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# CHAPTER ONE

# Child development at the intersection of race and SES: An overview

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## Abstract

Racial/ethnic disparities in socioeconomic status (SES) persist in the United States. These disparities perpetuate the intergenerational transmission of inequality. Although families of color vary significantly in socioeconomic standing and evidence suggests the links between SES and child development may differ by race/ethnicity, we know relatively little about how race and SES interact to shape children's social contexts and developmental outcomes. This chapter draws theoretical insights from sociocultural perspectives on development and intersectionality theory to understand how and why family life and child development may play out in complex ways at the nexus of race and SES.

## Keywords

Race/ethnicity; Socioeconomic status; Culture; Stress; Child development; Intersectionality

Racial/ethnic inequalities in social and economic standing remain a persistent attribute of American society (Dimock, Kiley, & Suls, 2013). Despite considerable progress in the wake of the civil rights movement, some populations of color (e.g., African Americans, Latinx Americans) continue to lag far behind their White counterparts in levels of household income, educational attainment, and wealth accumulation (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Chetty, Hendren, Jones, & Porter, 2018; Lui et al., 2006). Given the tight connection between children's social class origins and their future well-being (Duncan, Ziol-Guest, & Kalil, 2010; Gibb, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2012), these pronounced racial/ethnic disparities perpetuate

the intergenerational transmission of inequality (Bowles, Gintis, & Groves, 2009).

Social stratification is inextricably linked with racial stratification in the United States, and the inequitable distribution of resources, power, and status that undermines the development of socioeconomically-disadvantaged children can represent a double-burden for families of color because it is conjoined with systemic racial/ethnic inequity. Yet, although these stratification processes have operated synergistically in America, the consequences associated with them do not affect families of color in parallel ways. Specifically, the beneficial returns to family socioeconomic advantage can vary across populations of color, and socioeconomic inequality disproportionately affects some families of color (Chetty et al., 2018). For example, African American and Latinx American children are far more likely to grow up in socioeconomically-disadvantaged homes and communities than their Asian American peers (Mattingly & Varner, 2015; Reardon, Fox, & Townsend, 2015). Furthermore, the positive associations between higher family socioeconomic status (SES) and academic achievement (Ferguson, 2007a; Yeung & Pfeiffer, 2009), socioeconomic attainments (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Chetty et al., 2018), and mental and physical health (Assari & Caldwell, 2019; Assari, Caldwell, & Mincy, 2018; Assari & Moghani Lankarani, 2018; Assari, Simons, & Gibbons, 2018) are weaker for African American children and youth than for their White counterparts.

Despite the considerable heterogeneity in socioeconomic standing among U.S. families of all racial/ethnic backgrounds (Semega, Fontenot, & Kollar, 2017) as well as the growing racial/ethnic diversity of the child population in the United States (Child Trends, 2018; Vespa, Armstrong, & Medina, 2018), we know relatively little about how race and SES interact to shape children's social contexts and developmental outcomes. This chapter aims to set the stage for the subsequent chapters included in this volume by first drawing theoretical insights from sociocultural perspectives on development and from intersectionality theory to understand how and why children's lived experiences may play out in diverse and intricate ways at the nexus of race and SES. We next highlight the socioeconomic variation found among families from varied racial/ethnic backgrounds in the United States. Lastly, we briefly review empirical evidence showing how the intertwined effects of race and SES shape key dimensions of children's developmental contexts: investments and resources, environmental and psychosocial stressors; and cultural factors.

