food, style, music, and events.

While mentions of Black heritage, food, music, and events were made by several participants, extended discussions addressing the impacts of clothes and hairstyles to communicate or share participants' race with others established the importance of the Style sub-theme in the daily lives and interactions of Black undergraduates and their

peers. Participants across interviews ( $n=16$ ) repeatedly noted the ways that they dressed and styled their hair (i.e., style) as an important consideration among participants and their peers for navigating their environments as a racial-minority. Moreover, while majority of participants noted hair as a significant manner and topic of racial socialization among peers, these conversations were more extensive among participants who wore their hair in its natural state. For example, participants discussed the challenges of navigating mainstream cultural expectations of their hair being straightened with their personal desires to wear their hair in its natural texture and associated styles (e.g., locs, braids, etc.). Moreover, participants discussed the intentional decision to transition to wearing their hair in natural styles despite societal norms and expectations for their hair to be straight and ‘presentable’. For example, one female participant discussed these challenges in the context of interviewing for jobs.

*“Example would be how they’re trying to say you can’t wear natural hair in interviews or there’s some places that won’t allow you to wear dreadlocks in your interviews. [...] My Black friends will be like, ‘No, I’m going to wear my hair what I want, how I want. I can dress it up or down for an interview.’ [...] Well, what does professional look like if my skills and everything is on this resume, then how I wear my hair shouldn’t matter because you need my resume, my skills, not my hair.” (Interview 6, page 5, lines 146-150)*

Discussions of hair were not limited to female participants, but also included male participants. One male participant discussed his experiences navigating the difficult

decision of wearing his natural hair in the contexts of the campus environment and job interviews.

*And when I first came here, you would've never seen me walking around campus with a du-rag. And, shoot, I used to always be clean cut; like, damn near bald or a Caesar. I got braids now. It gets to the point where it's just like, you're tired of trying to mold yourself into their image. So, yeah. 'Cause I remember, like, going into interviews, I was thinking like "Will they look at me different because of my afro? Should I cut it?" (Interview 1, page 12, lines 483-488)*

While participants engaged their peers in discussions of navigating the quandary of wearing their hair in its natural state, as well as the process of managing their natural hair, it should be noted that the act of wearing their hair in and of itself was an expression of participants' race.

In addition to negotiating of norms and expectations related to their physical appearances, participants negotiated their verbal and body language through code switching to navigate their environments. In particular, all participants acknowledged the presence of negative stereotypes toward Black students in majority spaces and deliberately altered their mannerisms to align with mainstream behavioral expectations and manage others' impressions of them. These changes took place to not only manage others' perceptions of them through daily interactions, but also occurred to increase the comfort of non-Black individuals in their environment.

*"Cause in front of certain people you act a certain way. Like, I codeswitch with some people. Change up my mannerisms in front of others. [...] In*

*class, the bass goes out of my voice really quick. Interview-wise, I'll take the bass out of my voice so I can seem more—more personable. I am not as intimidating. Stuff like that. Enunciate more.” (Interview 1, pages 5-6, lines 176-188; 194-596)*

This presentation in majority White environments in complete contrast to his mannerisms when with friends.

*“I'll speak in my actual accent in front of my real friends” (Interview 1, page 13, line 557)*

Similarly, another participant, who spoke Spanish within her household growing up, discussed altering her speech between the home and school environments to manage others' impressions of her; however, she noted the personal discomfort that resulted from this practice.

*“My teacher would even say we don't speak that here. You know, stuff like that. And so, growing up with that, mom was like, ‘We just have to stop. Only speak Spanish around us or in the house. You just can't use it outside the house.’ And that was frustrating, but I ended up being accustomed to, okay, well if this is how I have to make friends, I've got to change. [...] At school, I have to be a proper [NAME] almost. I've got to sound a certain way, I can't have my accent showing, or I can't be overly active, or overly outspoken, type thing. And then when I would get home and I'm at home or I'm in my neighborhood with my friends, my accent comes out, a Charleston comes out, I say things incorrectly. I used to be afraid to speak. Even now,*

*every now and then in class I don't speak just for the fear of looking ignorant.” (Interview 6, page 13, lines 535-545)*

Furthermore, one participant highlighted the necessity of altering one's mannerisms to ensure their safety by appearing less threatening.

*“You have to police the way that you talk and carry yourself, ‘cause you’re automatically viewed as dangerous, as threatening, as intimidating. So, what may seem, trivial to you may look intimidating to others. Like—like, the way that Black people talk shit amongst each other, roast each other, doing that, to people of another background, may seem threatening.”*  
*(Interview 1, page 15, lines 644-648)*

As such, culture was noted to be a significant theme in the daily lives and behaviors of participants.

**Safe Spaces.** Safe Spaces highlighted the importance of interactions among participants and their same-raced peers. More specifically, this theme featured participants' discussions of seeking peers and organizations that they identified as spaces that were safe to engage in race-based discussions. Here, Black peers and Black organizations were identified as contexts in which participants felt a sense of ease in engaging in exchanges regarding race and culture. This sense of ease in discussion with Black peers was particularly important to participants as it was often compared to the challenges encountered when engaging in race-related discussions with White peers, such as peers justifying unjust racial incidents or the necessity for participants to explain the relevance of the situation. While participants found comfort in the community and race-related dialogue of their Black peers, participants often found themselves justifying and

explaining racial-related experiences and perspectives with their White peers. This was clearly demonstrated in one participant's juxtaposition of his interactions with his Black versus White peers.

*"Like, how a White friend, may, like, not receive it the same way. They may feel as if I'm trying to call them racist or call them out. With a Black friend, they'll, clearly receive it because they might see it the same way as I do."*

*(Interview 4, page 11, lines 434-436)*

This participant went into further explaining how these differences impacted his approach to discussions with peers.

*"I may, like, just bring up something lightly with a White friend. Just bring it up, see how they feel about it. But with a Black friend, I may go more into depth. Like, actually have a deep conversation about how I feel about it, how, maybe, how they feel." (Interview 4, page 11, lines 455-458)*

Furthermore, participants emphasized the impacts of simply being in community same-race peers who could relate to their experiences.

*"I think they help me, honestly, just by being Black. It's almost like whenever we deal with a racial slur or when we deal with discrimination, it's like you're going through it too. You understand what I'm going through because you've been through it, you've had to face it. (Interview 6, page 14, lines 600-602)*

Additionally, participants underlined importance of having a community of Black peers whom they could have casual interactions with.

**Coping.** Coping messages emphasized participants' utilization of resources to manage the effects of racist experiences and everyday microaggressions. In particular, participants discussed accessing Black peers to aid in coping with racial experiences. In particular, participants discussed the impacts of participants and their friends helping and supporting each other through racial experiences. Friends were supportive in various ways including being a space where participants could vent, a source of advice and validation, and a comforting and affirming presence. One participant highlighted her interactions with a friend in which she helped him cope with discrimination and provided advice for how to deal with similar situations.

*"I guess, like him being followed around the store and stuff. It makes me angry that people would do that. But then again, I have to tell him some people aren't as culturally aware or they don't realize that you're really a good person. You have to just turn the other cheek, I guess, like look at people like that as like, 'Really? Are you seriously still doing this now, this day and age?' [...] So, I guess we get to ... I learn and then I get to teach him also how to be a good person and to look over people and things like that." (Interview 5, page 14, lines 367-374)*

Another participant highlighted the ways in which having a friend who could relate to their experience was valuable in coping with racial experiences.

*Well, my Black friends, we can just switch to serious modes. We each will have a story that we can relate to a race issue or like, oh yeah, you know, a classmate said this, a teacher said that. But my White friends, I guess it*



*doesn't come up often or whenever I do, they always try to make excuses.*

*(Interview 6, page 7, lines 271-274)*

**The Black Struggle.** Similar to focus groups, the Black Struggle highlighted the challenges that participants experienced being the minority in majority-White spaces, such as their college campus. As one of the most prevalent themes throughout individual interviews ( $n=20$ ), The Black Struggle called attention to the challenges Black undergraduates experienced specific to the college campus environment and, more specifically, attending a PWI. Several sub-themes of the Black Struggle were noted including Black undergraduate students' efforts to actively resist stereotypes, challenges with navigating majority-White spaces, and struggles in engaging White peers in interactions around issues of race.

Participants across interviews noted the presence of stereotypes related to Black students on campus and felt pressure to ensure that they did not confirm these stereotypes. This resulted in increased vigilance regarding their behaviors and the altering of their behaviors so as not to be seen as fitting stereotypes. This was demonstrated in one participant who identified as Black and Latina and discussed the need to suppress her emotions regarding racial injustices due to the need to not confirm existing stereotypes about Black and Latina women.

*"But now, lately, I'm just feeling anger. And it's like, I try to channel my anger and my emotions into my art and it's like, I'll work on a series to try to show us in a different light. Like, I'm working on showing African Americans in a positive light or showing our history of being kings and queens; that we're not just slaves. And so, I've got to channel that anger*

*into that because it's also frowned upon for me to express my anger, because then I'll be a stereotypical Black girl that's angry or I'll be a sassy Latina. And it's like, no, I'm just mad. White people, when they're mad, oh, they're mad. But why do I got to get labeled this and that to be angry."*  
(Interview 6, page 15, lines 630-637)

In addition to difficulties navigating and resisting the stereotypes that others subscribed to as well as navigating predominantly White spaces as a minority, participants also exhibited challenges engaging in interactions with White peers regarding race. In particular, numerous participants discussed experiences in which White peers exhibited a lack of understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences regarding racial matters.

*"I know, like, with Colin Kaepernick last semester, I had posted on my page about that. Then one friend said, "Watch out 'cause he can be seen as a liberal.' The one friend who had, like, said that, like, I don't really see why. 'Cause you know I believe in what he's doing, to me. [inaudible] I explained to her. To me, it's sort of like, how he's doing that. To me, like, somebody's standing up for me in a way how he feels as if he's using his platform as an athlete to do that. Versus you, you just see it as a disrespectful. But to me, he's actually, like, respecting our race and stuff. (Interview 4, page 8, lines 294-301)*

This lack of understanding often led to participants abstaining from conversations about race with their White peers for concern about the direction that the conversation would go and the frustrations that participants would experience.

