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**RACE SOCIALIZATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMPETENCY WITHIN A SAMPLE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH**

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**A Thesis**

**Presented to the**

**Faculty of**

**California State University,**

**San Bernardino**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Science**

**in**

**Psychology**

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**by**

**Chreyll Lamitia LeSane**

**June 1998**

RACE SOCIALIZATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL  
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Approved by:

  
Jean Peacock Chair, Psychology

Date

  
David Chavez

  
Stacy Nagel

## ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationships between race socialization and academic performance among African American adolescents. Specifically I examined the bivariate correlations among race socialization messages, academic performance, self esteem, self competence, cultural mistrust, and ethnic identity. Participants were one-hundred thirteen 15-year-old African American youths (male = 49, female = 64) randomly selected from various Southern California school districts. Participants completed the Black Family Process Q-Sort (Peacock & Murray, 1993) as a measure of race socialization messages, Tellegan's (1978) Alienation subscale as a measure of cultural mistrust, the African Self-Consciousness Scale-Revised (Stokes, Murray, Peacock, & Kaiser, 1994), Harter's (1988) Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents, and the Multi-Dimensional Self-Esteem Inventory (O'Brian & Epstein, 1988) as a measure of global and domain specific self esteem. Participant's cumulative and current grade point averages were used to operationalize academic performance. Results indicated that feelings of competence, sense of self, and cultural awareness were positively related to high academic performance. Race socialization was not directly related to academic performance, but differential race socialization messages were related to perceptions of the importance of academic competence. Cultural mistrust was not significantly related to academic performance or race socialization messages. However, cultural mistrust was positively related to ethnic identity.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction .....	1
Family Characteristics of High Academic Performers .....	2
Race Socialization as a Socialization Strategy .....	3
Race Socialization as a Coping Strategy .....	4
Identity Formation .....	6
Cultural Mistrust .....	8
CHAPTER TWO: METHOD	
Sample .....	13
Procedure .....	13
Measures .....	14
CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS	
Race Socialization, Academic Performance, Cultural Mistrust, and Ethnic Identity .....	19
Race Socialization, Academic Performance, Self-Esteem, and Self-Perceptions .....	20
Relationships between Ethnic Identity, Self-Esteem, and Self-Perceptions .....	23

<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Limitations and Future Research</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>31</b>



## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations Among Cultural Mistrust (TAS-M), Academic Performance (GPA), Race Socialization (BFPQ), and Ethnic Identity (ASCS-R) .....	19
Table 2. Bivariate Correlations Among Race Socialization (BFPQ), Self-Esteem (MDSEI), Self-Concept (SPPA), and Academic Performance (GPA) .....	21
Table 3. Bivariate Correlations Among Ethnic Identity (ASCS-R) and Self Esteem Among 15-Year Old Youth .....	25

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Poor academic performance among African Americans has been the focus of numerous psychological studies. What has not received attention, however, is the performance of high-achieving African American youth who excel in spite of biased or discriminatory educational systems (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Luster & McAdoo, 1994; Taylor, Hinton, & Wilson, 1995). Indeed it can be argued that academic deficiencies have been examined more often among African Americans than among any other ethnic group. As an example, Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, and Johnson, (1990) reviewed the research on Asian- American and African American children's school achievement and found a small number of studies designed to study academic achievement among African Americans; instead, the focus tended to be on academic failure. In contrast none of the articles emphasized academic failure among Asian Americans. In addition, very few research articles published through 1970 addressed achievement socialization and development of African American children (Slaughter-Defoe, et al., 1990). Major theoretical gaps regarding African American populations exist, because the body of academic achievement literature is modest. Among these gaps, an examination of personality characteristics and effective parenting styles associated with high academic performance is needed; likewise, more attention should be focused on the diversity among African American families and the families' role in achievement

socialization. To this end, social scientists have a primary responsibility of providing families, academia, and society as a whole with a more informed understanding of academic and social competencies among African American youth. This information is essential in terms of adding to the body of literature on “the psychological processes involved in student achievement” (Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990, p. 366), formulating social policies, and assisting African American parents in making informed decisions regarding strategies conducive to the development of high social and academic skills among their children. In response to this need, the current study undertakes an examination of the relationships among parents’ socialization messages and their children’s academic performance, ethnic identity, self esteem, self concept, and cultural mistrust.

#### Family Characteristics of High Academic Performers

Luster and McAdoo (1994) examined factors which distinguished low and high academic performers by adapting the same methods that had been used to study low achievement. That is, using a sample of African American elementary school children, the study examined children’s chances of being academically successful based on the extent to which they experienced advantageous circumstances (e.g., psychologically healthy and well educated parents with adequate incomes and small family size) rather than disadvantaged circumstances. Luster and McAdoo (1994) called this an “advantage inventory”. Based on their study, it appears that family characteristics and processes differentiate high achieving students from low achieving students (Luster & McAdoo,

1994). The overall importance of this study was that it focused on factors related to success among African American school children. This study acknowledged the importance of the family in relation to achievement and adjustment of African American children. One important family characteristic examined in the current study was how parents socialize their children. More specifically, this study was interested in the differential race socialization messages employed by African American families.