## 1 Theoretical grounding: Race and SES in context

Sociocultural models of child development delineate how children's social identities or social positions influence their developmental competencies and long-term well-being (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Spencer et al., 2015; Super & Harkness, 1986). Status-infused social identities, such as race/ethnicity and SES, determine placement within the social hierarchy and thereby help structure the developmental contexts and influence the mechanisms driving the development of children of color (Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, & Richeson, 2017). Patterns of societal stratification consign families of color to social positions that subject them to

institutionalized racism, interpersonal prejudice, and sociocultural marginalization. In turn, these structural mechanisms confer unique contextual risks and elicit a range of adaptive responses (e.g., culturally-informed parental socialization practices) (Perez-Brena, Rivas-Drake, Toomey, & Umaña-Taylor, 2018). Depending on the ecological systems families of color are situated within, these adaptive responses may support resilience or exacerbate risk (Garcia Coll et al., 1996).

Status-based identities and their attendant privileges and disadvantages operate along multiple axes (Zou & Cheryan, 2017). Intersecting social positions (or ascribed social identities) can produce multiplicative effects on children's developmental contexts and outcomes (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005; Roy, 2018; Velez & Spencer, 2018). Intersectionality theory describes how interconnected social identities shape lived experiences, and, as a result, individual cognitions, behaviors, and psychology (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005). Social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, social class/SES) are mutually constitutive and operate dynamically to configure families' social, economic, and cultural conditions (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Cole, 2009). Moreover, social positions or identities reflect both sociohistorical processes of racial and socioeconomic stratification as well as individual- and group-level meaning-making processes (Collins, 2015). Intersectionality theory therefore highlights not only how identities intersect, but also how matrices of structural advantage and disadvantage differ between and within social groups and, consequently, shape subjective perceptions and experiences (Syed, 2010; Syed & Ajayi, 2018). As one example, among parents of color, experiences with systemic discrimination and interpersonal prejudice and how they interpret or make sense of such experiences can differ substantially by racial/ethnic identity and SES (Cole & Omari, 2003; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Waters, 1994). Ultimately, these interlocking systems bestow varying degrees of privilege and disadvantage, disparate access to power, and differing levels of oppression and exploitation on population subgroups. Together, these factors interact to influence family life and child development (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010; Few-Demo, 2014).

## 1.1 Pathways by which race and SES shape development

Intersectionality theory offers an analytic framework for thinking about how the reciprocal effects of race and SES structure human affairs in a stratified society. However, to understand how these mutually constructing social positions give rise to micro-level processes within families and communities, it is critical to couple intersectionality with insights from developmental science. A surfeit of theoretical and empirical developmental scholarship has revealed that race/ethnicity and SES can shape child development via three key routes: resources and investments, environmental and psychosocial stressors, and cultural factors.

### 1.1.1 Resources and investments

A large body of developmental scholarship delineates how SES, including household income and parental educational attainment, shapes families' access to developmentally-promotive resources and patterns of family investment and socialization (Lareau, 2011/2003; Mistry, Biesanz, Chien, Howes, & Benner, 2008; Mistry, Vandewater, Huston, & McLoyd, 2002). Low-income and poor families have fewer resources to invest in cognitively-stimulating and psychologically-enriching activities and materials that support children's cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and physical development (Duncan, Magnuson, & Votruba-Drzal, 2015). Parental education, on the other hand, influences parents' feelings of efficacy, their attitudes and beliefs about child development, and their childrearing practices and priorities (Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002). For example, better-educated parents are more likely to spend more time engaged in enriching activities with children and to adopt cultural models associated with intensive investment in childrearing (Kalil & DeLeire, 2004; Kalil, Ryan, & Corey, 2012; Lareau, 2011/2003). Additionally, both higher family income and parental educational attainment are tied to increased financial expenditures on children (Kaushal, Magnuson, & Waldfogel, 2011; Kornrich, 2016; Kornrich & Furstenberg, 2013). Moreover, in socioeconomically-disadvantaged families, parents are less likely to have standard 9 to 5 work shifts, while higher-SES parents enjoy greater autonomy and flexibility in their professional lives—factors that can influence parents' provision of developmentally enriching childrearing practices, affect parental psychological functioning, personality, and values, and, in turn, shape children's skills (Dunifon, Kalil, Crosby, & Su, 2013; Hitlin, 2006; Johnson, Kalil, & Dunifon, 2012; Lareau, 2011/2003; Li et al., 2014; Menaghan & Parcel, 1995).

