

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF BLACK
AND LATINX CHILDREN: SCHOOL IS (NOT ALWAYS) A SAFE SPACE

AN ABSTRACT

SUBMITTED ON THE FIRST DAY OF MAY 2019

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

OF THE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

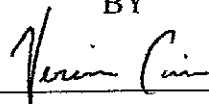
OF TULANE UNIVERSITY

FOR THE DEGREE

OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY



Veronica L. Coriano, M.S.

APPROVED:



Courtney N. Baker, Ph.D.
Director



Michael Cunningham, Ph.D.



Sarah Gray, Ph.D.



Stacy Overstreet, Ph.D.

Abstract

Racism and discrimination can lead to negative psychological, emotional, and physical health outcomes for people of color (Carter, 2007). While there is a sizeable literature exploring the psychological impact of racism and discrimination, adolescents and adults have been the focus of the majority of this research. This study employed secondary data analysis of data collected from a larger longitudinal study, the Safe Schools NOLA study, in order to explore the relationship between student perceptions of racial discrimination and internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors as well as the potential of teacher cultural competence to moderate this relationship within the school setting. Age differences in perceptions of racial discrimination were also explored. Primary analyses in the current study included 688 elementary school students and 65 teachers from six predominantly Black charter schools in New Orleans, Louisiana. Contrary to study hypotheses, student perceptions of racial discrimination were not linked to internalizing symptoms. However, in line with study hypotheses, perceptions of racial discrimination were linked to externalizing behaviors for Black students. Cultural competence was not found to moderate the relationship between perceptions of racial discrimination and internalizing or externalizing behaviors. Limitations of the cultural competence measurement tool are discussed. Contrary to study hypotheses, student age also did not have an impact on student perceptions of racial discrimination. Descriptive analyses were run for the smaller Latinx population and did not detect any relationships between key research variables within this population. Additionally, a comparison of the correlational data from the Black and Latinx subpopulation revealed that Latinx students experience fewer internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors in this study, despite endorsing overall higher levels of perceived discrimination than their Black counterparts,

suggesting differences in the way that racial discrimination is experienced between these groups. Implications for promoting well-being for Black and Latinx students are discussed.

Keywords: Black, Latinx, racial discrimination, psychological well-being, teacher cultural competence

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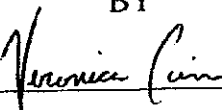
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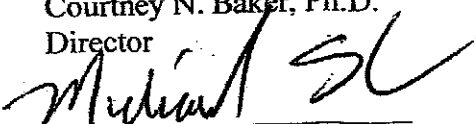
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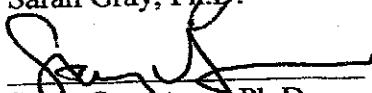

Stacy Overstreet, Ph.D.

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Introduction

The present-day impact of racial discrimination should be considered within a historical context that helps to explain why racism has been such a significant impediment to the well-being of Black and Brown people in the United States, and how this impact trickles down to the well-being of Black and Brown children. While a full history of racial dynamics in the United States is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief historical synopsis is offered both to contextualize the impact of racial discrimination on people of color in the United States and to demonstrate its wide-ranging and long-lasting impact.

Historical Context

Since the beginning of the colonization of the Americas, violence and force have been used to subjugate large groups of people, most infamously the Indigenous peoples of the United States (i.e., Native Americans) and the millions of Africans who were captured on the Western shores of Africa and brought to the United States as slaves, beginning in 1619 (Russel, 1937; Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). People of African descent were denied freedom, legally bought, sold, and traded as property, socially and politically excluded and, once granted freedom, continuously barred from access to quality resources that would enable them to successfully integrate into society and create better lives for themselves and their families (Carper, 1976; Russel, 1937).

In 1865, slavery was abolished with the passing of the 13th constitutional amendment (U.S. Const. amend. XIII). However, immediately following slavery, African Americans were disproportionately charged with and convicted of crimes and given harsher sentences than their White counterparts. Once imprisoned, African Americans

were forced to complete hard labor with little or no compensation through systems such as convict leasing which flourished through the 1920s (Carper, 1976). After the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), debt slavery (i.e., peonage) was one of few ways for African Americans to establish economic self-sufficiency given their lack of resources and education following generations of slavery. However, this system commonly left African Americans trapped in a cycle of work without pay and indebted to White landowners (Russell, 1937). This practice continued through the 1940s.

In the 1890s, the suppression of African Americans' rights continued through Jim Crow laws which legally enforced segregation throughout the South and led to a substandard quality of life for many African Americans. The Jim Crow era ended with the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, but the African American community was set back again when the drug wars emerged in the 1980s. The War on Drugs further contributed to inequality through its harsh and unequal enforcement in populations of color triggering mass incarceration at disproportionate rates (Wacquant, 2000). The generational impact of this historical disadvantage and continued inequality in the distribution of quality resources is a driver for why many African Americans are at risk for poor educational, economic, and mental and physical health outcomes in the present (Gaskin, Headen, & White-Means, 2005).

Latinxs, currently the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (Rivera et al., 2010), have had a different, but similarly unfavorable, experience of racism and discrimination in the United States. Although Latinx people vary in their racial and ethnic identities, individuals from this population can be targets of discrimination when they are perceived as Latinx or Black (e.g., a Dominican of African or mixed African

descent) in contrast to being perceived as White (Duany, 1998; Gómez, 2000). Existing research, conducted in the United States, suggests that people who self-identify as Hispanic or Latinx (i.e., Cuban, Dominican, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central or South American) report levels of discrimination comparable to that reported by Black people and significantly higher than that reported by White people (Moradi & Risco, 2006). As a result of discrimination, people of Latinx descent often lack access to opportunity and resources, which contributes to negative physical and mental health outcomes (Araújo, 2006).

After hundreds of years of slavery, genocide, forced migration, involuntary and unpaid labor, segregation, incarceration, and deportation, racism and discrimination are now less overt (Coates, 2008). However, recent events such as the shootings of unarmed Black and Brown men, women, and children by law enforcement and the subsequent Black Lives Matter movement, the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, and the recent presidential election along with its racially charged rhetoric (e.g., the promise to build a wall to prevent Mexican immigrants from entering the country) and actions (e.g., race-based violence at political rallies) have brought forth a revitalized sense of racial tension and hostility and reinitiated public displays of overt racism (e.g., the White nationalist rally in Charlottesville which claimed the lives of one counter protester and two police officers and injured dozens of others). In light of the current racial climate in the United States, the need to understand the present-day impact of racism and discrimination on people of color in the United States is pressing.

The terms racism and racial discrimination are often used interchangeably or are poorly defined (Giscombe & Lobel, 2005; Paradies, 2006b). Although there are diverse

definitions in the literature, in the current study, racism is defined as “a phenomena that results in avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources, and opportunities across racial or ethnic groups” (Priest, Paradies, Trenerry, Truong, Karlsen, Kelly, 2013, p. 116). Racism is expressed through “beliefs (e.g., negative and inaccurate stereotypes), emotions (e.g., fear/hatred) or [behaviors]/ practices (e.g., unfair treatment), ranging from open threats and insults (including physical violence) to phenomena deeply embedded in social systems and structures” (Priest et al., 2013, p. 116). Racial discrimination is defined as behavior and practices resulting from racism. Racial discrimination can occur at multiple levels (e.g., interpersonal, institutional/systems). Though there are several groups of people who experience these phenomena throughout the world, the present research will focus on the outcomes of Black and Latinx children as they are, respectively, the largest non-White racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

Risk for Disparate Mental Health Outcomes

Historical and present-day racism and discrimination are responsible for both the initiation and perpetuation of disparities within the United States. According to the Surgeon General’s report, *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity* “disparities...stem from minorities’ historical and present struggles with racism and discrimination, which affect their mental health and contribute to their lower economic, social, and political status” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001, p. 4). Racial discrimination is a unique stressor because it “foster[s] feelings of marginalization, decreased self-efficacy, and powerlessness over life choices” (Rivera et al., 2011, p. 459). Research has demonstrated direct links between racial discrimination and stress as well as many other indicators of psychological well-being, including self-esteem, depression,

anxiety, psychological distress, and life satisfaction (Carter, 2007; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Klonoff, Landry, & Ullman, 1999; Paradies, 2006).

Paradies' (2006) systematic review of 138 empirical studies on self-reported racism and health suggests that there is a strong association between racism and poor health outcomes, most commonly poor mental health outcomes. In this study, 70% of the 206 possible unfavorable mental health outcomes measured in the review were positively associated with racism. Unfavorable mental health outcomes were wide-ranging and included obsessive compulsive symptoms, somatization, stress, and negative affect. The most commonly reported unfavorable mental health outcomes were psychological distress, depression, and anxiety. Similarly, 42% of the favorable mental health outcomes measured were negatively associated with racism. Positive mental health outcomes included self-esteem, life satisfaction, and general mental health.

In Paradies (2006) review, 52% of the 491 mental health associations measured in African Americans were significantly tied to racism, while 56% of the 111 associations measured in Latinxs were significant. These findings highlight that there are a vast number of potentially negative outcomes associated with racism and highlight the importance of research that focuses on identifying these outcomes as well as protective factors that may buffer against negative outcomes. For adolescents and adults, the mediators between racism and negative mental health outcomes identified in the Paradies (2006) review were stress, self-esteem, and psychological distress. Stress was also found to be a moderator for general health outcomes. These findings provide evidence for a limited number of potential mediators and moderators of the relationship between racial discrimination and poor outcomes, but also point to the need for further exploration in

this area. Finally, the longitudinal studies included in Paradies' (2006) review suggest that racism precedes poor health, and that there is a stronger relationship between racism and mental health than with physical health outcomes. Because people of color report experiencing racial discrimination at rates significantly higher than their White counterparts, this is one plausible mechanism for disparities in health outcomes between these groups.