#### Race Socialization as a Socialization Strategy

Black parents, as do most parents, “socialize their children to become self-sufficient, competent adults as defined by the society in which they live” (Peters, 1985, p. 211). For Black families in the United States, racism and oppression encompass the reality of their existence. Thus, along with raising physically and emotionally healthy children, Black parents may face an additional challenge, raising children able to survive and prosper in a racist-oriented society. As part of this challenge, parents may act as a “protective buffer” between ethnic/cultural pride, identity, and the reality of racism and discrimination. This positioning of the ethnically identified youth in broader society is a primary goal of what is defined as race socialization. More accurately, Peters (1985, p.161) defined race socialization as “the tasks Black parents share with all parents-providing for and raising children-...but include the responsibility of raising physically and emotional healthy children who are Black in a society in which being Black has negative connotations.” Stevenson, Cammeron, and Herrero-Taylor (1996) defined race socialization as the process of communicating racial barriers and cultural strengths within

the environment to the younger generations.

Most African American parents want to raise children who feel and are confident, effective, and valued in the environment in which they live (Peters, 1985). In doing so, some parents have developed coping mechanisms which encompass a recognition that their children (a) must be accepted into the Black community to receive support and companionship and (b) must be accepted into the White community in order to prosper in broader society. Still in question is what are the coping strategies embedded within messages provided by Black parents that contribute to the development of healthy, socially functioning, and confident African American children?

#### Race Socialization as a Coping Strategy

Within the literature, there are varying viewpoints among Black parents as to the importance assigned to relating race-related messages as part of the socialization process (Peacock, 1995). Some African American parents address race in a “proactive” style by considering the discussion of race a central concern. Parents who use this approach do not wait until an event occurs before discussing race related issues with their children (Bowman & Howard, 1985). This approach to addressing race is said to help children feel a sense of control and confidence in race-related situations. In contrast, other parents utilize a more “passive” or “reactive” style where race is only discussed when it is brought up by their children. Children of these parents were less equipped with skills for dealing with racism and therefore may not feel in control when such situations arise (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987). Consequently, it appears that parents who use a

“proactive” approach, openly and actively addressing race socialization issues, would have children who functioned well and were psychological healthy as compared to children who receive passive or reactive messages.

Bowman and Howard (1985) studied differential race socialization messages to determine their effects on motivation and academic achievement. Participants consisted of Black youths in three-generation families. The participants’ grades, a measure of personal efficacy, and answers to questions regarding race-related socialization themes were gathered. It was found that parents emphasized one of four approaches: ethnic pride, self-development, racial barrier awareness, or egalitarianism. Youth whose parents emphasized racial-barrier awareness messages received higher grades. More specifically, parents who oriented their children to opportunities in a proactive manner had children not deterred from prospects of upward mobility, irrespective of environmental challenges. Parents who used the proactive style were said to spend time talking to their children about racism before the youth experienced racial encounters. The results suggested that race socialization strategies differentially contributed to academic achievement and perceived self-efficacy.

Demo and Hughes (1990, as cited in Stevenson, 1994) found that adults who received race-related socialization messages from parents while growing up “were more likely to have strong feelings of closeness to other Blacks and to hold stronger support for Black separatism” (Stevenson, 1994, p.447). Therefore, it could be concluded that a strong sense of group identity, as a result of receiving race-related socialization messages,

contributes to ones' ability to deal with an often racist, hostile, and discriminatory environment. In other words, adolescents who receive proactive race-awareness messages are more likely to succeed scholastically and have a stronger sense of group identity based on having received positive messages about their group membership, in addition to being equipped with the skills necessary to deal with negative connotations about their group.

### Identity Formation

Developing a sense of identity becomes a salient issue during adolescence. However, much of the research on self-concept and ethnic identity has been filled with methodological problems. For instance, research on identity development among African Americans has mostly consisted of comparison studies between African Americans and Euro-Americans in which the later are the norm and the former are the deviant. More to the point, these comparative studies have employed instruments normed on Euro-Americans to investigate the psychological functioning of African Americans. Another area of concern is the fact that ethnic identity has often been confused with self identity. To clear up this confusion, a distinction should be made between the two concepts.

