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Black Emotions Matter: Understanding the Impact of Racial Oppression on Black Youth's

Emotional Development

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Abstract

Black US Americans' emotions are subject to stereotypes about the anger and aggression of

Black people. These stereotypes are readily applied to Black adolescents' emotions. The purpose

of this conceptual paper is to operationalize racial oppression in the emotional lives of Black

adolescents through an application of García Coll and colleagues' (1996) ecological model for

minority youth development. We specify emotionally inhibitive features of Black adolescents'

schools, the adaptive culture of Black US Americans that responds to emotional inhibition, Black

families' emotion socialization processes, and Black adolescents' emotional flexibility

behaviors. Throughout, we integrate findings from research on Black adolescents' emotional

adjustment with research on cultural values, emotion and racial socialization, school-based racial

experiences, and theory on emotion and cultural navigation.

Black Emotions Matter: Understanding the Impact of Racial Oppression on Black Youth's

Emotional Development

To feel and express one's emotions is a basic human experience. The breadth of human

experience should give any person the freedom and access to a wide range of emotions, yet racial

hierarchies and power dynamics systematically attempt to deny emotional experiences to those

who are marginalized and oppressed. For Black individuals, particularly in the United States

(US)[1], stereotypes of the "angry Black" person (Durik et al., 2006) and the view of Black people

as "dangerous" and "explosive" (Callanan, 2012) contribute to the creation of systems that are

meant to inhibit and suppress Black people's emotions. This comes in the form of

misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Black people's' emotions as angry and hostile, using

undue force in response to Black people's emotional displays during interactions with law

enforcement (Swaine et al., 2016), the framing of Black pride movements as being dangerous to

the US American way of life (Ince et al., 2017), and the lack of collective empathy shown toward

the current and intergenerational experiences of trauma experienced by the Black community.

Such emotionally oppressive systems are made manifest in the lives of Black adolescents

through the ways in which their emotions go unrecognized and unsupported within their social

institutions and social interactions.

We specify adolescence as a unique developmental period in which to understand the

impact of emotionally oppressive systems on Black youth's emotional development.

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[1] Anti-Blackness and marginalization are experienced by Black populations, globally (e.g., Woodson, 2020). As such, we believe that the notions presented in this paper are relevant and applicable to the experiences of Black adolescents globally. Yet, the perspectives and empirical research that we draw on were developed specifically with Black populations in the United States (US) and thus, we use the terms Black and Black US American interchangeably to refer to this literature base. Future research should systematically test and amend the perspectives presented in this paper among Black populations in other parts of the world.

Adolescence is marked by developmental tasks such as identity formation, enhanced social

cognition in perspective taking and emotion processing, and autonomy development (Sturdevant

& Spear, 2002). These developmental tasks also accompany adolescent changes in heightened

emotional reactivity and particular sensitivity to social interaction (Blakemore & Mills, 2014).

Additionally, growth in the adolescent brain is associated with cognitive changes in formal

operations such as abstract thought, thinking in multiple dimensions, thinking about possibilities,

and self-referencing. These changes allow adolescents to become more advanced in thinking

about other people and their perspectives, social relationships, and social institutions (Keating,

2013). Black adolescents, specifically, begin to understand the social and emotional norms that

govern day-to-day interactions and which emotions feel safe to present to others who share their

racial identity, as well as those who do not. Thus, Black adolescents' emotion knowledge and

other emotion skills are uniquely shaped by their experiences and understanding of racial

dynamics and oppression.

The purpose of this paper is to operationalize racial oppression in the emotional lives and

development of Black adolescents through an application of García Coll and colleagues' (1996)

ecological model for minority youth development. We specify how racism manifests in Black

adolescents' lives through emotionally inhibiting environments, the adaptive Black culture of

Black that responds to emotionally inhibiting environments, Black families' emotion

socialization processes, and the necessity of emotional flexibility behaviors. In our discussion of

emotionally inhibiting environments, we primarily focus on schools as one of the most salient

social contexts for adolescents. School settings have a history of racially oppressive ideologies

and practices relative to Black youth's emotional development (see Allen, Scott, & Lewis, 2013

school microaggressions at a macro-level and Caldera, 2020 for a review of anti-Blackness in

schools). However, these contexts also include interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination that uphold the oppressive practices of the context, including daily experiences and microaggressions (i.e., subtle verbal, non-verbal, or visual behaviors and statements that denigrate racial-ethnic minorities). We start by describing emotional development among Black adolescents.

Emotional Development Among Black Adolescents

We center our discussion of Black adolescents' emotional development around the competencies of emotion expression, emotion regulation, and emotion understanding. These emotional competencies have been included in various perspectives on Black youth's resilience and positive youth development (e.g., American Psychological Association Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescence, 2008; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2018). Although the systematic study of these competencies among Black adolescents remains limited, various scholars have theorized the complexity of developing such skills as a Black youth in a racially oppressive system (e.g., Barbarin, 1993; Dunbar et al., 2017; Stevenson, 2002). For instance, Black youth's emotion expression, the verbal and non-verbal communication of internal feeling states, is misinterpreted and subject to racial bias by adults. Halberstadt and colleagues (2020) found that among pre-service teachers, Black boys' and girls' faces were more often mistaken for anger amid expressing other emotions such as happiness, sadness, fear, and surprise. Additionally, emotion regulation, the ability to control the intensity, duration, and expression of one's emotions, has been noted as essential for Black adolescents' successful navigation of educational spaces. Thomas and colleagues (2009) found that Black adolescent boys who outwardly expressed their anger were rated more negatively by their teachers in terms of more over-reactive behavior, while Black adolescent boys who regulated their anger through

suppression were rated positively by their teachers in terms of less over-reactive behavior.

Finally, emotion understanding, the ability to recognize one's own emotional experience as well

as others' emotion expressions, has been theorized as necessary in learning what types of

emotion can be expressed and with whom such emotions can be expressed according to

considerations such as public and private contexts, the power dynamics in the social context, and

the intra- versus inter-racial nature of the interaction (e.g., Dunbar et al., 2017; Vrana & Rollock,

1996).

Adolescent emotional development occurs against the backdrop of other key

developmental processes such as identity formation, advanced social cognition, and an

increasing need for autonomy (Booker & Dunsmore, 2016). Yet, for Black adolescents, we

consider that racial oppression is a social demand that informs Black adolescents' identity to

form a racial identity, is integrated into Black adolescents' social cognition about the possitbility

of racial discrimination in social interactions, and shapes how Black adolescents choose to assert

their autonomy in ways that are safe, yet culturally authentic. For instance, racial discrimination

heightens the importance youth place on being Black as part of their identity (i.e., centrality or

pride in being Black; Butler-Barnes et al., 2019), contributes to lower positive affect about being

Black (low public regard) and greater belief that others think negatively about Black people (low

private regard; Seaton, 2009), and disrupts normative racial identity developmental processes

such as exploring one's racial identity and committing to one's racial identity (Douglass &

Umaña-Taylor, 2017). Regarding racial oppression and social cognition, in a study utilizing a

person-centered approach to multiple contexts of socialization, Black adolescents who had the

highest scores on receiving messages about race and experiencing racial discrimination

demonstrated the greatest social cognition about social inequality (i.e., critical reflection; Byrd &

Ahn, 2020). Finally, in a study among high achieving Black high school girls, findings

demonstrated that the experience of navigating issues of diversity within school was associated

with Black adolescent girls' demonstration of autonomy in the assertion of their own racial

ideologies and expressions of their Blackness in was that were accommodating instead of

assimilating (Marsh, 2013).