*“Like with the police brutality and stuff like that, or I don't know. I feel like I have to censor myself when having conversations with them, because ... Like with my Black friends, you can really express how you feel. But with the White friends, especially if it's a White cop and a black guy, or something's like ... I feel like, 'cause I know with my attitude and stuff or if they were to say it's like the wrong thing, I feel like it would upset me.”*  
*(Interview 5, page 10, lines 240-245)*

**Racial Challenges.** Participants highlighted the racial challenges that they experienced both on and off the college campus. In fact, similar to focus groups, racial challenges were one of the most frequently noted themes among individual interviews ( $n=20$ ). Participants identified racial challenges as a focal point of interactions with their peers as they engaged in discussions with their peers to process the incidents they experienced personally or even observed (i.e., vicarious trauma). Various racial challenges were identified in participants' discussions including White peers engaging in inappropriate and insensitive behaviors, both intentionally and unintentionally, discriminatory treatment, and being stereotyped by others.

Similar to focus group interviews, participants in individual interviews discussed experiences in which non-Black peers crossed racial boundaries, exhibiting insensitivity for race-related topics and situations. In particular, participants cited intrusive hair touching and the use of the N word as common situations that they contended with on the college campus, which mirrored the experiences of focus group participants. Participants also coped with more overt interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination on the campus. One participant described an encounter during his tenure as a Resident Manager:

*“Matter of fact, there was a couple of weeks ago where someone put a racist joke on the board at my dorm, and it was wrong anyway, but it was talking about Jim Crow did nothing wrong. And then, I think they tried to do, um, like the...I don’t—I don’t know if it was the three-fifths compr-, like, the three-fifths compromise. I don’t know if it was two-thirds or three-fifths, but they were trying to allude to the fact that Black people were counted three-fifths of a person.” (Interview 8, page 8, lines 302-307)*

These experiences emphasized the racial injustices that participants experienced on the college campus; however, participants also contended with discrimination beyond the college campus in their everyday lives including in their work places.

*For example, the older White co-worker that I have, when I told my friends yeah, he’ll just call me every name under the sun but my name and it’s names that will either be stereotypical ghetto, like Lashauna or Bonquisha or whatever. (Interview 6, page 7, lines 274-276)*

In addition to peers crossing racial boundaries and experiences of discrimination, participants also discussed their experiences of being racially stereotyped. Overall, these experiences exemplify the racial stressors and challenges that participants navigated within their environments, which were frequently topics of discussion among peer groups or experiences that had alongside their peer group.

**Political Division.** Political division was another theme identified among individual interviews that overlapped with focus group interviews. Political division highlighted the ways in which participants identified racial discord, both personally and nationally, largely as a result of the 2016 presidential election and the subsequent

political climate. While participants ( $n=10$ ) discussed politics becoming an increasingly normative topic of discussion with peers following the presidential election, participants also discussed their personal challenges navigating the campus political climate as well as relationships with individuals of differing political affiliations. More specifically, participants discussed their experiences engaging in dialogues about navigating friendships with individuals who were identified as holding contrasting political views.

*“Like, with politics, it’s easier to talk to them about than it is to talk to White people because I just feel like with my Black friends, that I can be like, ‘Well, I don’t like Donald Trump bc so and so.’ And they’re like, ‘Oh yeah, that doesn’t make sense or what he’s doing.’ And something like that. And then with my White friends, they’re like, they defend him. Like, it’s, in my opinion, sometimes I’m like, “Let’s just drop it” ‘cause I don’t... I feel like it’s going to get racist and then that’s what I don’t want to happen.”*  
*(Interview 7, page 9, lines 336-339)*

Similar to focus group participants, individual interview participants noted these discussions as important for process these experiences, exploring their values and beliefs, and deciding on behaviors.

**Media.** Although it was not exhaustively discussed among individual interviews, media was noted as an important theme of peer racial socialization. In particular, discussions of current events in the news, television shows, and movies all influenced the racial dialogue that occurred among Black undergraduates and their peers. The news media showed to be an influential source of conversation across all interviews, with all participants citing local or national headlines as the impetus for discussion among peers.

Participants in seven interviews also discussed the influences of television shows and movies in raising discussions about race, representation, and the Black culture. These Participants noted that television shows and movies were both the focus of interactions among peers (i.e., engaging in activities together) as well as the focus of dialogue regarding racial issues. In particular, recent films, such as Black Panther, appeared to spark in-depth discussions about race among Black undergraduates and their peers.

*“I guess with the movies that came out now, it's more noticeable; that race aspect of things. I guess being that Black Panther came out, and this movie came out, that movie came out, it's been a central topic that's been brought about. [...] We're just talking about how our ethnicity has been dominant within the movies and how we have prevailed and how it has impacted and made this amount of views or is influencing people or this amount of people” (Interview 17, page 6, lines 116-122)*

**Changing Language.** Study participants frequently discussed parents, in addition to peers, as an important source of support in processing racially challenging or discriminatory experiences; however, participants noted marked differences in their interactions with their parents versus those with their peers. Changing languages highlights these differences in that participants discussed being more reserved in the language that they used in discussing racial incidents with their parents versus their peers.

*“I curse a lot less in front of my parents, I guess.” (Interview 1, page 17, line 737)*

These differences included decreasing the use of curse words and sometimes even increased used of spiritual terms to relate more to parents’ values and teachings.

*“But she’s, like, a Christian. I have to remember she’s a Christian. So, I have to tone down my language. But we’re basically, very, informal about it. And I don’t have to go through analysis. [...] My Black friends, I’ll be like, ‘This B did this today. Like, she’s f-ing with my nerves.’ It’s just like a...I’ll be more honest. [...] But my mom, I’m like, ‘So, the devil is trying me today. And, like, I this, this, this, and this.’ And I’m trying to be a Christian, but I can’t do this and this.” (Interview 8, page12, lines 486-502)*

While discussions of changing language was present across all individual interviews, this code demonstrated important differences in the ways that participants engaged in the racial socialization process with peers compared to their parents.

**Self-Development.** Self-development messages focused on the ways in which participants and peers encouraged and celebrated educational pursuits among themselves and one another. These messages held undertones of race in highlighting the ways that peers discussed encouraging themselves and others toward success. Participants’ encouragement of success and self-development ranged from everyday behaviors regarding classwork,

*“We’ll start talking about what we’re trying to do right now. Like, classes, you know, life, how are things going. Just like, eventually, it goes after that. Then, we got to keep work important. Everybody else is not looking so we grind hard, like that.” (Interview 4, page 5, lines 166-169)*

to the ways that participants and their peers presented themselves in the school and work environments and preparing for the future.

While some self-development messages simply held undertones of race, others were blatant in their discussion of encouragement of success in the face of perceived racial barriers in the education and work environments as well as in the face of racial stereotypes. For example, one participant described an influential encounter between her and her friends in which her friends pushed her toward a goal despite the clear barriers that the participant would have to face to achieve success.

*“Well, I want to be a lawyer. So, for me, I just feel like being a lawyer and then being a girl is hard too. And then being Black, like, all that. It’s just, like, being Black. And then, I’ve talked to them before about being a girl and being Black and, with my Black friends, they can resonate with that. Like, they’re Black and they’re a girl and they know how hard it is. Like, you have to do ten times better. Or you have to be better than the next person’s resume. And then, although they can’t tell on your resume that you’re Black, but, like, sometimes they can. Like, they assume that you’re Black. And so, there’s a lot of obstacles that I can, like, talk to them about. Which is was easy. Like, we understand how hard it is. Like, you have to be better. They’re like, ‘Well you still have to do it. you still have to get over it. Although it’s hard, like, you still have to make this goal. And although you have to go over guys and White people or other minorities, you still have to, like, do it.’ So, pep talk. Like, they give me a pep talk”. (Interview 7, page 20, lines 870-884)*

Overall, these messages emphasized the importance of excelling and striving for success in the face of blatant and covert barriers.



## **Modalities of Peer Racial Socialization Message Transmission**

Similar to focus groups, analyses were conducted to identify the modalities of message transmission utilized in the peer racial socialization process. Analyses for individual interviews utilized the same coding structure as focus groups, which was based upon previously identified modes of message transmission identified in literature on the parent racial socialization process. The social Media/technology theme was added to the codebook to compensate for changes in communication styles since the introduction of parent racial socialization literature. As such, modalities of peer racial socialization focused on non-verbal modalities, including modeling, exposure, and social media/tech, and verbal modalities of message transmission.

**Non-verbal.** Non-verbal messages were noted by participants in every individual interview. Participants communicated non-verbal messages through several modalities including modeling, exposure, and social media/tech. Among individual interviews, modeling theme was most frequently identified with this mode of message transmission being noted across all 20 interviews. Modeling refers to participants' demonstration or intentional abstinence from a behavior to communicate a message about race. Participants modeled peer racial socialization messages in several ways including their style, the events they attended, and the behaviors they did or did not engage in. For example, one participant discussed the use of style to express her race throughout Black History Month.

*“Well, all through Black history month I wore Black Power t-shirts. So, I would just walk in the student government office and people were like ‘What?’ I would just wear Rosa Parks, Barack Obama, the Colin Kaepernick one, now that one*

*was fun. It's like, this one I have on right now has a Black woman with big hair or something like the afro. (Interview 3, page 12, lines 372-376)*

Social media/technology was also noted as a modality of message transmission in the process of peer racial socialization. Noted across 14 individual interviews, participants discussed the use of social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and GroupMe and formats for sharing racial messages with their peers. More specifically, social media and technology facilitated interactions among Black peers, both familiar and unfamiliar, in which they could provide support to one another. Additionally, text messages were an important format for sharing racial messages with peers.