Race/ethnicity is also associated with patterns of investment and access to resources (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005; Gelatt, Peters, Koball, & Monson, 2015; Hao & Yeung, 2015). Studies have found that native-born parents of all racial/ethnic backgrounds engage in less enrichment and emotional support compared to their native-born White peers (Gelatt et al., 2015). At the same time, however, immigrant parents of color tended to participate in less intellectual stimulation and demonstrate less sensitivity than their native-born White and co-ethnic peers (Gelatt et al., 2015), which suggests cultural origins play an important role in shaping parenting (Mistry et al., 2008). Other developmental research has revealed racial/ethnic differences in academic socialization practices, with African American children, for instance, on average receiving fewer learning-related materials and activities and Chinese American children with immigrant parents experiencing more formal, structured home-based instruction than White children (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Rarely, however, has developmental scholarship examined how race and SES interact to shape childrearing.

### **1.1.2 Environmental and psychosocial stressors**

Race/ethnicity and SES are also both related to differences in exposure to environmental and psychosocial stress at the family and neighborhood levels (Evans, 2004, 2006; Evans, Eckenrode, & Marcynyszyn, 2010; Evans & Kim, 2013). Economically-disadvantaged families confront greater financial strain and material hardship, which foments parental stress

and negatively impacts family functioning (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Conger et al., 2002; Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007; Linver, Brooks-Gunn, & Kohen, 2002). These processes have been shown to play out similarly among families of color as well (McLoyd, 1990; Raver, Gershoff, & Aber, 2007). Meanwhile, at the community-level, socioeconomically-disadvantaged and racial/ethnic minority children—particularly African American, Latinx American, and Native American youth—contend with higher levels of neighborhood disadvantage (e.g., exposure to violent crime, dilapidated and unsafe housing) than their disadvantaged White counterparts. The close connection between neighborhood advantage and public school quality means socioeconomically-disadvantaged and minority children are more likely to attend lower-quality schools that have less experienced teachers, fewer resources, and more negative school climates (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Alessandro, 2013). As a result, SES may demonstrate direct and indirect effects on children's immediate and more distal developmental contexts via multiple processes (Conger et al., 2002; McLoyd, 1990; Mistry et al., 2002).

Experiences with discrimination and prejudice constitute salient psychosocial stressors for families and children of color (Murry, Butler-Barnes, Mayo-Gamble, & Inniss-Thompson, 2018). As noted earlier, in the U.S. context, patterns of racial and social stratification operated in tandem to consign racial/ethnic minorities to a lower rung on the socioeconomic ladder. Furthermore, for highly-marginalized groups, such as African Americans, these stratification processes also relegated them to a bottom-caste status, which led to an intergenerational cycle of restricted access to social, economic, and privileged cultural capital (i.e., cultural knowledge and expressions recognized and rewarded by the dominant society) (Carter, 2003; Davis, Gardner, & Gardner, 2009). Discrimination against and negative stereotypes about minorities in America remain prevalent in the United States (Park, Martinez, Cobb, Park, & Wong, 2015; Quillian & Pager, 2001; Reny & Manzano, 2016), and these factors are associated with negative developmental outcomes among children of color (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, Bámaca, & Zeiders, 2008; Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Benner & Graham, 2011; Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Coutinho & Koinis-Mitchell, 2014; Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2009; Seol, Yoo, Lee, Park, & Kyeong, 2016).