We assert that this unique set of developmental circumstances and racial terrain that

Black adolescents navigate, likely has long term consequences on the ways Black adolescents

express, manage, and understand their emotions. For instance, we expect that the development of

one's racial identity in relation to their social interactions facilitates Black youth's exploration

and identification of emotions that are central to their Black identity (e.g., pride and/or joy in

being Black, fear of being Black in particular spaces, shame in being Black because of negative

stereotypes) and how to express, manage, adapt, and/or protect emotions according to the social

affordances given to them in formative institutions such as schools. Additionally, changes in

social cognition likely allow Black adolescents to think deeply about which environments and

which people in those environments provide security to explore their identities and associated

emotions in autonomous ways (see Dunbar et al., 2017 for a perspective on how Black parents'

messaging about race and emotion may promote this social cognition). Thus, Black adolescents

are tasked with thinking about their identity development and their experiences and management

of emotion, but with added attention to how others think about the emotional experiences and

management of emotions of people in their racial-ethnic group. This creates a context in which

emotional experience and management are not autonomous--impeding on Black adolescents'

need for emotional autonomy. Although research that makes such explicit links to Black

adolescents' emotional development is limited, we further consider the ubiquitous presence of

racial oppression at multiple levels in the Black adolescent experience through an application of

an integrative framework of social stratification to the study of Black adolescents' emotional

development.

Application of the Integrative Model to Black Adolescents' Emotional Development

We organize our discussion of the impact of racial oppression on Black adolescents'

emotional development within García Coll and colleagues' (1996) Integrative Model for the

Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children (Integrative Model). The

Integrative Model advanced developmental science by placing marginalization as a central force

in shaping ethnic-racial minoritized youth's development and asserted that theory and empirical

research developed among White middle-class populations could not meet the needs of ethnic-

racial minoritized youth (Causadias & Umaña-Taylor, 2018). Consistent with the way in which

García Coll and colleagues (1996) defined how culture organizes the systems and pathways of

child development by one's social position within that culture, we assert that Black adolescents'

social position in a racial hierarchy organizes the pathways of their emotional development (see

Figure 1). The racism inherent in US American society traverses through adolescents' lives as

they encounter and interact with multiple social institutions and others of their same and different

racial-ethnic groups (Gee et al., 2019; Seaton, 2018). All individuals are tasked with the

responsibility of learning to communicate emotional information properly (i.e., adhering to social

norms of emotion expression and regulation within context). However, Black US Americans are

additionally burdened with the imposition of Western, Eurocentric cultural values on behavioral

expression (e.g., individualism, materialism, objectivity) while deeming the cultural values of

minoritized groups as culturally deficient or different (Boykin, 1986). Racist ideals about the

inferiority of being Black or the danger of Black people to a US American way of life are

communicated through pervasive societal messaging and narratives that create expectations for

Black people's emotions and emotion-related behaviors. These expectations shape the ways

Black individuals express, understand, and regulate their emotion.

Consistent with stereotypes, Black people's emotions are expected to be uncontrolled or

dysregulated (Stevenson, 1997), angry, aggressive, and dangerous (Durik et al., 2006;

Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2004). Yet also, Black people's emotions are often ignored or

dismissed as an aspect of dehumanization (e.g., Haslam, 2006). These expectations are also

uniformly extended to Black youth, conceiving of them as less innocent, more culpable, and

more adult-like (i.e., adultification; Epstein et al., 2017; Ferguson 2000; Goff et al., 2014;

Kunjufu, 1986) and therefore as less in need of social protections. These views of Black emotion

as dangerous and Black youth as adults (and therefore also dangerous) live in the psyches of

those who make decisions about structure and access to social institutions that impact Black

adolescents and their communities and serve as forms of systemic and interpersonal

discrimination, prejudice, and oppression.

Experiences of oppression are also what residentially, economically, socially, and

psychologically segregate Black families and adolescents into *emotionally promoting or

emotionally inhibiting environments*. Building on García Coll and colleagues' (1996) concept of

promoting and inhibiting environments, we believe an environments' capacity to meet the

emotional needs of Black adolescents reflects whether an environment is emotionally promoting

or inhibiting. Traditional theories on emotion socialization propose the benefits of opportunities

for emotional validation and communication for promoting positive emotional development and

the costs of habitual emotional invalidation and suppression in terms of inhibiting positive

emotion development (see Eisenberg et al., 1998 for a review). Although we recognize that these

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traditional theories do not consider the cultural and racist contextual experiences of Black families in their discussion of emotion socialization nor the necessity for Black families to sometimes use suppressive socialization in tandem with emotional validation (see Dunbar et al., 2017), we strongly assert that Black youth and families are deserving of the same emotional validation and space for emotional communication that are recommended for White youth and families. Thus, we propose that in an emotionally promoting environment, Black adolescents' emotions and emotion-related behaviors are recognized and validated as meaningful internal cues and external expressions that should elicit support from significant adults in the environment. Emotionally promoting environments should have abundant opportunities for Black adolescents' experience and expression of positive emotions such as happiness, hope, love, and joy, while also allowing Black adolescents to learn about and process negative emotions such as anger, sadness, or fear. Thus, emotionally promoting environments communicate to Black adolescents that their emotions are a normal part of their daily lives and that it is safe to share their emotions in prosocial ways because their emotions will be responded to with respect and support. To be an emotionally promoting environment, schools should have structures in place to ensure that the administrators, educators, and support staff have adequate training to recognize, empathize with, and can respond to Black adolescents' emotions in ways that are developmentally appropriate (e.g., providing space for identity development and autonomy) and antiracist (e.g., addressing educator bias, acknowledging students' cultural origin as informative of their emotional experiences, utilizing culture to maximize positive emotional development, recognizing the role of systemic inequality in Black adolescents' emotion-eliciting academic experiences; Duchesneau, 2020; Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Borowski, 2018).

In an emotionally inhibiting environment, Black adolescents' emotions and emotion-related behaviors are closely monitored and policed, are systematically ignored or treated as dangerous, and are used as justification for the mistreatment and murder of Black individuals by police and self-deputized citizens. Thus, emotionally inhibiting environments communicate to Black adolescents that their emotions should be suppressed and hidden for the safety of others and for themselves (e.g., Thomas et al., 2009). At the same time, emotionally inhibiting environments also habitually activate Black adolescents' negative emotions via their own interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination or the vicarious experiences of racial discrimination that they are exposed to through the experiences of their family members, peers, community members, and media coverage of Black people's mistreatment (English et al., 2020; Heard-Garris et al., 2018).

In response to emotionally inhibiting environments, Black US Americans have developed an adaptive culture encompassed by Western African cultural orientations toward affect, expressive individualism, orality, and communalism maintained and developed in response to the sociocultural history of their displacement from Africa and enslavement in the U.S. (Boykin & Toms, 1985). Boykin described Black US Americans' orientation toward these Afro-cultural values and the necessity of negotiating a Black cultural experience rooted in these values, while simultaneously also needing to navigate mainstream American culture and the experience of being racially and culturally minoritized in the U.S. (see a brief description of Boykin and Toms' [1985] *Triple Quandary Theory* below in Complementary Theoretical Perspectives). As such, Black families have developed specific cultural coping mechanisms to manage the conflict and strain of emotionally inhibiting environments while also maintaining cultural patterns of emotion and emotion expression via racial socialization (e.g., Dunbar et al., 2017) and cultural

socialization (e.g., Lozada & Riley, 2019) of emotion. Black families' racial and cultural socialization of emotion teaches Black adolescents appropriate forms of emotion expression, regulation, and understanding that facilitate successful navigation of multiple cultural demands and avoidance of negative interracial experiences (e.g., emotional flexibility behaviors such as emotional code switching) as well as emotional adjustment in the face of racism. The ways in which Black families socialize emotions are sensitive to youth's characteristics of age, temperament, biological sex, gender, and physical characteristics (Dunbar et al., 2017; Hastings, 2018; Hughes, Watford, & Del Toro, 2016), but also, these characteristics shape the ways in which Black adolescents develop emotional competencies.