*"Even on social media sometimes I'll put a quote or if it's somebody's birthday, I'll post something like a Black person that's made a big difference or a big change or something." (Interview 14, page 9, lines 403-405)*

One participant discussed the ways in which the Black undergraduates' GroupMe group was utilized to process racial experiences.

*"Like, with the shooting, with the guy getting...who got mistaken as a phone as a gun. [...] Somebody, like, we're in...Somebody posted in our group talking about that. And we started talking about how it's kind of crazy how that's happening. And how, like, it could've been, like, one of us maybe or something like that." (Interview 4, page 11, lines 515-521)*

Finally, Exposure was also discussed as a modality of peer racial socialization, although it was less noted compared to other modalities with it being discussed in four interviews. Exposure refers to participants introducing peers less familiar to Black culture to cultural experiences and knowledge.

*So, I'll invite you to events that I have from back home or sometimes, if you want to meet my friends from back home, or sometimes if you ever have the chance to meet my family and really understand why I am the way I am or how I got to where I am. So, I sometimes, I'll invite my White friends to come out to this event that I'm going to. Triple A-S is having this, come out to that."*  
(Interview 3, page 12, lines 394-399)

The presence of exposure in individual interviews appeared to be highly influenced by the racial composition of participants' friend groups.

**Verbal.** Verbal messages were one of the most frequently noted modalities of peer racial socialization, with all individual interviews noting the use of verbal messages. Verbal messages included spoken messages transmitted between participants and their peers. Participants engaged in discussion with peers across all themes of racial socialization. For instance, one participant demonstrated the importance of verbal messages in peers' ability to provide support following racial incidents.

*"I'll say that it's like, being able to talk to them about it and see how they feel. When they feel the same way, then it's just encouraging again. How we can keep working hard and try to get through it."* (Interview 4, page 15, lines 649-651)

Another participant discussed the use of verbal messages with peers in communications with peers around succeeding at school.

*"They just basically encourage me to either go for it again or go for something different or even better because sometimes I really just feel down about the situation and they'll comfort me but at the end of they'll tell me you got to do*

*something about it. Either get over it and do something better or go for it again and get it. do something better to try to get it. So that's about it. They encourage me, they support me and stuff like that.” (Interview 12, page 15, lines 666-670)*

As such, these messages highlight the significance of verbal messages in the process of transmitting racial messages among the peer group.

### **RQ 1C: Circumstances of Peer Racial Socialization**

Similar to focus groups, systematic analyses were conducted to assess for the circumstances by which individual interview participants and their peers communicated racial socialization messages, including reactively and proactively. Analyses indicated that participants across all interviews communicated messages in response to a situation or event (i.e., reactively). Regarding proactive message, majority of participants ( $n=14$ ) indicated that they provided messages before an event occurs or in the absence of specific event. These findings suggest that while racial socialization messages are communicated both reactively and proactively, the communication of reactive messages are more widespread in the communication of messages about race.

### **RQ 2: Peer Racial Socialization versus Parent Racial Socialization**

As was done in focus groups, analyses were conducted to understand the similarities and differences in peer racial socialization as compared to parent racial socialization. To conduct these analyses, deductive coding was completed utilizing codes based off of the existing framework of parent racial socialization. Analyzed themes of parent racial socialization analyzed among individual interviews included Cultural, Preparation for Bias, Promotion of Mistrust, Egalitarianism, and Self-Development messages.

**Cultural.** Similar to focus group interviews, Cultural messages were noted in every individual interview through participants' discussions. Similar to the culture theme identified in inductive coding, the Cultural theme based on parent racial socialization literature (i.e., deductive coding) highlighted the various ways in which participants expressed messages about culture to one another. For example, participants exchanged messages about historical figures in Black history.

*Like yesterday, it was the 50-year anniversary of when Martin Luther King Jr. had been killed. So, it came up yesterday, usually with topics or something (Interview 13, page 6, lines 221-222)*

One participant expressed how she and her friends highlighted Black history and historical figures through their style of dress.

*"I know in the beginning of this year, we all bought, um, t-shirts from Expression T's that different, like, expressions. Like, mine said, um, folks wanna pop off and it was a Barack Obama quote. One of my other friends, she had a, I think it was Sojourner Truth it just said 'Aint I' from her 'Ain't I A Woman' speech. And then there was somebody else's. There was a Huey Newton one. 'Fight back' I think it said, yeah." (Interview 14, page 8, lines 303-307)*

Cultural socialization was also expressed in the foods participants ate and the music that they listened to with their friends. These findings indicate that cultural messages are a significant racial socialization among both parent and peer racial socialization practices.

**Preparation for bias.** Preparation for bias was rarely noted among individual interviews with only four participants expressing preparation for bias messages. First,

interview one participants noted an instance in which he and his peers discussed preparing for a potential act of racism.

*“In particular, the Black Panther showings. ‘Cause in the back of our minds, between a lot of my friends and a lot of other people [inaudible], some White supremacist is going to shoot up one of those movie theaters. Thank god it didn’t happen, but that was in our mind. So, in our mind it was to be prepared about it” (Interview 1, page 20, lines 896-899).*

Participants also discussed preparation for bias in the context of job interviews, which was noted across previously mentioned three interviews.

*“You can literally put your resume and you can interview for a job and they are going to go based off your resume and your interview. I can do exactly what you’ve done and they wouldn’t accept me just because I’m Black. Like literally I can have everything. I would have to get twice as much as you do. Try to straighten my hair for the interview and literally try to become something that I’m really not.” (Interview 3, page 7, lines 216-220)*

**Promotion of mistrust.** Promotion of Mistrust messages called attention to the messages communicated about racial bias that may be experienced without complimentary advice of how to cope with these experiences. Participants ( $n=8$ ) provided preparatory messages to their peers about potential discriminatory encounters both within the campus environment as well as beyond the campus environment. For example, two participants noted situations in which they warned their friends about the ways in which they could potentially experience discrimination based on the

circumstances they were in. The first example discussed the potential impacts of being the only Black individual among a group of White peers.

*“In our apartment there’s three of us and one White kid. I remember one time he brought all his friends over and there was one White kid that was with th-, I mean, and one Black kid that was in they entire group of White folk. So, as soon as them boy left, we called the Black kid back in, be like, ‘You alright? Anything going on?’ Like, ‘You know you not supposed to follow them up whatever you do, now. Because, like, if they get into some shit, you know everything falling on you, right?’ And it was just like, we’re playing around, but at the same time, we’re being serious.” (Interview 1, page 9, lines 401-407)*

The second participant similarly provided a contextually-based preparatory message, but about the need for caution in majority White neighborhoods.

*“I know one time, we were talking and one of my friends, she left her keys and her purse in her White friend’s car. And they were on vacation, so she wanted to go over there and get it out of the car because the girl gave her the PIN. And she got upset at her mom because, and her grandma, because they told her not to go over there. And we were siding with the mom and grandma because we felt like it would look, kind of, suspicious. She was going in the friend’s car if they weren’t at home in that neighborhood. Because it was a more predominantly White neighborhood. So, we thought it looked more suspicious.” (Interview 14, page 6, lines 212-216)*

These findings indicate that promotion of mistrust messages was a significantly overlapping theme in parent and racial socialization practices.

**Egalitarianism.** Similar to focus groups, egalitarian messages in individual interviews ( $n=13$ ) emphasized the ways in which equality and equitable treatment were present or absent compared to parents' messages which emphasized how individuals of various groups were equal. In particular, participants highlighted the ways in which they could contribute to equality and what equality may look like in the future

*"We talked about how we feel like, how do we feel things would get better, how can we make things better, or will things ever get better regarding race relations in the United States. And will racism ever go away. I think we, kind of, reach the consensus that it could never, well, probably will never go away, but we can always combat it." (Interview 14, page 16, lines 670-675)*

Equality also included the identification of way in which participants experienced inequitable treatment and the ways in which the campus environment lacked equality. One participant noted the lack of representation of Black students and faculty in leadership positions.

*I think we also argue about representation a lot. I know this campus, I guess it's kinda my thing is they will say like, 'Oh you created this position.' So, for example, we have a Chief Diversity Officer. Didn't always have that so you know somebody, a White person, will be like 'Oh wow. They're working on diversity. They created a Chief Diversity Officer.' So, you created a position to try to appease diverse and represent underrepresented pop. (Interview 3, page 9, lines 267-272)*

This participant also went on to emphasize the lack of representation among other minority groups in leadership positions.



*“And not even just Black, why is there not LGBT umm rep why is there not Muslim or outside of Christian rep like why instead of- I think that a lot of time like my White friends will be like “oh if we create a position umm just for you...This, like, no. That’s not what I’m asking for. Representation means for to literally be weaved into every aspect of life. For me, it’s to be able to see myself. If I look at the board of trustees, I see myself. If I look to the athletics staff, I see myself.” (Interview 3, page 10, lines 280-285)*

**Silence about race.** Silence about Race messages highlighted the absence of race in participants’ ( $n=12$ ) discussion. While Silence about Race in parent racial socialization literature highlights the complete absence of racial messages communicated from parents to children, Silence about Race among participants highlighted the selective absence of discussions of race among peers. Participants cited two instances in which they would not engage in discussions about race including with White peers and in the school or work settings. This is highlighted in one participants discussion related to politics.

*“So, I haven’t really had a race conversation, I feel like, with a White person. In fact, I try to stay away from those as much as possible, just ‘cause I fear—I have a personal fear of that going in the wrong way and then ruining that relationship, um, with that person. (Interview 14, page 14, lines 663-666)*

Participants’ discussions of Silence about Race suggested that the absence of racial conversations with White peers were intentional and meant to avoid negative outcomes that appeared inevitable. Similarly, messages were communicated about abstaining from racial discussions in the school

*“I wouldn’t talk about it in a class full of White people. Because I feel like I just be judged and then I just feel like I’d be attacked at the same time because I wouldn’t have anybody else to help me speak on the topic. So, in my class they’re full of White people mainly, and then there’s only like two or three black people. So then, all these White people are putting their perspectives on it and it’s the two or three black people that are putting their perspectives on it. I feel like it would just be a debate and the debate would not go our way.” (Interview 11, page 13, lines 547-553)*

and work contexts.

