

A Theoretical Framework of the Role of Racism in Adolescent Personal Identity Development: Applications to Racially Marginalized Youth in the USA

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Abstract

Racism is an element of the sociocultural context that may significantly impact personal identity development among youth of color in the USA. However, theories of personal identity development largely do not consider the influence of racialized experiences. This paper presents a theoretical framework of the role of racism on adolescent personal identity development (RAPID framework); we demonstrate its utility with the example of interpersonal forms of racism in the context of racially marginalized youth in the USA. The RAPID framework combines psychological and sociological perspectives on identity development to describe moments in the process that may be affected by aspects of racism (e.g., stereotypes, biases). Empirical support for aspects of the framework is drawn from research on adolescents' ethnic-racial identities and specific aspects of personal identities (e.g., academic identity). To create environments that promote positive personal identity development for ethnic-racially marginalized youth, the RAPID framework addresses potential barriers that can be eliminated and highlights aspects of resilience that

can be supported. Suggestions for empirical research on the RAPID framework, as well as for theoretical extensions of it, are discussed.

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Identity, in essence, is the answer to the question “Who am I?” that reflects people's views of who they are and how they fit in society (Erikson, 1968). Although identity forms and is revised throughout the life span, developing an identity that aligns with individual strengths and contextual supports is a salient and critical part of development during adolescence (Cantor et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2022). Indeed, aspects of identity that are developed during adolescence can act as a guide for youth as they navigate paths to adulthood in a way that can lead to productive life choices and life satisfaction in both the short and long term (Ashby & Schoon, 2012; Lilgendahl, 2015).

Young people do not develop these identities in a vacuum, however; in the complex ecology of society and culture, information about the self is obtained through interacting with various entities that are embedded in the larger context of culture and history (Bronfenbrenner,

1979; Rogers et al., 2021). In a highly racialized society such as the USA, racism is a potent factor in the macro-system that privileges white people and discriminates against people of color, and it can impact the experiences that inform adolescents' identity development (García Coll et al., 1996). Theories such as the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) (Spencer, 2008; Spencer et al., 1997) and its extensions (Velez & Spencer, 2018) have emphasized how young people's experiences and the meaning they make of challenges and support in the context of privilege and marginalization influence how youth come to form stable thought patterns about who they are. These theories, and others, call on developmental science to consider the context of racism in the study of youth identity.

Despite the critical demand, there has been a lack of attention, particularly in personal identity literature, on understanding how youth navigate the racist social context as they engage in identity development. Research on "personal" identity centers domains that typically pertain to choices that individuals make, such as beliefs, goals, and values (Erikson, 1968); the connections that people have to larger social groups such as race and gender have typically been considered the realm of "social" identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This bifurcation, however, does not acknowledge that the process of personal identity development is a social one, wherein adolescents' interactions with their context are pivotal. In fact, qualitative examinations of how young people talk about their identities have demonstrated that youth make meaning of their racialized experiences in relation to their personal identities (Azmitia et al., 2008). Yet, the core developmental processes in personal identity research have been defined and studied with a focus on intraindividual processes, leaving the socio-cultural interactions through which those processes are enacted underexamined.

To address this gap, we present a theoretical framework for considering how racism may influence the personal identity development of youth, entitled the Role of Racism in Adolescent Personal Identity Development (RAPID) framework, in order to facilitate building a systematic understanding of how race relates to personal identity, promote further research, and effectively inform practices for supporting young people's development (Lerner, 2018). The RAPID framework identifies moments of potential challenge in the process of personal identity development caused by the social context of racism. Moreover, we also identify opportunities of resilience in the framework. We use definition of resilience

of Ungar et al. (2007), which is that it involves not only the strengths of individual youth but also their interactions with the qualities of their environment that act as resources for positive development despite challenging circumstances. The scope of the theoretical framework is narrowed to a specific population of adolescents and particular forms of racism in the current paper.

Regarding population, we focus on youth who are racially minoritized rather than youth more broadly (regardless of racial identification). We chose this approach because we believe that, to effectively support young people's personal identity development in the context of racism, research should focus on understanding experiences within the contexts of either marginalization or power instead of assuming one normative developmental process that applies to everyone (García Coll, 2022; García Coll et al., 1996; Spencer, 2008). In the USA, youth of color have been and continue to be racially marginalized, whereas white adolescents experience racial privilege (Moffitt et al., 2022). In the face of marginalization, there may be particular challenges and opportunities for resilience that youth of color experience to develop their personal identity (Masten, 2014; Murry et al., 2014; Rogers et al., 2021), which we specifically illuminate in this paper.

Regarding forms of racism, the framework focuses on experiences in the most proximal levels of young people's contexts. Racism exists in different forms in various levels of the developmental system, such as structural (public policies, practices, and norms that reinforce each other to perpetuate inequity), institutional (policies and practices within and across institutions), and interpersonal (relationships among people). Each of these forms may influence the personal identity development of racially marginalized adolescents. However, because of the longstanding emphasis on individuals in psychological science, empirical evidence on the role of racism in young people's identity development primarily concerns their direct relationships with individuals or their relations with institutions (Rogers et al., 2021; Syed & McLean, 2023). To systematically organize current empirical knowledge, this paper focuses on forms of racism that manifest on the institutional or interpersonal levels that have been empirically examined.

In sum, the goal of this paper is to present the RAPID framework that theorizes the potential challenges faced by racially marginalized adolescents and the resilience they may have and be able to cultivate as they develop their personal identities in the context of racism in their specific developmental contexts. To do so, we first introduce two perspectives on personal

identity development in psychological and sociological literature to identify processes relevant to considering the racialized context. Then, we present the RAPID framework, providing empirical evidence where available. Last, we discuss the implications of the RAPID framework for practice and research and also suggest directions for future research.

Theoretical Perspectives on Personal Identity Development

Two theories informed the framework presented in this paper: the Dual-Cycle Model (Luyckx et al., 2006, 2008) and Identity Control Theory (Burke, 2006; Burke & Reitzes, 1991). We referenced the Dual-Cycle Model because it is a widely used framework in psychological research that details the intraindividual processes involved in personal identity development. To complement the Dual-Cycle Model, we referenced Identity Control Theory, due to its explicit consideration of interindividual processes. Although neither theory focuses overtly on adolescents or explicitly addresses the racialized context of marginalized youth, the two theories together describe what goes on within and around youth during the process of personal identity development. Accordingly, they are instrumental in considering racism that exists on the sociocultural level of context (Kerpelman et al., 1997).