Complementary Theoretical Perspectives to the Integrative Model

In addition to the Integrative Model, two complementary theoretical perspectives help us to situate Black adolescents' experiences with racial oppression as both distal and proximal experiences to their emotional development: Triple Quandary Theory (Boykin & Toms, 1985) and Racial Encounter Coping Appraisal and Socialization Theory (RECAST; Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). Briefly, Triple Quandary Theory is a conceptual framework for understanding the complexity and diversity of the socialization processes characteristic of Black child development (Boykin, 1983; Boykin & Toms, 1985). The framework integrated various perspectives of Black families to appropriately recognize the multicultural nature of being Black in US America - an experience that necessarily reflects the coping strategies that react and adapt to the experience of racism and influence of mainstream American culture but that also does not ignore the African cultural basis of Black US American life. As such, Boykin proposed that Black US Americans navigate three realms of cultural experience: a Black cultural experience (reflective of nine Afrocultural values maintained from West African philosophies such as affect,

expressive individualism, orality, and communalism), a mainstream cultural experience (reflective of European American values such as competition and individualism), and a minority experience (reflective of the experiences of oppression associated with being a part of a minoritized group). Garcia Coll and colleagues (1996) recognize Triple Quandary Theory as contributing to the conceptualization of adaptive culture within the Integrative Model, yet the theory also recognizes the family processes that Black families engage in to instill that adaptive culture into Black youth to promote positive developmental competencies. As such, we invoke Triple Quandary Theory below as we describe aspects of adaptive culture, Black families' racial and cultural socialization, and the necessity of emotional flexibility for Black youth in navigating multiple cultural expectations and racism.

RECAST (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019) is a racially specified conceptual framework of stress and coping that describes the role of family processes (i.e., racial socialization) in intervening on Black youth's appraisal of their self-efficacy and coping resources (both emotional and behavioral) in the face of racism-related stress. Specifically, Anderson and Stevenson (2019) assert that in the face of racist events, Black youth go through a two-pronged appraisal process of determining whether the event is a racial threat (primary appraisal) and determining the availability of their coping resources to meet the demands of the racial threat (secondary appraisal) before engaging in emotion regulation and racial coping to manage racism-related stress. It is within the conception of racial stress appraisal that the necessity of emotion understanding is made explicit in being aware of the emotional experience in oneself and in others as a result of a racist event to determine the necessity of employing specific emotion regulation strategies in the face of a such a racial threat. The framework also recognizes the central importance of racial socialization competence (how well racially specific emotion

regulation and coping skills are transmitted, received, and understood) in building Black youth's self-efficacy in engaging emotion regulation and coping in the face of racial threat. Thus, we similarly invoke RECAST during our discussion of Black families' racial socialization and in Black youth's use of emotional flexibility in the face of racism.

Below we further expand on the application of the Integrative Model by describing the characteristics of emotionally inhibiting environments and the implications of these characteristics for Black adolescents' emotions in school settings. We describe specific characteristics of emotionally inhibiting school environments as racial oppression that shapes the emotional lives of Black adolescents: racialized interactions and relationships with teachers (Legette et al., 2020), the presence of law enforcement in schools (Pigott et al., 2018), and lack of access to professional emotional support in schools (Harper & Temkin, 2018). We follow this with a brief discussion of Black parents' racial and cultural socialization of emotion as an adaptive process in Black families that contributes to the development of Black adolescents' subsequent emotional flexibility behaviors, consistent with the tenants of Triple Quandary Theory and RECAST. Where relevant, we also discuss how Black adolescents' biological sex/gender characteristics may shape family processes and emotional development outcomes.

Racialized Interactions and Relationships with Teachers

We start our discussion of emotionally inhibiting environments within social interactions in schools, in which Black youth may have some of their earliest emotionally inhibiting experiences (see Gilliam et al., 2016 on perceptions of Black preschoolers' emotion-related behaviors). Yet during adolescence, a developmental period marked by greater emotional frequency, intensity, and instability (see Bailen et al., 2019 for a review), Black adolescents are

faced with the emotionally-triggering experience of racial discrimination at elevated rates--

particularly in schools. Studies using annual, retrospective self-report of racial discrimination

indicate that on average Black adolescents experience racial discrimination a couple of times a

year (Cogburn et al., 2011; Gale & Dorsey, 2020; Wong et al., 2003). In a study on a nationally

representative sample of African American and Black Caribbean American adolescents, 90% of

the sample had at least 1 racial discrimination experience over the period of a year, with one of

the most common experiences being that teachers acted as if they were afraid of the student

(Seaton et al., 2008). In a more recent study, English et al. (2020) used daily assessment of

common experiences of racial discrimination, including racial microaggressions that occur

during school (i.e., "asked to be a representative of your race/ethnicity during a discussion at

school"), with Black adolescents reporting an average of 5.2 racial discrimination experiences

per day.

Black adolescents' racial discriminatory experiences with their teachers often elicit

negative emotions. For example, in a qualitative study on high school students' experiences of

discrimination, Rosenbloom and Way (2004), describe how a Black female student was the

target of a culturally insensitive remark about her hair made by a White teacher in front of the

class. The Black student and her peers were angry about this interaction and the expression of

this anger resulted in the Black female student being called a troublemaker and being verbally

reprimanded for the rest of the class (pp. 436-437; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Although feeling

angered by a discriminatory event is normal and justified, this example demonstrates that the

expression of such anger, no matter how warranted, makes Black students targets for further

negative interactions with teachers and places them at greater risk for more severe action, such as

school expulsion or arrest (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Riley, Foster, Serpell, 2015). Thus,

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emotion suppression may be a necessary emotion regulation strategy for Black students to avoid

negative interactions with teachers (e.g., Thomas et al., 1999), even if habitual emotion

suppression may be costly for Black youth's mental and physical health (Assari, Moghani

Lankarani, & Caldwell, 2017; Johnson et al., 1987).

Legette and colleagues (2020) described the central role of emotion in educators' implicit

racial bias toward Black students, subsequent racialized interactions, and implications for racial

disparities in school discipline. For instance, educators' misunderstanding of Black adolescents'

normative emotion expression in the classroom may reflect stereotypes of Black people as angry

and aggressive and manifest in a "racialized anger bias" (a tendency to interpret the faces of

Black people as angry more often than the faces of White people, even when anger is not being

expressed; e.g., Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2004). This racialized anger bias has been recently

established in interpretations of emotions and behaviors of Black youth in comparison to White

youth (Halberstadt et al., 2020; Halberstadt et al., 2018). There is a particular vulnerability of the

racialized anger bias for Black adolescents, as the strength of racialized anger bias increases

when Black youth are believed to be older (Cooke & Halberstadt, 2020). In addition to

perceiving Black adolescents as angry, educators also tend to interpret Black students' behaviors

as defiant, disrespectful, or showing 'an attitude' (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba et al., 2011) as

well as being more adult-like, intentional, fixed, and deviant (Ferguson, 2000). Thus, it is the

response to Black adolescents' genuine expression of emotion that communicates to Black

adolescents that their emotions are not welcome or validated in schools and that their emotion

expression could serve as a liability. Specifically, in emotionally inhibiting school environments,

Black adolescents' emotion expression makes them vulnerable to exclusionary discipline

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practices, and as we will describe in the next section, disproportionately exposed to law

enforcement and subsequent criminal justice systems.

