



The Effects of Discrimination on Black Mothers' Internalizing Symptoms and Parenting Behavior



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Study Aim

- The goal of the present study was to examine associations among maternal experiences of discrimination, maternal depressive and anxiety symptoms, and mothers' responses to their children's negative emotions.
- I hypothesized that mothers' experiences with discrimination would be associated with higher levels of mothers' depressive and anxiety symptoms and more maternal minimizing and punitive responses to children's negative emotions. I also expected depressive and anxiety symptoms to be associated with increased minimizing and punitive responses to children's negative emotions.

Background

- Experiences of discrimination have been shown to have a negative emotional and psychological impact on people and can impact various aspects of individual's lives such as negative affect, chronic physical pain, reduced motivation to work, and compromised parenting (Vines et al., 2017; Dugan et al., 2017; Goldman et al., 2006).
- For Black women, discrimination—i.e. perceived race macro- and micro-aggressions—has led to an increase in depressive symptoms, with macro-aggressions having a greater significantly negative impact on their mental health than micro-aggressions (Donovan et al., 2013). Discrimination has also been found to increase symptoms of anxiety in Black people (Williams et al., 2018).
- There is limited research regarding the connection between mothers' experiences of discrimination and children's socioemotional development. However, Bécares et al. (2015) found that mothers' experiences of racial discrimination indirectly predicted children's socioemotional development via an increase in punitive parenting and a decrease in maternal mental health.

Method

Data Source

This was a secondary data analysis using data from the School Transitions and Academic Readiness Project with a subsample of 86 Black caregivers. Respondents were Black mothers with either Black (92%) or Multi-Racial (8%) children.

Participants

- N = 86 Black mothers and 86 children
- Mean Age = 32.58 years old (SD = 7.23), range=19-52 years
- Mean Total Annual Income = \$32, 611
- Marital status = 70.5% were single, divorced, or widowed, and 29.5% were married.
- Education = 6.4% had some high school experience, 10.3% had a high school degree/GED, 47.4% completed 2 or less years of college, 35.9% obtained a 4-year degree and more.

Method (cont.)

Measures

Mothers' Discrimination Experiences: The Index of Race-Related Stress- Brief Version (IRRS-B; Utsey, 1999).

Maternal Psychiatric Symptoms: Depression--The Center for Epidemiologic Studies- Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977); and **Anxiety--**The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1988).

Parent Emotion Socialization: The Coping with Children's Negative Emotions survey (CCNES; Fabes et al., 2002).

Tables and Figures

Bivariate correlations between all study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
M Global Racism IRRS 4yr	-				
M Depression CESD Total Mean Score 4yr	0.18	-			
M State Anxiety STAI Subscale Mean Score 4yr	.22*	.72**	-		
M CCNES- Punitive Reactions Subscale Mean Score 4yr	0.15	.43**	.31**	-	
M CCNES- Minimization Reactions Subscale Mean Score 4yr	0.04	.34**	.24*	.85**	-

Note. *p<.05. **p<.01. Values represent Pearson coefficients.

Results

- Results revealed a trend association between mothers' reported racial discrimination and their depressive symptoms, $r = .18$, $p < .10$, and a significant association with anxiety symptoms, $r = .22$, $p < .05$.
- There was a significant positive correlation between mothers' depressive symptoms and maternal punitive responses, $r = .43$, $p < .05$, and maternal minimizing responses, $r = .34$, $p < .05$.
- There was a significant positive correlation between mothers' anxiety symptoms and maternal punitive responses, $r = .31$, $p < .05$, and maternal minimizing responses, $r = .24$, $p < .05$.
- There was no significant association between discrimination and parenting for either punishing or minimizing responses.

Discussion

- Black mothers' experiences of discrimination did not directly impact amount of parental punitive or minimizing responses.
- Black women who experienced discrimination reported having increased depressive and anxiety symptoms.
- Maternal depressive and anxiety symptoms were both found to increase parental minimizing and punitive responses toward their young children.
- Limitations:** In order to have a more representative study with generalizable results, a larger sample size is needed; All the measures were self-reports from a single reporter; and, finally, in using a cross sectional design, all the results are correlational.
- Future research should consider a longitudinal analysis design to test the causal effects between discrimination, maternal depressive and anxiety symptoms, and parenting responses in Black mothers and their children. Specifically, research should assess the mediating and moderating effects of depressive and anxiety symptoms on the relationship between mothers' discrimination experiences and maternal minimizing and punitive responses.
- In addition, the moderating role of social buffers and racial socialization on the relationship between discrimination and mental health should be examined in future work.

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