Buss (1995) described identity as having two components, social and personal. Social identity referred to an individual's place of origin, religion, organized social groups, etc. Therefore, ethnic identity is an aspect of social identity. Ethnic identity is "part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional

significance attached to that membership” (Phinney, 1992, pg. 16). Terminology such as self-hatred or self derogation have been used to describe group identity, yet are terms relevant to only personal identity. Personal identity refers to one’s appearance, style, and personality (Buss, 1995). More specifically, personal identity refers to self-esteem or self concept. In a number of studies African Americans, as well as other ethnic minority group members, have demonstrated that they are able to distinguish self evaluations from social evaluations of their ethnic identity (Cross, 1985; Spencer, 1982). According to Buss (1995), feelings of group belongingness were strengthened when African Americans were subjected to bigotry on the part of Euro-Americans. In addition, ethnic identity also may be strengthened through parental race socialization strategies. That is, messages children receive from their parents about group membership not only buffer negative messages, but also could greatly influence children’s adoption of behaviors, attitudes, and cognitions identified as specific to that group. However, few attempts have been made to link African American children’s racial preference with parental child rearing strategies (Helms, 1990; Spencer, 1983). The studies that are available used methodology that has been heavily criticized and it is questioned whether these studies have validity as a measure of racial identity. Consequently, it is difficult to draw any conclusion concerning the influence of parental strategies on racial identity. Therefore, an examination of the role parents play in their children’s development of an ethnic identity is important to determine. In addition, ethnic identity has been hypothesized to have an effect on scholastic performance (Phinney, 1992; Smith, 1991). However, this



relationship is still in need of evaluation.

Still in question is whether there is a relationship between self esteem and ethnic identity. Strictly in terms of methodology it is easy to measure the relationship between self esteem and ethnic identity, because they can both be measured quantitatively.

However, the Afrocentric paradigm (Banks, 1992) insists we take into account the unique history of African Americans. Moreover, an examination of factors influencing African American children's self concept is important to understand.

### Cultural Mistrust

Some people's racial identity is embedded within cultural mistrust (Cross, 1985). Cultural mistrust is a term coined by Terrell and Terrell (1981) to describe the tendency of some African Americans to be suspicious of Whites. It was assumed that experiences with racism and biased treatment led some African Americans to become suspicious/mistrustful of Whites. Terrell and Terrell (1981) identified four areas in which African Americans may manifest distrust of Whites. One such area pertains to educational and training settings. For example, African American students may feel that the educational system and its teachers are biased against them (Russell, 1971). Terrell and Terrell (1983) also studied the effects of race of examiner and the level of mistrust of Whites among African American elementary school children on a standardized test. They found that on an intelligence test administered by a White examiner, African American participants with high mistrust scored lower than did African American participants with low mistrust. One explanation for this occurrence was that African Americans who

tended to mistrust Whites had reduced motivation in areas where they perceived they were likely to be treated unfairly (Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Terrell & Barrett, 1979, as cited in Terrell and Terrell, 1983). However, Grier and Cobbs (1968) argued that “mistrust” can be a positive defense mechanism for some Blacks. “Healthy cultural paranoia,” described by Grier and Cobbs (1968) is one way in which African Americans adapted to coping in their social environment. “Racism reaction” described by Thompson (as cited in (Biafora , Taylor, Warheit, Zierman, & Vega, 1993, p.260) offered an explanation of how African Americans in predominantly White educational institutions have been able to deflect feelings of threat and discrimination by their institution. For example, rather than attributing negative evaluations of teachers to one’s self image, Black students may attribute these evaluations to the racism of White teachers and/or White authority in general. However, Biafora, et. al. (1993) did not indicate whether these students’ mistrust of their White educators was related to their academic performance. Also, although the researchers sampled different Black ethnic groups, they did not discuss how the respondents’ ethnic identity was related to their cultural mistrust.

In another study related to cultural mistrust (Biafora , Taylor, Warheit, Zierman, & Vega, 1993), African American (N = 946), Haitians, and Caribbean Islanders from countries other than Haiti living in the United States were surveyed on their level of cultural mistrust. An important finding was that among the 1,328 adolescent males examined, about one-third expressed mistrust of Whites in general and of White educators specifically.

To date, only a handful of studies have addressed the role of cultural mistrust in the area of academic achievement. Fewer studies have compared the levels of cultural mistrust or racial awareness among different populations of African Americans (Biafora, et.al., 1993); and nearly all have focused upon small samples of African Americans. A more comprehensive understanding of cultural mistrust and related factors is warranted. Important concerns include (a) how cultural mistrust is related to ethnic identity; and (b) as primary socializing agents, how do parents influence cultural mistrust and how is this related to academic success?

A paucity of literature exists to provide the necessary framework for examining successful academic performance and cultural mistrust among African American youths. One exception is the study reported by Halliday, Murray, Stokes, and Peacock (1995). This study examined motivational factors relevant to positive and negative achievement outcomes for African American students. Using a sample of one hundred 10th-grade students, Halliday et.al. (1995) examined the relationship between measures of cultural mistrust (mistrust of White people), ethnic identity, academic self-perception, perceptions of classroom environment, and African self-consciousness. The results indicated that students who reported high global self-esteem in conjunction with perceptions of academic competency identified with school and had low mistrust of Whites. In other words, according to this study, African American youth who excelled in school thought well of themselves, perceived their academic capabilities as positive, and tended to trust Whites.