The Presence of Law Enforcement in Black Adolescents' Schools

Black youth experience more frequent interactions with law enforcement (Nowicki,

2018) in their neighborhoods and schools. Among middle and high schools with an enrollment of

75% or more of Black students, 54.1% had at least one school law enforcement or security

officer on school grounds in comparison to 32.5% at middle and high schools with an enrollment

of 75% or more of White students (Harper & Temkin, 2018). In 2016, Black students represented

just 15% of the total school enrollment, yet 31% of referrals to law enforcement and school-

related arrests (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The roles of school law enforcement varies

greatly from school to school (Finn et al., 2005; Kupchik, 2010), but overwhelmingly their roles

are meant to promote "safety" in schools through enforcement of behavioral compliance and

punitive measures. There is little evidence to suggest that school law enforcement improves

actual or perceived school safety (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Instead, law enforcement further

facilitates exclusionary discipline practices and prematurely introduces students to the criminal

justice system. These practices disproportionately target Black adolescents (Skiba, Arredondo, &

Williams, 2014) and represent the "school-to-prison" pipeline processes that push Black

adolescents out of classrooms and schools and into prison systems (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba

et al., 2014).

The issue of school law enforcement is interrelated to the discussion of racialized

interactions with teachers. Law enforcement presence in schools encourages teachers to request

assistance from school officers to enforce punishment and remove students from their classrooms

for perceived misbehaviors -- perceptions that, as we have discussed previously, reflect

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stereotypes of Black students' behaviors and emotions. These stereotypes and misinterpretations

of Black students' behaviors and emotions also apply to school law enforcement officers and

may serve as the basis for increased out of school suspensions and expulsions, situation

escalation, and the unnecessary use of physical force and arrests to manage Black adolescents.

Recently, Crosse and colleagues (2021) found that when analyzing monthly school

administrative data, increased school resource office presence was associated with increases in

reported offenses and exclusionary actions taken against Black (and Hispanic) students, but not

for White students. Further, there have been numerous high-profile cases in which school police

officers' unnecessary use of force (e.g., body slamming, choking, slapping) on Black adolescents

was documented via video recording (e.g., Bever, 2016; Fausett & Southall, 2015). The images

of these assaults on Black adolescents are graphic and violent, yet shed light on how physically,

emotionally, and psychologically harmful these school experiences can be (Cameron &

Sheppard, 2006; Scott, Moses, Finnigan, Trujillo, & Jackson, 2017).

        To avoid situation escalation introduced by law enforcement, Black adolescents likely

need to develop the skill of emotion suppression to regulate themselves, no matter how justified

their feelings are. Black adolescents also likely become hypervigilant in attending to and

accurately reading emotional cues from teachers and school law enforcement (a form of emotion

understanding) to inform their behavioral decisions as a means of protection during such

interactions. Support for the development of hypervigilant emotion understanding among Black

youth has been found in emotion recognition research in which Black youth demonstrated

similar and greater accuracy of emotion expression in White faces in comparison to expression in

Black faces (Tuminello & Davidson, 2011) -- a phenomenon that is counter to the well-

documented in-group bias for emotion recognition (e.g., Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). Although

this specific aspect of emotion understanding has not been linked with hostile school interactions

specifically, hypervigilance has been documented in research among Black adolescent males

who have been exposed to community violence (Phan et al., 2020) and has been described as an

agentic and effective response to navigating inhibiting environments, despite hypervigilance

being classified as a symptom of posttraumatic stress syndrome (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2018).

Applied to emotionally inhibiting school settings with aggressive law enforcement

presence, similar hypervigilance may develop among Black adolescents, in which enhanced

detection and reaction to potentially threatening stimuli (e.g., such as negative affect and hostility

expressed by school law enforcement) may prompt Black adolescents to regulate their

expressions and behaviors. For instance, Black boys have been noted to minimize anger

expression by softening the tone of voice, joking, and limiting sudden movements to appear non-

threatening (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Steward et al., 1998). The presence of law

enforcement in schools represents a clear structural issue in Black adolescents' schools that

promote emotion suppression while activating Black adolescents' negative emotions. Paired with

the racialized interactions and relationships with teachers described in the previous sections, both

emotionally inhibiting experiences may force Black adolescents to develop adaptive patterns of

emotion expression (e.g., softened facial and tonal expressions), regulation (e.g., emotion

suppression), and understanding (e.g., emotional hypervigilance) as protection.

Lack of Access to Emotional Support Through Schools

Related to the presence of law enforcement in Black adolescents' schools, is the lack of

access to trained school emotional support staff (e.g., counselors, psychologists, social workers).

According to data from the 2015-2016 federal Civil Rights Data Collection, among schools that

serve mostly Black students, 20.7% had a greater number of law enforcement or security staff on

school grounds than emotional support staff; this is in comparison to only 2.5% of schools that serve mostly White students (Harper & Temkin, 2018). As such, Black adolescents attended schools with greater law enforcement presence than emotional support staff presence at 3 times the rate of White adolescents (Harper & Temkin, 2018). Initiatives such as 'Counselors Not Cops' (Whitaker et al., 2019) speaks to this interrelation between lack of emotional support staff and overreliance on law enforcement in schools being evidence of the ways in which schools are structured to criminalize Black students instead of meeting their developmental and emotional needs. In the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) report on the presence of law enforcement and mental health professionals in schools (Whitaker et al., 2019), standard school recommendations were to have at least one social worker and one counselor for every 250 students in a school and one psychologist for every 700 students in a school. Yet, 90% of public schools do not meet these recommendations. Thus, schools are not equipped to handle the emotional needs of its students, and the lack of support is felt most intensely for Black adolescents among whom we have described are most vulnerable to having less supportive and positive relationships with teachers and are disproportionately targeted by school law enforcement.

The lack of emotional support staff in Black adolescents' schools represents a missed opportunity for addressing Black adolescents' emotional needs. Schools are often the best positioned to provide emotional support services to youth as a natural point of contact (Ali et al., 2019; Grantmakers in Health, 2010), circumventing some of the commonly known access to care issues that Black families and their adolescents face when seeking emotional support services in the community (e.g., transportation issues, parental time loss from work) -- especially in low-income communities (Alegria et al., 2011; Breland-Noble et al., 2006). One of the primary

responsibilities of emotional support staff like school social workers and psychologists is to

design and adapt evidence-based interventions to support student development and success

(Avant & Swerdlik, 2016). A set of interventions that are relevant to adolescent emotional

development and have garnered wide-spread support for fostering adolescents' healthy emotional

adjustment in schools is that of social and emotional learning (SEL; Yeager, 2017). Many

emotional support staff are being positioned as leaders in school SEL programming efforts to

teach adolescents how to identify, regulate, and express their emotions (Bowers et al., 2018).

Yet, if Black adolescents attend schools with few emotional support staff members, they may be

less likely to be exposed to any SEL curriculum or more likely to be exposed to low-quality SEL

curriculum, limiting their potential growth of these skills. Additionally, recent critiques of SEL

programming have questioned whether the guiding SEL frameworks and programs adequately

acknowledge the cultural assets of Black youth and whether they seek to police Black students'

behaviors and promote cultural compliance and assimilation (e.g., Jagers et al., 2019). This may

be particularly true in the absence of Black emotional support staff who likely have a deep

understanding of the culturally specific emotion expression and coping that Black adolescents

might display and thus, may mitigate the potential biases Black adolescents may experience in

receiving emotional support in the form of SEL programming, emotional and behavioral

diagnosis, and service referrals. Thus, any emotional support intervention, including SEL

programming, that does not take care to address staff implicit bias, cultural competence, and

racial sensitivity may undermine the benefits of such interventions and facilitate the same

emotional suppression and hypervigilance among Black adolescents that emerge from racialized

interactions with teachers and the presence of school law enforcement. The lack of emotional

support staff in Black adolescents' schools may leave them ill-equipped to develop adaptive

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emotion expression, regulation, and understanding that helps them navigate the negative

emotions that are activated from negative teacher and law enforcement interactions.