### 1.1.3 Cultural factors and processes

Heterogeneity in social identities, resources, experiences, and cultural background cohere to create a unique developmental niche for children (Super & Harkness, 1986, 1997). The developmental niche children are embedded within arises from the interaction between factors and processes operating across multiple levels of influence. More precisely, culture operates as a proximal and distal influence on development. The macrostructural system determines the socioeconomic, political, and cultural landscape families and children operate within. At the micro-level, cultural factors and mechanisms related to race/ethnicity and SES individually and jointly shape families' and children's ecologies, cultural narratives, frames, and tool-kits, and the psychological orientation of parents and guardians (Hoff, Laursen, &



Tardif, 2002; Lareau, 2011/2003). Specifically, cultural factors associated with social positions are a product, in part, of group-specific sociohistorical conditions that can differentially shape cultural outlooks, values, and practices. Research has shown, for instance, that African American parents engage in ethnic-racial socialization practices that emphasize African Americans' fight for civil rights in the United States, highlight academic achievement as a countervailing force against discrimination, and simultaneously cultivate children's independence and strong attachment to the family system (Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008).

Culturally-derived childrearing patterns are also evident among other racial/ethnic minority parents. Asian and Latinx parents tend to promote strong family bonds (e.g., filial piety, *familismo*), appropriate and respectful behavior, and social-emotional competence as key socialization goals (Baptiste, 2005; Chao & Tseng, 2002; Cheah & Rubin, 2004; Fuller & García Coll, 2010; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006). However, it's important to note that childrearing priorities and practices may differ at the intersection of race/ethnicity and immigrant status. As an example, immigrant parents of color may vary considerably in their degree of acculturation to mainstream or dominant cultural norms as well as their prioritization and adoption of tradition-influenced socialization practices inherited from their culture or subculture of origin (Bornstein & Cote, 2004; Durgel, Leyendecker, Yagmurlu, & Harwood, 2009; Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007).

SES also influences cultural repertoires related to childrearing (Hoff, 2013; Hoff et al., 2002; Lareau, 2011/2003). To illustrate, using a sample of African American and White families, Lareau (2011/2003) found that (irrespective of race) higher-SES parents adopted a cultural ethos of intensive investment in children's cognitive and academic development and heightened involvement in their schooling. Working-class and poor families, on the other hand, demonstrated a comparatively *laissez-faire* childrearing approach that prioritized supporting children's natural growth by meeting their basic material, emotional, and social needs, and because they faced greater resource constraints, they were less able to invest in structured enrichment activities for children. Notably, Lareau's ethnographic study is among the few to investigate socialization goals and practices at the intersection of race and SES.

## 2 Family life and child development at the intersection of race and SES

Although applying an intersectional perspective to child development reveals the myriad ways in which social positions are interwoven and produce complex patterns of development, only scant research has explicitly considered these associations or conceptualized how and why intersections of these identities yield unique developmental niches. To inform future scholarship, we briefly consider the ways in which race/ethnicity and SES influence family life and developmental outcomes via the three principal pathways outlined above: resources and investments, environmental and psychosocial stressors, and cultural factors.

### 2.1 Resources and investments at the intersection of race and SES

SES and socioeconomic mobility differ considerably by race/ethnicity (Chetty et al., 2018). African American, Latinx, and Native American families contend with higher poverty rates, lower levels of parental educational attainment, and less wealth (Hummer & Hamilton, 2010). By contrast, Asian American families tend to surpass both White families and other minority families in SES (Chetty et al., 2018; Sakamoto, Goyette, & Kim, 2009). Furthermore, intra-racial and intra-ethnic disparities are substantial. Immigrant-origin Asians and Blacks tend to attain higher-SES levels than their native-born counterparts (Kent, 2007; Koury & Votruba-Drzal, 2014; Manuel, Taylor, & Jackson, 2012; Nawyn & Park, 2019; Ramakrishnan & Ahmad, 2014). Additionally, though the model-minority trope is applied to Asian Americans generally, socioeconomic inequality is more pronounced among Asian ethnic subgroups than among Whites. For example, Indian Asian and East Asian Americans exceed their Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander counterparts in average household income levels (Ramakrishnan & Ahmad, 2014; Weller & Thompson, 2018; Zhou & Lee, 2017). Latinx families also evince substantial ethnic and socioeconomic heterogeneity (Motel & Patten, 2012). Families of Mexican- and Central American-extraction, for example, lag behind Cuban- and South American-origin families in socioeconomic well-being (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2011). However, unlike their Asian American and African American peers, native-born Latinx Americans tend to be more socioeconomically-advantaged than their immigrant-origin co-ethnic peers.