*“Work. I try not to talk about it at work. [...] Yeah. ‘Cause that can get a little bit heated. Um, yeah that’s basically it. I wouldn’t talk about it at work.” (Interview 7, page 19, lines 822-827)*

**Self-development.** Self-development was a parent racial socialization theme that was identified in all individual interview participants’ discussions of peer racial socialization. These messages emphasized improving oneself educationally and personally to achieve success.

*“Even on social media sometimes I’ll put a quote or if it’s somebody’s birthday, I’ll post something like a Black person that’s made a big difference or a big change or something.” (Interview 14, page 9, lines 403-405)*

Furthermore, this theme held undertones of race, suggesting that success was strived for and achieved in the face of racism.

*“Because eventually we are gonna have to graduate and go out into real life. So, somebody is gonna end up looking at what we’ve done in school, so you’re*

*gonna be put up against another person. So, let's say that person was White and then you, you are a black candidate, so now he's looking at the both you guys. I mean race might not play a part into it, but say that it was, say if it did, then maybe your high GPA or your great grades were all better than his and he still picks the other guys.” (Interview 11, page 14, lines 609-615)*

### **Convergent Findings**

Several data driven themes converged across focus groups and individual interviews. Convergent themes included Culture, Political Division, Media, The Black Struggle, Racial Challenges, and Self-Development (see Table 2). Further analysis of focus group and individual interview codebooks revealed additional convergent themes that were renamed and recategorized during the unique thematic analysis processes with differing teams of coders. Respectively, these focus groups and individual interview convergent themes included Support for Academics and Self-Development, Social Support from Black Peers and Black Peers as Safe Spaces, and Support-Supporting Friends through Racial Incidents and Coping-Supporting Friends through Racial Incidents.

### **Divergent Findings**

While several convergent themes of peer racial socialization were identified among focus groups and individual interviews, themes and sub-themes were also identified that diverged (see Table 4.2). In particular, a total of seven divergent codes were identified with approximately 48% of additional themes identified coming from focus groups. These themes were exclusively Support sub-themes including Support from Non-Black Ethnic-Minority Peers, Support from Parents, and Support for Friends' Goals for the Future. The remaining divergent themes originated from individual interviews and

included the sub-themes of Culture-Events, Coping-Social Media, Safe Spaces-Black Organizations as Safe Spaces, and Changing Language-Parents and Peers.

Focus group and individual interview data was audited to identify whether any divergent themes were present, but not identified by coders in interviews. This auditing process revealed that four of the seven identified divergent themes were present across interviews but were not identified as consistent themes. For example, the themes Support for Friends' Goals and Support from Parents were both identified in individual interviews as aspects of subthemes but were not identified as distinct parent themes or sub-themes. While Support for Friends' Goals were present in individual interviews, this theme was subsumed within the Self-Development theme as a sub-theme in the individual interview codebook. Comparatively, individual interviews regularly noted Support from Parents throughout interviews; however, coders identified that discussions around this theme were more frequently related to comparisons of differences between support processes from parents and peers (i.e., Changing Language-Parents and Peers). As such, the Support from Parents code was partially subsumed within the Changing Language-Parents and Peers theme, which was a divergent theme identified within individual interviews. One additional divergent focus theme was identified in individual interviews, which was Culture-Events. Finally, auditing of focus groups revealed that while cultural events were mentioned in focus group discussions, it was not prevalent enough to be identified as an independent theme among focus group data. These results suggest that identified dissimilarities found in focus groups and individual interviews were largely a function of differences in coding rather than the complete absence of codes.

Table 4.2. Comparison of Focus Group and Individual Interview Themes

Focus Groups	Individual Interviews
Culture	Culture
<i>Black Heritage</i>	<i>Black Heritage</i>
<i>Style</i>	<i>Style</i>
<i>Food</i>	<i>Food</i>
<i>Music</i>	<i>Music</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Language</i>
	<i>Events</i>
Political Division	Political Division
Media	Media
<i>News</i>	<i>Current Events (formerly News)</i>
<i>Police Brutality/Shootings</i>	<i>Police Brutality/Shootings</i>
<i>Movies/TV Shows</i>	<i>Movies/TV Shows</i>
Support	Safe Spaces
<i>Academics</i>	<i>Black Organizations as Safe Spaces</i>
<i>Support Friends' Goals for the Future</i>	<i>Black Peers as a Safe Space</i>
<i>Social Support from Black Peers</i>	
<i>Social Support from Non-Black Ethnic Minority Peers</i>	
<i>Social Support from Parents</i>	
<i>Supporting Friends Through Racial Incidents</i>	
The Black Struggle	The Black Struggle
	<i>Resisting Stereotypes</i>
	<i>Navigating White Spaces</i>
	<i>White Fragility</i>
Racial Challenges	Racial Challenges
<i>Crossing Racial Boundaries</i>	<i>Crossing Racial Boundaries</i>
<i>Discrimination</i>	<i>Discrimination</i>
<i>Stereotypes</i>	<i>Stereotypes</i>
	Coping
	<i>Social Media</i>
	<i>Supporting Friends through Racial Incidents</i>
	Changing Language-Parents and Peers
	Self-Development

### **RQ 3: Gender Differences in Racial Socialization**

Due to challenges with recruiting all male focus groups, planned comparisons based on gender (i.e., male and female comparisons) were primarily conducted with individual interview data. As such, gender differences were compared based on data yielded from individual interviews. Overall, few differences were noted in the communication of peer racial socialization themes among males and females. More specifically, individual interview participants discussed themes of peer racial socialization in similar ways with the exception of movies and hair. First, the Culture sub-theme of style was an important difference noted. In particular, while two male participants noted hair as an important format and topic in communications about race, discussions pertaining to considerations of hairstyles were more widely noted by female participants ( $n=20$ ). This difference appeared to be related to the length of participants' hair. In particular, while only one participant noted explicitly the length of their hair in relation to resulting racial socialization messages, the one male participant who extensively discussed hair as a racial expression noted that he had long hair, which prompted his considerations of others' views of his hair.

*“‘Cause I remember going into interviews I was thinking, ‘Will they look at me different because of my afro? Should I cut it?’” (Interview 1, page 12, lines 487-488).*

Similarly, discussions of intrusive hair touching were primarily introduced by female participants, with the exception of the previously noted male participant. However, this participant noted intrusive hair touching in the context of a conversation with a female friend who experienced the intrusion.

Subtle differences were also noted in participants' discussions of movies. These differences were primarily noted in focus groups, but also was noted in one two individual interviews. In particular, male participants initiated discussions of the Black Panther movie as a topic of peer racial socialization. Male participants not only noted the movie itself as a topic of discussion, but also noted the movie as the impetus for further discussions of Black culture. Notably, these discussions were absent in all female focus groups and interviews with no female participants, outside of co-ed focus groups, noting the Black Panther movie in their discussions of racial socialization with their peers. Despite this detailed difference in the discussion of movies, female participants did note movies and television as a topic of racial socialization.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The current study documented the existence and explored the process of racial socialization among Black emerging adults and their peers. Findings of the current study offer a new way of understanding racial socialization beyond the existing theoretical conceptualization of parent racial socialization. In particular, this study expands the theoretical framework of racial socialization to conceptualize racial socialization as a developmental process that is likely impacted by one's developmental stage and role (e.g., undergraduate students). Moreover, the current study highlighted the importance of peer racial socialization in navigating three tasks of emerging adulthood including identity development, establishing peer support networks, and civic development and engagement. The current study also provides important insight into the distinctions of the process of racial socialization among peers compared to the racial socialization process within the parent-child relationship. The following sections will discuss the findings, implications, and limitations of the current study and will discuss future directions for research.

#### **Peer Racial Socialization Convergent findings**

Findings of the current study underscore the substantial influence of the developmental context on the communication of racial messages. Emerging adulthood is an important developmental period characterized by the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Arnette, 2000). While emerging adulthood features the tasks of evaluating personal values, identity establishment, and autonomous decision making, emerging adults in



college must accomplish these tasks while navigating the campus environment and associated expectations (Arnette, 2000; Dill & Henley, 1998; Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet, 2015; Shields, 2001). For Black emerging adults, this is further complicated by the necessity of navigating racial stressors unique to the minority experience (Cokely, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013). The current study highlighted the ways in which communications about race among Black undergraduate students and their peers enabled the mastery of three developmental tasks. These three developmental tasks included identity development and negotiation, development of the peer support network, and civic development and engagement (see Figure 5.1 for conceptual model).

The three developmental tasks that were identified as connected to the peer racial socialization messages organically emerged from the data and became evident when considering the relationships among themes of peer racial socialization. More specifically, the tasks of identity development and management was clearly connected to identified themes given participants' key phrases and statements emphasizing the importance of being able to express their culture (i.e., identity development) and their considerations for how others may perceive their expression of their culture and subsequent behaviors (i.e., identity management). Similarly, development of the peer network was clearly connected to themes as evident by explicit discussions on the importance of peers, which will be discussed in further detail. While these two developmental tasks were identified through key words and phrases that were signaled in participants' discussions of themes, identification of the developmental task of civic development and engagement was not as explicitly connected to themes. As such, this task was not identified by key words and phrases, but by relationship among remaining

themes. In particular, as attending to the news media and politics and engagement in civic duties, such a voting, are key markers of civic development and awareness, it became clear that this was a significant developmental task associated with the racial socialization practices of Black undergraduates and their peers.