Adaptive Culture: The Black Cultural Experience of Emotion

The emotionally inhibiting environments discussed above create the conditions under

which Black adolescents are systematically denied the opportunity to safely and freely express

and explore their emotions. Yet this emotional inhibition is in direct opposition to the cultural

values of Black US Americans broadly. Boykin & Toms (1985) described Black US American

cultural experience as reflecting Western African-centered philosophies based on values such as

affect, expressive individualism, orality, and communalism. Affect refers to an emphasis on

emotions in daily life and social interactions reflected in paying attention to emotional cues (an

aspect of emotion understanding) and the tendency to be expressive of one's emotions.

Expressive individualism is the value for one to be distinct yet authentic in personality and way

of being. Orality describes the cultural preference for oral forms of expression in which both

speaking and listening are active ways of participating in expression and in which oral abilities to

use colorful, graphic, and alliterative forms of spoken language are celebrated. Communalism is

an orientation toward social connection with others and a recognition of the importance of

responsibility to social bonds relative to responsibility to one's individual priorities. Although

Boykin and Toms (1985) also discussed other Afro-cultural values (e.g., spirituality, harmony,

movement, verve, and social time perspective), we have highlighted affect, expressive

individualism, oral tradition, and communalism as the most relevant to the understanding of

Black adaptive culture regarding emotion. Specifically, while affect describes the extent to which

emotions are valued and recognized in Black culture, expressive individualism speaks to the

authenticity of emotional ways of being which would include emotion expression and emotion

regulation. Additionally, oral tradition invokes the use of emotion words and vivid oral descriptions to express and evoke emotion in conversation. Finally, communalism is relevant to the distinction of social bonds being a safe context in which emotions should be shared.

Despite these cultural values, Black US Americans must operate within and interact with a larger mainstream culture based largely on Western Eurocentric philosophies and U.S. mainstream cultural values that broadly place higher values on objective reasoning and independence rather than on understanding and sharing emotional experience (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Halberstadt, 1986). Additionally, as minoritized individuals within this larger mainstream context, Black US Americans are subject to oppression from this system through structural racism and individual experiences of racial discrimination. As a result, we propose that adaptive culture of emotion among Black US Americans necessarily responds to emotionally inhibiting environments via the navigating these three cultural experiences in ways that: (a) sometimes evokes Black cultural patterns of emotion (open, oral exchanges of authentic emotion expression and inquiry as a means of social connection with others), (b) sometimes evokes mainstream cultural patterns of emotion (a potential devaluing of others' emotion experience in allegiance to one's own emotions or a dampening of emotion expression to match mainstream display rules of emotion), and (c) sometimes evokes the minoritized experience (a suppression of emotion as means of avoiding or responding to racial discrimination).

Consistent with contemporary perspectives on adapting cultural systems, we assert that the adaptive culture of emotion among Black US Americans is transactional and evolving (White et al., 2018) and thus, the emotion strategies that Black adolescents, families, and communities use to balance the tensions between their cultural values and their experiences of marginalization in mainstream contexts shift according to changing cultural demands. For instance, in the current

era of the Black Lives Matter movement, a pattern of collective emotion expression has emerged

in response to the systematic murders of Black people in the name of policing (Hinderliter &

Peraza, 2021). Thus, new patterns of adaptive culture of emotion may begin to emerge among

Black communities to accommodate the necessity of collective emotion expression to advance

social justice. Such patterns of expression are consistent with communalism values while also

being responsive to the contextual demands of racial oppression.

Black Family Processes: Racial Socialization and Cultural Socialization of Emotion

Given the adaptation of Black culture in response to emotionally inhibiting environments,

Black parents are tasked with helping their adolescents learn about what it means to have and

express emotions in ways that maintain Afro-cultural values, but that also prepares Black

adolescents to negotiate their emotions while navigating a racist society. This distinction of

emotion socialization goals reflects the distinction of the Black cultural experience and the

minority experience described in Triple Quandary Theory. Black parents' emotion socialization

goals and behaviors that are consistent with the minority experience reflect *racial socialization*

of emotion, in which messages about race and navigating racial experiences are integrated and

communicated with Black parents' emotion socialization. Dunbar and colleagues (2017) recently

theorized such an integration of racial and emotion socialization as an aspect of Black parents'

preparation for bias strategies that center emotion in racial coping. Extending beyond the

messages that Black parents give their adolescents about the potential for experiencing racial

discrimination (preparation for bias; Hughes et al., 2006), Black parents' emotion socialization

behaviors teach their children the emotional display rules about where (public vs. private

contexts) and with whom (authority figures vs. family members) to express emotions and

emotion regulation skills that teach one how to cope with the emotions from the experience of

racial discrimination (Dunbar et al., 2017). Such integration of racial and emotion socialization is also consistent with the description of racial socialization within RECAST (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019) in which Black parents teach racially specific emotion regulation and coping. Consistent with both perspectives, Black parents' emotion socialization behaviors include supportive emotion processing of racist events, encouragement of contextually-appropriate emotion expression, responses to children's emotions that support suppression to protect against racial bias, attentional vigilance toward others' emotions, and teaching about effective emotion regulation in the context of racial experiences.

Black parents' emotion socialization goals and behaviors that are consistent with the description of the Black cultural experience in Triple Quandary Theory reflects *cultural socialization of emotion*, in which Afro-cultural values regarding the value of and display rules about emotion are communicated through Black parents' emotion socialization. For instance, Black parents' behavioral responses and their own emotion expression to their adolescents' emotions may communicate Afro-cultural values of affect and communalism, as well as appropriate emotion expression in the context of other cultural group members. McKee and colleagues (2015) described Black mothers' expanding responses to their adolescents' positive emotions through positive reinforcement or encouragement actions to maintain happiness (e.g., praise, physical affection, encouragement), exploring the causes of their adolescents' positive emotions, and 'joining in' with laughter and joking. Expanding responses communicate to Black adolescents that their positive emotions should be recognized and attended to, consistent with the Afro-cultural value of affect. Expanding responses also communicate that Black adolescents should express their positive emotions within the safety of their social bonds with their parents, consistent with the Afro-cultural value of communalism. Finally, expanding responses may teach

about appropriate emotion expression with other cultural group members, by communicating to

Black adolescents that positive emotions should be shared and amplified by joining in with

behaviors such as laughing and joking. This idea is consistent with other research that has

highlighted cultural patterns of joking as a means of connection and communication among

Black US Americans (Kunjufu, 1995).

Patterns of racial and cultural socialization of emotion are likely to vary by adolescents'

characteristics of age, temperament, physical characteristics (e.g., skin tone and hair texture),

biological sex, and gender. We are not aware of any research that has specifically examined

variation of Black parents' racial and cultural socialization of emotion according to these

characteristics. However, a recent systematic review of empirical on Black US American

parents' general emotion socialization (Labella, 2018) highlighted various differences by child

gender. For instance, qualitative studies described African American parents' reflections on

raising their boys to suppress and restrain emotion expression (anger and exuberance) to reduce

perceptions of their sons as being aggressive and using minimizing responses to their sons'

negative emotions so that they become tough and are not viewed as weak. Other research

reviewed demonstrated the ways in which parent gender and child gender interacted for unique

gender effects. For instance, one qualitative study described Black fathers as encouraging their

sons to express their emotions, while another highlighted Black mothers as being more

supportive of their daughters' distress and less supportive of their sons' distress (see Labella,

2018 for a full review of research). Such gendered notions of both race and gender in emotion

socialization research would likely transfer to gendered considerations in racial and cultural

socialization of emotion.