Risk Across the Lifespan

Research on adolescents and adults has been an asset to understanding the links between racial discrimination and health outcomes for people of color. Correlational studies suggest that African American and Latinx adults' experiences with racial discrimination are associated with poor mental health, including feelings of anger and depression (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Furthermore, research on adolescents has revealed that adolescents are at increased risk for poor academic and socioemotional outcomes when they do not feel respected by their teachers, including feelings of being devalued due to membership to a particular racial or ethnic group (Wang & Eccles, 2013). Findings such as these support the idea that perceptions of racial discrimination may increase the probability of negative outcomes.

Recent research findings demonstrating similar risk patterns in children point to the need to further explore the impact of racial discrimination on the well-being of children of color, particularly Black and Latinx children (Paradies, 2006). Consistent with adolescent and adult research that has identified a relationship between racial discrimination and negative mental and physical health outcomes (Carter, 2007; Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Harrell, 2000; Noh & Kaspar, 2003; Utsey, 1997; Way, Reddy,

& Rhodes, 2007), correlational research with children suggests that children's experiences with and perceptions of racial discrimination are linked to negative outcomes including stress, behavior problems, depression, and low self-esteem (Burchinal, Roberts, Zeisel, & Rowley, 2009; Coker et al., 2009; Dulin-Keita, Hannon III, Fernandez, & Cockerham, 2011; Rivera, López, Guarnaccia, Ramirez, Canino, & Bird, 2011; Szalacha, Erkut, García Coll, Alarcón, Fields, & Ceder, 2003). Although correlational in nature, these findings demonstrate that Black, White, and Latinx children are impacted by racial discrimination and that the negative outcomes associated with these experiences can begin during childhood. Furthermore, Black and Latinx children are significantly more likely to report racially discriminatory experiences than their White counterparts, further contributing to disparate outcomes. Related concepts (e.g., intergroup relationships and attitudes, inclusion/exclusion) have been more extensively researched in the child literature (Killen & Stangor, 2001; Killen, Pisacane, Lee-Kim, & Ardila-Rey, 2001); however, the number of studies specifically researching the links between racial discrimination and mental health for children (i.e., preschool through 8th grade) is limited.

Although perceptions of racial discrimination are reported by children, these rates (i.e., 12-44.2%) are lower than that suggested by research with adolescents and adults (i.e., up to 90%), which may be indicative of developmental differences in cognitive ability (Dulin-Keita et al., 2011; Feagin & Van Ausdale, 2001; Paradies, 2006). There is some debate as to whether children have the cognitive ability to perceive racial discrimination (Feagin & Van Ausdale, 2001). However, developmental research suggests that children as young as 6 years old have the cognitive skills (e.g., social cognition, cultural cognition) necessary to make such a perception (Brown & Bigler,

2005) and to demonstrate an awareness of stereotypes and an understanding of ingroup/outgroup as early as preschool (Killen et al., 2001). It is apparent, however, that as cognitive development progresses, and as children spend more time outside of the family, perceptions of racial discrimination are also likely to increase (Feagin & Van Ausdale, 2001).

Although differences in perceptions of racial discrimination may vary by age, the impact of these experiences in children's lives should not be overlooked or underestimated. As Black and Latinx children account for the majority of the approximately 20 million children of color under age 5 in the United States, there are promising personal and societal benefits of intervention with children from these historically disadvantaged groups (e.g., lower rates of school removal, juvenile delinquency, adult imprisonment, underemployment) (Karoly et al., 1998; Wilson, 2014) which can lead to better life outcomes across the lifespan. Black and Latinx children will be the focus of the current study.

School Context

Research suggests that up to 75% of children experiencing racial discrimination experience it at school (Coker et al., 2009). On one hand, this is unsurprising, given that children spend the majority of their time at school. However, because schools are supposed to be a safe environment that facilitates learning and development for all students, this finding is disconcerting. Given this finding, understanding how racial discrimination that occurs within this context impacts students' socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes (e.g., internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors) and factors that can protect against these outcomes may prove to be extremely valuable.

Unfortunately, the school context has not been extensively utilized as a context to evaluate the relationship between racial discrimination and mental health outcomes for children. However, related research does suggest that, for adolescents, a positive school climate is associated with higher levels of student achievement and lower rates of suspension and expulsion, self, esteem, and a wide range of mental health outcomes (Mattison & Aber, 2007; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013).

Previous studies within the school setting focused on overall school climate, but few have attended to school racial climate. However, findings from studies on overall school climate demonstrate that students are more likely to be physically, mentally, and more academically successful when they attend schools that are characterized by trust, cooperation, and support (Denny et al., 2011). One study that looked specifically at school racial climate found a link between school racial climate and student experiences of safety, support, and connectedness as well as behavioral outcomes and psychological well-being (Voight, Hanson, O'Malley, & Adekanye, 2015), while a second study found that adolescent's grades and attachment to school were impacted when they attended schools with higher than average levels of perceived prejudice (Benner, Crosnoe, & Eccles, 2014). Taken together, these studies suggest that school is an appropriate context to evaluate the relationships between school racial climate (i.e., perceptions of racial discrimination within the school setting) and socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes for children of color.

Cultural Competence

Not every child who experiences racial discrimination has poor outcomes. Therefore, understanding potential moderators of the relationship between racial

discrimination and poor mental health outcomes in children is important. Although the literature suggests that factors such as strong ethnic identity and parental warmth may moderate the relationship between racial discrimination and mental health outcomes for children, these findings are not always consistent. For example, Dulin-Keita et al. (2011) found that parental warmth was a protective factor for the Black children, but not the Latinx children in their study. Though home factors have been explored to some extent, school factors should also be explored.

Cultural competence (also referred to as cultural sensitivity, cultural proficiency, or cultural responsiveness) is defined as

the ability to engage in actions or create conditions that maximize the optimal development of client and client systems...the acquisition of awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society (ability to communicate, interact, negotiate, and intervene on behalf of clients from diverse backgrounds), and on an organizational/societal level, advocating effectively to develop new theories, practices, policies, and organizational structures that are more responsive to all groups (Sue, 2011, p. 802)

Although this term was first introduced within the field of counseling psychology, over the last decade it has become increasingly relevant across fields and is gaining empirical support as a method for improving therapeutic interventions (Sue, Zane, Nagayama Hall, & Berger, 2009).

Cultural competence is an ongoing, dynamic process, with the goal of developing a unique combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, through which one can best

understand, interact with, and effectively treat people from any background (Qureshi, Collazos, Ramos, & Casas, 2008). Considered within the school context, culturally competent practices are those which are able to most effectively facilitate learning and understanding at an academic and interpersonal level (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Cultural competence has the potential to buffer against the potentially damaging effects of perceived racial discrimination by increasing student engagement in learning and connectedness with teachers and creating an environment where students who feel that they are discriminated against at the school level feel respected and valued within their classrooms. An understanding of the potential for culturally competent practices to buffer against the impact of racial discrimination and facilitate more positive outcomes for students who feel discriminated against is critical as previous research has identified the school setting as one of the primary locations that students report experiencing racism (Coker et al., 2009). The evidence for cultural competence in related fields is that culturally competent practice has a moderate, positive effect on outcomes and leads to more engagement (Sue et al., 2009). Therefore, it follows that cultural competence in schools may offer some protection against the potentially deleterious effects of experiences of racial discrimination at school. To date, this relationship has not been explored; however, from the emerging empirical support for cultural competence as a method for improving treatment outcomes, it is possible that these positive effects might translate to the school setting. While the direct impact of cultural competence on student outcomes within the school context is undoubtedly worth examining, the focus of this study is to examine how culturally competent practices may reduce the impact of racial discrimination as racial discrimination has been identified in the literature as having

strong ties to poor outcomes and protective factors within the school setting are understudied.

The Current Study

The current study analyzed data from a larger longitudinal study with urban, racial minority youth in order to explore the relationship between perceptions of racial discrimination and socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes among Black and Latinx children within the school setting. Furthermore, this study explored how teacher cultural competence influences this relationship. Study hypotheses were as follows: 1) there is a positive relationship between perceptions of racial discrimination and internalizing symptoms; 2) there is a positive relationship between perceptions of discrimination and externalizing behaviors; 3) teacher cultural competence moderates the relationship between perceptions of racial discrimination and internalizing and externalizing behaviors such that children who perceive racial discrimination at their school, but who are in classrooms with teachers who demonstrate more cultural competence, have socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes that are less impacted than their peers who are in classrooms with teachers who demonstrate less cultural competence; and 4) younger children perceive less racial discrimination than children who are older.

Method

This study employed secondary data analysis of data collected from a larger longitudinal study, the Safe Schools NOLA study (Overstreet, Whalen, & Baker, 2016).

Study Context

The purpose of the Safe Schools NOLA study is to evaluate a trauma-informed school intervention designed to help foster teachers' abilities to understand how students'

experiences of trauma and vicarious experiences of trauma by school staff (via teacher-student interactions) can impact student and staff behavior. The ultimate goal of the Safe Schools NOLA study is to improve school safety. The Safe Schools NOLA study uses a multiple baseline design with four data collection timepoints per year. The first year, used in the current study, was the baseline year. Beginning in the second year, two schools each received the trauma-informed schools intervention. The Safe Schools NOLA study also uses a planned missingness design, in which students and teachers were randomly assigned to participate in data collection at two of the four timepoints each year. This method of data collection provides a large overall sample while reducing the burden on students and teachers (Little & Rhemtulla, 2013). This method also reduces testing effects that might occur by having every student participate in every wave. The Safe Schools NOLA study received approval by the Institutional Review Board affiliated with the Principal Investigator's University.