The Dual-Cycle Model

The Dual-Cycle Model (Luyckx et al., 2006, 2008) highlights two main processes involved in young people's personal identity development: formation and evaluation. It extends ideas from Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966) that posit two key processual dimensions: exploring options (or alternatives) for personal identity content and committing to (i.e., selecting and engaging in) specific contents. In the Dual-Cycle Model, the two processes are further decomposed, which results in two exploration dimensions (exploration in breadth, exploration in depth) and two commitment dimensions (commitment making, identification with commitment). The identity formation cycle involves searching for options regarding identity content (exploration in breadth) and choosing one among the alternatives (commitment making). After a commitment is formed, the identity evaluation cycle starts. At that point, information about the chosen identity content is gathered (exploration in depth). In this cycle, individuals may develop a sense of identification with commitment if their certainty about the commitment increases after exploration in depth. If not, they may

return to the formation cycle to consider other alternative identities. Simply put, the two cycles described in the Dual-Cycle Model are forms of creating theories about the self and investigating to verify, reject, and modify the theory.

The Dual-Cycle Model has been used widely in personal identity development research with youth across countries (e.g., Crocetti et al., 2011; Park et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2011). These studies have demonstrated the importance of adolescents' active engagement in identity formation and evaluation for their psychosocial well-being. Having sufficient opportunities to learn about one's personal identity can foster stronger certainty to rely on it as a compass for navigating through life. Moreover, the experience of considering various commitments as directions to take in life can build a sense of flexibility, which is necessary for adapting to the experiences that individuals face across the life span (Bersonsky, 2011; Kerpelman et al., 1997). Accordingly, young people need ample opportunities and support to engage in exploring existing and alternative identity contents (i.e., commitments).

The cycles of identity formation and evaluation inform the RAPID framework introduced in this paper as two key moments of intraindividual (i.e., within-youth) cognitive processes for personal identity development. However, the Dual-Cycle Model does not address the role of contextual influences on these processes (Kerpelman et al., 1997). Interactions with society are integral to personal identity development because information about the self and commitments are attained in the social context (Spencer, 2008). To consider the influence of racism, social interactions should also be included in the theoretical framework. The second theoretical perspective, Identity Control Theory, complements the Dual-Cycle Model by addressing the interpersonal processes (i.e., between youth and other people) involved in identity development.

Identity Control Theory

Identity Control Theory is based on a sociological perspective, wherein the primary interest is to understand how social behaviors affect individuals. Identity Control Theory posits that people try to minimize the discrepancy between how they define themselves (i.e., identity) and how they perceive themselves to be currently (i.e., self-perception) (Burke, 2006; Burke & Reitzes, 1991). The theory distinguishes these two self-related concepts in that identity is actively constructed to be consistent across time and situations, whereas self-perception is purported to be passively formed and based on the current moment.

The theory posits that individuals engage in specific social behaviors to align with their existing identity standards (aspects of self-definition analogous to personal identity content or commitment). Identity Control Theory further postulates that those behaviors elicit social feedback from other people that is transformed into self-perception (the appraisal of the current actual self). According to the theory, if the defined self and perceived self are congruent, then the system only continues to monitor for discrepancies. This proposed result can be likened to the strengthening of identification to a commitment after evaluation, as described in the Dual-Cycle Model. If the self-perception is incongruent with their identity standard, the person may adjust either the social behaviors or the identity standard so that the definition and perception of themselves match. This theoretical process is similar to returning to the formation cycle after identification with commitment is not achieved in the Dual-Cycle Model.

Identity Control Theory complements the Dual-Cycle Model by expanding on the interpersonal microprocesses involved in the evaluation and maintenance of personal identity, which corresponds to the evaluation cycle (evaluation of existing personal identity commitments). Importantly, interpersonal processes – social behavior and social feedback – which are not explicit in the Dual-Cycle Model are included as focal elements. The inclusion of interactions with the context as integral factors is necessary for considering how the context of racism may affect personal identity development of youth of color. Therefore, these two interactional processes of the evaluation cycle are key moments in the developmental process implicit in the current theoretical discussion.

Still, Identity Control Theory is not without shortcomings. First, the theory does not describe the social interactions through which people initially form commitments (i.e., social interactions involved in exploration in breadth), but this process is equally important and active during adolescence as evaluating commitments. Adolescents are forming identities in several novel domains, such as careers, as they prepare to assume new roles in adulthood. Furthermore, because they may not be as strongly tied to their responsibilities as adults, it is possible that modification of existing commitments may be more frequent (i.e., returning to the formation cycle after the evaluation of existing commitments) (Kroger et al., 2010). Social contexts can influence the identity formation cycle, such as by giving information about or restricting the range of alternative identities to be explored in breadth (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Second, the postulation that social feedback directly transfers to people's self-perception lacks consideration of other

potential ways that individuals may react, particularly with more agency. People do not always automatically incorporate any social feedback into their self-perception; instead, they may treat the feedback as biased, uninformed, or unrepresentative of themselves. Because adolescence is a period of increasing ability of critical and agentic thinking, youth may be capable of such resistive reactions to social feedback. Therefore, in the RAPID framework, we incorporate interpersonal process in the formation cycle as well as the evaluation cycle and consider a range of reactions to social feedback.

The Role of Racism in Adolescents' Personal Identity Development (RAPID) Framework

The Dual-Cycle Model and Identity Control Theory are jointly useful for understanding the intraindividual and interindividual processes involved in personal identity development, but the consideration of race as a key contextual factor is missing in these frameworks. This omission is concerning because, in the USA, racism is an aspect of the developmental context of youth that impacts the interactions they have with the world, which can inform them about who they are and can be (García Coll et al., 1996; Rogers et al., 2021). For youth of color, racism may pose challenges, as well as opportunities for resilience as they develop definitions of themselves as an individual. To address this omission, we present the RAPID framework (shown in Fig. 1) that describes the potential impact that racism may have on youth of color form and evaluates their personal identities. We particularly focus on how racial stereotypes and biases may impact the formation and evaluation cycles of identity development and describe related challenges and resilience that youth may experience regarding the content and process of identity, providing empirical evidence where applicable.