Racial socialization researchers also describe that Black parents believe their sons are at greater risk for racial discrimination experiences than their daughters and send more frequent preparation for bias messages accordingly (i.e., higher for sons; McHale et al., 2006; Thomas & Speight, 1999). However, Brown and colleagues (2010) reported that Black mothers reported giving more messages about coping with racism to their daughters than their sons. Other research finds no gender differences in Black parents' racial socialization by gender (see Hughes et al., 2006 for a review). Interestingly, Brown and colleagues (2010) also examined ethnic socialization among Black families. They framed ethnic socialization as messages transmitted among individuals with a similar social and cultural history about how to interact with each other as opposed to other groups. They found that both Black female adolescents reported greater communication of cultural values, American history, and ethnic pride from Black mothers and fathers relative to Black adolescent males, suggesting that cultural socialization may be more consistently communicated to Black adolescent girls than to Black adolescent boys.

Taken together, the sometimes-gendered nature of emotion and racial socialization is likely also inherent in racial and cultural socialization of emotion to reflect the unique experiences of racial oppression that Black parents may anticipate for their adolescents. As such, Black adolescents' may exhibit differential use of specific emotion competencies according to their socialization. For instance, among a sample of urban Black US American adolescents, Black boys reported greater use of "physical release of emotion" as a coping strategy (e.g., exercise, physical activity) and Black girls reported greater use of "expressing feelings" (e.g., verbal expressions such as persistent discussion of problems and focus on negative feelings; Carlson & Grant, 2008). Yet, in other research on emotion expression under stress among a predominately African American (84%), low-income adolescent sample there were notable

similarities across gender such as in the expression of anger (Panjwani et al., 2015). Thus,

although gendered socialization may be present to prepare Black adolescents for gendered racial

experiences this may yield similar trajectories of emotional development between Black boys

and girls. This may be because the eminent need for emotional protection in the face of racial

oppression is similar even if the means of parental protection from racial oppression may differ

by biological sex or gender. Future research is needed to systematically document racial and

cultural socialization of emotion and to examine the potential role of Black adolescents'

biological sex and gender within this socialization process. Gendered expectations will likely

also interact with Black adolescents' other characteristics of age, temperament, and physical

characteristics.

Emotional Development Competencies: Emotion Flexibility Behaviors

To this point, we have reviewed theory and empirical research that links systems and

experiences of racism with the development of Black youth's emotion expression, regulation,

and understanding. Yet, among this small body of literature, these emotion competencies are

often conceived as separate skills without taking into consideration their necessary integration,

particularly during social interaction (Halberstadt et al., 2001) and especially during adolescence

when this integration of skill increases in sophistication (Booker & Dunsmore, 2017). The lack

of integrated conception of emotion skill limits how we understand Black adolescents' complex

navigation and management of their emotions in the context of navigating multiple cultural

experiences (Boykin & Toms, 1985) and the activation of stress and emotion during racist events

(Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). The negotiation of multiple culturally-based expectations on

Black adolescents' emotion behaviors and the emotion-eliciting experiences of racial oppression

necessitates an integrated set of skills that allow for emotional flexibility or the ability to engage and activate different sets of emotion behaviors to respond to changing emotional demands.

The American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents (2008) described flexibility as one of four themes of resilience that characterized the research on racial, ethnic, and cultural experiences of Black youth. Specifically, the report described the need for African American youth to be able to engage in "a flexible form of emotion regulation, supporting balanced, situationally appropriate emotion expression" amid pervasive stereotypes of angry, dangerous, and explosive behaviors of Black people (Callanan, 2012; Durik et al., 2006) as a means of surviving and thriving in the face of oppression. We believe that the Task Force's reference to flexible emotion regulation denotes the selection and use of emotion regulation strategies that are sensitive to the social context in which it must be deployed as we describe in further detail below.

Despite noting the investigation of flexible behavioral repertoires as a promising area of research in understanding Black youth development, there has been little work to explicitly examine flexible forms of emotion behaviors such as expression and regulation among Black adolescents. Dunbar and colleagues (2017) hinted at this flexibility when describing Black parents' nuanced approach to emotion socialization, which may teach Black youth how to "code switch" (p. 18, Dunbar et al., 2017) between cultural contexts of the mainstream culture, the minority experience, and the Black cultural experience as described in Triple Quandary Theory (Boykin & Toms, 1985). Similarly, RECAST (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019) evokes the notion that Black youth have a potential flexible repertoire of various coping strategies of which they have varying levels of self-efficacy for enacting according to the racial socialization they have received from their parents. Thus, we describe specific emotion flexibility behaviors that Black

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adolescents develop to navigate multiple cultural expectations on their emotion behaviors and the experience of racism: *emotion regulatory flexibility* and *emotional code switching*.

Emotion regulatory flexibility (ERF) is the ability to shift one's experience, expression, and management of emotional states according to contextual demands (Aldao, Sheppes, & Gross, 2015; Bonanno & Burton, 2013). Recent research has noted the benefit of ERF in the face of adversity above and beyond habitual uses of specific emotion regulation strategies (Westphal, Seivert, & Bonanno, 2010). Additionally, recent qualitative research suggests Black parents' intention to teach Black adolescents emotional flexibility to guard against racial discrimination (Lozada & Riley, 2019), suggesting that ERF may be a valued cultural emotional competence that may protect Black youth from the detrimental effects of racial discrimination.

The ERF heuristic defines three dimensions of emotion skill integration: (1) context sensitivity – the ability to perceive incoming demands from the context and determine the most appropriate emotion regulatory strategy for the context, (2) regulatory repertoire – the ability to use a wide range of regulatory strategies (of emotion expression and emotion experience) depending on shifting emotional demands (e.g., changes in the emotional valance, intensity, and/or arousal of the interaction), and (3) feedback sensitivity – the ability to monitor and use feedback about the efficacy of the chosen emotion-related strategy to inform decisions about emotion-related adjustment (Bonanno & Burton, 2013). Given that emotion-related skill is flexibly organized according to context (Saarni et al., 2007), context sensitivity is the primary situation processing skill that drives other aspects of ERF. One must have at least some context sensitivity to perceive and take into account aspects of the social interaction that will inform emotion-related behavior within and across social interactions.

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The development of these ERF skills likely occurs in some basic form in early and middle childhood as children gain a firm grasp on basic emotion-related skills such as appropriate emotion expression, understanding others' emotion expression, and gaining control and regulation of one's emotions, particularly in the context of parent-child interaction and supervised peer relations (Saarni et al., 2007). However, adolescence may be the ideal time to explore ERF skills as adolescents have increased opportunities to engage in social interaction with unfamiliar others without parental scaffolding or intervention, forcing adolescents to rely on their advanced cognitive skills, social awareness, and emotional competence to understand and negotiate their own and others' emotions in and across social contexts and interactions (Booker & Dunsmore, 2016). For Black adolescents, the developing conceptions of one's racial identity and particularly how others view one's racial group may further make salient the need to pay attention to "who is around" and "what are they feeling" regarding the safety of sharing emotions openly and monitoring and regulating expressions and behaviors to avoid racially discriminatory experiences altogether or cope with the stress of racial discrimination in real time.