The Safe Schools NOLA study is being conducted in New Orleans. New Orleans is a moderately-sized, predominantly Black (60%) southern city in the United States. The New Orleans public school system is predominantly Black (90%) with a poverty rate of 84%. New Orleans public schools are 100% chartered schools. In order to capture a demographically representative sample, two large New Orleans charter school networks with locations throughout New Orleans were recruited to the study. Six schools within these charter networks agreed to participate in the study. Both charter networks are well established and demonstrate adequate academic progress by Louisiana state standards.

Participants

Students. Data from 688 students were analyzed in the current study. Participants

were evenly distributed across third through eighth grade. The overall student sample was approximately 93% Black, 6% Latinx, 1% White, and 1% multiracial. As Black and Latinx students were the populations of interest for the current study, students from all other racial and ethnic groups were excluded from analysis, including those who identified as biracial, or multiracial. Students included in the primary analyses were 49% male and 51% female and 100% Black or African American (see Table 1 for participant demographics).

Teachers. Sixty-five teachers were included in the current study. The majority of teachers in the primary analysis were White, 49.3%, followed by 41.6% Black or African American teachers, and 7% Latinx teachers. Teachers were 21% male, 79% female. Teachers from all other racial and ethnic groups were dropped due to small sample sizes.

Procedure

Student data were collected using paper surveys administered in small groups. Data from each student was collected during two out of four waves in the baseline year. At each wave of data collection, student evaluation measures included multiple self-report measures. It is estimated that students spent 45 minutes per wave completing these measures. Data were collected by the research collection team, comprised of Master's level researchers, Ph.D. level researchers, doctoral students in psychology, and undergraduate research assistants. Students received school supplies as an incentive for participation.

Teachers completed student ratings of all consented students in their classes using several rating scales. It is estimated that teachers spent approximately 30 minutes per wave completing surveys for a small group of students randomly assigned to that wave.

Teachers reported on each student twice per year. Teachers and school staff also completed self-report measures about their own demographics, attitudes, behavior, and other relevant constructs. Teachers received \$10 for every 30 minutes per wave when reporting on students (e.g., student ratings) in the form of a gift card. Teachers were also paid \$10 for every 40 minutes of data collection about themselves (e.g., teacher self-report) in the form of a gift card.

Finally, teachers also participated in 20-minute classroom observations. Classroom observations were conducted using several frequency and duration codes as well as global codes. Frequency codes were used to code specific behaviors within an observation period, while global codes were used to provide general impressions on teacher and student performance in a number of areas including classroom management, teacher responsiveness, student participation, student compliance, socially disruptive behaviors, teacher responsiveness, and teacher cultural proficiency. Observations were conducted by trained graduate students in psychology and one Ph.D. level faculty researcher. Observers were predominantly White and female. Observers were trained with procedures used in previous observation studies, which included in-person trainings, practice videos, homework, and extensive training and review of a coding manual (e.g., Rusby, Foster, & Taylor, 2008). Thirty percent of all observations were double coded.

Measures

Student and teacher demographics. Student gender, race/ethnicity, and grade level were collected from the school rosters as the rosters were determined to be a more accurate report of student race/ethnicity than the self-report measure. Teacher race/ethnicity was collected from the teacher self-report survey. In the demographics

section, teachers were asked to identify their race and could check as many boxes as they wished. In a separate question, they were asked to identify, with a yes or a no, if they were Hispanic/Latinx.

Racial discrimination. The school climate portion of the Delaware School Climate Survey-Student (DSCS-S; Bear, Gaskins, Blank, & Chen, 2011) was used to assess student perceptions of racial discrimination at school. The DSCS-S is a larger measure that assesses how students perceive the school environment (e.g., school safety, fairness). Previous research has demonstrated high internal consistency and concurrent validity for this measure in elementary, middle, and high schools and across ethnic groups (Bear et al., 2011). Examples of questions from the DSCS-S that are relevant to assessing racial discrimination are “teachers treat students of all races with respect” and “the color of a person’s skin doesn’t matter to teachers in this school.” These questions were derived from the “respect for diversity” subscale which included three items. Students selected one of 5 choice points ranging from “disagree a lot” to “agree a lot”. A summary score was created by averaging subscale items. See Appendix A for the full subscale. The internal reliability of this measure, $\alpha=.67$, approached the acceptable range.

Socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes. Socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes (i.e., internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors) for children were assessed using three measures: the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997; see Appendix B), the Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Checklist (TOCA-C; Leaf, Schultz, Keys, & Ialongo, 2002; see Appendix C), and the Children’s Social Behavior Scale (CSBS; Crick, 1996, see Appendix D).

The SDQ is a brief behavioral screening questionnaire that can be used with

children ages 3-16 years old. On this measure, students were asked to select one of three choice points to indicate whether they believed a number of statements to be not true, somewhat true, or certainly true of themselves over the last six months. Examples of questions from this measure are “I worry a lot,” “I am often unhappy, depressed, and tearful,” “I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want,” and “I get very angry and often lose my temper.” Items on each scale were averaged to create a summary score. The five-item emotional symptoms subscale and five-item conduct problems subscale were used in the current study. A robust literature has examined the reliability and validity of the SDQ. Interrater reliability, test-retest reliability, and validity have been found to be satisfactory both in and outside of the U.S. (Bourdon, Goodman, Rae, Simpson, & Koretz, 2005; Goodman, 2001). Internal reliability for the emotional symptoms subscale, $\alpha=.78$, was acceptable, while the conduct problems subscale, $\alpha=.67$, approached the acceptable range.

The TOCA-C was developed to measure children’s social, emotional, and behavioral functioning. Data from the five-item internalizing subscale was used for the current study. Teachers respond to questions using a six-point Likert scale (1 = never to 6 = almost always). Scores within each subscale were averaged to create a subscale score. Higher scores on internalizing measure indicate more internalizing symptoms. The factor structure of the TOCA-C is consistent across gender, race, and age; internal consistency is also high (Koth, Bradshaw & Leaf, 2009). Cronbach’s alpha was high, $\alpha=.88$, indicating that items included in this scale were internally consistent and suggest that this scale is a reliable measure.

The Children’s Social Behavior Scale (CSBS) was also administered as a part of

the teacher ratings of students. Scores for each of the four items in the overt aggression subscale were averaged to create a subscale score. Items on this scale are on a five-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = all of the time). Example items include “this child hits, shoves, or pushes peers” and “this child threatens to hit or to beat up other children.” Numerous studies have indicated that the CSBS has high internal consistency across genders and is suitable for use with children as young as preschool age (Crick, 1996; Crick, Casas, & Moscher, 1997). Cronbach’s alpha was high, $\alpha=.95$, indicating that items included in this scale were internally consistent.

Cultural competence. Teacher observations were collected using the Assessing School Settings: Interactions of Student and Teachers (ASSIST; Rusby, Taylor, & Milchak, 2001). The ASSIST observational measure was designed to evaluate social processes occurring in the classroom. The measure of teacher “cultural proficiency” was used to evaluate culturally competent teaching practices using global codes. Examples of questions included in this eight-item measure are “teacher connects lessons to real world examples” and “teacher engages in personal storytelling or sharing.” Scores are given on a five-point Likert scale from “never” to “almost continuously.” A scale score was created by averaging the item scores, with higher scores reflecting more cultural proficiency. See Appendix E for the full cultural proficiency measure. Items on the cultural proficiency measure were derived from the Debnam, Pas, Bottiani, Cash, & Bradshaw (2015) study. However, it is important to note that the internal reliability for this measure was poor, $\alpha=0.38$, which suggests that the items included in this measure may not produce a reliable assessment of cultural competence. IRR for the cultural competence measure in the current study was 78.57%.

Analytic Approach

The current study analyzed cross-sectional baseline data from the Safe Schools NOLA study. Data for each participant was collapsed across the four possible timepoints of data collection during the baseline year to create average scores for each participant. Because the data are nested (i.e., students grouped within classrooms), multilevel modeling was used to test the hypotheses. Specifically, I fit two-level random-intercepts mixed linear models using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). All analyses were run with full maximum likelihood (FML) estimation and 10,000 iterations. Because the clusters of observations are not independent of each other, the independence assumption of OLS regression is violated. Using HLM allows the associations between the predictors and outcomes to be evaluated accounting for the hierarchical data structure of children within classrooms and classrooms within schools. HLM 7.0 (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) was used to fit multi-level models. All models controlled for student age and student gender at level 1 and for teacher race/ethnicity at level 2. Each of these variables was controlled for because there may be differences in the relationships between perceptions of discrimination and its connectedness to internalizing and externalizing behaviors related to these background variables.

There were two student-reported outcomes (emotional symptoms, conduct problems) and two teacher-reported outcomes (internalizing symptoms, overt aggression), each of which were evaluated in separate models. To evaluate hypotheses 1) that student perceptions of racial discrimination are linked to internalizing symptoms and 2) that perceptions of racial discrimination are linked to externalizing behavior problems, each of the four outcomes (i.e., two internalizing behavior problems and two

externalizing behavior problems) were predicted in separate models by racial discrimination, controlling for student age, student gender, and teacher race/ethnicity. Gender was dummy coded (0=male, 1 = female). Race/ethnicity was also dummy coded with Black as the reference group and 1 indicating membership in a particular racial or ethnic group.

To evaluate hypothesis 3) that teacher cultural competence moderates the relationship between perception of racial discrimination and student outcomes, teacher cultural competence was added to the model at level 2, and the cross-level interaction between racial discrimination and cultural competence was evaluated. Dichotomous variables and interaction terms were entered uncentered; continuous variables were grand-mean centered. Grand-mean (rather than group-mean) centering was used because to assess how perceptions of racial discrimination influence individual students relative to the average student, rather than relative to their own classroom average. All variables at Level 1 were tested for randomly varying slopes; final models estimated variance components only when terms were associated with significant variability (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). See Figure 1 for a conceptual model of hypotheses 1 through 3.