Socioeconomic attainments are related to family life in nuanced ways when viewed through an intersectional prism. Relatively few studies have examined racial/ethnic differences in parenting practices among families from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. However, this limited research paints a complex picture. In contrast to Lareau's ethnographic study, quantitative analyses using nationally representative data have found that Black (as well as Hispanic and Asian) parents engaged in substantially less concerted cultivation than their White counterparts, with these discrepancies persisting even after controlling for family SES (Cheadle & Amato, 2011). Related research showed that Black parents trailed their



White peers in multiple dimensions of concerted cultivation at each level of SES level (based on a composite encompassing income, education, and occupation status) (Bodovski, 2010). Notably, when it came to home-based cognitive stimulation/intellectual enrichment, almost no race differences emerged. In fact, some isolated discrepancies among families at the median SES level were unearthed, and these findings showed *more* home-based stimulation and enrichment among African American families (Bodovski, 2010). By contrast, at each SES level, Black parents engaged in less concerted cultivation involving participation in school activities, community-based activities and enrichment, and extracurricular activities and lessons (Bodovski, 2010). Similarly, an analysis of data from a nationally representative study of 20,000 children entering kindergarten in 1998 found that African American mothers with a four-year college degree had fewer children's books in their homes than college-educated White mothers (Ferguson, 2007a, 2007b). College-educated African American mothers reported possessing similar numbers of children's books as high-school-educated White mothers (Ferguson, 2007a, 2007b). At the same time, compared to their lower-SES co-ethnic counterparts, African American parents participate in more intensive ethnic-racial socialization involving the provision of Black cultural artifacts and knowledge, which has been associated with school readiness and academic achievement (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Caughy & Owen, 2015; White-Johnson, Ford, & Sellers, 2010). Such findings suggest that parenting measures used in large-scale national studies may not fully capture the varied practices African American parents employ to support their children's academic and psychosocial development.

Parents' childrearing beliefs, goals, and practices are informed by their developmental histories (Belsky, 1984; Dow, 2011) and prior experiences (Cole & Omari, 2003; DeFreece, 2016; White-Johnson et al., 2010). Dow (2011), for example, found that middle-class African American mothers' perspectives on racial identity and parental socialization goals were informed by their childhood socioeconomic backgrounds and community characteristics. Hence, having grown up in low-SES families and communities may constrain upwardly-mobile, socioeconomically-advantaged Black parents' access to privileged cultural repertoires related to intensive investment in childrearing (Lareau, 2011/2003). Similarly, parental perceptions of the opportunity structure may also influence their childrearing aims and approaches to ethnic-racial socialization (Lee, 1994). Compared to their socioeconomically-disadvantaged Black counterparts, higher-SES African Americans, for example, endorse greater suspicion of the American Dream ethos and more skepticism toward societal institutions (Cole & Omari, 2003; Harris, 2008; Hochschild, 1995). In contrast, socioeconomically-advantaged Whites hold more system-justifying beliefs and tend to underestimate levels of racial inequity in the United States when compared to both low-SES Whites and higher-SES African Americans (Kraus, Rucker, & Richeson, 2017). These attitudes and, in turn, parenting beliefs, goals, and practices may be shaped by higher-SES African Americans' increased rates of downward mobility (Chetty et al., 2018) and higher levels of perceived discrimination (Horowitz, Brown, & Cox, 2019; Krieger et al., 2011). Indeed, when African American mothers fear that systemic race-based obstacles will affect

their children's future opportunities, they communicate ethnic-racial socialization messages centered on how to overcome these barriers (Suizzo et al., 2008).