A review of Halliday et al.'s (1995) findings led to several questions regarding the relationship among cultural mistrust, ethnic identity, and academic performance. For example, the study found that low achievers tended to mistrust Whites. What this finding suggests is that African Americans who mistrust Whites are more subject to low academic performance. The current study disagreed with this perception of African American students. Therefore, the question that arose was can African American youth who score high on cultural mistrust also perform well academically? If so, what factors, if any, mediate the relationship between cultural mistrust and academic performance? The current study extends Halliday et. al.'s investigation in an attempt to answer these questions by examining parental race socialization factors as possible contributors to successful academic attainment and achievement perceptions among African American students.

In review of the literature, several questions were raised regarding areas which are in need of further examination. The current study is an attempt to fill in some of these gaps in the literature, and expand Halliday et. al.'s (1995) findings by exploring race socialization, along with additional factors related to academic performance. Given the sparse empirical research in these areas, an exploratory approach to data analysis is used. Pearson Product Moment Correlations are used to examine the relationships among race socialization, academic performance, cultural mistrust, ethnic identity, self esteem, and self concept. The relationships among these variables are used to examine the following:

1. Is there a relationship between race socialization strategies, academic performance,

ethnic identity, and cultural mistrust?

2. How are race socialization strategies and academic performance related to self esteem and self concept?

3. What is the relationship between ethnic identity and self esteem?

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHOD

#### Sample

Participants were recruited from several Southern California high schools located in Inglewood, Rialto, and Riverside school districts. Participants consisted of 113 fifteen year old male ( $N = 49$ ) and female ( $N = 64$ ) youths involved in the African American Families Research Project. The African American Families Research Project is an ongoing longitudinal and cross-sectional study at the University of California, Riverside, funded by the National Institute of Health. The current study utilized archival participant data from the 1993/94-1994/95 academic years.

#### Procedure

Letters were mailed to parents identified as having African American children in the designated school districts. These letters identified the research as the African Americans' Families Project, and requested, in part, parents' assistance in identifying the social and academic factors that impede or enhance the well-being of African American youth. Parents were also informed that the project was longitudinal. Consent forms were returned to the researchers before participation. Parents were contacted upon the researchers receipt of the consent form and given additional information about the study. Participants completed the questionnaires in the research laboratory or in the designated area at their respective school. Participants received 10 dollars on completion of the

study.

### Measures

#### Grade Point Average (GPA)

Official grades were mailed to the University of California, Riverside from each participant's school. Grade point averages (GPA) were based on a 4-point scale (4 = A, 3 = B, 2 = C, 1 = D, 0 = F). The higher the grades, the more achievement motivated a participant was rated. Participants' cumulative GPA's (GPA Cumul) were based on grades received within the first two years of high school. Participants' current GPA's (GPA Current) were based on grades received within the present school year. The mean GPA for cumulative and current were 2.54 and 2.46 respectively.

#### The Black Family Process Q-Sort (BFPO)

The Black Family Process Q-Sort is a 65-item instrument divided into four domains. Race socialization represents one of the four possible domains. Each item was placed on separate cards which participants used to describe the criterion. The cards were then ranked by placement into one of seven columns along a continuum from 1="most uncharacteristic" to 7="most characteristic" of his/her parent. The seven columns "force" participants responses to fit the distribution that is imposed (i.e., the "1" and "7" categories can only be used six times), which means the mean and standard deviation of all participants will be the same. Participants were required to record item numbers only once onto the distribution printed on letter-size paper. The Q-sort took approximately 35 minutes to complete.

In an earlier study, four factor solutions were extracted with use of Principle Components factor analysis with varimax rotation that represented strategies that African American parents use. Factor loadings which met the  $> .30$  criterion were retained. Only four variables failed to load. Items loading on factor 1 suggested a dimension pertaining to “hostile” feelings directed to other groups as well as one’s own ethnic group. Factor 2 suggested a “race neutral” dimension that exemplified an “everyone is the same” orientation. Factor 3 was interpreted as “ethnic pride without the use of proactive coping strategies” (ethnic pride), which meant that although parents relayed messages of ethnic pride, they did not tell their children how to deal with racial barriers. In contrast factor 4 loadings, “ethnic pride with proactive strategies” (proactive), included items related to the importance of ethnic identity, sensitivity to racial issues and talking about racial barriers. This dimension is consistent with the “proactive” orientation described by Bowman and Howard (1985).