To evaluate hypothesis 4) that students who are younger will perceive less racial discrimination than children who are older, I evaluated a Pearson product-moment correlation between student age and racial discrimination. Finally, descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, and correlations) were utilized to evaluate the smaller Latinx subpopulation as only Black or African American students were included in the primary analyses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

In the Black student sample, students who reported perceiving more racial discrimination were rated by their teachers as having more externalizing behaviors than students who perceived less racial discrimination, $r(677) = .14, p < .01$, (see Table 1). Students who reported perceiving more racial discrimination also self-reported more externalizing behaviors than students who reported perceiving less racial discrimination $r(823) = .19, p < .01$. More perceived racial discrimination was associated with less teacher cultural competence, $r(517) = -.10, p < .05$. More teacher cultural competence was associated with less teacher reported externalizing behaviors, $r(536) = -.17, p < .01$ and less student reported externalizing behaviors, $r(518) = -.12, p < .01$. Higher self-reported internalizing symptoms were associated with higher teacher ratings of internalizing symptoms, $r(688) = .13, p = .01$. Self-reported internalizing symptoms were also associated with female gender, $r(825) = .16, p < .01$, and younger age, $r(825) = -.11, p < .01$. Higher teacher ratings of externalizing behaviors were associated with male gender, $r(804) = -.13, p < .01$. Higher teacher rated externalizing behaviors were also associated with higher teacher reported internalizing symptoms, $r(804) = .28, p < .01$. Self-reported externalizing behaviors were associated with male gender, $r(825) = -.12, p < .01$, more self-reported internalizing symptoms, $r(825) = .26, p < .05$, and more teacher reported externalizing behaviors, $r(678) = .31, p < .01$. Teachers who were Black or African American had more students in higher grade levels than teachers who were not Black or African American, $r(670) = .25, p < .01$, and were rated as less culturally competent than teachers who were not Black or African American, $r(670) = -.13, p < .01$. White teachers had more students in

lower grade levels than teachers who were not White, $r(670) = -.08, p < .05$, and were rated as more culturally competent than teachers who were not White, $r(670) = .19, p < .01$.

Latinx teachers also had more students in lower grade levels than teachers who were not Latinx, $r(670) = -.30, p < .01$, and were rated as less culturally competent than teachers who were not Latinx, $r(670) = -.09, p < .05$.

Internalizing Symptoms

To begin, a null model was run for each internalizing measure (i.e., self-report and teacher report). The significant hypothesis test associated with the fixed effects at level 2 in the null model for the teacher report, $y_{00} = 2.35, t = 40.21, p < .001$, and the null model for the self-report measure, $y_{00} = 1.73, t = 74.05, p < .001$, suggests that the mean internalizing score across classrooms is different from zero. Furthermore, the estimate of the variance component at level 2 for the teacher report, $u_o = .14, X^2 = 191.45, p < .001$, and the self-report measure, $u_o = .01, X^2 = 91.30, p < .01$ were significant and suggest that there is unexplained variation between classrooms on internalization scores. Finally, an intraclass correlation (ICC) was calculated to determine the variance in internalization that is attributable to individual students versus classrooms. For the teacher report, $ICC = .19$ or 19%. This suggests that 19% of the variance can be attributed to classroom level factors, while 81% of the remaining variance can be attributed to individual variability. For the self-report measure, $ICC = .05$ or 5%. This suggests that 5% of the variance can be attribute to classroom level factors, while 95% of the remaining variance can be attributed to individual variability. It is unsurprising that the classroom level factors account for a small portion of the variability in the self-report measure as individual student ratings of themselves are less impacted by classroom/teacher level factors than

teacher report. Together, these findings warrant the use of HLM to better understand the relationship between racial discrimination and internalizing behaviors.

To test the first hypothesis, that racial discrimination is a significant predictor of internalizing symptoms, two separate conditional models were run including teacher reported and student self-reported internalizing symptoms from perceptions of racial discrimination. Results from neither model supported hypothesis 1, that racial discrimination is a significant predictor of internalizing symptoms (see Tables 2 and 3). However, for self-reported internalizing symptoms, gender ($\gamma_{10} = .16, t = 3.87, p < .01$) and grade level ($\gamma_{20} = -.03, t = -2.97, p < .01$) were significant predictors. Females reported more internalizing symptoms than males, and younger children reported more internalizing symptoms than older children. Although the relationship between racial discrimination and self-reported internalizing symptoms was not significant, the relationship was influenced by teacher race, $\gamma_{31} = .13, t = 3.04, p < .01$. Results were graphed to understand the relationship (see Figure 2). The graph illustrated that more racial discrimination was associated with more self-reported internalizing symptoms when teachers were White, but that more racial discrimination was associated with less self-reported internalizing symptoms for students with Black teachers.

Externalizing Behaviors

The significant hypothesis test associated with the fixed effects at level 2 in the null model for the teacher report, $\gamma_{00} = 1.96, t = 33.02, p < .001$, and for the self-report measure of externalizing behaviors, $\gamma_{00} = 1.56, t = 79.11, p < .001$, suggests that the mean externalizing behavior score across classrooms is different from zero. Furthermore, the estimate of the variance component at level 2 for the teacher report, $u_o = .11, X^2 = 143.34$,

$p < .001$, and the self-report measure, $u_0 = .01$, $X^2 = 87.46$, $p < .05$, suggests that there is unexplained variation between classrooms on externalizing behaviors. These significant findings warrant the use of HLM to better understand the relationship between racial discrimination and externalizing behaviors as there is variation between students' externalizing behaviors, some of which can be accounted for by classroom level factors. An intraclass correlation (ICC) was calculated to determine the variance in externalization that is attributable to individual students versus classrooms. For the teacher report, $ICC = .15$ or 15%. This suggests that 15% of the variance can be attributed to classroom level factors, while 85% of the remaining variance can be attributed to individual variability. For the self-report measure, $ICC = .06$ or 6%. This suggests that 6% of the variance can be attributed to classroom level factors, while 94% of the remaining variance can be attributed to individual variability.

Next, to assess hypothesis 2, a conditional model was run predicting teacher reported externalizing behaviors from racial discrimination. Results from this model supported hypothesis 2, that racial discrimination is a significant predictor of externalizing behaviors, $y_{30} = .18$, $t = 2.13$, $p < .05$, as more racial discrimination was associated with more externalizing behaviors. Gender, $y_{10} = .16$, $t = 3.81$, $p < .01$, also significantly predicted externalizing (see Table 4). Results indicated that males were rated as having more teacher reported externalizing behaviors than females.

A conditional model was also run predicting self-reported externalizing behaviors from racial discrimination. Results from this model also supported hypothesis 2, that racial discrimination is a significant predictor of externalizing behaviors, $y_{30} = .10$, $t = 3.59$, $p < .001$, as more racial discrimination was associated with more self-reported

externalizing problems. Gender, $y_{10} = -.09$, $t = -2.89$, $p < .01$, also significantly predicted externalizing behaviors (see Table 5). Males reported more externalizing behaviors than females.

Cultural Competence as a Moderator of Unfavorable Outcomes

To test the third hypothesis, that cultural competence is a moderator between perceptions of racial discrimination and internalizing and externalizing behaviors, four additional conditional models were run. Two predicted internalizing symptoms from perceptions of racial discrimination at level 1 and teacher cultural competence at level 2, controlling for student age, student gender, and teacher race/ethnicity. The other two predicted externalizing behaviors from perceptions of racial discrimination at level 1 and teacher cultural competence at level 2, controlling for student age, student, gender, and teacher race/ethnicity. The results of these analyses did not support hypothesis 3, that there is an interaction effect between racial discrimination, teacher cultural competence, and any measures of internalizing behavior problems (see Table 6 and Table 7) or externalizing behavior problems (see Table 8 and Table 9).

Although the cultural competence hypothesis was not supported, several of the control variables were statistically significantly related to student well-being outcomes. For the internalizing behavior model, gender, $y_{10} = .17$, $t = 3.88$, $p < .01$, and grade level, $y_{20} = -.03$, $t = -3.09$, $p < .01$, significantly predicted self-reported internalizing symptoms. Females self-reported more internalizing symptoms than males and younger students self-reported more internalizing symptoms than older students (see Table 7). Additionally, the relationship between racial discrimination and self-reported internalizing symptoms was influenced by teacher race, $y_{32} = .13$, $t = 3.03$, $p < .01$. Results were graphed to understand

the relationship (see Figure 3) and indicated that more racial discrimination was associated with more internalizing symptoms when teachers were White, but that more racial discrimination was associated with less internalizing symptoms when teachers were Black.

In addition, for the externalizing behaviors model, teacher cultural competence significantly predicted teacher reported externalizing behaviors, $\beta = -.33$, $t = -2.52$, $p < .05$, such that more cultural competence was associated with less externalizing behaviors (see Table 8). Gender also significantly predicted teacher reported externalizing behaviors, $\beta = -.31$, $t = -3.80$, $p < .01$, such that males were rated as having more externalizing behaviors than females. Gender, $\beta = -.09$, $t = -2.90$, $p < .01$, also significantly predicted self-reported externalizing behaviors (see Table 9). Males reported more externalizing behaviors than females.

Perceptions of Racial Discrimination and Age

A correlational analysis between age and perceptions of racial discrimination did not indicate that there is a relationship between these two variables. Hypothesis 4 was not supported. Age did not significantly relate to perceptions of racial discrimination, $r(823) = .02$, n/s. See Table 1.