## 2.2 Environmental and psychosocial stressors at the intersection of race and SES

Higher-SES does not necessarily protect families and children of color from heightened risk emanating from a range of contextual stressors, including neighborhood disadvantage, financial strain, and discrimination and prejudice that are interwoven into the experiences of people of color in the United States (Assari, Simons, et al., 2018; Lipsitz, 1998; Pager & Shepherd, 2008); however, the intensity and pervasiveness of such experiences may differ by race/ethnicity. Field experiments (called audit studies) that match prospective candidates on all characteristics except for race/ethnicity reveal that systemic discrimination against African Americans, Latinx Americans, and Native Americans remains pervasive in employment, housing, and credit markets (Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Quillian, Pager, Hexel, & Midtbøen, 2017). Audit studies also show Asian Americans confront bias in the housing market, but this research sometimes indicates that Asian Americans experience less discrimination in employment and lending. Such results should be interpreted with caution given the tendency in the social science literature to treat Asian Americans as a monolithic group and thus fail to consider how risk for or experiences with discrimination differ by ethnicity and SES among Asian Americans. For example, Hmong populations—which are among the most socioeconomically-disadvantaged Asian subgroups (Sakamoto et al., 2009)—appear to experience substantial levels of bigotry and bias in the areas where they've settled in the United States (Hein, 2000). By contrast, recent scholarship suggests that racial animus toward and discrimination against Chinese and Japanese Americans, who tend to surpass their Asian ethnic counterparts in SES, declined across the 20th century (Hilger, 2016; Wu, 2013). Thus, exposure to discrimination may tangibly differ among Asian ethnic subgroups.

These findings highlight another key consideration: Namely, encounters with institutionalized racism (e.g., employment discrimination or bias in the criminal justice system) versus interpersonal prejudice (e.g., being called a racial epithet or subjected to derogatory jokes) may indeed differ among populations of color. For example, a recent Pew survey revealed that Black American and Asian American adults reported the highest levels of perceived discrimination, with 76% of Blacks and 75% of Asians saying they had been discriminated against, far in excess of their Hispanic and White peers (Horowitz et al., 2019). When discrimination experiences were disaggregated, however, large numbers of Black Americans reported discrimination in multiple domains, and they were considerably more likely than Asians, Hispanics, and Whites to report labor market bias and unfair treatment by police. By contrast, a majority of Asian Americans said they had been called derogatory names or subjected to racist jokes. Notably, in line with other research, higher-SES Black adults reported higher rates of discrimination than their lower-SES Black peers in this survey

(Horowitz et al., 2019). Though suggestive, this study did examine within-race ethnic differences in perceived discrimination, which might be substantial.

Perceived discrimination clearly represents a key psychosocial stressor for families and children of color, with growing evidence indicating that some youth may be at increased risk for exposure to racial/ethnic bias and its related negative consequences. For example, at the intersection of race and SES, socioeconomically-disadvantaged African American children and youth, especially boys, report greater discrimination (Assari, 2018; Assari & Caldwell, 2018; Assari, Simons, et al., 2018), which contributes to poorer mental health (Assari, Gibbons, & Simons, 2018). Likewise, disadvantaged community conditions also appear to disproportionately affect some families and children of color (Bischoff & Reardon, 2013; Reardon et al., 2015; Reardon, Kalogrides, & Shores, 2016; Reardon & Yun, 2003). African American and Latinx neighborhoods, for example, tend to have more concentrated poverty (Logan, 2011). Yet, even conditional on family SES, Black children are growing up in communities with more structural disadvantage and negative social climates than their Latinx American, Asian American, and White counterparts (Logan, 2011; Reardon et al., 2015; Sampson, Sharkey, & Raudenbush, 2008). Disadvantaged neighborhood conditions, including punitive policing, diminished social cohesion, and less collective efficacy, are associated with negative developmental outcomes (e.g., psychological distress) (Fagan, Geller, Davies, & West, 2010; Geller, Fagan, Tyler, & Link, 2014; Sampson, 2012; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999; Velez, 2006). Tellingly, associations between socioeconomic advantage and greater perceived discrimination among African American youth appear to be mediated by school and community contexts, with higher-SES Black youth reporting more discrimination when they attend or reside in predominantly White schools and neighborhoods (Assari, 2018).