**Racial identity development and negotiation.** Findings from this study demonstrated the importance of peer-based racial messages in navigating the process of identity development and negotiation. More specifically, the current findings suggest that peer racial socialization may function as a mechanism of identity development and negotiation for Black emerging adults. Identity development is a process that occurs throughout adolescence and is established as individuals enter adulthood (Arnette, 2000); however, racial identity is one facet of the identity developmental process specific to minority youth. Racial identity refers to the significance that one's race holds in their life and the way they define themselves (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Themes of Culture, Racial Challenges, Self-Development, and The Black Struggle highlighted the challenges that participants experienced navigating their racial identity development in the context of the college campus. In particular, participants identified the importance of negotiating the expression of racial identity, through their style, behavior, and discussions, while in the presence of mainstream cultural expectations in order to reduce potential consequences for not adhering to cultural expectations. This practice, known as identity negotiation, has been cited as a task specific to the experiences of minorities (Rivas-Drake, Umaña-Taylor, Schaefer, & Medina, 2017; Sellers et al., 1998). In identity negotiation, individuals shift their mannerisms to blend into the mainstream

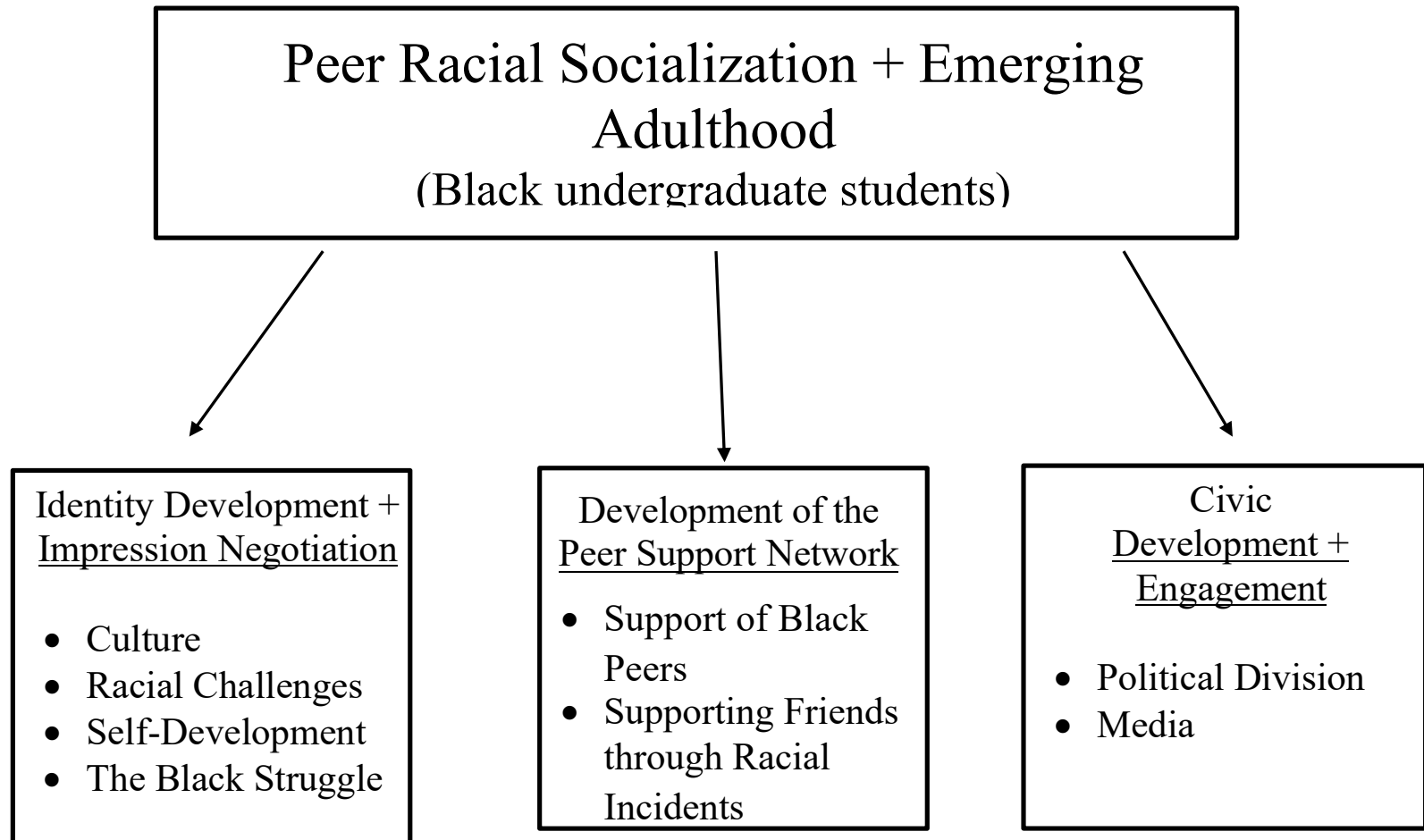


Figure 5.1. Conceptual Model for Peer Racial Socialization and Emerging Adulthood

culture, reduce their visibility, and manage impressions of themselves (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Dickens, Womack, & Dimes, 2018; Roberts, Settles, & Jellison, 2008).

In the face of racial challenges such as discrimination and stereotypes, Black undergraduate students must consider how expressions of race may be perceived by others and the potential consequences of negative perceptions (Dickens, Womack, & Dimes, 2018). As such, participants exhibited an increased awareness of their minority status on the college campus (i.e., being one of few Black students in majority spaces), stereotypes that others subscribed to pertaining to Black students, and the importance of combating those stereotypes. For example, several participants discussed considerations of altering their mannerisms, speech, and hair in order to appear more relatable to their White peers and to obtain jobs. This awareness is further amplified by the tense racial climate, both in the nation and on the college campus, following the 2016 presidential election. Sellers and colleagues' (1998) Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) conceptualizes the racial identity as an oscillatory process where one's racial identity becomes more or less salient in relation to the individuals' contexts. This is particularly important in the current climate where racist rhetoric and acts have been frequently noted in the media as well as on the participating campus. Due to this climate, it is likely that participants have an increased awareness of their race overall as well as increased sensitivity to the impacts of others' perceptions of them based on their race, further impacting participants' considerations and negotiation of their expressions of their race.

Students' racial socialization practices not only highlighted the practice of identity negotiation among participants and their peers, but also the contribution of peers in

reflecting on this process and negotiating personal values and mainstream expectations. More specifically, participants discussed the importance of peer encouragement in positive behaviors and development despite barriers in communications of the Self-Development theme. Through Self-Development messages, participants and their peers acknowledged the barriers they faced to academic and personal success and provided messages encouraging one another to strive for success in spite of those. For example, various participants discussed the importance of resisting stereotypes and presenting their best selves through class performance. Through these messages, participants and their peers acknowledged the need for negotiating one's identity and provided encouragement for pushing past barriers.

**Peer support networks.** Another significant finding from this study highlighted the importance of the peer racial socialization process in the developmental task of establishing the peer support network. While establishing the peer network becomes an increasingly important developmental task throughout adolescence, the shifting of environments (e.g., college) and increased autonomy in emerging adulthood heighten the importance of this task during this developmental stage. In particular, emerging adults' transition from the home environment to the college campus increases their autonomy and responsibility for their behaviors as well as alters their primary support network due to proximity and access. As such, emerging adults' primary support network begins to shift from their parents to their peers in preparation for adulthood (Colarossi & Eccles, 2000; Richman et al., 1998). Furthermore, this transition to the college environment is often accompanied by a shift in the peer group, which is stressful for emerging adults and

contributes to the need for establishing a reliable peer network during this developmental phase (Larose & Boivin, 1998).

While the peer network allows for emerging adults to analyze and refine their values, process their experiences, and identify how they should respond in various situations, the current study identified that the peer network is particularly important for Black emerging adults to process and navigate racial experiences (Apugo, 2017). Various themes highlighted the importance of peer racial socialization in the establishment and maintenance of the peer network including: 1) Support of Black Peers (also identified as Safe Spaces-Black Peers), 2) Supporting Friends through Racial Incidents, and 3) Self-Development. The peer network was a crucial space in which participants examined and tested their conceptualizations and applications of their personal values; however, participants experienced significant difficulties with exploring racial issues and values with non-Black peers. These challenges influenced who participants chose as friends and how they managed peer relationships. For example, emerging adults noted significant challenges discussing political differences, that related closely and loosely with race, with White peers. Similarly, participants often experienced difficulties discussing racial challenges with White peers, with discussions sometimes resulting in participants' justifying or educating others on their experiences. Other-raced peers' lack of understanding often resulted in participants' re-evaluating those friendships, choosing whether or not to abstain for race-related discussions, and sometimes distancing themselves from peers with differing views. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of Black peers in engaging in dialogues about their racial experiences and the validation that they received from these peers due to similarity in experiences and sharing

similar values and perspectives. This ease of interaction and validation led students to seek out or maintain same-race relationships. These findings are supported by studies indicating that youth are more likely to initiate and maintain relationships with peers who have similar beliefs (Brown & Larson, 2009; Hamm, 2000; Shin & Ryan, 2014). For participants in the current study, similarities that were crucial in the peer network include, not only peers' ability to relate to their experiences, but also peers' ability to simply conceptualize and validate their experiences, which was often found in same-race peer interactions. The importance of same-race peer relationships has been noted in existing literature on the experiences of minority college students (Apugo, 2017; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008). For example, Apugo's (2017) study of Black graduate women's experiences with same-raced peer relationships identified how racial identities were integral parts of their peer relationships in that these relationships validated their identities in spaces where their voices were not heard. Furthermore, the importance of Black college students having safe spaces at PWIs in which they can process and cope with their racial experiences has been highlighted in literature (Grier-Reed, 2010; Museus, 2008). These studies support that same-race peer networks act as safe spaces, where interactions regarding race can occur to allow for emerging adults to navigate their race-related experiences and values.