#### Modified Version of Tellegan’s Alienation Scale (TAS-M)

This scale represents a modified version of Tellegan’s (1982) Alienation Subscale. This 20-item scale was modified to measure cultural mistrust. The scale explores the degree to which a person feels “that he/she is a victim of bad luck, mistreated, a target of false rumors, believes that others want to harm him/her, and feels betrayed or used by friends” (Halliday, 1995, p.19).

Two major changes were made to the TAS-M. For one, items which referred to “some people” or “People” in general were changed to specifically refer to “White”



people. For example, item 268 on the original Tellegan's scale, "I know that certain people would enjoy it if I got hurt", was changed to item 18 "I know that White people would enjoy it if I got hurt. This change was made because the current study was interested in how participants alienated themselves from White people. The second change was that responses were made on a 5-point Likert scale. The internal consistency among the items was very high ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

African Self-Consciousness Scale-Revised (ASCS-R, Stokes, Murray, Peacock, Kaiser, 1994).

This 33 item scale is designed to measure the construct of African Self-Consciousness. The scale assesses "awareness of African identity and heritage, priorities placed on Black survival and development, Afrocentric values, customs and institutions, and other activities that promote the knowledge and affirmation of African heritage" (Halliday, 1995, p. 15; Baldwin & Bell, 1985). Factor analysis conducted by Stokes, et. al. suggested four dimensions of the scale labeled Personal Identification with the Group (Group Identity), Racial and Cultural Awareness (Race and Cult. Aware,  $\alpha = .71$ ), Other Group Orientation (Other Group), and Value for African Culture (Values African). Most items were found to only load on one factor. Items with loading greater than or equal to .3 were retained for future analyses.

#### The Harter Self-Perception Profile for Adolescence (SPPA)

This 45-item self-report scale by Harter (1988) taps adolescents' perceptions of themselves. The profile contains eight domains of perceived competence or adequacy as

well as global self-worth. Each subscale consisted of 5 items, of which 2 or 3 were reverse scored, measured on a four-point scale. The academic competence domain assesses students' perception of their competence and ability to perform scholastically ( $\alpha = .60$ ). The social acceptance domain taps into the degree to which one feels popular, liked, and accepted by peers. The athletic competence domain measures athletic competence with respect to sports and outside games. The physical competence domain taps into the degree to which one likes his/her physical appearance. This domain is important because of the saliency and value placed on physical appearance during adolescence. Behavioral conduct refers to the degree to which adolescents like the way they behave, feel they do the right thing, and stay out of trouble ( $\alpha = .65$ ). The global self-worth domain probes the extent to which an adolescent is happy with himself/herself in general and the extent to which he/she is happy with the way his/her life is going ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

Responses were scored based on a 4-point scale that is said to provide accurate self-perception responses rather than socially desirable ones. Each item consists of two alternative self-descriptive statements. This question format was created to include the various possibilities of responses. Participants were first asked to decide which statements best describe himself/herself. They were then asked to decide whether this statement was "really true for me" or "sort of true for me". The internal consistency coefficient for the global self-worth scale was moderately high ( $\alpha = .81$ ). The behavioral conduct domain had moderate internal consistency ( $\alpha = .65$ ). The

academic scale had only moderate internal consistency ( $\alpha = .60$ ), but was retained because of the integral part academic self-concept played in the current study.

Multi-Dimensional Self-Esteem Inventory ( MDSEI, O'Brian & Epstein, 1988)

The MDSEI is a 116 item instrument that measures Global self-esteem and 8 domain specific aspects of self-esteem. Participants indicate on a 5-point Likert scale how accurately 61 of the items describe them and how often they experience the thoughts and feelings described in 55 of the items. The 7 domains used are Competence, (feels capable of mastering new tasks,  $\alpha = .75$ ); Lovability, (feels worthy of love and supported by loved ones); Likability, (popular, accepted by peers); Personal Power, (assertive, powerful, has strong impact on others); Self-Control, (self-discipline); Moral Self-Approval, (pleased moral values and behavior); Body Appearance, (pleased with appearance); and Body Functioning, (well coordinated, feels healthy).

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

#### Race Socialization, Academic Performance, Cultural Mistrust, and Ethnic Identity

To answer the question, is there a relationship between race socialization strategies, academic performance, and dimensions of ethnic identity, bivariate Pearson Product Moment correlations were performed between Race Socialization strategies (BFPQ), academic performance (GPA-cumulative and current grade point average), Cultural Mistrust (TAS-M), and dimensions of ethnic identity (ASCS-R), and are presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**Bivariate Correlations Among Cultural Mistrust (TAS-M), Academic Performance (GPA),**  
**Race Socialization (BFPQ), and Ethnic Identity (ASCS-R)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. TAS-M	1.00										
2. GPA Current	.06	1.00									
3. GPA Cumulative	.03	.88***	1.00								
4. Hostile	.17	.04	.04	1.00							
5. Race Neutral	-.08	.15	-.16	-.59***	1.00						
6. Ethnic Pride	-.12	.04	-.04	-.01	-.11	1.00					
7. Proactive	.07	.12	.13	-.28**	.33***	-.11	1.00				
8. Group Identity	.43***	.12	.05	-.01	-.03	-.16	.12	1.00			
9. Race and Cultural Awareness	.07	.12	.20	-.03	.05	-.21*	.18*	.37**	1.00		
10. Values African Culture	-.05	.21	.26*	-.09	.10	-.16	.08	.18*	.37***	1.00	
11. Other Group	.01	-.10	-.09	.05	-.15	.12	-.07	-.05	-.17	.04	1.00