Identity Formation Cycle

In the identity formation cycle of the Dual-Cycle Model, exploration in breadth is emphasized as a key process (Luyckx et al., 2006). In most research on youth's consideration of possible identities (i.e., exploration in breadth), it has been implicitly assumed that all youth have the same scope of opportunities to engage in such exploration. In turn, research has seldom paid attention to potential disparities in the accessibility of alternative commitments that youth can consider. Although not explicit in the Dual-Cycle Model or Identity Control Theory, in reality, youth explore their identities in their

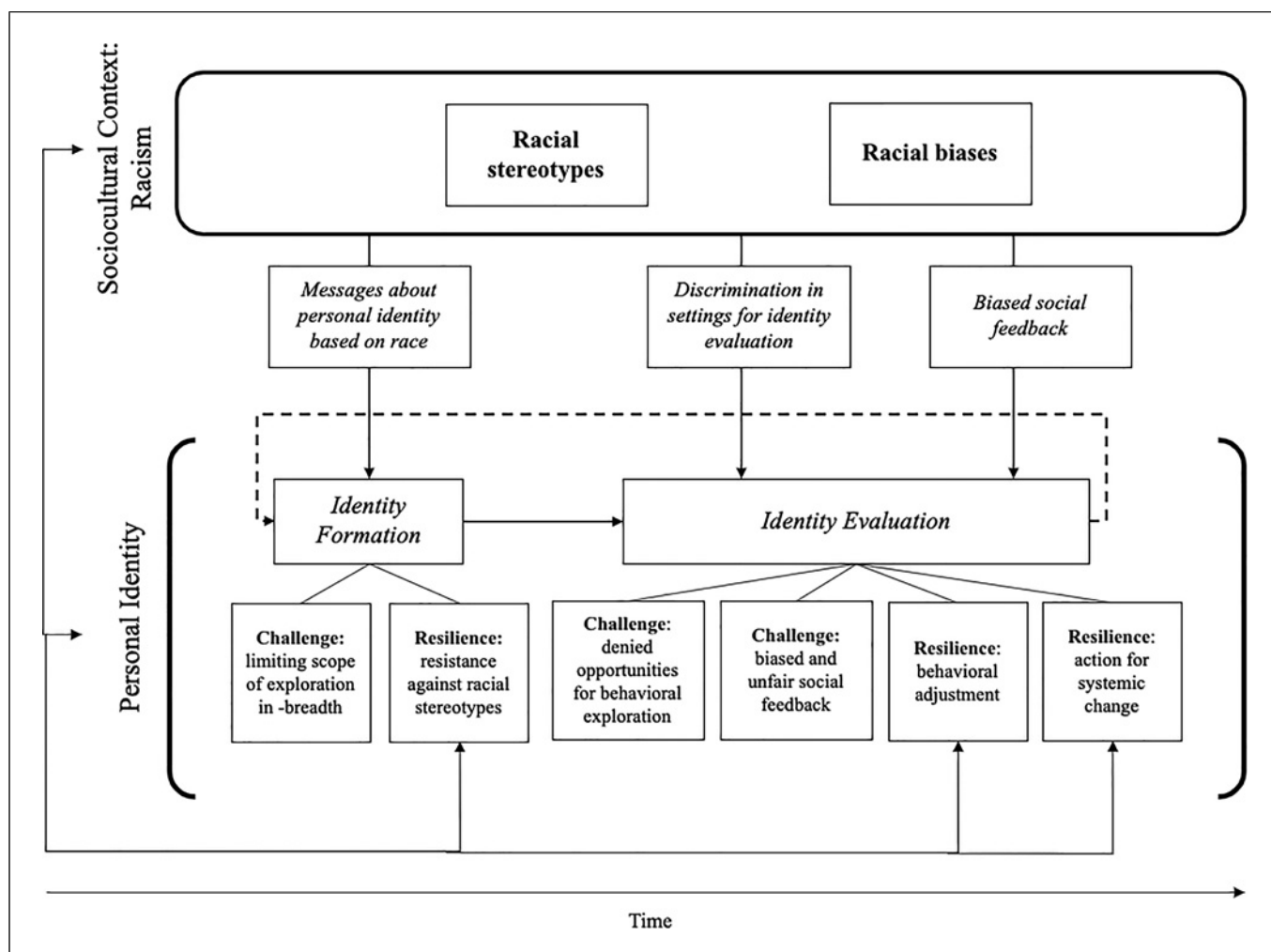


Fig. 1. The Role of Racism on Adolescent Personal Identity Development (RAPID) framework applied to racially marginalized youth in the USA.

social context, where there are constant messages from various people and social entities about who they are and can be (Erikson, 1968; Way & Rogers, 2015). These messages may influence adolescents to more readily explore some identities while being less likely to consider others.

In the context of racial marginalization, messages laden with stereotypes may influence this process. Although racial stereotypes are often considered in research on ethnic-racial identity (Del Toro et al., 2021), they are also highly relevant to personal identity. Racial stereotypes are generalized expectations and beliefs about people categorized as a specific race (Allport, 1954; Stagnor & Schaller, 2000). Such stereotypes send messages to youth about personal characteristics and potential roles in society, which are salient aspects of

identity as an individual, on the basis of their phenotype (Rogers, 2018; Way et al., 2013). Racial stereotypes can be conveyed through interactions with both within and outside of the adolescents' own marginalized racial group, including institutions such as media and school, and interpersonal relationships such as those with teachers, peers (Hughes et al., 2006), and neighbors (Mastro, 2015; Stevenson, 1997). These various channels of stereotypes create a complex sociocultural context which youth of color must navigate in their journey to define their personal identities.

Challenges for Identity Content and Process

Racial stereotypes can pose a challenge to youth developing their personal identities in regard to both content and process. Personal identity content may be

impacted because many racial stereotypes are negative and undermine the unique strengths and abilities of individuals. For instance, common stereotypes about black youth in the USA are that they are athletic, lazy, loud, and angry (Neal-Jackson, 2018; Stevenson, 1997). Similarly, Latine youth are stereotyped as lazy and dumb, as well as criminals and gang members (Shafer & Rivadeneyra, 2022). Asian American youth are stereotyped as the “model minorities” – smart, quiet, and obedient – but, at the same time, also as dirty, poor, and weak (Yip et al., 2021). Such stereotypes may limit the range of possible identities that adolescents can consider when forming or modifying their commitments, which could make it difficult for them to form positive personal identity content. Accordingly, personal identities that are persistently influenced by such stereotypes may lead to decreased motivation to engage in behaviors that would fulfill their potentials (Cantor et al., 2021; Oyserman & Destin, 2010).