**Civic development and engagement.** Finally, findings demonstrated how peer racial socialization messages, including *Media* and *Political Division*, facilitated the developmental tasks of civic development and engagement for Black undergraduate students and their peers. Civic development is a process by which youth increase their awareness of political institutions, social issues, and community issues through exploring

political perspectives, watching the news, reading newspapers, and more (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). This process allows youth to explore and resolve their own values (Watts & Flanagan, 2007) and frequently results in youth becoming engaged in the civic process through behaviors such as volunteering in the community and voting based on their personal values. While civic engagement is an important developmental task for all emerging adults, given their new voting status, the civic development and engagement process looks different for Black emerging adults. In particular, Black emerging adults must take into consideration the ways in which race and racial bias impact their social and political systems (i.e., structural racism; Hope & Jager, 2014). As such, participants' discussions of themes including *Political Division* and *Media* brought attention the process by which racial messages communicated among peers helped participants navigate the civic development and engagement processes in the college context.

Participants noted the significant impacts of the media and political climate in galvanizing discussions about race among their peer group. For instance, this was seen in Alisha's (focus group 1) consideration of how a particular political party's stances do or don't fit with her personal views and how that potential misalignment impacts her relationships with peers who may endorse those views.

*"So, just seeing people's true colors and their reasonings behind supporting him, or stuff like that. And I'm just like, how can I even be friends with you if that's what you think. You know? It was more than just me not liking them because they're a Republican. I don't like you because you're standing behind somebody who is out here with all of this hate rhetoric. And, at the end of the day, if it's a Republican and I like what they're saying, I have no problem voting*



*for them if that's what I believe. But, I'm like, but if this is a person that y'all are choosing to represent y'all's party you're standing behind him, why should I be friends with you? Because he doesn't respect me and then you're supporting him not respecting me. So, there's no point of us being friends. So, it just puts strain on my relationships I have with my friends who weren't Democrats."* (FG 1, page 11, lines 462-472, Alisha)

These discussions underlined participants' increasing awareness about social and political issues occurring across the nation. Moreover, as participants became aware of the social and political issues occurring around them, the peer network was an important context in which they explored their perspectives and values related to these issues. However, many participants illustrated the difficulties of engaging in this process among various peer groups. More specifically, many participants experienced challenges engaging in discussions regarding political and social injustices with White peers who demonstrated a lack of awareness and understanding pertaining to concepts such as structural racism. As a result, many participants chose to refrain from engaging in these discussions with White peers and instead engaged same-race peers in socio-political discussions for their ability to empathize and validate their perspectives. These discussions not only resulted in the exploration and solidification of participants' values, but also resulted in civic engagement for many of the participants.

Research broadly suggests that Black youth are less engaged in the civic engagement process than youth of other races; however, some scholars suggest that structural barriers may reduce Black youth's participation in traditional forms of civic engagement and Black youth may instead engage in more non-traditional forms of

political activism (Hope & Jager, 2014; Hope, Keels, Durkee, 2016; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). In the context of civic engagement, peer racial socialization allows Black undergraduate students to organize their responses to sociopolitical issues that impact them including racial injustices in the nation and on their college campus. Participants in the current study considered the consequences for a range of responses to the injustices that they experienced on and around the college campus. Discussions related to the theme of Culture highlighted some of the ways that participants engaged in non-traditional forms of political activism. In particular, although subtly delivered, participants discussed their use of cultural expressions, particularly their style, to impart their stances on sociopolitical issues. These stances interestingly reflected more overt historical protests during the civil rights movement by referencing key figures in this movement. For instance, participants discussed the intentional decision for themselves and their peers to wear t-shirts that referenced historical figures from the civil rights movement, such as Rosa Parks. Participants' choices to wear natural hairstyles may be another example in that natural hair has historically been recognized as a political statement against oppressive ideals dating back to the civil rights movement. Additionally, although not clearly stated by participants, it appeared that communications around Black history (i.e., Culture-Black Heritage) also played an important role in the ways that participants approached their political activism. These examples emphasize that peer racial socialization was influential in not only the development of values regarding civic development, but that these communications were also influential in the determination and execution of expressions of political activism for Black undergraduate students.

## **Peer Racial Socialization versus Parent Racial Socialization**

Comparisons of peer and parent racial socialization yielded similarities in themes throughout both deductive (i.e., top down) and inductive coding (i.e., bottom up). First, inductive coding highlighted the most frequently overlapping themes which included cultural socialization and themes related to discrimination. In particular, the culture theme was one of the most frequently coded among the peer racial socialization themes in both focus groups and individual interviews. This aligns with existing literature on parent-child racial socialization which highlights cultural socialization as one of the most frequently communicated themes across the lifespan for youth (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Furthermore, cultural messages are the earliest racial socialization messages that youth are exposed to in the parent racial socialization process (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). The pervasiveness of this theme throughout the lifespan may highlight the importance of cultural messages, both verbal and non-verbal, in the everyday lives of Black youth. As such, these messages may be normative and entrenched in the routines of Black undergraduate students, thus influencing the prevalence of communications about culture in the peer socialization process.

In considering deductive coding, findings indicated that while participants addressed each theme of parent racial socialization, most themes, except for cultural socialization self-development, and preparation for bias, were rarely used in peer racial socialization. These findings suggest that although peers and parents similarly communicate messages around culture and discrimination, they largely communicate

unique messages in the racial socialization process. Various reasons may contribute to the significant differences noted in peer versus parent racial socialization messages.

First, the power dynamics of peer-to-peer communications and parent-to-child communications are significantly different and lend to differences in the purposes behind communicating messages. In particular, parent-child communications have been noted as a way that Black parents teach and prepare their children to conduct themselves in the world where youth may experience oppression. Many parent racial socialization messages are delivered as preparatory messages for youth and precede youth's experiences, though they can also be in response to experiences. Comparatively, the current study demonstrated that peer-based messages often appear to be communicated responsively for the purposes of processing events and experiences that occur and exploring ideals and potential solutions for issues. These messages are more transactional in nature, allowing peers to engage in a reciprocal process that helps them clarify their ideals and values. These differences in parent and peer racial socialization are developmentally appropriate considering that peer relationships are more collaborative and involve individuals with equal power statuses whereas parent relationships are inequitable in power dynamics where the parent is considered the individual with the most experience and knowledge and therefore provides advice and guidance through the communication process. As such, parent racial socialization should be conceptualized as vertical process whereas peer racial socialization is a horizontal process.

Another factor that may contribute to differences in parent racial socialization codes identified in participants' discussions includes the social climate. The social climate has been noted to have a significant impact on the types of racial messages that

are communicated among individuals (Spencer, 1983). This may be extrapolated further to include the cultural differences experienced in the current generation compared to previous generations. In the current cultural and social climate, discussions of social injustices and inequitable treatment of people identifying with various social identities has become an ongoing topic of conversation. While discussions of trans-rights and racial equality have been frequent focus of news articles, debates, and protests, much of the conversation focuses on the importance of enforcing equitable rights for marginalized groups rather than whether groups deserve recognition or equitable rights. As such, egalitarian messages may be a normative idea among emerging adults in the current generation and, as such, messages emphasizing equality among groups are not the focus of messages transmitted among peers.

### **Peer Racial Socialization Divergent Findings**

Significant differences were noted between themes identified in focus groups and themes identified in individual interviews (see Table 5.1); however, only one true divergent theme (i.e., theme that did not converge across interviews) was identified which was Coping-Social Media. This theme highlighted the use of social media in assisting participants in coping with race-related experiences. Although one participant among focus groups cited the use of social media in their interactions with their friends, it appeared that this was the only significant mention of social media among focus groups. Despite this, it is believed that differences in the group format versus the individual format contributed to the differences seen in this code. In particular, focus group interviews often featured frequent transitions from topic to topic in which participants' discussions were influenced by other participants. While significant overlap occurred in

themes overall, this particular theme may have been influenced by individual interview participants' increased time to reflect on specific instances in which they accessed peers to help them navigate race-related experiences. Indeed, it is hypothesized that focus group participants also engaged in similar behaviors due to the notable influence of social media in the current generation everyday interactions with one another. As such, further probing around this theme in future studies may further highlight the utility of social media in helping participants cope with racial experiences.

Table 5.1. Comparison of Peer Racial Socialization and Parent Racial Socialization

<b>Peer Racial Socialization Themes</b>	<b>Parent Racial Socialization Themes</b>
Culture	Cultural Socialization
<i>Black Heritage</i>	<i>Black Pride</i>
<i>Style</i>	
<i>Music</i>	
<i>Language</i>	
Self-Development	Self-Development
	Preparation for Bias
Political Division	
	Promotion of Mistrust
Media	
News	
<i>Police Brutality/Shootings</i>	
<i>Movies/TV Shows</i>	
	Egalitarianism
Black Peers as Safe Spaces	
	Silence About Race
The Black Struggle	
Racial Challenges	
<i>Crossing Racial Boundaries</i>	
<i>Discrimination</i>	
<i>Stereotypes</i>	

## Limitations

This study was not without limitations. First, the researcher was unable to obtain the desired number of Black males for participation in focus groups. As such, the data obtained in focus groups may not adequately represent the peer racial socialization

experiences of Black males as they may be experienced within a peer setting. Despite this, the desired number of Black male participants were obtained for the individual interviews, which should provide insight into the peer racial socialization experiences of Black undergraduate males attending PWIs.

Another limitation to this study included the context in which the study took place. Due to the setting of the study being a campus in a mid-sized Southeastern city, several characteristics of the setting influence the experience of participants. For example, several experiences identified as racial challenges that occurred specifically on the featured campus influenced the ways in which participants engaged in interactions regarding race. Similarly, the state in which the campus exists is a politically conservative state, which was not consistent with the political ideologies of many participants. This is particularly important for the current study as interviews took place within two years following a political election, where many of the participants had experienced their first opportunity to vote in a presidential election. Due to these factors and others related to the setting of the study, these results may not be representative of the general population and experiences of undergraduate students at PWIs across the United States. Future studies should replicate this study at different universities where the social context and social climate may be different to understand whether students at various institutions have similar experiences as students in the current study.

