

Is My Anger Justified? The Influence of Gendered Racial Identity Centrality on the Relationship Between Internalization of the Sapphire Stereotype and Disengagement Coping Among Black Women

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ABSTRACT. Historically, Black women have been susceptible to the effects of race- and gender-related stress, such as the sexually promiscuous Jezebel or the motherly Mammy stereotypes. However, few studies have centered on the influence of the Sapphire stereotype—defined as being overbearing, emasculating, and aggressive—on Black women’s health. Due to these stereotypes, Black women may utilize different coping strategies such as disengagement coping—limiting one’s interpersonal interactions—to manage these stressors. Yet, little research has specifically examined how Black women’s gendered racial identity development relates to internalization of the Sapphire stereotype. The present study aimed to explore whether gendered racial identity centrality moderates the relationship between the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement coping among Black women. Two hundred ninety-eight Black/African American women between the ages of 18–52 completed an online survey via Qualtrics. Based on the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory, we hypothesized that gendered racial identity centrality will moderate the relationship between the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement coping. Consistent with the hypothesis, the results indicated that identity centrality significantly moderated the relationship between the Sapphire stereotype and the use of disengagement coping such that higher identity centrality decreased the association between the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement use ($b = .51$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = 5.67$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.33, .69]). This research can be used to develop educational programs to promote healthy identity development among Black women.

Keywords: gendered racial identity centrality, Sapphire stereotype, gendered racialized stereotypes, disengagement coping, coping strategies



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Historically, Black women have been—and continue to be—susceptible to the effects of race and gender-related stress, considering their socially constructed identities of being Black and a woman (Greer, 2011). Lewis et al. (2016) concluded that other people often have gendered racial misconceptions about Black women's behavior and treat them based on those beliefs. Oftentimes, Black women are labeled as the Angry Black woman, or the promiscuous Jezebel. Another lesser-known stereotype, the Sapphire, describes Black women as loud, emasculating, and aggressive (Bond et al., 2021). These stereotypes are connected to experiences of gendered racial microaggressions, defined as seemingly innocent yet harmful remarks based on one's gender and race. Experiencing such gendered racial microaggressions has been associated with poorer mental health and coping strategies (Lewis et al., 2017).

In fact, Black women may manage stressful events regarding racism, colorism, sexism, and other forms of oppression by utilizing different coping strategies, such as religion/spirituality, social support, and disengagement coping (Hall, 2018; Holder et al., 2015; Kilgore et al., 2020). Research has shown that the use of more disengagement coping strategies, the process of limiting one's participation in certain activities, groups, or situations, was associated with poorer mental and physical health among Black women (Lewis et al., 2017). Further research has shown that the importance of one's race and gender identity, referred to as gendered racial identity centrality (GRIC), may positively or negatively buffer the relationship between gendered racism and coping strategies among Black women (Jones et al., 2021). Yet, minimal research has examined the significance of GRIC in minimizing the effect of internalization of specific stereotypes (e.g., the Sapphire stereotype) and the use of disengagement as a coping strategy. The purpose of the current study was to fill this research gap by understanding how GRIC moderates the relationship between internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement as a coping strategy.

In the present study, the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) was the main theoretical framework used to explore and contextualize the relationship between gendered racism and the coping strategies Black women use. This theory explains how various risk factors influence potentially stressful experiences, how individuals use various coping mechanisms, and how these mechanisms impact an individual's behavior and health outcomes (Spencer et al., 1997). Previous research exploring racial discrimination in Black adolescents used PVEST to explain unique protective and risk factors associated with being Black (Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers et al., 2006). In one study, Sellers et al. (2006) used PVEST's risk and resilience framework to examine psychological well-being with racial