Previous research has established that at least one aspect of ERF (i.e., expressive flexibility) is protective against the effects of stress (e.g., Westphal et al., 2010), yet this assertion has not been tested in the context of race-related stress. However, ERF may be useful in navigating and coping with racial discrimination experiences in various ways. First, context sensitivity allows Black adolescents to assess the context in which racial discrimination is occurring (e.g., characteristics of the aggressor, location, bystanders) and determine the most appropriate emotion regulatory strategy to use in the situation (e.g., allowing oneself to feel and use one's anger to confront the aggressor because the aggressor is a peer). Second, regulatory repertoire allows Black adolescents to have access to a variety of regulatory strategies to choose

from in case other strategies fail in regulating one's emotion or expression (e.g., recognizing that

if confronting the aggressor elicits anger too intensely, that one could walk away from the

situation). Third, feedback sensitivity allows Black adolescents to monitor and use feedback

about one's chosen strategies to make decisions about further emotional and behavioral

adjustment (e.g., choosing to continue in the confrontation because of emerging feelings of pride

for standing up to the aggressor's racist remark). It may be that having these ERF skills helps

Black adolescents navigate racial discrimination with low cost to their psychosocial well-being.

These specific assertions complement the description of racial coping self-efficacy and racial

coping behaviors described within RECAST (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). However, these

specific assertions require systematic investigation to understand the process and role of ERF in

Black adolescents' coping with racism.

ERF skills may also be the basis for the emotion flexibility behavior of *emotional code

switching*, which we define as the ability to switch emotion expression and regulation styles

according to the demands of the cultural context. The concept of emotional code switching is

consistent with García Coll and colleagues' (1996) call to expand the conception of

developmental competencies among youth of color to recognize successful functioning in two or

more different cultures (biculturalism). The concept of emotional code switching recognizes that

Black adolescents must learn the codes (e.g., LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993) and

display rules that are specific to mainstream culture, Black culture, and coping with the culturally

minoritized experiences. We believe that emotional code switching is driven by the ERF skill of

context sensitivity as the primary processing skill needed for Black adolescents to recognize the

characteristics of the environment that communicate which emotion codes and display rules to

use. Additionally, competence in the ERF skill of regulatory repertoire gives Black adolescents

access to a range of emotion regulatory strategies that can be used for contextually appropriate

emotion expression. Examples include enhancing emotion expression in Black cultural contexts

where the joining in of emotion expression may be expected, dampening emotion expression in

mainstream cultural contexts where low intensity emotion expression may be expected, or

completely suppressing or masking emotion expression during minoritized experiences to avoid

being a target of racial bias. Finally, Black adolescents must also be able to tune into

environmental cues as interactions progress (the ERF skill of feedback sensitivity) to determine

how appropriate and successful their emotion expression and regulation is to the environment

and to know whether adjustments to emotion-related behavior should be made to maintain

successful intercultural and interracial interaction.

This idea of emotional code switching is consistent with how Black youth use linguistic

code switching (e.g., switching between using "standard" English and African American

English; Young et al., 2014) and may be used as a strategy for impression management to avoid

racial discriminatory experiences while navigating various cultural contexts, but particularly

those contexts dominated by White cultural values. McCluney and colleagues (2021) recently

described a similar concept of racial codeswitching among Black US Americans in the

workplace and discussed the potential psychological and social costs to this behavior. Such

accounts of the common practice and experience of flexible emotional and behavioral code

switching among Black people may provide emerging evidence that code switching has become

an adaptive cultural practice of this population. Future research is needed to empirically

document the process of emotional code switching among Black adolescents during interracial

interactions, Black youth's perspectives on their use of emotional code switching, the

socialization processes that promote the onset and growth of emotional code switching, and the psychosocial outcomes associated with this behavior.

Future Directions

In the application of the Integrative Model to understanding the role of racial oppression on Black adolescents' emotional development we have already highlighted several promising avenues for future research. Below we provide further discussion on future research of Black youth's emotional development in the context of racial oppression and, where appropriate, offer insight into intervention and policy changes needed to dismantle the characteristics of emotionally inhibiting school environments.

There remains little work on Black adolescents' emotion expression, regulation, and understanding in the context of racial oppression. Although researchers have linked the ways in which interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination are associated with broad emotional functioning (e.g., depressive and anxiety symptoms) among Black adolescents (Brody et al., 2006; Smith-Bynum et al., 2014), the lack of descriptive and process-oriented research on the foundational emotional competencies that underlie such emotional functioning limits our ability to pinpoint the affective mechanisms that become enhanced or inhibited in the face of racial discrimination. For instance, it may be that the increase in anxiety-related symptoms that is associated with racial discrimination experiences among Black adolescents is driven by an increase in attentional vigilance to emotion or that the increase in depression is driven by an increase in emotion suppression.

In addition to knowing the roles of emotion expression, regulation, and understanding in the associations between racial discrimination and emotional wellbeing, it is also important to document the role of these competencies for racial coping in the moment. Above we described

the promise of emotion regulatory flexibility (ERF) in helping Black adolescents use internal and

external emotion cues during an episode of racial discrimination. Consistent with this notion,

RECAST(Anderson & Stevenson, 2019) highlights the importance of having awareness of one's

own emotions and the emotions of others in reaction to racial stress, as well as emotion

regulation skills to manage the experience of one's own emotion and facilitate problem-focused

coping strategies. Yet, we are aware of no empirical research that documents or unpacks the

emotion-related processes described in RECAST or otherwise. Such specificity in identifying the

habitual and moment to moment use of emotion skill to navigate and cope with racial

discrimination will provide valuable information to researchers who seek a contextual

understanding of Black adolescents' emotional development and practitioners who seek to help

youth build tools for emotional coping that might reduce the negative effects of racial

discrimination on Black adolescents through treatment and intervention.

Despite the need to understand individuals' emotional competencies to help Black youth

cope with and make sense of their experiences with racism, we must also look toward research

that will shift the onus to the systems that inhibit Black adolescents' emotions and experiences.

For instance, the previously mentioned APA Task Force (2008) report on resilience among

African Americans described that Black youth need to demonstrate emotional flexibility as a

dimension of resilience, yet in several instances the report also mentions the need to understand

environmental systemic barriers to Black youth's positive development. Consistent with this call

to understand environmental systemic barriers, we identified three aspects of emotionally

inhibiting school environments that we hope will stimulate further research and policy change:

racialized interactions and relationships with teachers, interactions with law enforcement, and

lack of access to professional emotional support. Regarding racialized interactions and

relationships with teachers, the research on racial bias in recognition of Black youth's emotions (e.g., Halberstadt et al., 2018; Halberstadt et al., 2020) highlights the need for educator professional development that engages teachers in developing their own emotional competence and disrupting the automaticity of their implicit bias in their interactions with Black youth. Such professional development may help teachers become more accurate in identifying their Black students' emotions and subsequently, more able to appropriately meet their students' emotional needs. Future intervention research may build on teacher socioemotional learning programs to integrate teacher awareness of implicit bias toward Black students' emotions and stereotype-based activation of teacher emotion during interactions with Black students to address teachers' racialized interactions and use of discipline.

Relatedly, the presence of law enforcement in Black adolescents' schools has been critiqued as a significant threat to students' emotional and physical wellbeing (Ryan et al., 2018) and parallels the disproportionate policing and police brutality experienced by the Black community more generally. Black students' racialized interactions with school law enforcement elicit negative emotions that they must then suppress to avoid the risk of physical restraint, harm, or arrest. Given this, several school districts have made significant changes to their agreements with law enforcement and school resource officers (SROs). A recent report from EdWeek on media coverage of district policy shifts on school police officers between May 2020 and June 2021 revealed that 33 school districts ended their contracts with local law enforcement for school police officers or eliminated their school police officer positions (Riser-Kositsky & Sawchuk, 2021). Large school districts like Chicago and Los Angeles, significantly cut their budgets and positions for school police officers. Other school districts, like that of Prince George's County in

Maryland, decided to continue to use SROs but limited the number of officers who had arrest

powers.