African Americans' sociopolitical beliefs—including their perspectives on whether African Americans share a linked or collective fate—are also connected to neighborhood quality and SES (Gay, 2004). For example, Gay (2004) reported that Black Americans living in more advantaged communities were less likely (1) to believe that their individual fates were closely connected to those of Blacks as a group and (2) to view discrimination as a major barrier to Blacks' upward mobility. Variation in stress associated with perceived discrimination and neighborhood conditions are also related to parental mental health and socialization practices. Specifically, experiences with discrimination are connected to parenting beliefs and practices (Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004; Hughes, 2003; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Lee & Ahn, 2013; White-Johnson et al., 2010), and parental depression associated with discrimination experiences has been shown to contribute to negative childrearing behaviors and styles among low-income African American families (Anderson, Hussain, et al., 2015) and to mediate links between perceived discrimination and children's externalizing problems among middle-class African American families (McNeil, Harris-McKoy, Brantley, Fincham, & Beach, 2014).

Unfortunately, too little scholarship has investigated how race/ethnicity and SES shape differences in perceived discrimination among parents and children of color or considered

how disparate experiences with systemic racism and interpersonal bigotry may shape parental investments and socialization approaches as well as children's responses to these parenting behaviors.

## 2.3 Cultural factors at the intersection of race and SES

Cultural beliefs and models can also shape developmental contexts. For example, cultural values may operate as protective or compensatory factors in low-SES families of color (Gaylord-Harden, Burrow, & Cunningham, 2012). Studies have found that *familism* supported psychological resilience and higher-quality parenting among Mexican-origin families living in more disadvantaged circumstances (White, Liu, Nair, & Tein, 2015; White, Roosa, & Zeiders, 2012). Meanwhile, cultural assets, such as spiritual and religious beliefs among African Americans, may likewise foster better family functioning (Dunbar, Leerkes, Coard, Supple, & Calkins, 2017) or promote healthy development (Brega & Coleman, 1999; Butler-Barnes, Williams, & Chavous, 2012; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012). Culturally-adaptive childrearing practices may also interact synergistically with structural factors to buoy resilience or exacerbate vulnerability. For example, Banerjee, Rowley, and Johnson (2015), recently found that, in violent neighborhoods, ethnic-racial socialization practices intended to instill cultural pride were associated with less depression, whereas parental messages meant to raise awareness about discrimination were tied to heightened depressive symptomatology.

Cultural perspectives on the macrostructural context can also influence socialization goals and practices and thus youth outcomes, such as identity development. Less-stigmatized racial/ethnic minority families, for instance, may endorse cultural perspectives focused on the abundance of opportunities they and their children enjoy in America. At the same time, some racial/ethnic groups may perceive particular status-based obstacles (e.g., immigrant and generational status, English-language proficiency) as temporary obstacles rather than systemic barriers to overcome (Arthur, 2000; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Involuntary minorities (e.g., African American descendants of enslaved people, Native Americans), whose collective experience in America involves pervasive subjugation (e.g., slavery, Jim Crow segregation, colonization) due to systemic racism, might be more suspicious of societal institutions (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Conversely, voluntary minorities (i.e., immigrants of color), may not view their adopted society through the same prism of suspicion and distrust because they have not been subject to the same history of oppression and exploitation in the U.S. context (Greer, 2013; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Additionally, to the extent that immigrants of color subscribe to the notion that America is the land of opportunity and internalize negative stereotypes about the intellectual or moral inferiority of low-status subpopulations in the United States, they might hold negative attitudes toward their more stigmatized peers of color (Arthur, 2000; Greer, 2013; Waters, 1994).