Latinx Students

In the Latinx sample ($n = 59$), correlational analyses revealed that student reported internalizing symptoms were associated with student gender, $r(26) = .50$, $p < .01$. Female students self-reported more internalizing symptoms than males. Teacher reported externalizing behaviors were associated with student gender, $r(45) = -.37$, $p < .05$. Male students were rated higher than female students in externalizing behaviors. The teacher

report of externalizing behaviors was also associated with the teacher report of internalizing symptoms, $r(45)=-.38, p<.05$. Higher scores on the teacher reported externalizing behaviors measure were associated with lower scores on the teacher reported internalizing measure. Having a Black or African American teacher was associated with higher ratings on the self-report internalizing symptoms scale. Having a Latinx teacher was associated with being in a lower grade level, $r(43)=-.41, p<.01$. Along with participant demographics, means, standard deviations, and correlations between all variables are presented in Table 10.

To further evaluate the Latinx student data, means for Latinx students were compared to the means from the Black student population, this comparison revealed that the Latinx student population was slightly more male than the Black student populations and slightly older than the Black student population. With the exception of the student self-report measure of internalizing symptoms, Latinx students were also rated lower on all measures of internalizing behavior problems and externalizing behavior problems (see Table 11) than Black students, despite having overall levels of perceived racism, $M=4.10, SD=.62$, that were higher than that of Black students, $M=3.60, SD=.91$. Teachers of Latinx students were also rated higher in cultural competence, $M=2.41, SD=.46$, than teachers of Black students, $M=2.34, SD=.44$. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution as teachers of Latinx students also had Black students in their classroom and vice versa, so this finding may not be meaningfully interpretable.

Discussion

This study built upon previous research that has demonstrated a number of unfavorable outcomes associated with perceptions of racial discrimination (Carter, 2007;

Paradies, 2006). Utilizing hierarchical linear modeling to conduct secondary data analysis of data from Safe Schools NOLA project, a larger study evaluating a trauma-informed schools intervention in six New Orleans charter schools, the current study extends the examination of the relationship between perceptions of racial discrimination and internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors to a younger population, including children as young as 8 years of age (i.e., 3rd graders). Furthermore, this study is one of the first to evaluate teacher cultural competence as a buffer (i.e., moderator) against the potentially harmful effects of racial discrimination. Analyses using HLM were run to assess the impact of student perceptions of racial discrimination on teacher-reported and self-reported internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors. Teacher cultural competence was also included in the analyses in order to evaluate if students in classrooms with teachers who were rated as more culturally competent would be less impacted by perceptions of racial discrimination than their peers in classrooms with teachers who were rated as less culturally competent. Age was also explored as a predictor of perceived racial discrimination.

Main Findings

Support for study hypotheses were mixed. This study did not find support for the hypothesis that perceptions of racial discrimination are linked to internalizing symptoms. Although the literature suggests that racial discrimination is linked to a number of internalizing symptoms, such as depression and low self-esteem (Burchinal et al., 2009; Coker et al., 2009), there is also evidence that there are a number of factors beyond the school setting that can help to buffer against these effects such as having a strong racial identity or family structure (Dulin-Keita et al., 2011). Therefore, all students who

experience racial discrimination are not vulnerable to unfavorable outcomes. Since teacher cultural competence was the only potential buffer measured in this study, it is possible that students who did not display or endorse internalizing symptoms were protected by other factors that are beyond the scope of this study.

In contrast, support was found for the hypothesis that perceptions of racial discrimination are linked to both teacher-reported and self-reported externalizing behaviors. In line with the literature, this finding suggests that children, like adolescents and adults, are impacted by racial discrimination in meaningful ways (Burchinal et al., 2009; Coker et al., 2009; Dulin-Keita et al., 2011; Szalacha et al., 2003). For the students in this study, this finding suggests that the externalizing behaviors they engage in, may, at some level be influenced by racial discrimination that they experience within the school setting. Racial discrimination is likely to not only influence student behaviors, but how these behaviors are perceived and responded to by school staff. Unfortunately, students of color, who are most often the targets of racial discrimination may be doubly vulnerable to unfavorable outcomes because of this.

Contrary to study hypotheses, no support was found for the hypothesis that teacher cultural competence is a moderator of the relationship between racial discrimination and internalizing or externalizing behaviors. Although research on cultural competence suggests that culturally competent practices promote positive outcomes in the context of therapeutic relationships (Sue et al., 2009), culturally competent teaching practices were not found to have the same effect in the current study. However, as cultural competence is difficult to measure, the lack of support for this hypothesis may have resulted from an inability to adequately capture culturally competent practices

occurring within the classroom setting. This measurement difficulty is evidenced by the poor reliability of the cultural competence measured utilized in this study and demonstrates the need to identify better methods to capture this competency.

Furthermore, the hypothesis that age is a significant predictor of perceptions of racial discrimination was not supported. Although we know from the literature that cognitive capacity increases over the course of development (Brown & Bigler, 2005), it is also apparent from the literature that children, as early as preschool age, are able to pick up on racial cues in their environment (Clark & Clark, 1947; Killen et al., 2001). Additionally, while children are likely to encounter more racial discrimination as they come in contact with more people across multiple settings, because this study was specific to the school setting, it is likely that experiences within this context are similar across age groups within this setting. This finding highlights the importance of exploring children's experiences of racial discrimination within schools as most children spend more time in school than in any other community setting.

Although only correlational analyses were conducted for the Latinx student data, racial discrimination was not found to be related to internalizing or externalizing symptoms for Latinx students. Furthermore, teacher cultural competence was not associated with internalizing symptoms, externalizing behaviors, or with perceptions of racial discrimination, and age was not associated with perceptions of racial discrimination. However, a few relationships were detected, despite the small sample size. First, Latinx female students self-reported more internalizing symptoms than males, and male students were rated higher in externalizing behaviors than female students by teacher report. Secondly, teacher report of internalizing and externalizing behaviors were

related such that students who were rated higher in externalizing behaviors were rated lower in internalizing behaviors. Additionally, for Latinx students, having a Black or African American teacher was associated with higher ratings on the self-report internalizing symptoms scale than Latinx students who had teachers who were not Black. Finally, a comparison of the Black and Latinx student data revealed that Latinx students were rated lower on 3 out of 4 measures of internalizing behavior problems and externalizing behavior problems than Black students, despite having overall levels of perceived racism that were higher than that of Black students. This finding suggests that there may be meaningful differences in the way that Black and Latinx students experience and process racial discrimination and highlights the importance of carefully considering the current and historical experiences of different racial and ethnic groups and how they might be impacted by them in the present.

Additional Findings

Although support for study hypotheses was mixed, a number of other interesting findings were revealed. First, correlational analyses revealed that students who perceived more racial discrimination at school were in classrooms with teachers who were rated as less culturally competent than other teachers. One interpretation of this finding is that there is a protective benefit of having a culturally competent teacher, such that being in a classroom with a teacher that is rated as more culturally competent reduces students' overall perceptions of a racial discriminatory climate within their school. This interpretation aligns with research that indicates that cultural competence promotes positive outcomes (Sue, 2001; Sue et al., 2009), in this case, the positive outcome being a reduced sense of school level racial discrimination which is linked to being in a

classroom with a culturally competent teacher. However, it is important to note that correlational analyses do not imply causality, and that there are a number of reasons that this relationship may exist that were not accounted for in this study, such as the quality of individual student and teacher relationships within each classroom which may offer protective benefits, and students' experiences with and exposure to racial discrimination outside of school which may shape their perceptions of and responses to racial discrimination within the school setting.

Secondly, correlational analyses demonstrated that teachers who were rated as more culturally competent had students with lower ratings of child-reported externalizing behaviors. In contrast, however, this relationship was not detected for teacher-reported externalizing behaviors which may reflect differences in how children perceive themselves and how they are perceived by their teachers. This finding also aligns with cultural competency literature that suggests that cultural competence promotes positive outcomes, in this case, lower child-reported externalizing behaviors (Qureshi et al., 2008). Although these correlational links do not imply not causality, they are notable as they tie a number of key research variables (i.e., racial discrimination, cultural competence, externalizing behaviors) together in a meaningful way, suggesting that the relationships between these variables may be worth further exploring.

In addition, several control variables were predictive of child well-being outcomes. For example, female gender was linked to having more internalizing symptoms than male gender and younger students self-reported more internalizing symptoms than older students. Additionally, in line with the literature, males were rated more highly in externalizing behaviors by self-report and teacher report than female

students (Lahey et al., 2000). Developmental research indicates that both gender and age influence behavioral outcomes, such that males and older children are reported to have higher levels of externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression) than females and younger children (Hicks et al., 2007; Lahey et al., 2000). The current study exemplifies this trend.

Finally, although the relationship between racial discrimination and internalizing symptoms was not significant, the relationship between racial discrimination and self-reported internalizing symptoms was impacted by teacher race, such that students who were in classrooms with teachers who were White endorsed more internalizing symptoms than students who were in classrooms with Black teachers. On the contrary, having a Black teacher was associated with having fewer internalizing symptoms. However, when graphed, the need for this finding to be interpreted thoughtfully becomes apparent as Black students with Black teachers also reported more internalizing symptoms in a context where less racial discrimination was being perceived and reported fewer internalizing symptoms in a context where more racial discrimination was being perceived. However, this finding indicates that teacher race may be an area worth further exploring as differential student outcomes were found to be linked to teacher race. Although we know that positive teacher and student relationships, regardless of racial or ethnic match, can contribute to positive outcomes (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003), it is notable that this study found support for increased internalizing symptomatology associated with increased perceptions of racial discrimination when teachers were White, but that the opposite effect was found for Black teachers.