We should also note that Black youth activists, primarily those in the larger Black Lives

Matter Movement, played a major role in school districts' decisions to make changes to their law

enforcement policies. Research on Black youth-led protests to defund the police, particularly in

cities including Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Atlanta, show that protests led to cuts to local

police expenditures (Ferrer & Nguy, 2021; Kohli & Blume, 2020). Thus, it should be noted that

not only are Black youth impacted emotionally by SROs, they are also faced with the stress of

protesting on the frontlines for policy change related to SROs in the presence of their schools.

Research is needed to understand the impact of these policy changes on Black adolescents'

emotional outcomes and whether specific approaches (e.g., no school officers, school officers

with limited power) are more ideal for Black adolescents' emotional outcomes than others.

As we noted above, emotional support staff at Black adolescents' schools may help to

subvert the negative emotional experiences caused by racialized teacher and law enforcement

interactions. Yet, like professional development needed for teachers to reduce racial bias toward

Black students, emotional support staff also need training to ensure that they do not reinforce the

biased and racialized interactions that Black adolescents encounter with other school staff. For

instance, researchers have suggested the necessity of multicultural training in counselor

preparation programs as well as on-going multicultural professional developments to build

school counselor multicultural competence (Codrington & Fairchild, 2012). Such multicultural

competence training is inclusive of gaining cultural awareness of one's own and others' cultural

behaviors. Such training should include awareness of cultural displays of emotion expression and

cultural manifestations of coping and regulation of Black adolescents as both a means of

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recognizing such behavior, but also in helping Black adolescents to develop emotion flexibility

skills. To better understand how schools can leverage the presence of emotional support staff to

support the emotional development of their Black students, more research is needed to identify

Black students' specific experiences with emotional support staff in school, whether initiatives to

hire more emotional support staff translate to changes in racial disparities in school discipline,

and the incidence of emotional competence and emotional functioning among Black adolescents

who have better access to the emotional support they need.

As researchers, practitioners, and school leaders seek to further understand and address

the characteristics of emotionally inhibiting environments that impact Black adolescents' daily

emotional functioning, it is important that Black adolescents' perspectives are represented among

the solutions. Research methodologies that center youth voice such as participatory action

research, have yielded valuable insights into the adolescent experience while also generating

solutions that are most proximal to meeting adolescents' development needs of autonomy (Ozer,

2017). Strategies such as asking youth to identify the places in the school where they feel

emotionally supported and inhibited may be one way to assess the school structures and practices

that limit Black adolescents' emotional experiences and may facilitate youth's perspectives on

how to address these issues. Further, family members and other significant adults in Black

adolescents' lives should also be invited as experts in conversations on Black adolescent

emotional development as these adults may have the deepest cultural understanding of Black

adolescents' emotion expressions and behaviors and thus, yield insights into best practices for

affirming and supporting Black adolescents' healthy emotion expression, regulation, and

understanding.

Conclusion

In the current paper we apply an ecological framework to describing the ways in which racial oppression acts on Black adolescents' emotional development through oppression in emotionally inhibiting school environments, while also recognizing the ways in which adaptive culture and family processes respond to racial oppression to influence Black adolescents' emotion developmental competencies. The description of emotionally inhibiting school environments in the current paper is not exhaustive, but it does provide a starting part for conceptualizing the features of environments that threaten to limit Black adolescents' emotional experiences to negativity and hopelessness. We strive to stimulate more research on the development of Black adolescents' emotions in broad recognition of the full spectrum of emotions that Black adolescents experience, but also in recognizing the various contexts and modes of expression that Black adolescents use to communicate their emotions. As movements continue to proclaim that Black lives matter and Black adolescents lift their voices to participate in their own liberation, it is important that we create spaces that communicate to them that their emotions matter, too.

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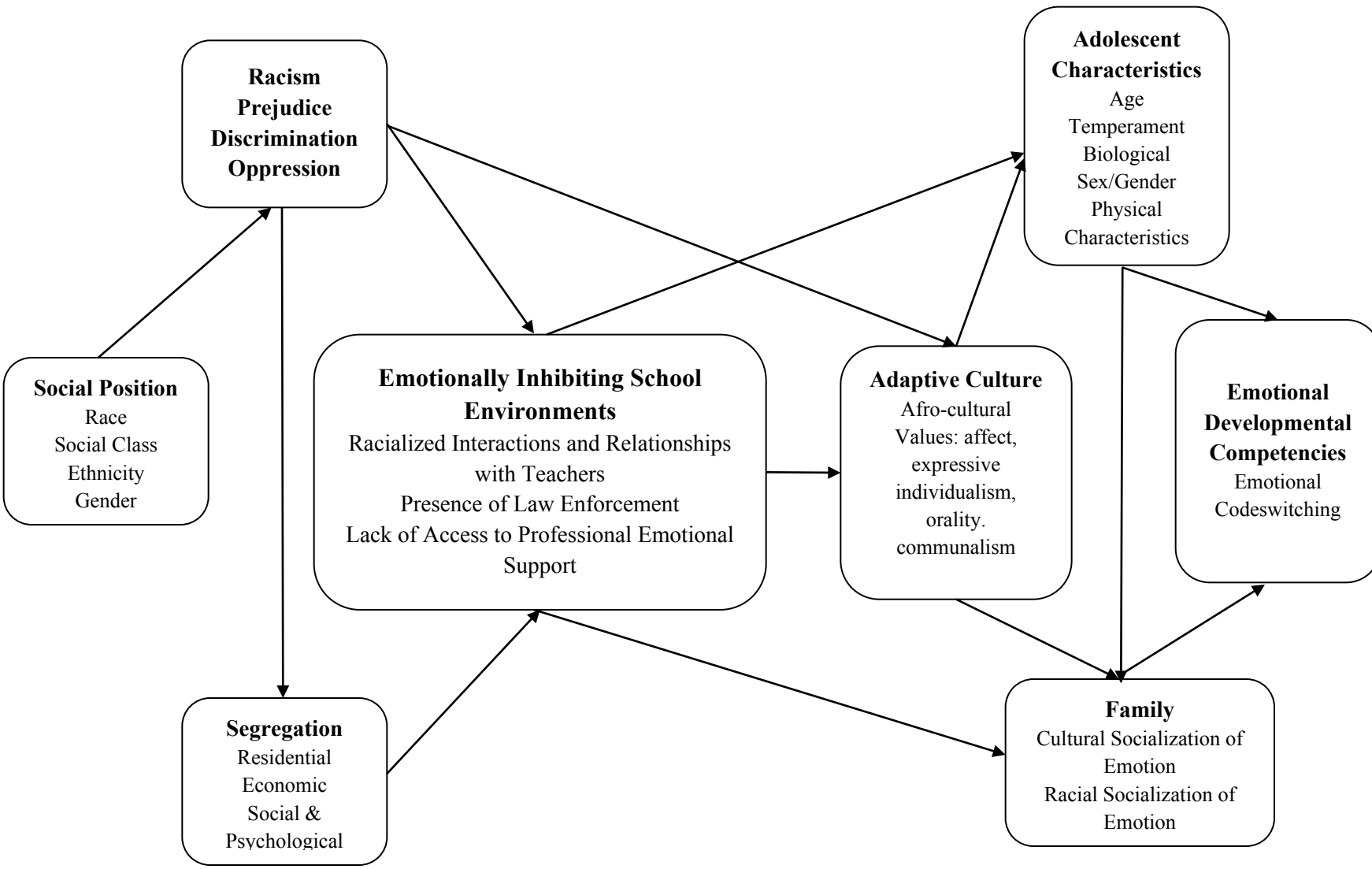

Figure 1. Application of García Coll and Colleagues' Integrative Model to Black Adolescents' Emotional Development