Indeed, increasing research suggests that some racial/ethnic subgroups, including both Asian and Black ethnics, perceive themselves to occupy an “elevated minority status” in



comparison to their African American counterparts (Greer, 2013). Drawing from in-depth interviews, Dhingra (2003) found that many second-generation Asian American respondents made a distinction between cultural and racial/ethnic minority status. They did not perceive themselves to be cultural minorities and believed their more advantaged economic status, higher educational attainment, and greater acculturation distinguished them from native-born Black Americans (Dhingra, 2003). Equivalent attitudes were expressed by first- and second-generation immigrant Black parents and adolescents who endorsed strong ethnic (i.e., West Indian, Haitian) identities (Waters, 1994). To understand these findings, it is important to remember that many immigrant-origin Asian and Black Americans represent a hyper-selected group who have achieved high occupational status and educational attainment levels in their countries of origin (Zhou & Lee, 2017). These advantages may influence their rates of upward mobility, perceptions of the opportunity structure, and general attitudes toward African Americans, who tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged in America.

Notably, variation in cultural practices, values, and beliefs can impact psychological well-being (Wang, Henry, Smith, Huguley, & Guo, 2019). In a recent meta-analysis, Yoon et al. (2013) observed that greater acculturation (i.e., assimilation to mainstream norms and culture) was associated with better mental health for Asians, whereas enculturation (i.e., strong affinity for or belief in the centrality of one's racial/ethnic subculture) was more strongly related to enhanced psychological health among African Americans. Using qualitative data from a sample of parents of preschool-aged children, Anderson, Jackson, et al. (2015) discovered parents of color often communicated messages meant to enhance cultural pride and knowledge. However, they also found that African Americans were more likely to convey information aimed at increasing their children's awareness of discrimination and cultivating coping strategies to counteract it; thus, ethnic-racial socialization played a key role in how they supported their children's school readiness. In contrast, immigrant-origin Korean Americans tended to avoid messages about discrimination and bias. Instead, Korean-origin parents often expressed the belief that individual achievement and meritorious behavior would essentially allow their children to escape or counteract any existing discrimination and prejudice.

### 3 Conclusion

Social identities are inextricably interlinked, and race/ethnicity and SES represent two key social categories that have serious implications for children's long-term well-being. Although a rich body of developmental scholarship has documented the additive associations between race/ethnicity, SES, and child development and delineated the prospective mechanisms underlying these associations, increasing scholarship underscores the need to adopt an intersectional perspective and consider how these social positions interact to influence children's developmental niches, and consequently, multiple dimensions of their development. A failure to examine how race/ethnicity and SES jointly structure children's and families' ecologies obscures our understanding of the factors and processes that confer

vulnerability or support resilience, and critically, undermines our ability to identify the sources of racial/ethnic disparities in life chances.

Importantly, the lack of attention to how race/ethnicity, SES, and social context intersect masks significant variation in the lives of families from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. When we do not consider how and why the meaning ascribed to and privileges and disadvantages associated with SES differ by race/ethnicity, our understanding of the processes that shape inequality in family life and child development fall out of focus. Furthermore, a lack of conceptualization about how families and children construe and make sense of their social positions means that we often erroneously treat race/ethnicity as a proxy for culture and fail to consider that both White families and families of color have culturally-derived values, beliefs, and norms based on their socioeconomic standing and cultural community and society of origin (Causadias, Vitriol, & Atkin, 2018). At the same time, insufficient attention to the multiple pathways by which race/ethnicity and SES interact to shape development means running the risk of misattributing to cultural factors and mechanisms what are the product of adaptive responses to structural factors. To understand clearly how development plays out across contexts and to delineate universal processes and determine how heterogeneous contextual influences alter those processes, developmental scientists must adopt an intersectional approach in their work.

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