Racial stereotypes can have implications for the identity process as well because they may restrict youth from actively exploring specific potential personal identities that are stereotyped as “uncharacteristic” of their racial group. This kind of restraint may limit the scope of exploration in-breadth; if this limited scope persists across adolescence, it may ultimately inhibit the personal identity development process and lead to less certainty about commitments (Luyckx et al., 2008; Marcia, 1966). Furthermore, narrowed breadth of exploration may make it harder for youth to have a flexible self-definition that they can adjust adaptively in response to changing contexts (Berzonsky, 2011).

Evidence of this kind of negative impact of racial stereotypes can be found in the literature on possible identities (Oyserman & Destin, 2010; Oyserman & James, 2011), also referred to as possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible identities are definitions of the self that youth think they can hold in the future. This concept is related to the breadth of identity exploration because youth must consider a specific aspect of personal identity (e.g., education, occupation, roles, or personal characteristic) as something that is attainable (i.e., possible) in order to even consider it as a potential commitment. Because education is such a salient aspect of adolescents’ ideas of who they are, most research has focused on whether academic success or related personal characteristics (e.g., being studious or smart) are viewed as possible identities for racially marginalized youth. For instance, Fryberg et al. (2008) conducted an experiment with Native American college students. Students who were shown Native American mascots reported fewer

achievement-related characteristics (e.g., “finding a job,” “working,” “good grades,” “getting my degree”) as possible self-definitions compared to participants who were shown an advertisement for the American Indian College Fund or who were not primed at all. The authors suggest that the mascots may “remind American Indians of the limited ways in which others see them” (alluding to stereotypes held against Native Americans) and that “the views . . . can limit the ways in which American Indians see themselves.” Similar research by Anderman et al. (1999) and Oyserman & Yoon (2009) showed that black and Latin adolescents were less likely to see themselves as “good students” in the future compared to white youth. These studies illustrate how racial stereotypes about personal attributes may challenge youth of color in forming positive personal identity content and restrict them from engaging in identity exploration broadly during the formation cycle.

Opportunities for Resilience

Despite the potential restricting effect of racism on the breadth of identity exploration, there is considerable evidence that racially marginalized adolescents can experience resilient trajectories of personal identity development; these trajectories can be supported through young people’s own agency as well as aspects of their environments (Ungar et al., 2007). Youth of color are not “stuck” with stereotyped personal identities; they can actively make meaning of racial stereotypes instead of passively following expectations based on their racial group memberships (Spencer, 2008). Indeed, researchers have shown many ways in which youth of color navigate the tension between racial stereotypes and personal identity with resistance. In a qualitative study on the impact of racial stereotypes on racially diverse adolescents, Way et al., 2013, identified “resisting stereotypes” as a prominent theme, which manifested through youth debunking the false stereotypes altogether and distancing themselves or other individuals from the common mischaracterizations of their racial groups. For instance, many adolescents explicitly named stereotypes against their racial groups as wrong. Other youth discussed their efforts to avoid making decisions that would correspond with society’s negative stereotypes against their racial groups. Other studies have shown ways that adolescents from specific racial or ethnic minority groups actively cultivate identities that do not conform to stereotypes, such as black boys developing scholar identities (Whiting, 2006) and East Asian descent adolescents distancing themselves from model minority stereotypes (Yoon et al., 2017).

Resisting stereotypes can also involve rejecting racist definitions of personal characteristics, such as what it means to be physically attractive. For example, Rosario et al. (2021) found that black girls were aware of and actively resisted colorist and racist views of physical attractiveness, such as regarding skin color, hair texture, and body type. Resisting against stereotypes in these ways (i.e., refuting or distancing oneself from stereotypes, redefining racist definitions) can broaden the range of possible identities that adolescents can explore in the formation cycle (Rogers & Way, 2016; Spencer, 2008).

The presence of these forms of resilience, however, does not mean that the only way for youth of color to be on a positive developmental trajectory is to form commitments that defy racial stereotypes. Depending on the strengths and contexts of individual adolescents, personal identity content that concurs with racial stereotypes may nonetheless accurately reflect their potentials and guide them to thrive (Cantor et al., 2021). For instance, a black boy with an identity as an athlete may find this aspect of his personal identity to be a source of positive motivation and self-certainty, even while it also reflects the stereotype that black men are athletic. As such, identity content as an outcome of exploration processes cannot be categorized as ultimately positive or negative based on its conformity with (or resistance against) racial stereotypes. Rather, the opportunity to safely engage in exploration without challenges or by resisting challenges should be considered a core element of positive identity formation trajectories.

These positive trajectories can be bolstered through interpersonal, institutional, and systemic supports. One potentially potent type of support is ethnic-racial socialization, which refers to the practices, knowledge, and values about ethnic-racial backgrounds and culture that are communicated to young people (Hughes et al., 2006). These socialization messages can come from many sources, including parents, peers, teachers, and schools (Byrd, 2017; Hughes et al., 2006). The messages may include various contents; for example, cultural socialization addresses customs of their heritage, and preparation for bias messages instill awareness of racism and skills to cope with such experiences (Hughes et al., 2006). For racially marginalized youth, ethnic-racial socialization has been strongly linked to positive psychosocial outcomes such as self-esteem, academic engagement, motivation, and ethnic-racial identity development (Byrd, 2015; Martinez-Fuentes et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020).

In the context of encountering racial stereotypes during adolescence, messages of cultural socialization and preparation for bias can be protective factors for personal

identity development. Positive messages about racial group membership conveyed in cultural socialization may help youth navigate stereotypes with resilient positive self-perceptions (Hughes et al., 2009; Murry et al., 2014). Preparation for bias can include specific strategies and skills that adolescents can use to negotiate the challenges they encounter in exploring their identity in breadth due to stereotypes and encourage youth to critically resist unjust ideologies (Neblett et al., 2012). Although there has not been much research directly examining the potential protective effect of ethnic-racial socialization on the relation between racial stereotypes and personal identity development, research on other outcomes shows promise. For instance, cultural socialization and preparation for bias have both been found to buffer the negative impact of experiencing racial discrimination on self-esteem and perceived stress of racially minoritized youth (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Neblett et al., 2006).

The specific ways that types of ethnic-racial socialization may promote positive functioning within the context of racism and stereotypes are being actively investigated. For instance, when preparing youth for bias merely involves messages making young people aware of the existence of stereotypes, the heightened stereotype consciousness can exacerbate negative outcomes (Hughes et al., 2009; McKown & Strambler, 2009). However, if such socialization also includes messages about how youth can cope with experiences of stereotypes, it can be protective (Neblett et al., 2012). Research on the protective effects of ethnic-racial socialization related to supporting youth to engage in identity exploration despite the stereotypes they encounter can be instrumental for creating environments that bolster resilience.