Implications

Altogether, the findings of the current study suggest that racial discrimination

may be related to specific types of unfavorable outcomes, rather than having an overall negative effect, and that student level factors (i.e., age and gender) and teacher level factors (i.e., teacher race/ethnicity) may play a role in this relationship. We know, from previous research, that children of color pick up on racial cues in their environment as to what is deemed desirable, preferable, and valuable (Clark & Clark, 1947) as well as which group(s) they belong to (Killen et al., 2001). However, this preference does not necessarily translate into internalized beliefs about oneself, but may rather reflect an awareness of what the socially desirable or acceptable answer is and a desire to give a socially desirable response.

Regardless of the underlying rationale, children are aware of racial messages in their environment and may be impacted by them. The current study builds on the idea that children are able to pick up on racial themes, but takes this concept one step further by exploring specific ways in which perceptions of racial discrimination may impact children within the school setting. In this study, a relationship was identified between perceptions of racial discrimination and externalizing behaviors in children (grades 3-8) such that students who perceived more racial discrimination were rated by their teachers and by themselves as having more externalizing behaviors than peers who reported perceiving less racial discrimination. This relationship was specific to externalizing behaviors, revealing differential pathways associated with internalizing versus externalizing outcomes. Furthermore, in line with the literature, males self-endorsed and were rated by their teachers as having more externalizing behaviors than female students. Taken together, these findings lend support to the idea that students, particularly male students, who are in schools where they perceive teachers to engage in racially

discriminatory actions tend to exhibit more externalizing behaviors than students who do not perceive racial discrimination in their school environment.

As students of color, particularly Black or African American boys, are often disciplined more frequently and severely for behavior challenges (Bryan, 2000; Monroe, 2005), it is important to acknowledge that, at some level, the behaviors exhibited as well as how their behaviors are interpreted or responded to, may be partially and cyclically driven by cues that they receive from the school environment about who is valued and respected in regards to race. Although perceptions of racial discrimination are just one factor of many which may impact the success of students of color within the school setting, it is also an area that school personnel can make a conscious and direct effort to combat. An attempt was made to identify factors within the school setting (i.e., teacher cultural competence) that could buffer against this effect; however, no support for cultural competence as a moderator of the relationship between racial discrimination and unfavorable outcomes was found. However, for the teacher reported externalizing behavior model, direct effects of cultural competence were identified such that students with teachers were rated higher in cultural competence were rated lower in externalizing problems.

Additionally, age was not found to be a significantly linked to the amount of racial discrimination that students perceived, revealing that children, as young as 8 years old, may be able to pick up on racial discrimination in a manner similar to adolescents and adults. Considering related research that looks at racial preferences and ingroup/outgroup awareness in young children (Killen & Stangor, 2001; Killen et al., 2001), this finding makes sense and demonstrates that not only are children of color

aware of racial discrimination, but may also be impacted by it in meaningful ways.

Furthermore, this finding suggests that the study of the impact of perceptions of racial discrimination on children is warranted as children may, in fact, have the cognitive capacity early in their development to be impacted by racial discrimination at a deeper or more direct level than generally believed.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had a number of strengths in its design. One strength is that this study benefitted from utilizing data collected over the course of an entire school year, which helped to better capture the true functioning of students rather than a rating or snapshot of students at one period in time. Another strength is the use of both student self-report data and teacher ratings which helped to ensure a more well-rounded perspective of each child. Finally, the use of hierarchical linear modeling took nesting into account in order to help better understand the complexities of the relationships that were revealed in simple correlational analyses as HLM is designed account for similarities in student data that may have resulted from being in the same classroom with the same teacher. However, there are a number of study limitations that may have also impacted study outcomes.

One study limitation is that internalizing symptoms are not as obviously detectable as externalizing behaviors, so it is possible that teachers' ratings of their students' internalizing symptoms were impacted by an inability to directly observe some of the internalizing symptoms included in the teacher measure (e.g., fearful, worried, sad). Similarly, it may be more difficult for students to self-identify internalizing symptoms than it is for them to endorse externalizing behaviors as externalizing behaviors are more concrete and overt and, therefore, may be easier to self-identify than

internalizing symptoms, therefore, making it more difficult to adequately capture internalizing behaviors. Although this difficulty could help to explain why support was not found for the hypothesis that perceptions of racial discrimination predict more internalizing symptoms, it is also possible that students are simply not impacted by perceived racial discrimination in such a way that it is linked to internalizing symptoms. When considering the wealth of literature on resilience in people of color (Resnick, 2000), it makes sense that many children of color are able not to internalize racial messages that they receive within their school environment in such a way that it impacts them at an emotional level (i.e., internalizing symptoms); however, that is not to minimize the potential impact or to imply that racial discrimination does not impact children of color in other important and significant ways.

Another study limitation was in the measurement of teacher cultural competence. Although teacher cultural competence was not found to be a significant influence on the relationship between perceptions of racial discrimination and internalizing symptoms or externalizing behaviors, there are several factors that may have influenced study results. Most notably, the internal reliability for this measure was poor, making it difficult to know whether or not this measure is able to adequately measure this construct. Additionally, the teacher cultural competence data was collected through classroom observational data. Because cultural competency is a characteristic that may not be overtly demonstrated by teachers throughout the school day, it is possible that observational measures were only able to capture a snapshot of the level of cultural competence that a teacher actually possesses and that ratings of cultural competence may have been different dependent upon the day, time, or lesson that was being observed.

Admittedly, previous research on the cultural proficiency measure noted that individuals tended to rate themselves higher in cultural proficiency than they were rated by independent observers using the ASSIST measure (Debnam et al, 2015), and although higher levels of internal reliability ($\alpha=.56$) of the culturally proficiency measure have been noted in previous work (Debnam et al., 2015), generally alphas larger than .70 are considered acceptable in the literature (Taber, 2018), suggesting a general weakness in this scale's ability to reliably measure cultural competence. Additionally, IRR for the cultural competency measure in the current study was lower than the overall IRR for the full ASSIST measure, suggesting that there may have been slightly more difficulty in capturing this construct than other observed behaviors or competencies. Due to the multifaceted nature of cultural competence, it is difficult to determine how to best capture true levels of this competency. To this point, correlational analyses in this study revealed that, in this sample, White teachers, were rated as more culturally proficient than Black teachers and Latinx teachers which, on a surface level, is difficult to explain. However, it is possible that when observing teachers who were a different race than the majority of their students, a certain level of sensitivity towards identifying indicators of cultural competency may be activated that was not present when observing teachers who were the same race as the majority of their students (i.e., Black teachers). Because the majority of students in this sample were non-White, it is possible that White teachers were rated more highly on cultural competence as the indicators of cultural competence may have been more noticeable or salient to observers when exhibited by White teachers, rather than when exhibited by non-White teachers. Furthermore, teachers who were in a classroom with students of the same race may have more nuanced ways of making

cultural connections and demonstrating cultural sensitivity that are blended into their daily routines and may not be as obviously detectable as those which are implemented by White teachers who may have had less time or experiences in developing practices and strategies that are sensitive to the culture of students of other races. In sum, the cultural competency measure was a major limitation to this study. Finally, this study was not experimental in nature and therefore causal conclusions cannot be drawn from it.

Future Directions

In the future, this study could be replicated with a more intentional effort to collect cultural competence data with a larger sample of teachers that may reveal more robust effects. Furthermore, in addition to observational data, self-report measures and the use of more observers from diverse backgrounds could be utilized in order to help give a more well-rounded perspective of teacher cultural competence. For example, the fact that all observers were university students or faculty, as opposed to community members, who may have vastly different demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, level of educational attainment, etc. may contribute to a more limited interpretation of what cultural competence looks like. This research could also be extended to include a wider age range of students in order to help further tease apart the exact age or stage of development when children are able to understand and be impacted by racial discrimination within the school setting. Finally, since a link between racial discrimination and externalizing behaviors has been identified, further exploration of potential buffers against this impact is warranted.

In sum, this study attempted to identify specific outcomes associated with perceptions of racial discrimination within the school setting. Findings revealed a

relationship between student perceptions of racial discrimination and externalizing behaviors, such that students, particularly Black boys, self-endorse and are rated by their teachers as having more externalizing behaviors in a school context where they perceive more racial discrimination to occur. Study findings also revealed links between key study variables such as racial discrimination and teacher cultural competence, but were not able to detect significant relationships beyond simple correlations. Given these findings, it is important to continue to explore the various pathways in which racial discrimination may impact children of color as well as to fine tune measurement tools designed to capture teacher competencies that may help to buffer against these potentially damaging effects. As the school setting is a major part of children's daily experiences, gaining an understanding of how to create a classroom environment where students of all races feel safe, supported, and valued, is a key factor to promoting the long term well-being of Black and Brown children especially in school settings where some students of color may not feel that they are being treated with fairness and respect due to the color of their skin.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Black or African American Student Data

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Student gender: 49% male, 51% female	--										
2. Student grade: $M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.66$	-.03	--									
3. Internalizing symptoms (teacher report): $M = 2.88$, $SD = .80$.04	-.06	--								
4. Internalizing symptoms (self-report): $M = 2.72$, $SD = .45$.16**	-.11**	.13*	--							
5. Externalizing behaviors (teacher report): $M = 1.91$, $SD = .93$	-.13**	-.01	.28**	-.03	--						
6. Externalizing behaviors (self-report): $M = 1.56$, $SD = .38$	-.12**	-.07	.07	.26**	.31**	--					
7. Perceptions of racial discrimination: $M = 3.60$, $SD = .91$.02	-.02	.00	.02	.14**	.19**	--				
8. Teacher cultural competence: $M = 2.33$, $SD = .44$.03	-.07	-.03	-.06	-.17**	-.12**	-.10*	--			
9. Teacher race (Black or African American): 41.58%	.03	.25*	-.03	.04	.06	.04	-.02	-.13**	--		
10. Teacher race (White): 49.33%	.02	-.08*	-.03	-.08	-.04	-.07	.02	.19**	.83**	--	
11. Teacher race (Latinx): 7.00%	.01	-.30**	.08	.08	-.04	.06	.06	-.09*	-.23**	.27**	--

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$. Gender was coded 0 = male, 1 = female.