While qualitative methodology allowed for a better understanding of the ways in which peer racial socialization occurs among college students, it is limited in providing and understanding of the impacts of peer racial socialization on developmental outcomes (e.g., well-being, racial identity development, etc.). As such, quantitative methodology,

alone or in conjunction with qualitative research, would be valuable in making inferences on the impacts of peer racial socialization messages on emerging adults' functioning and development.

### **Study Implications**

**Theory.** The current study has several implications for the understanding the existing theoretical framework of racial socialization. First, the current study expands the theoretical framework of racial socialization practices from the parent-child interaction to include peer-to-peer interactions. This is particularly relevant given the importance of the peer relationship in the socialization process throughout the development of youth. While several studies have alluded to the contributions of peers in the racial socialization process (Lesane-Brown et al., 2005; Stevenson et al., 2002), no studies had been identified that explore the specific messages that peers communicate about race. Furthermore, existing studies have sought to understand the ways in which racial messages communicated about race impact youth's racial identity development, yet most studies have focused on the messages that youth receive from parents, neglecting to consider the distinct messages that youth may communicate to one another. Findings from the current study supports Lesane-Brown and colleagues' (2005) findings that peers are an important source of racial socialization, which may significantly lend to the development of youths' racial identities as suggested by Stevenson and colleagues (2002). Although peers communicate some messages that are similar to those communicated by parents, peers largely communicate unique racial messages associated with their developmental context and the mastery tasks of that context. Furthermore, the current study identifies the peer context as important for allowing participants to explore



their values and racial identities, further supporting Stevenson and colleagues' (2002) hypothesis.

Second, the current study, guided by the PVEST theory (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997) highlights the importance of the individual experience and access to resources in understanding outcomes. While the current study did not quantitatively measure participants' functioning following racial experiences, participants noted the importance of engaging in interactions with peers in helping them cope with racism. Additionally, peers and the peer racial socialization process was emphasized as an important process in allowing participants to process their experiences and navigate the various developmental tasks encountered in emerging adulthood in the context of racial bias.

Next, this study emphasized the developmental nature of racial socialization and established the importance of conceptualizing this process as a developmental task. In particular, along with existing literature, the current study indicates that racial socialization is a process that occurs across the lifespan and changes in scope as individuals' cross developmental stages. For example, while emerging adulthood features the navigation of developmental task through the racial socialization process, later stages of adulthood features the use of racial socialization for parents preparing younger generations to navigate a society as a racial minority. These findings may further indicate the need to explore racial socialization as a stage-based theory in which the focus and tasks of the racial socialization as individuals shift developmental stages.

**Practice.** Findings from the current study identify the challenges that Black undergraduate students experience within the college environment and the critical

importance of peers in navigating and mastering the tasks of emerging adulthood in the face of those racial challenges. Participants' ability to engage in the racial socialization process among peers was an influential factor in their peer relationships. Participants often cited the impacts that same-raced peers had in allowing participants to reflect on their values, process their experiences, and identify how to proceed in situations; however, some participants also noted the difficulties of finding same-raced peers early on in the college experience due to their minority status. These difficulties have been noted throughout the literature on peer relationships and high achieving Black youth. These findings have implications for the creation of safe spaces for minority youth on the college campus. In particular, PWIs should consider the intentional creation of safe spaces for minority students where they may engage in safe discussions around their racial experiences on the college campus and beyond. Furthermore, these should include consistently open and welcome spaces created specifically for students of color. The importance of these spaces, including Black organizations and counterspaces, have been cited throughout the literature on Black adolescents and college students and have been shown to have significant implications for youth's psychological and academic functioning within these environments (Case & Hunter, 2012; Grier-Reed, 2010). It should be noted that campus initiatives for promoting diversity are not the ideal safe space as minority students have cited the brevity and limited discussion that accompanies these events. Furthermore, students note that these events frequently appear to be a response to challenges that have been highlighted on campus and rarely result in lasting discussion or change related to the presenting concern. As such, it is important to create a

space with the specific intent to be an ongoing, open, and non-judgmental space for Black students to discuss, reflect upon, and process their racial experiences.

**Future Directions for Research.** This study was a first look into understanding the process of peer racial socialization and the similarities and differences between peer racial socialization and parent racial socialization. While this study provides valuable knowledge and insight into the peer racial socialization process, and the racial socialization process overall, it calls attention to directions for future research to better understand the phenomenon of peer racial socialization.

First, the current study should be replicated with Black undergraduate students attending Predominantly White Institutions in various regions and social contexts. As expected from existing literature on parent racial socialization, the social and political context in which the racial socialization process is captured largely influences the messages and volume of different messages that are transmitted. In the current study, political messages were very present in the interactions among Black undergraduate students and their peers, likely as a result of the recent contentious political election, the political climate within the city and state that the institution was located, and the potential mismatch between the political affiliations of the participants and their peers within the university. Capturing peer racial socialization on various campuses and within various social and political contexts will highlight the overlapping messages that are transmitted among Black undergraduate students and their peers. Furthermore, this will provide insight into whether additional messages are communicated that were not found in the current study based on the context in which students exist and whether other racial messages are more frequently communicated based on the context.

Second, the future research should be conducted to understand the peer racial socialization messages that are communicated throughout adolescence. The current study exemplified the importance of the developmental context in the content of racial socialization messages communicated for emerging adults; however, emerging adulthood is a very specific developmental period that may not reflect the changes and socialization practices seen in earlier phases of adolescence. It is likely that youth in adolescence communicate unique messages specific to their developmental tasks and context as well as messages that overlap with emerging adulthood and parent racial socialization. Furthermore, due to the distinct contexts in which early- and mid-adolescents exist within (i.e., middle and high school) compared to late-adolescents and emerging adults (i.e., college), their experiences within these environments may also influence the racial messages that youth communicate to one another.

Finally, several significant threads of discussion were identified in the data that were not established as themes in the current study. Future research should further explore these threads to gain a greater understanding of whether these are significant themes in the process peer racial socialization. For example, comparison of what is considered the norm of Black culture versus White culture was noted in interviews. These comparisons were also noted in Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) work in which participants of that study discussed how some behaviors were identified as related to the mainstream culture (i.e., White) and therefore if Black youth engaged in them, they were acting Black. As this has been identified in multiple studies, it may be concluded that this is an important consideration (i.e., peer norms and expectation of what constitutes as Black behaviors and norms) for understanding the interactions of Black peers. Future research

should further investigate this to understand how it fits within the peer racial socialization and further how it relates to the identity development of youth as they navigate their racial identities and racial experiences in the current culture and/or mainstream culture.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, findings of the current study highlighted the important role of peer racial socialization in the development of Black emerging adults attending a PWI.

Although the peer racial socialization process explored among emerging adults in the current study overlapped with findings in the peer racial socialization literature, distinct themes were noted in the racial socialization process among peers, highlighting the significance of further exploring this process among peers. As such, further research should be conducted to better understand this phenomenon.

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## APPENDIX A

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

#### *Warm up questions*

- What kind of music do you listen to?
- Where are you from?
- What is your major?
- What organizations are you apart of?
- Tell me a bit about your cultural background?

#### *Content Questions*

- What does being Black mean to you?
- How important is it that you can talk with your friends about topics related to your race?
- How does race come up when you're with your friends?
  - Tell me about a time when it came up playfully or seriously?
  - How do these [racial] conversations differ when you are with your close friends compared to when you are with acquaintances?
  - How do these conversations differ when you are with your Black friends versus White or other-raced friends?
  - How did the people around you respond to this conversation?
- Tell me about the ways you express your race with your friends.
- Tell me about a time when your friends expressed race to you?
- How important is it that you are able to share your culture with your friends? Why?
  - How does your ability to share your culture differ based on the race of your friends?
- What are the challenges that you and/or your friends experience being Black?
  - What about on campus?
  - Have you ever been treated unfairly because of your race?
  - Who do you usually talk about these challenges with?
  - Tell me about how your friends help you get through personal experiences or observed instances of discrimination.
- Tell me about the last time you and your friends had a conversation where race came up.
  - How do they differ with Black friends versus White or other-raced friends?
- On what occasions do you usually discuss race with your friend

- Following an incident?
- On a regular basis?
- Prior to an incident that you feel could occur?

*Racial Socialization Questions (use if not addressed earlier in discussion)*

- How do you and your friends discussed equality among people of different races?
  - Tell me about a time when you and your friends emphasized equality among people of different races.
- Under what circumstances do you not talk about race?
  - Do you have friends that you don't discuss racial or cultural matters with at all?
- Tell me about a time when you and your friends discussed coping with racism? What was the situation that sparked this conversation?
- Do you and your friends ever discuss racism and racist experiences *without* talking about how to cope with it? Give me an example of a time when this happened.
- Tell me about a time when you and your friends talked about improving yourselves and succeeding in the face of racism.

*Closing Question*

- Based on the things we talked about today, what is the most important thing that people should know about how Black youth and their peers communicate about race with one another?

## APPENDIX B

### ONLINE RECRUITMENT EMAIL-FOCUS GROUPS

Hi!

My name is Alexandra Golden and I am a doctoral student in the Clinical-Community Psychology program at the University of South Carolina. ***I would like to invite you to participate in my dissertation study***, which explores the life experiences of Black college students. Participants will be asked questions about their interpersonal experiences as a college student. Participation in this study will provide invaluable information about the importance of peers in the lives of Black youth as well as the importance of race in Black youths' life experiences.