Racially marginalized adolescents' resistance can also be supported through programmatic interventions. For example, Oyserman et al. (2002) implemented an after-school intervention program with black middle school students that strengthened academic success as a possible identity element. The program activities encouraged youth to imagine their adulthood, feel a sense of belonging in school, and create concrete plans and strategies to actualize their possible academic identities. Such interventions may be adapted to support youth in exploring other possible contents of personal identities that may be challenged by racial stereotypes.

Identity Evaluation Cycle

In the evaluation cycle of the Dual-Cycle Model, exploration in-depth is theorized as the key process through which adolescents evaluate existing commitments

(Luyckx et al., 2006). Identity Control Theory describes behavioral engagement in commitments and receipt of social feedback as the interpersonal processes involved in this cycle (Burke, 2006; Burke & Reitzes, 1991). In the macro-context of racism, both of these interactions may be affected by racial discrimination and biased feedback at the institutional and interpersonal levels (Neal-Jackson, 2018; Steele, 1997).

Racial discrimination can influence what types of opportunities are (un)available for youth of color to engage in to evaluate their existing personal identity content (Neal-Jackson, 2018). The racial biases of people and organizations that should provide environments for identity exploration may result in unfair denials or restrictions of opportunities for some youth to participate in specific social behaviors (Neal-Jackson, 2018; Rogers & Way, 2016). For instance, youth of color may be unfairly excluded from engaging in behaviors related to personal identities that clash with racial stereotypes (e.g., Asian adolescents may be actively discouraged from exploring athleticism, which defies the “nerd” stereotype). These restrictions may have implication for not only the specific cycles of identity evaluation but, through reiterations of the cycle, developmental change of youth personal identity (Lerner, 2018).

Moreover, racial biases in people and institutions that provide social feedback to adolescents may impact the content and quality of the feedback youth of color receive. Being denied opportunities to engage in activities because of race (as explained in the previous section) can itself be negative feedback about the adolescents’ commitment because it suggests that they do not fit in spaces related to that identity content. Even if youth of color have opportunities to engage in social behaviors, racial biases may cause people to misconstrue the behavioral engagement and provide biased social feedback (Neal-Jackson, 2018). As a result, racial discrimination and biases pose another set of challenges that racially marginalized adolescents have to navigate as they explore their personal identity commitments in depth.

Challenges for Identity Content and Process

The obstacles to gain opportunities for behavioral engagement and biased social feedback may cause adolescents to misapprehend what it means to have specific commitments and misperceive the fit between themselves and the identity content (Berzonsky, 2011; Kerpelman et al., 1997). Such influence can pose challenges to the evaluation of personal identity commitments among racially marginalized adolescents, impacting both content and process of their

identities. In regard to content, youth may be hindered from maintaining and feeling certain about personal identity content that racist beliefs suggest is not characteristic of their racial group (Ferguson, 2000; Neal-Jackson, 2018). Indeed, research shows that youth of color often struggle to maintain commitments that defy racial stereotypes (Steele, 2011) and that there may be fewer youth who identify with such commitments as they grow older and have had to resist stereotypes for longer (Way, 2011; Way et al., 2013). Because of the dehumanizing and mostly negative nature of these stereotypes (Jones & Rogers, 2022), developing identification with positive personal commitments can be further challenged.

Process-wise, discrimination and biased feedback may be obstacles for youth to gather and incorporate information that adequately reflects the actual attributes of themselves and their context, which is necessary for personal identity to function as a compass when navigating through important life decisions. Just as the limited scope of exploration in breadth could hinder the certainty that youth can foster from their personal identity commitments, insufficient opportunities and information to properly evaluate the commitments can inhibit the process leading to certainty (Luyckx et al., 2008; Marcia, 1966).

Much of the evidence on challenges for behavioral engagement among youth of color has been documented in the context of schools (e.g., Neal-Jackson, 2018). This focus reflects the reality that education plays a significant role in adolescents’ psychosocial development, and educational opportunities are directly related to important life outcomes (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). These studies have elucidated how racially marginalized adolescents are denied equal opportunities (compared to white students) to participate in academic activities, which are necessary for evaluating personal identity content as a learner (e.g., Neal-Jackson, 2018; Nunn, 2018; O’Connor et al., 2011). For instance, Neal-Jackson (2018) conducted a meta-ethnographic review that synthesized evidence of unequal access to educational opportunities due to teachers’ and school officials’ biases that youth of color are not good students. Across studies, students reported that they felt the teachers’ and administrators’ stereotypes and biases about their race caused schools to deny them high-quality education, such as not being placed in advanced course offerings or not being provided chances to share their thoughts or answers in class (Ferguson, 2000; Nasir et al., 2009; Noguera, 2009). Further examination of teachers’ perspectives on black students revealed that many teachers had racist beliefs about their students’

abilities which led them to being less invested in providing sufficient chances for academic engagement (Neal-Jackson, 2018).

There is also evidence about how the behaviors that youth of color may engage in to explore a specific commitment are sometimes misunderstood or wrongly labeled, especially in the academic context (Morris, 2007; Nasir et al., 2009; Pringle et al., 2012). Pringle and colleagues (2012) studied black girls' experiences in math classrooms and found that actively asking questions in class, which is something students may do because they are highly engaged in the topic matter, was misinterpreted by teachers as being disobedient to their authority. Similarly, Morris (2007) observed that teachers viewed black girls' attempts to participate in class, such as asking questions or shouting out answers in class, as being controlling, instead of interpreting these behaviors as positive indicators of motivation to be involved in their learning (as they might for white students). Nasir and colleagues (2009) also noted how black students' participation in class was not as appreciated as the participation of white students. Ultimately, these studies show that youth of color are often told (implicitly or explicitly) that they are outsiders within spaces that are integral for evaluating their commitments and that their current selves do not match pertinent, context-specific commitments (Debrosse et al., 2020).