Table 2

Fixed and Random Effects for the Model Predicting Teacher Reported Internalizing Symptoms

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t ratio</i>
Model for classroom means			
Intercept	2.31	0.10	22.29**
Racial discrimination	-0.03	0.05	-0.68
Student gender	0.05	0.08	0.64
Student grade	-0.01	0.04	-0.15
Model for racial discrimination-internalizing symptoms slope			
Intercept			
Teacher race (White)	-.03	0.13	-0.23
Teacher race (Latinx)	.20	0.26	0.77
Racial Discrimination			
Teacher race (White)	.09	0.07	1.27
Teacher race (Latinx)	-.26	0.16	-1.64
Random Effects			
	<i>Variance Component</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>X²</i>
Classroom level variance	0.13	58	170.95
Level 1, τ	0.59		<.001

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .001$.

Table 3

Fixed and Random Effects for the Model Predicting Self-reported Internalizing Symptoms

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t ratio</i>
<i>Model for classroom means</i>			
Intercept	1.67	0.03	49.01**
Racial discrimination	-0.04	0.03	-1.84
Student gender	0.16	0.04	3.87**
Student grade	-0.03	0.01	-2.97*
<i>Model for racial discrimination-internalizing symptoms slope</i>			
Intercept			
Teacher race (White)	-0.07	0.04	-1.60
Teacher race (Latinx)	0.05	0.05	1.03
Racial discrimination			
Teacher race (White)	0.13	0.04	3.04*
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.08	0.05	-1.51
<i>Random Effects</i>			
	<i>Variance Component</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>X²</i>
Classroom level variance	0.00	60	81.19
Level 1, τ	0.18		
			.04

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .001$.

Table 4

Fixed and Random Effect for the Model Predicting Teacher Reported Externalizing Behaviors

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t ratio</i>
Model for classroom means			
Intercept	2.17	0.11	19.70**
Racial discrimination	0.18	0.08	2.13*
Student gender	-0.31	0.08	3.81**
Student grade	-0.00	0.03	-0.03
Model for racial discrimination-externalizing slope			
Intercept			
Teacher race (White)	-0.11	0.12	-0.95
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.15	0.17	-0.92
Racial discrimination			
Teacher race (White)	0.01	0.10	0.08
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.33	0.20	-1.71
Random Effects			
	<i>Variance Component</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>X²</i>
Classroom level variance	0.32	58	123.28
Level 1, τ	0.59		<.001

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .001$.

Table 5

Fixed and Random Effects for the Model Predicting Self-reported Externalizing Behaviors

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t ratio</i>
Model for classroom means			
Intercept	1.63	0.04	46.25**
Racial discrimination	0.11	0.03	3.59**
Student gender	-0.09	0.03	-2.89*
Student grade	-0.00	0.01	-0.37
Model for racial discrimination-externalizing slope			
Intercept			
Teacher race (White)	-0.05	0.04	-1.26
Teacher race (Latinx)	0.03	0.04	0.62
Racial discrimination			
Teacher race (White)	-0.03	0.04	-0.79
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.01	0.05	-0.21

<i>Random Effects</i>	<i>Variance Component</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>p value</i>
Classroom level variance	0.01	60	84.31	0.02
Level 1, τ	0.14			

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .001$.

Table 6

Fixed and Random Effects for the Model Predicting Teacher Reported Internalizing Symptoms with Teacher Cultural Competence as a Moderator

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t ratio</i>
Model for classroom means			
Intercept	2.29	0.10	21.87**
Racial discrimination	-0.04	0.05	-0.88
Student gender	0.06	0.08	0.73
Student grade	-0.00	0.03	-0.11
Model for racial discrimination-internalizing symptoms slope			
Intercept			
Cultural competence	-0.01	0.11	-0.05
Teacher race (White)	-0.02	0.13	-0.15
Teacher race (Latinx)	0.21	0.26	0.80
Racial discrimination			
Cultural competence	-0.17	0.10	-1.68
Teacher race (White)	0.11	0.07	1.70
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.29	0.17	-1.69

<i>Random Effects</i>	<i>Variance Component</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>p value</i>
Classroom level variance, ω^2	0.13	57	167.00	<.001
Level 1, τ	0.59			

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .001$.

Table 7

Fixed and Random Effects for the Model Predicting Self-Reported Internalizing Symptoms with Teacher Cultural Competence as a Moderator

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t ratio</i>
Model for classroom means			
Intercept	1.67	0.03	48.53**
Racial discrimination	-0.05	0.03	-1.92
Student gender	0.17	0.04	3.88**
Student grade	-0.03	0.01	-3.09*
Model for racial discrimination-internalizing symptoms slope			
Intercept			
Cultural competence	-0.02	0.05	-0.57
Teacher race (White)	-0.07	0.05	-1.47
Teacher race (Latinx)	0.05	0.05	1.01
Racial discrimination			
Cultural competence	-0.00	0.05	-0.08
Teacher race (White)	0.13	0.04	3.03*
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.08	0.06	-1.47

<i>Random Effects</i>	<i>Variance Component</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>p value</i>
Classroom level variance	0.13	57	167.00	<.001
Level 1, r	0.59			

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .001$.

Table 8

Fixed and Random Effects for the Model Predicting Teacher Reported Externalizing Behaviors with Teacher Cultural Competence as a Moderator

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t ratio</i>
Model for classroom means			
Intercept	2.14	0.11	18.10**
Racial discrimination	0.17	0.09	1.90*
Student gender	-0.31	0.08	-3.80**
Student grade	-0.01	0.03	-0.22
Model for racial discrimination-externalizing slope			
Intercept			
Cultural competence	-0.33	0.13	-2.52*
Teacher race (White)	-0.05	0.12	-0.43
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.19	0.13	-1.44
Racial discrimination			
Cultural competence	-0.06	0.11	-0.52
Teacher race (White)	-0.02	0.10	0.21
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.34	0.20	-1.74
<i>Random Effects</i>			
	<i>Variance Component</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>X²</i>
Classroom level variance	0.09	57	113.05
Level 1, τ	0.76		
			<i>p value</i>
			<.001

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .001$.

Table 9

Fixed and Random Effects for the Model Predicting Self-reported Externalizing Behaviors with Teacher Cultural Competence as a Moderator

<i>Fixed Effects</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t ratio</i>
Model for classroom means			
Intercept	1.63	0.03	48.04**
Racial discrimination	-0.11	0.03	3.51**
Student gender	-0.09	0.02	-2.90*
Student grade	-0.01	0.01	-0.51
Model for racial discrimination-externalizing slope			
Intercept			
Cultural competence	-0.07	0.04	-1.64
Teacher race (White)	-0.04	0.04	-1.03
Teacher race (Latinx)	0.02	0.04	0.39
Racial discrimination			
Cultural competence	0.00	0.04	0.07
Teacher race (White)	-0.03	0.04	-0.76
Teacher race (Latinx)	-0.01	0.05	-0.17
Random Effects			
	<i>Variance Component</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>X²</i>
Classroom level variance	.00	59	80.43
Level 1, τ	.13		
			<i>p value</i>
			.03

Note. *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .001$.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Latinx Student Data

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Student gender: 52.5% male, 47.5% female	--										
2. Student grade: $M=5.44$, $SD=1.83$.11	--									
3. Internalizing symptoms (teacher report): $M=2.29$, $SD=1.83$	-.02	.17	--								
4. Internalizing symptoms (self-report): $M=1.73$, $SD=.53$.50**	-.10	-.19	--							
5. Externalizing behaviors (teacher report): $M=1.40$, $SD=.68$	-.37*	-.08	-.38*	-.26	--						
6. Externalizing behaviors (self-report): $M=1.42$, $SD=.33$.34	-.21	.12	.32	.07	--					
7. Perceptions of racial discrimination: $M=4.10$, $SD=.62$.13	.21	-.07	.03	-.17	.32	--				
8. Teacher cultural competence: $M=2.41$, $SD=.46$	-.15	-.09	.05	-.18	-.28	-.35	.33	--			
9. Teacher race (Black or African American): 38.64%	.14	-.05	.13	.45*	-.01	-.06	-.12	-.15	--		
10. Teacher race (White): 54.55%	.00	.10	-.06	-.30	.01	-.12	.11	.27	-.87**	--	
11. Teacher race (Latinx): 9.10%	-.16	-.41**	-.16	.18	-.15	.19	-.28	-.09	.07	-.35*	--

Note. *= $p<.05$, **= $p<.01$. Gender was coded 0 = male, 1 = female. Sample included 59 Latinx students.