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

In examining the relationship between race socialization strategies and dimensions of ethnic identity, the following was found: respondents who reported receiving ethnic pride messages without proactive strategies had lower race and cultural awareness ( $r = -.21, p < .05$ ); however, respondents who received Ethnic Pride messages along with proactive strategies had higher race and cultural awareness ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ). Race socialization strategies were not significantly related to academic performance (GPA). Academic performance was found to be significantly related to ethnic identity. The higher participants' cumulative grade point average (GPA) the more likely they were to value African culture ( $r = .26, p < .05$ ).

Table 1 also shows how cultural mistrust is related to academic achievement, dimensions of ethnic identity, and race socialization messages. Cultural mistrust was significantly related to group identity. Participants with high levels of cultural mistrust were more likely to identify with their ethnic group ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ). Race socialization, and academic achievement were not significantly related to cultural mistrust.

#### Race Socialization, Academic Performance, Self-Esteem, and Self-Perceptions

In Table 2, Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis was used to examine how race socialization(BFPQ) and academic performance (GPA) are related to self esteem (MDSEI) and self-perception(SPPA). Hostile race socialization messages were related to several dimensions of self esteem and self-perception. Participants who received negative messages about other groups as well as their own ethnic group felt less

**TABLE 2**  
**Bivariate Correlations Among Race Socialization (BFPQ), Self-Esteem (MDSEI), Self-Concept (SPPA), and Academic Performance (GPA)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. Hostile	1.00																					
2. Neutral	-.59*	1.00																				
3. Ethnic Pride	-.01	-.11	1.00																			
4. Proactive	-.28**	.33***	-.11	1.00																		
5. Competence	-.23**	.19**	-.04	.13	1.00																	
6. Social	-.36***	.27**	-.12	.10	.52***	1.00																
7. Athletic	-.34***	.27**	-.15	.26**	.34***	.35***	1.00															
8. Conduct	-.27**	.07	-.10	.12	.40***	.29***	.24**	1.00														
9. Academic	-.17	.15	-.15	.08	.61***	.27**	.19**	.33***	1.00													
10. Academic Importance	-.07	.16	-.19*	.21*	.36***	.44***	.18*	.31***	--	1.00												
11. Job Importance	-.21*	.21*	-.13	.19*	.28***	.39***	.14	.24**	.30***	.47***	1.00											
12. Conduct Importance	-.19*	.20*	-.12	.17	.32***	.27***	.17	.46***	.29**	.39***	.51***	1.00										
13. Approval	-.25*	.15	.01	.21*	.39***	.21*	.26**	--	--	--	--	--	1.00									
14. Power	-.19*	-.04	-.03	.01	.53***	.60***	.25***	.31***	.61***	.34***	.27**	.29***	--	1.00								
15. Appearance	-.20*	.08	.00	.05	.42***	.50***	.44***	.18	--	--	.05	.16	--	--	1.00							
16. Global	-.26**	.13	.00	.08	.42***	.50***	.47***	.48***	.23**	.28**	--	--	--	.42***	--	1.00						
17. Lovable	-.25**	.10	.28**	.11	.43***	.26**	.19*	.26**	--	.14	.25**	--	--	.33***	--	--	1.00					
18. Likable	-.21*	.02	.00	.01	.39***	.64***	.23**	.30***	--	.12	.22**	--	--	.56***	--	--	--	1.00				
19. Control	-.29**	.16	.01	.16	.41***	.32***	.39***	.50***	--	.08	.29***	--	--	.33**	--	--	--	--	1.00			
20. Identity	-.19*	.18	-.04	.14	.61**	.37***	.34***	.29**	--	.14	.30***	--	--	.41**	--	--	--	--	--	1.00		
21. GPA Current	.04	.15	.04	.29	.29*	--	--	--	.29*	.38**	--	.35**	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.32*	1.00	
22. GPA Cumulative	.04	-.16	-.04	.13	.35**	--	--	--	.40**	.38**	--	.44**	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.28*	--	1.00