Biases can be found in feedback about other actions (ones that youth do not consciously intend to explore an identity commitment in depth) that affect youth's self-perceptions, too (Koonce, 2012; Lei, 2003; Neal-Jackson, 2018). For example, studies of teachers' perceptions of black girls in school show that the girls' behaviors unrelated to academics, such as when they are simply with friends, are often negatively construed (Koonce, 2012; Lei, 2003; Neal-Jackson, 2018). In the studies of Lei (2003) and Koonce (2012), teachers viewed black students' visibility and "loudness" in school hallways as unsettling and as indicative of impoliteness and disobedience. Biased feedback about adolescents' personal attributes can also be present in relationships with general others (e.g., unrelated adults) (Harris & Kruger, 2022). For example, black male adolescents are often viewed as dangerous as evident in disproportionate rates of detention, policing, and incarceration (Ferguson, 2000), which may cause biased social feedback about their everyday actions (Harris & Kruger, 2022). These inaccurate perceptions and false characterizations of youth of color conveyed through biased social feedback can lead to fluctuations in their self-perceptions that may lead to problematic transformational change if repeated. Adolescents may

change their identity standards to match these changed perceptions of the current selves (as reflected through biased feedback by others).

The concept of ethnic/ideal self-discrepancies is similar to the Identity Control Theory concept of differences between self-perception and identity standards and illustrates the challenges that youth of color may experience in the evaluation cycle (Burke, 2006). In particular, studies show how youth of color may feel discouraged from maintaining personal identity content that defies racist stereotypes about their attributes. Ethnic/ideal self-discrepancies capture the perceived gap between the characteristics that adolescents believe that members of their ethnic group possess and the ideal self that represents whom they wish they were. These discrepancies are studied in relation to aspects of identity such as occupation or education (Debrosse et al., 2018). In a study with immigrant adolescents from diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds (e.g., South East Asian, Central or South American, Caribbean, African), the perceived gaps between adolescents' ethnic and ideal personal identities predicted weaker engagement with and certainty about their academic aspirations (Debrosse et al., 2020). In other words, when the youth thought that their aspirations were very different from what was believed by others to be typical for members of their ethnic group, their academic identities were diminished.

Similar to the identity formation cycle, it is important to emphasize here that whether adolescents' personal identity content that is strengthened through evaluation is consistent or resisting stereotypes may not be inherently negative or positive. Instead, the current theoretical model highlights unjust obstacles that can cause stress for youth of color when they need to engage in identity evaluation of specific commitments.

Opportunities for Resilience

The challenges that racially marginalized youth may experience in the evaluation cycle do not definitively mean that they are bound to identify only with personal identity content that affirms racial biases or stereotypes. Adolescents' agentic actions can prompt pathways wherein they are afforded more opportunities for behavioral engagement and unbiased feedback. Although such trajectories are evidence for youth resilience against racism, they may come at a cost of undermined racial identities and overall well-being. As such, supportive and transformative actions in adolescents' interpersonal, institutional, and societal contexts are crucial to ensure that adolescents do not have to engage in the type of resilience-promoting actions that may have unintentional negative consequences.

In environments without much support from surrounding individuals or systems, youth of color may adjust their behaviors to obtain more opportunities to evaluate their personal identity commitments that may otherwise be discouraged due to discrimination and bias. These behavioral adjustments can be seen as adolescents' individual efforts for personal identity evaluation. Studies of racially minoritized students' experiences in schools, for example, describe how they autonomously adjusted their behaviors, such as by changing the way they spoke (Nasir et al., 2009; Neal-Jackson, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2011), to be better accepted in classrooms, which then enabled them to explore their academic identities. Youth of color may also control their behaviors to avoid being perceived as conforming to negative stereotypes in other general contexts as well. In interviews with youth of various ethnic-racial backgrounds (Rogers & Way, 2016; Way et al., 2013), many adolescents spoke about the efforts they made to avoid being perceived as confirming the stereotypes of their ethnic-racial group. For instance, in the context of stereotypes that black men are dangerous and violent, black male adolescents felt motivated to exhibit acts of kindness to "prove them wrong" (Harris & Kruger, 2022). These behaviors can be interpreted as responses to stereotyped social feedback that adolescents engage in to maintain the identity content of not being a dangerous or violent person. Although these behaviors should not be necessary (in a fair and racially unbiased context), they represent a potential form of resilience that some youth of color may use.

However, when considering the overall identity and well-being of youth, these efforts can add stress to youth of having to negotiate tensions between their racial and personal identity if there is no corresponding support from and transformation of the surrounding context (Butler-Barnes et al., 2017; Eggleston & Miranda, 2009; Legette, 2018; Smith et al., 2007; Steele, 1997). For instance, in recognition that the salience of their racial group membership cultivates negative feedback and treatment from teachers, students may adjust their behaviors in ways that are intended to make their racial identity less obvious; such changes may include avoiding using African-American vernacular English and/or specific accents or maintaining limited visibility within classes (Horvat & Antonio, 1999). Several qualitative studies have documented the stress that youth experience when engaging in these kinds of behavioral adjustments. For example, students who changed the way they spoke to be accepted by teachers as learners described feeling like they were surrendering their sense of racial belonging (Horvat & Antonio, 1999). Furthermore, black adoles-

cents remarked that having to actively avoid being misunderstood and mistreated due to their race was often very tiring (Eggleston & Miranda, 2009). Black adolescents with high levels of academic achievement may also distance themselves from their black peers (Legette, 2018); such distancing may mean that they lose a source of racial belongingness and social supports that are critical for the well-being of youth of color. Although individual adolescents' efforts to obtain more opportunities for themselves to engage in identity evaluation should be recognized, the evidence of stress caused by such efforts clearly demonstrates that cultivating positive identity pathways should not solely be the burden of youth.

Adolescents' resilience must be complemented and supported by interpersonal, institutional, and systemic action that can create changes in the contexts of youth to reduce the challenges and tension that they have to navigate. Dupree and colleagues (2015) suggested that ethnic-racial socialization can challenge and change the stigmatized image of race that marginalized youth may have and can, thus, reduce the tension in exploring positive personal identity that resists stereotypes. Although such effects of ethnic-racial socialization have not been examined empirically, studies have shown that ethnic-racial socialization at school and from parents or family members can enhance adolescents' school engagement (Byrd, 2015; Martinez-Fuentes et al., 2021; Neblett et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2020). Culturally responsive teaching practices, warm interactions with school officials, and promoting positive cross-race interactions at school are additional practices that also bolster school engagement (Bottiani et al., 2020; Byrd, 2015). Such school practices can be effective through creating an inclusive and warm climate wherein adolescents can explore their personal identities safely and with confidence that the social feedback they receive is fair. Considering that school is an important setting for youth to explore personal identities in depth (e.g., academic identity, occupational identity) and much of the negative impact of racism on personal identity has been documented in the academic domain, the practices examined in these studies may be seen as supportive for adolescents' active and positive engagement in personal identity evaluation.