Table 11

Comparisons of Black and Latinx Student Means of Key Research Variables

	<u>Black students</u>		<u>Latinx students</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender	0.51	0.50	0.47	0.50
Grade	5.33	1.66	5.44	1.83
Internalizing symptoms (teacher report)	2.33	0.79	2.29	0.76
Internalizing symptoms (self-report)	1.72	0.45	1.73	0.53
Externalizing behaviors (teacher report)	1.91	0.93	1.49	0.68
Externalizing behaviors (self-report)	1.56	0.38	1.42	0.33
Perceptions of racial discrimination	3.60	0.91	4.10	0.62
Cultural competence	2.34	0.44	2.41	0.46

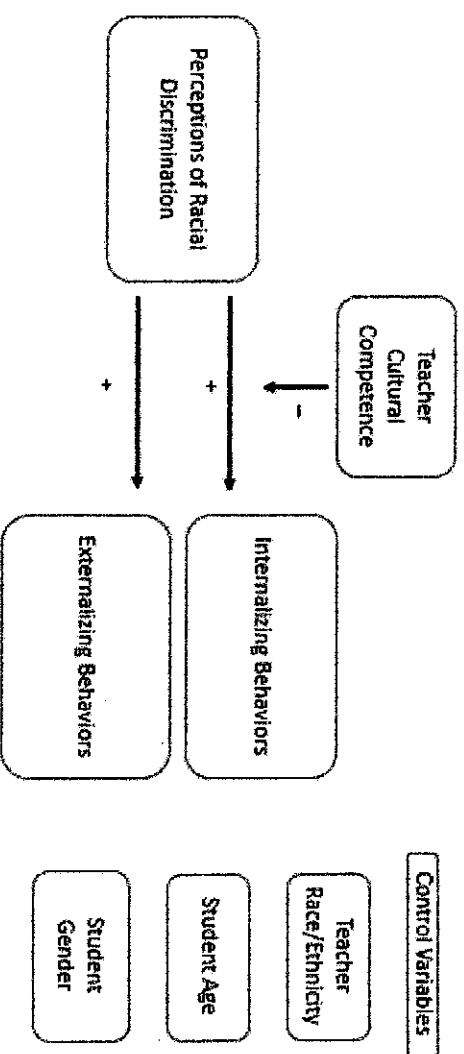


Figure 1. Conceptual model of study hypotheses 1 through 3.

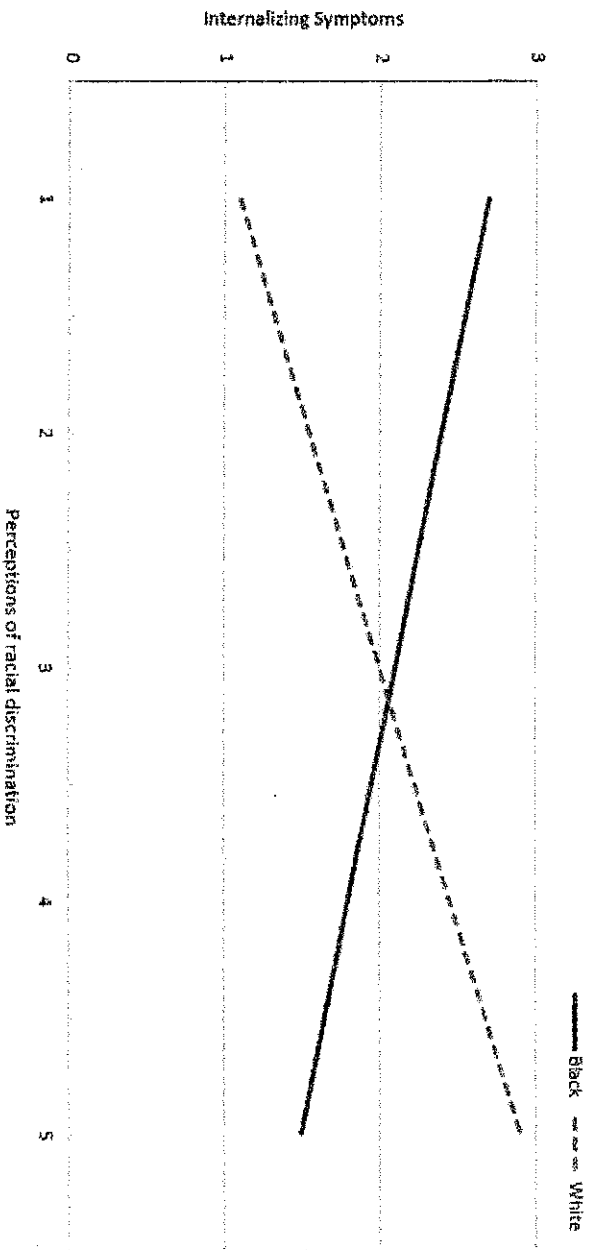


Figure 2. The relationship between self-reported internalizing symptoms and perceptions of racial discrimination. Comparison of students with White and Black teachers.

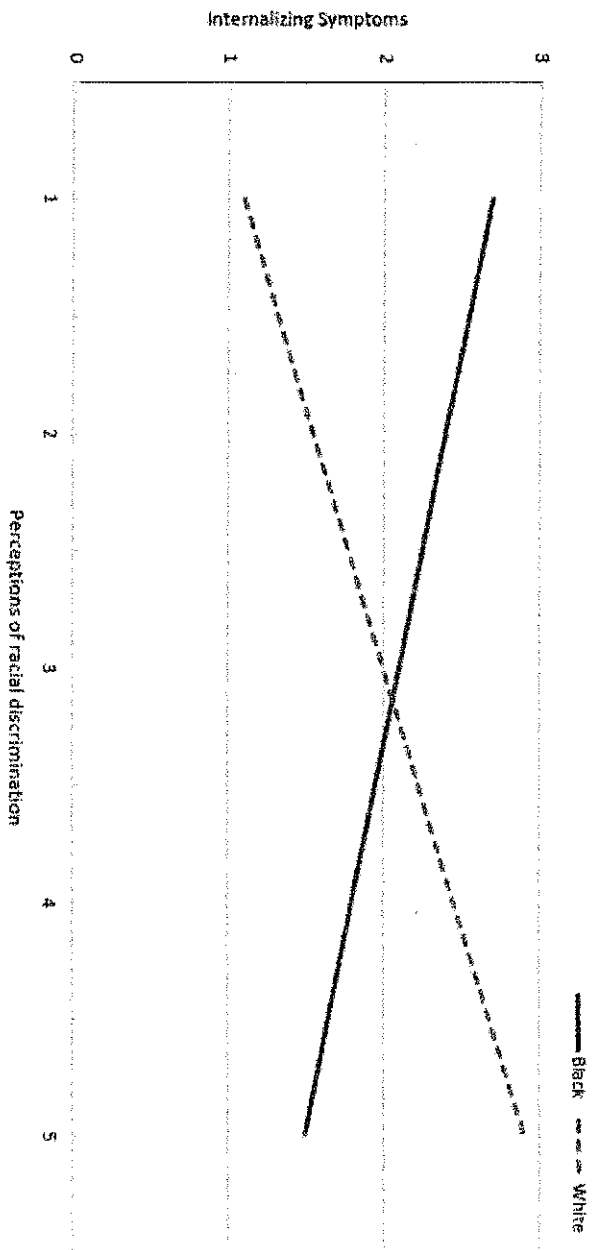


Figure 3. The relationship between self-reported internalizing symptoms and perceptions of racial discrimination. Comparison of students with White and Black teachers with cultural competence added to the model.

*Appendix A***Delaware School Climate Survey – Student Version**

This survey is about how you feel about your school. Please fill in the circle that best shows how you feel about each item. Disagree a lot, disagree, neither, agree, agree a lot. Do NOT give your name. No one will know who answered this survey. Please answer every item.

IN THIS SCHOOL...

1. Teachers treat students of all races with respect.
2. Adults in this school care about students of all races.
3. The color of a student's skin doesn't matter to teachers in this school.

Note. Item coding was reversed that higher scores indicated more racial discrimination.

*Appendix B***Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**

For each item, please mark the box for not true, somewhat true, or certainly true. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain. Please give your answers on the basis of how things have been for you over the last six months.

1. I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness.
2. I get very angry and often lose my temper.
3. I usually do as I am told.
4. I worry a lot.
5. I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want.
6. I am often unhappy, depressed or tearful.
7. I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence.
8. I am often accused of lying or cheating.
9. I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere.
10. I have many fears, I am easily scared.

Note. Items 1, 4, 6, 7, and 10 load onto the self-report emotional symptoms subscale (i.e., self-report internalizing symptoms) and items 2, 3, 5, 8, and 9 load onto the conduct problems subscale (i.e., self-report externalizing behaviors). Item 3 is reverse coded.

*Appendix C***Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Checklist (TOCA-C)**

In the last three weeks, would you say the following statements were never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often, or almost always true of each student...

1. Nervous
2. Withdrawn
3. Fearful
4. Sad
5. Worries

*Appendix D***The Children's Social Behavior Scale – Teacher Report**

Instructions: Please answer how frequently (never, almost never, sometimes, almost all of the time, and all of the time) you have observed this student engaged in the following behaviors in the last 2 months.

1. This child hits, shoves, or pushes peers.
2. This child initiates or gets into physical fights with peers.
3. This child threatens to hit or to beat up other children.
4. This child tries to dominate or bully peers.

*Appendix E***Assessing School Settings: Interactions of Student and Teachers (ASSIST)**

Observers indicate whether the following behaviors occur never, seldom, some of the time, a lot of the time, or almost continuously.

1. Teacher connects lessons to real world examples.
2. Teacher engages in personal storytelling or sharing.
3. Teacher uses positive humor to engage students or defuse problems.
4. Teacher integrates cultural artifacts reflective of students' interests into learning activities.
5. Teacher employs rhythm or call-and-response instructional strategies.
6. Teacher is calm and attentive when problems arise in the classroom.
7. Teacher gives direct commands.
8. Students are given opportunities to co-teach or co-facilitate learning activities.

Biography

Veronica Coriano was born in Chicago, Illinois. She received her Bachelor of Arts at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois in 2011 with a major in Psychology and a minor in intercultural studies. She received her Master of Science in Psychology in 2015 from Tulane University. She is currently a doctoral candidate at Tulane University and is a part of the Project DIRECT research team led by Dr. Courtney N. Baker. Her research interests are focused on early prevention and intervention with an emphasis on promoting mental health and academic success in Black and Latinx children.