\*\*\* p < .001. \*\* p < .01, \* p < .05

accepted and liked by peers ( $r = -.36, p < .001$ ), had less athletic competence ( $r = -.34, p < .001$ ), and had lower competence in their behavior and their ability to do the right thing ( $r = -.27, p < .01$ ). Respondents who received hostile socialization messages also rated the importance of work ( $r = -.21, p < .05$ ) and appropriate conduct as less important ( $r = -.19, p < .01$ ). Respondents who received hostile messages were less pleased with their behavior ( $r = -.25, p < .05$ ), had lower self competence ( $r = -.23, p < .01$ ), felt less assertive ( $r = -.19, p < .05$ ), were less pleased with their appearance ( $r = .20, p < .05$ ), felt less lovable ( $r = -.25, p < .01$ ) and likable ( $r = -.21, p < .05$ ), felt less self-disciplined ( $r = -.29, p < .01$ ), and had less identity integration ( $r = -.19, p < .05$ ).

Receiving race neutral messages was positively related to competence ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ), social acceptance ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ), and athletics ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ).

Ethnic pride with proactive messages and ethnic pride without proactive messages, were related to the importance respondents placed on academics (i.e. the importance of an education). Respondents who perceived their parents as relaying ethnic pride without proactive messages perceived academics as less important ( $r = -.19, p < .05$ ). Whereas those who received ethnic pride with proactive messages perceived academics as more important ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ).

Academic performance was also related to the importance respondents placed on academics. For both cumulative and current GPA the correlation was ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ). The higher respondents cumulative and current GPA the more academically competent they feel. Behavioral conduct was also related to academic performance. The higher the

GPA the more respondents perceived behavioral conduct as important ( $r = .44, p < .01$  for cumulative GPA, and  $r = .35, p < .01$  for current GPA). Respondents with higher GPA's also have a better sense of self (identity integration) ( $r = .28, p < .05$  for cumulative GPA, and  $r = .32, p < .05$  for current GPA) and feel more competent ( $r = .35, p .01$  for cumulative GPA, and  $r = .29, p .05$  for current GPA).

### Relationships Between Ethnic Identity, Self-Esteem, and Self-Perceptions

In Table 3, Pearson Product Moment correlational analysis was used to examine how the four dimensions of ethnic identity are related to dimensions of self esteem (MDSEI) and self-perceptions (SPPA). Race and cultural awareness was related to the following: Those who were found to be more aware of their culture had feelings of personal power ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ) and perceived academics ( $r = .22, p < .05$ ) as important. Valuing African culture significantly correlated with global self-esteem ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ) that is, the higher the value participants placed on African culture, the more positive their overall self-esteem. Participants high in valuing African culture also feel a sense of personal power ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ) and identity ( $r = .22, p < .05$ ). These participants also feel accepted by their peers (social,  $r = .30, p < .001$ ) and perceive academics (academic importance,  $r = .30, p < .001$ ) and their conduct ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ) ) as important. Although no significant relationship was found between identification with the group and other group orientation dimensions of the ASCS-R and dimensions of self-esteem and self- concept, attention should be drawn to the negative trend found between group identity and dimensions of self-esteem and self-concept. The higher respondents' group



identity, the lower their self esteem and self-concept.

**TABLE 3**  
**Bivariate Correlations Among Ethnic Identity (ASCS-R) and Self esteem (MDSEI) among 15-Year Old Youth**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Group Identity	1.00											
2. Race and Cultural	.37***	1.00										
3. Values African	.18*	.37**	1.00									
4. Other Group	-.05	-.17	.04	1.00								
5. Global	-.09	-.02	.30***	.06	1.00							
6. Likable	-.11	.08	.23**	.00	.54***	1.00						
7. Identity	-.12	.05	.22*	-.09	.57***	.35***	1.00					
8. Power	-.04	.23**	.23**	.15	.42***	.55***	.41***	1.00				
9. Social	-.06	.11	.30***	.06	.50***	.63***	.37***	.60***	1.00			
10. Conduct	-.03	.14	.27**	.01	.48***	.30***	.52***	.31***	.29***	1.00		
11. Academic Imp.	-.01	.22*	.30***	.01	.32***	.26***	.30***	.34***	.44***	.31***	1.00	
12. Conduct Imp.	-.12	.14	.18*	-.11	.28**	.22*	.30***	.28**	.27**	.46***	.39***	1.00

\*\*\* p <.001, \*\* p <.01, \* p<.05,

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DISCUSSION**

This study explored how African American adolescents' perceptions of their self esteem, self competency, and parents' race socialization messages were related to their academic performance, cultural mistrust, and ethnic identity. The first question asked was if there was a relationship among race socialization messages, academic performance, ethnic identity, and cultural mistrust. The use of proactive race socialization messages were found to have important consequences on the outcomes for youth. For example, participants who reported parents as using ethnic pride without proactive messages had lower racial and cultural awareness whereas participants whose parents used ethnic pride messages in addition to proactive messages, had children with high levels of racial and cultural awareness. Consequently, it should be noted that the only differences between these two race socialization messages is the use of proactive messages in which the latter appears to be positively related to ethnic identity. These findings are consistent with the those of Demo and Hughes (1990) who found that people who received proactive race socialization messages were likely to feel closer to other African Americans. Academic performance and ethnic identity were found to be related such that the higher participants grades the more likely they were to identify with other African Americans.