Resilient personal identity evaluation among youth of color can also be promoted through critical consciousness. This framework, which originated in the writings of Paulo Freire (1973), focuses on the examination of the systemic causes of unjust social conditions (critical reflection), which is hypothesized to lead to individual and

collective behaviors (critical actions) to change such circumstances (Diemer et al., 2017). Promoting critical consciousness among racially marginalized youth may empower them to navigate connections among racial and personal aspects of their identities by critiquing the unjust system rather than having to choose between two important aspects of themselves (Hope et al., 2015). Empirically, critical consciousness among youth of color has been associated with various positive outcomes, including enhanced career development, occupational expectancies, and academic engagement (Gale et al., 2023; Heberle et al., 2020; Seider et al., 2020). These outcomes are closely related to important domains of personal identity during adolescence, which suggests that fostering critical consciousness may have the potential to support positive personal identity development.

People who work with youth should also establish anti-racist spaces wherein stereotype-resisting personal identities can be fully explored. Such spaces can include classrooms, schools, after-school programs, student clubs, and community resources. Professionals and institutions working with adolescents should especially pay attention to their own biases to ensure a fair environment for racially marginalized youth to explore their personal identities. For instance, teachers and school administrators should examine whether opportunities for learning and feedback are fairly provided to students and ensure that all students are given the same opportunities to explore their academic potentials. Youth programs that help adolescents explore various activities and behaviors can be supportive as well.

Summary

Racism can challenge the personal identity development of youth of color as they form and evaluate commitments. In the formation cycle, racial stereotypes may convey a narrow range of ideas about who young people are as individuals, which potentially limits the scope of their exploration in-breadth (Oyserman & James, 2011; Way et al., 2013). As most stereotypes of minoritized racial groups are negative, such attitudes may make it difficult for youth to develop positive personal identity content that motivates them to engage in activities that fulfill their positive potential (Cantor et al., 2021; Oyserman & Destin, 2010). In addition, the potentially constrained scope of exploration in-breadth may hinder adolescents from developing commitments that they can fully identify with and flexibly adjust (Berzonsky, 2011; Luyckx et al., 2008; Marcia, 1966). However, youth of color may reject stereotypes and explore personal identity commitments that are against societal expectations

(Rogers & Way, 2016; Way et al., 2013). Interpersonal and societal support such as ethnic-racial socialization and educational practices are important to consider in helping youth cultivate such resilient paths. Resisting racial stereotypes can enable youth to explore their potentials in a wider range (Rogers & Way, 2016; Spencer, 2008).

In the identity evaluation cycle, youth of color may be kept from opportunities to behaviorally engage in exploring certain stereotype-precluded personal identity contents in depth (Neal-Jackson, 2018). Furthermore, racially marginalized adolescents' actions may be misconstrued, and they may receive biased feedback, which can distort their self-perception or understanding of their identity content (Neal-Jackson, 2018). This array of social processes may make it difficult for youth of color to explore their commitments in an in-depth way without being pressured by biased messages about their racial groups (Debrosse et al., 2020; Way, 2011; Way et al., 2013). Youth of color may adjust their behaviors in ways that result in them being given more opportunities and feedback for evaluating their identities, but that often involves tensions from their racial identities (Steele, 1997). As such, supports for youth personal identity development at the interpersonal, institutional, and societal levels are critical.

Discussion

A key part of adolescent development is to foster a sense of personal identity that accurately reflects individual strengths and contextual resources (Cantor et al., 2021; Erikson, 1968). For youth of color, experiences of racism can influence the kinds of information about themselves that they integrate into their self-definition (Spencer, 2008). Although theories have addressed processes involved in this developmental task at the intra-individual (exploration and commitment) and interindividual (social behaviors and feedback) levels (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Luyckx et al., 2006), racism and individuals' racial group memberships have not been considered critical factors in the social context within these theories. Moreover, empirical studies have only indirectly examined the potential impact of racism on personal identity development (e.g., Neal-Jackson, 2018; Way et al., 2013). In light of these gaps in the literature, we presented the RAPID framework that integrated two models of cyclical processes involved in personal identity development and described how racism may impact the ways that racially marginalized adolescents define themselves as they

develop. This framework highlights elements of challenge and resilience that youth may experience in their personal identity journeys.

The RAPID framework highlighted that racial stereotypes and biases in the proximal contexts of adolescents of color may hinder their active engagement in processes of personal identity development and the acquisition of positive self-definitions. The messages conveyed and opportunities denied by individuals and institutions such as peers, teachers, schools, and media may unfairly restrict the breadth and depth of identity exploration (Oyserman & James, 2011; Way et al., 2013). Eliminating racially stereotyped messages, providing ample opportunities to behaviorally explore various commitments, and providing fair and supportive feedback are crucial to creating an environment where young people of color can freely and actively engage in their personal identity development (Cantor et al., 2021).

Along with the potential challenges in the racist context, the RAPID framework underscored youth resilience in such situations as well (Neal-Jackson, 2018; Way et al., 2013). The evidence of adolescents' autonomy demonstrates that they are not merely subject to the risks of racism to their personal identities but are also autonomous agents who make meaning of and cope with such challenges (Spencer, 2008). Therefore, along with reducing biases in the environments wherein youth of color develop personal identity, direct support for them to act on their autonomy and resilience is another important way to support positive personal identity development. Support directed at the stress that these adolescents may experience as they resist stereotypes and adjust their behaviors in ways that often risk their racial identities is especially necessary (Rogers & Way, 2016; Van Laar et al., 2008).

Limitations and Future Research

Research that illuminates the precise features of this developmental process is necessary to identify potential challenges, opportunities for resilience, and potential interventions for the positive personal identity development of racially marginalized youth. The RAPID framework mainly describes the risks and opportunities for resilience that exist for the personal identity development of youth of color in cycles of identity processes. However, specific factors that may contribute to the within-group heterogeneity of outcomes of personal identity are also important. Identity processes take place within each individual adolescent's developmental system, which consists of unique personal attributes and contextual supports and challenges, as well as interrela-

tions between the personal and context (Lerner, 2018). Intrapersonal and contextual factors relevant to how youth develop their personal identities, such as how much ethnic-racial socialization they receive or what cognitive strategies they use when thinking about identity-related questions, may vary across individuals (Berzonsky, 2011; Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020). Moreover, although common macro-level contextual factors of racial inequalities exist, individual adolescents experience inequalities through different types of interactions at different intensities and frequencies (Spencer, 2008). Therefore, identity development theories should acknowledge and incorporate such heterogeneity in the lives of racially marginalized youth (Lerner, 2018).