***To participate in this study, you must: (1) Identify as Black; (2) Be between the ages of 18 and 22; (3) Be an enrolled student at the University of South Carolina.*** Focus groups will last approximately 60-90 minutes. ***Participants who complete the study will receive a \$10 gift card for their time.***

If you are interested in taking part in this study and meet eligibility requirements, please email [argolden@email.sc.edu](mailto:argolden@email.sc.edu) and/or go to <https://goo.gl/2Bx8ef> to complete a brief eligibility survey. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact Alexandra Golden at [argolden@email.sc.edu](mailto:argolden@email.sc.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact Thomas Coggins (Ph: 803-777-7095), Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Best,

Alexandra Golden

## APPENDIX C

### FOCUS GROUP STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION

#### **Title of Research: Power of Peers Study**

**Researchers: Alexandra R. Golden, M.A.**

#### **Dear Participant:**

You are being invited to participate in the **Power of Peers Study** conducted by Alexandra Golden, a doctoral student in the psychology program at the University of South Carolina. This study will to explore the messages that Black youth and their peers communicate about race. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions before deciding to participate.

**Description of Study Procedures.** If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be part of a 60 to 90 minute focus group. During this focus group, you will be asked questions about how you and your peers communicate about race as well as questions about your life experiences. All responses will be confidential and you do not have to answer anything you do not wish to answer.

**Risks of Participation.** The nature of some of our questions (e.g., experiences with racial discrimination) may produce mild discomfort. If you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about any of the questions during the interview, you are encouraged to share your concerns and the interviewers will make accommodations if necessary. Participants will be asked to refrain from using their names or other identifying information during the focus group, as it will be audio recorded. Additionally, the researchers ask that group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

**Benefits of Participation.** The information gathered from this study will lend insight into exploring how Black youth communicate cultural messages and the importance of these messages in Black youth's experiences. For participation in focus groups, you will receive course credit through the participant pool or a \$10 gift card.

**Confidentiality of Records.** All information gathered from the study will be kept confidential and your identity will private. All data obtained from this study will be stored on a password-protected computer.



***Voluntary Participation.*** Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. If you are participating for course credit and decide to discontinue your participation, you may participate in another opportunity for course credit. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept confidential.

***Contact Information.*** If you have any additional questions about participation in this study, please contact Alexandra Golden, Department of Psychology, 1512 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC, 29208 (argolden@email.sc.edu) If you have any questions about your rights as a, you may contact Thomas Coggins (Ph: 803-777-7095), Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

## APPENDIX D

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION

#### **Title of Research: Power of Peers Study**

**Researchers: Alexandra R. Golden, M.A.**

#### **Dear Participant:**

You are being invited to participate in the **Power of Peers Study** conducted by Alexandra Golden, a doctoral student in the psychology program at the University of South Carolina. This study will explore the messages that Black youth and their peers communicate about race. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions before deciding to participate.

**Description of Study Procedures.** If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be part of a 30 to 60 minute interview. During this interview, you will be asked questions about how you and your peers communicate about race as well as questions about your life experiences. All responses will be confidential and you do not have to answer anything you do not wish to answer.

**Risks of Participation.** The nature of some of our questions (e.g., experiences with racial discrimination) may produce mild discomfort. If you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about any of the questions during the interview, you are encouraged to share your concerns and the interviewer will make accommodations if necessary. Participants' identities will remain confidential throughout the interview, as it will be audio recorded.

**Benefits of Participation.** The information gathered from this study will lend insight into exploring how Black youth communicate cultural messages and the importance of these messages in Black youth's experiences. For participation in focus groups, you will receive course credit through the participant pool or a \$10 gift card.

**Confidentiality of Records.** All information gathered from the study will be kept confidential and your identity will be private. All data obtained from this study will be stored on a password-protected computer.

**Voluntary Participation.** Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. If you are participating for course credit and

decide to discontinue your participation, you may participate in another opportunity for course credit. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept confidential.

**Contact Information.** If you have any additional questions about participation in this study, please contact Alexandra Golden, Department of Psychology, 1512 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC, 29208 (argolden@email.sc.edu) If you have any questions about your rights as a, you may contact Thomas Coggins (Ph: 803-777-7095), Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration

## APPENDIX E

### RACIAL SOCIALIZATION DEDUCTIVE CODING SCHEME

Racial Socialization Themes		
Major Themes	Definitions	Examples
Cultural Socialization	Communications that provide cultural knowledge and/or information about youths' ethnic and racial history. Cultural socialization may include statements that are made as well as behaviors such as wearing particular clothing, preparing cultural dishes, or attending cultural events.	Wearing African garb; attending cultural events; discussing Black culture or history
-Racial Pride	Messages that encourage individuals to be proud of their race and heritage	"We are a mighty and strong people"; "You're black, black is beautiful and there's nothing wrong with that"
Preparation for Bias	Messages warning of potential negative encounters due to their race and, accompanied by advice on how to cope with those negative experiences	"You are more likely to be pulled over by the police for being Black, but this is what you need to do [...]"
Promotion of Mistrust	Messages about potential biases and barriers that individuals may experience that <i>are not accompanied by advice on coping with the se situations</i>	
Egalitarianism	Messages that emphasize equality among people of different races.	"Blacks are just as good as anyone else"
Silence about Race	The <i>absence</i> of socialization messages regarding being Black	
Self-Development	Communications about the importance of working hard, pursuing education, and building character and initiative. These messages are communicated with racial undertones, suggesting that Black youth must work harder overcome barriers to success.	"You must work hard to get a good education";

## APPENDIX F

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### *Warm up questions*

- What kind of music do you listen to?
- Where are you from?
- What is your major?
- What organizations are you apart of?
- Tell me a bit about your cultural background?
- What are the racial demographics of your friend group?

#### *Content Questions*

- What does being Black mean to you?
- Tell me about the ways you express your race with your friends.
- How important is it that you can talk with your friends about topics related to your race? Why?
- How does race come up when you're with your friends?
  - Tell me about a time when it came up playfully or seriously?
  - How do these [racial] conversations differ when you are with your close friends compared to when you are with acquaintances?
  - How do these conversations differ when you are with your Black friends versus White or other-raced friends?
  - How did the people around you respond to this conversation?
- Tell me about a time when your friends expressed race to you?
- How does your ability to share your culture differ based on the race of your friends?
- What are the challenges that you and/or your friends experience being Black?
  - What about on campus?
  - Have you ever been treated unfairly because of your race?
  - Who do you usually talk about these challenges with?
  - Tell me about how your friends help you get through personal experiences or observed instances of discrimination.
- Tell me about the last time you and your friends had a conversation where race came up.
  - How do they differ with Black friends versus White or other-raced friends?
- On what occasions do you usually discuss race with your friends?
  - Following an incident

- On a regular basis?
- Prior to an incident that you feel could occur?

*Racial Socialization Questions (use if not addressed earlier in discussion)*

- How do you and your friends discussed equality among people of different races?
  - Tell me about a time when you and your friends emphasized equality among people of different races.
- Under what circumstances do you not talk about race?
  - Do you have friends that you don't discuss racial or cultural matters with at all?
- Tell me about a time when you and your friends discussed coping with racism? What was the situation that sparked this conversation?
- Do you and your friends ever discuss racism and racist experiences *without* talking about how to cope with it? Give me an example of a time when this happened.
- Tell me about a time when you and your friends talked about improving yourselves and succeeding in the face of racism.

*Closing Question*

- Based on the things we talked about today, what is the most important thing that people should know about how Black youth and their peers communicate with one another?

## APPENDIX G

### ONLINE RECRUITMENT EMAIL-INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Hi!

My name is Alexandra Golden and I am a doctoral student in the Clinical-Community Psychology program at the University of South Carolina. ***I would like to invite you to participate in my dissertation study***, which explores the life experiences of Black college students. Participants will be asked questions about their interpersonal experiences as a college student. Participation in this study will provide invaluable information about the importance of peers in the lives of Black youth as well as the importance of race in Black youths' life experiences.

***To participate in this study, you must: (1) Identify as Black; (2) Be between the ages of 18 and 22; (3) Be an enrolled student at the University of South Carolina.*** Focus groups will last approximately 60-90 minutes. ***Participants who complete the study will receive a \$10 gift card for their time.***

If you are interested in taking part in this study and meet eligibility requirements, please email [argolden@email.sc.edu](mailto:argolden@email.sc.edu). If you have any information regarding the study, please contact Alexandra Golden at [argolden@email.sc.edu](mailto:argolden@email.sc.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact Thomas Coggins (Ph: 803-777-7095), Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Best,

Alexandra Golden

**APPENDIX H**  
**BRIEF RECRUITMENT SCREENER**

1. What year are you in school (i.e., classification)?
2. Do you live on campus or off campus?
  - a. If off campus, do you live with your parents?
3. What gender do you identify with?
4. Are you currently a student at the University of South Carolina?
5. How old are you?



## APPENDIX I

### UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT RESOURCES

#### **University of South Carolina Counseling Center**

The USC Student Health Services provides access to individual counseling services for students at the university. Through this service, students are able to work one-on-one with a trained and licensed professional. Providers include psychologists, licensed professional counselors, licensed social workers, psychology interns and counselor and social work trainees. For additional information or to schedule an appointment, please call 803-777-5223.

Website: <https://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/cp/>

#### **Blackspace**

Blackspace is a community support group for Black undergraduate, graduate, and professional students at the University of South Carolina. Black space provides a setting in which individuals can discuss issues of culture, race, racial experiences, and more. Black space **meets every fourth Thursday from 5:30-7 PM at Russel House** (location TBD). Additional information can be accessed at 803-777-5223.

Website: <https://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/events/blackspace/>

#### **Psychology Services Center**

The Psychology Services Center (PSC) is a non-profit university-based clinic that provides individual, couples, and group counseling services. The services at the PSC are designed to provide clients with the highest quality, empirically-supported treatments available at very little cost to the client depending on ability to pay. Service fees are on a sliding scale and are based on family income. The therapists at the PSC are doctoral candidates in the Clinical-Community and School Psychology Graduate Programs. Each therapist is supervised by a licensed clinical or school psychologist who is also a faculty member of the USC Psychology Department or another related department. For more information or to schedule an intake appointment, please call 803-777-7302.

Website: <http://www.psych.sc.edu/psc/front-page>