Contradictory to the expectations of this study and the findings of previous studies, cultural mistrust was not significantly related to academic performance.

However, participants with high levels of cultural mistrust were more likely to identify with their ethnic group. Cultural mistrust was not associated with race socialization at the bivariate level. Overall these correlations did not follow a systematic pattern.

The second question asked how race socialization messages and academic performance were associated with self esteem and self concept. Striking results were found between race socialization messages and self esteem. Significant negative relationships were found between the hostile race socialization strategy and dimensions of self esteem and competency for the sample. An example item for this race socialization dimension, "thinks people of own race are ignorant", would help to explain these negative correlations. It appears that parents who send out hostile messages paint a negative picture of not only the child's external environment (i.e., other groups) but of their immediate environment as well (i.e, own group). These youth are given messages that they are unable to control their environment and they should not trust people of other races as well as their own. Thus, these participants enter situations with a lack of confidence and a distrust of others. Therefore, parents who utilize this type of race socialization strategy are likely to have children who do not feel self-confident, powerful, liked by others, or a sense of control.

Participants with high academic performance tended to have a better sense of self (identity integration) and tended to feel they were effective and capable. This finding is consistent with the literature which says individuals with high self esteem, in general, are more confident about their abilities and more confident that their actions or behaviors will

lead to success relative to low achievers. High achievers may feel more capable because they have experienced more positive reinforcements for their academic efforts. Therefore, based on past experiences, high achievers go into new situations feeling more confident and capable. The higher participants' academic performance, the more they perceived academic achievement and behavioral conduct as important. This is similar to Halliday, et. al.'s (1995) finding that high achievers tended to identify with school. That is, high achievers find school to be an important contributor to their self esteem. On the other hand, they found low achievers disidentify with school. According to Halliday et. al. (1995) low achievers evaluated academics as a domain which they or their group were negatively evaluated. Based on this conclusion, high achievers should not evaluate academics as a domain for negative evaluation. However, an alternative explanation can be offered. High achievers may also view academics as an area where their group is subject to negative evaluation as well. However, they may look to academics as one way to improve the way they are negatively viewed in society. High achievers may see academic achievement as a way to get ahead or "beat the system" (Grier and Cobbs, 1968). According to Bowman and Howard (1985), this proactive way of dealing with racial barriers can be attributed to parents' transmission of proactive race-related messages.

The third question asked how ethnic identity was associated with self esteem and self concept. In general identifying with one's ethnic group was significantly related to a more positive evaluation of one's self and the importance of academics. Ethnic identity

was also positively correlated with important indicators such as the sense of personal power and peer acceptance. This study, however, found a negative trend between group identity and measures of self esteem and self concept. This trend suggests that respondents who strongly identified with their group were likely to have lower self esteem and a more negative self concept.

### Limitations and Future Research

This exploratory investigation was the beginning of a longitudinal study on African American youth. Consequently, the limitations which exist will provide future directions and challenges for upcoming studies. For example, grades for all of the participants and demographic information such as parents' socio-economic status was unavailable. Also, this study explored only the bivariate relationships between the variables. Multivariate analyses should be used in the future to examine possible moderator/mediator effects among the variables. In addition, factor analyzing race socialization and cultural mistrust may also help to determine why cultural mistrust was not found to be significantly related to race socialization or academic performance. Stevenson (1994), found that parents also socialize their children toward distrust of White Americans. Thus, it is possible that cultural mistrust is a dimension of race socialization. Since the current study is part of a longitudinal study, this factor will be interesting to examine within this population over time. Another limitation is the racial setting for the sample. Southern California is an important place to examine race socialization because of its ethnic diversity. However, Thornton, Chatters, and Allen (1990) found that

sociodemographic and environmental variables influenced parents' use of race socialization messages. Thus, parents from other regions of the United States may racially socialize their children different than parents in Southern California. The impact of parents' race socialization messages in these various regions may also differ.

The importance of the current study is that it provided a stepping stone for future research on academic achievement, and stressed the importance of race socialization for African American youth. Another benefit of this study was that the race socialization measure asked participants to report on how their parents currently relay messages to them. This type of information is more reliable than retrospective data because it is not subject to memory loss and less likely to be embellished.

The current study has explored the importance of race socialization as it relates to achievement, cultural mistrust, feelings of competency, and group identity. It is evident that more attention needs to be given to positive aspects of African American families. Research that expands our current knowledge in this area is needed for educating parents and policy makers to help improve and enhance the lives of African American youth and families.

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