Our framework did not address how adolescents' specific holistic developmental status and contextual factors coact across time to affect their personal identity development. As adolescents mature cognitively and socially, the dynamics of the coaction of intrapersonal and contextual factors transform as well. Moreover, the reiteration of the influence of racism on the cycles of identity formation and evaluation across the holistic development of youth itself can lead to transformation of youth and their personal identities. Thus, for a more comprehensive understanding of how youth of color develop their personal identities in the context of racism, the developmental timing of the coactions between individual maturation and contextual features must be considered (Elder et al., 2015).

We presented indirect empirical evidence supporting the elements of the theoretical framework, but future studies should be directed specifically at testing aspects of the framework. Research questions based on the RAPID framework may be examined in several ways. Studies using existing neo-Eriksonian measures and methods, such as the Dual-Cycle Model (e.g., Luyckx et al., 2008), can incorporate forms of social processes and racism as factors that influence the process-related dimensions. For example, researchers may investigate whether exposure to stereotyped messages about an adolescents' racial group inhibits exploration in breadth. Another example could be to examine how racially biased feedback on identity-related activities impacts youth's identification with their developing commitments. In both cases, researchers should also measure aspects of the process that provide adolescents with opportunities for resilience, such as racial-ethnic socialization and engagement in collective actions designed to dismantle systems of racist oppression.

In light of the importance of developmental timing (Elder et al., 2015), future research should be conducted longitudinally to examine how repeated coactions of

experiences of racism and individuals' reactions lead to transformative change in youth identity. Furthermore, empirical research should implement idiographic research designs and measures because group-focused research cannot accurately describe either the intraindividual phenomenon of personal identity development (Yu et al., 2021), in general, or how it is impacted by racism.

Qualitative research should be conducted to obtain detailed information about both the content and process of adolescents' personal identities in the context of racial inequalities. A key hypothesis of the RAPID framework is that stereotypes and biases may limit the kind of content that youth can explore for their identity development. That is, racism has a potential impact not only on the process of exploration but also on the content of what is being explored. Currently, most quantitative measures of personal identity development are focused on measuring the level of engagement in processual dimensions, but they do not capture the content of exploration or commitments (e.g., Luyckx et al., 2008). Thus, qualitative data may supplement quantitative measures by reflecting not only how engaged youth are in moments of identity development but also the breadth or depth of the content of exploration.

Although we used the RAPID framework to explain personal identity development among racially marginalized adolescents, empirical evidence was provided for only monoracial youth of color and not for multiracial youth. The experiences of this growing group of young people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) should be studied as well. Although the basic tenants that we presented about how interpersonal and institutional stereotypes and discrimination impact young people's identity exploration may be applicable for multiracial adolescents, additional considerations for how youth navigate monoracist ideologies are necessary for this much-needed theoretical and empirical work (Jones & Rogers, 2022).

Our current framework concerned only youth of color, that is, youth who experience marginalization based on their race and/or ethnicity in the USA. The focus was chosen because the differential impact of racism depending on privilege or marginalization should each be understood in their own context, instead of assuming one as normative and the other as deviation from the norm (García Coll, 2022). Future extensions of the RAPID framework should consider the ways in which personal identity develops among youth who are racially privileged to elucidate that the process of personal identity development of white youth is not merely the "normal" process but that their processes are influenced by racism as well, just in different ways (Spencer, 2008). Moreover, these areas of focus may be extended to other populations and other forms of racism for a wider scope of

understanding of how racism functions as a macro-system of personal identity development. For instance, the RAPID framework may also be useful in understanding personal identity development of youth outside the USA, where stratification of social groups exists with different names and historical backgrounds (Moffitt et al., 2020).

The integrated framework of intra- and interpersonal processes involved in personal identity development presented here may be expanded to understand the potential impacts of other elements of young people's social contexts and other axes of privilege and marginalization, such as those based on gender, sexual orientation, ability status, health status, or immigration status. As previously mentioned, experiences related to social group membership inform personal identity development because the self as a member of a group is not separate from the self as an individual (Vignoles, 2018). Thus, experiences related to different sources of inequality impact adolescents' personal identity development as well. Furthermore, the constraints that racism places on the personal identity development of racially marginalized adolescents are likely to differ based on the ways in which adolescents experience privilege and marginalization within their other social group memberships (Crenshaw, 1991; Galliher et al., 2017).

Regarding forms of racism, the impact that structural racism may have on youth's personal identity development should be examined. The current theoretical framework focused on interpersonal or institutional racism but did not consider structural racism. Structural racism is the coaction of current and historic public policies, practices, and norms that reinforce each other to perpetuate racial inequity (Rogers et al., 2021). Structural racism can operate at a higher level in the developmental context to influence youth both directly (e.g., limiting opportunities for exploring specific identities) and indirectly (e.g., shaping more proximal contexts, such as by perpetuating biases in interpersonal relationships or institutions) (Rogers et al., 2021; Syed & McLean, 2023). The potential negative impacts of structural racism on personal identity development must also be addressed in future theory and research to inform holistic strategies for supporting positive development.

In developing practices and policies to dismantle barriers and support the resilience of youth of color, research in other disciplines can be informative. Active research in the field of education on critical and transformative actions can be especially instrumental (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991; Stetsenko, 2017), given how schools are pivotal settings for youth identity development and how much of the existing evidence of the impact of racism has been accumulated around adolescents' academic experience and identity.

Conclusions

This paper described a theoretical framework for the role of racism in how racially marginalized youth define themselves as individuals. As described throughout this paper, research on adolescents' ethnic-racial identities has often implied the potential impact of racial inequalities on adolescents' self-definitions as an individual (e.g., Way et al., 2013). Moreover, studies on more specific aspects of personal identity, such as academic identity, have demonstrated influences of racial stereotypes and biases (e.g., Oyserman & Destin, 2010). The RAPID framework presented in this paper attempts to integrate the empirical evidence of potential challenges and resilience into the process of personal identity development (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Luyckx et al., 2006). This framework can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how racism may impact personal identities of youth of color for researchers and may provide insight for planning interventions for positive psychosocial development for practitioners.

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Statement of Ethics

Per journal policy, we note that this paper, being a theoretical paper, does not report original research with human subjects and, for that reason, its writing did not require review by an institutional review board.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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