discrimination as a risk factor and a stressor and racial identity as a tool for resilience and as a coping strategy. The researchers found more racial discrimination to be associated with more stress, more depressive symptoms, and lower psychological well-being, indicating that race is one unique factor related to stress among African American adolescents. Specifically exploring the experiences of Black women, Dickens and Chavez (2018) used PVEST to posit how race, socioeconomic status, and gender serve as risk factors that result in Black women developing reactive coping mechanisms, such as changing their behavior to fit their environment. Through conducting interviews, researchers found that Black women described changing their behavior, appearance, and perspective, also known as identity shifting, to navigate experiences of stereotyping and discrimination in the workplace (Dickens & Chavez, 2018). These results show that race, socioeconomic status, and gender act as unique risk factors that are stressors for Black women, which can lead to maladaptive coping strategies. In the current study, PVEST was used to show that experiences of gendered racialized stereotypes are risk factors that can cause stress for Black women and these stressors can influence the coping strategies that Black women decide to use, such as the use of disengagement coping strategies when faced with the stressors associated with being both Black and a woman.

Black Women's Identity Development and Related Experiences

One factor that may buffer Black women against the harmful effects of experiences of stereotyping and discrimination is gendered racial identity centrality, which refers to how an individual's gender and racial identity combined are directly important to that person's overall sense of self (Jones et al., 2021). For example, some Black women may view being Black and a woman as important to who they are (i.e., their identity) and others may not. Many researchers have examined the extent to which Black women place importance on their race and gender identity (Jones et al., 2021; Lewis et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2022; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). Scholars have found mixed results on the influence of GRIC among Black women, such that some research has found that greater GRIC served as a protective factor in the face of gendered racism (racism and sexism; Lewis et al., 2017), and other studies found that greater GRIC was related to poorer outcomes when experiencing gendered racism (Jones et al., 2021; Nelson et al., 2022; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). Specifically, research has found that more GRIC increased the positive relationship between identity shifting—changing one's speech and actions to minimize experiences of discrimination—and depressive symptoms (Jones et al., 2021), and increased the positive

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relationship between gendered racism and the use of disengagement coping among Black women (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). Conversely, researchers also found that less GRIC increased the positive relationship between experiences of gendered racism and disengagement coping (Lewis et al., 2017), indicating mixed results on the influence of GRIC. Based on previous research, it is suspected that experiencing more gendered racism may be associated with Black women using more avoidant coping strategies (e.g., disengagement coping) regardless of their level of GRIC. Overall, more research is needed on the influence of GRIC on Black women's experiences of stereotyping or discrimination. Particularly, GRIC needs to be examined in relation to the internalization of gendered racialized stereotypes, which stem from gendered racism.

Gendered Racialized Stereotypes – The Sapphire

Unfortunately, Black women are often subjected to negative gendered racialized stereotypes. Most prominently, there is the Jezebel, sexually promiscuous and seductive; the Angry Black woman, domineering and loud; the Mammy, self-sacrificing and nurturing; the Superwoman, emotionally strong and driven; and the welfare queen, lazy and materialistic (Collins, 2000; Holder et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2022). In particular, the Sapphire stereotype describes a Black woman who is emasculating, loud, and aggressive (Bond et al., 2021). The imagery associated with the Sapphire may seem familiar because it is the root of the Angry Black woman stereotype (West, 2018). These stereotypes can be extremely harmful to Black women, especially if they internalize the stereotypes. According to Bailey et al. (2011), internalizing and accepting negative stereotypes is a component of internalized racism, or the acceptance of White dominant culture's attitudes towards Black people, that goes beyond simply identifying with these negative stereotypes. As Black people accept White dominant attitudes and identify with negative stereotypes, they start to reject Black culture and values. Similarly, metastereotype awareness refers to when people are aware of and have personal beliefs about stereotypes for their own social group (Jerald et al., 2017). For Black women, awareness of negative stereotypes and beliefs about one's own group has been shown to have negative effects on one's health (Jerald et al., 2017). Specifically, metastereotype awareness of the Sapphire stereotype was indirectly related to less self-care and more substance use in Black women (Jerald et al., 2017).

Additionally, Black women who internalize the Sapphire image may struggle to express needs or show anger (Thomas et al., 2004). If gendered racialized

stereotypes—like the Sapphire—are internalized, Black women may feel responsible for the inconvenience of others and change to avoid conflict with other ethnic groups (Lewis et al., 2016; West, 1995). They might feel the need to suppress their anger and other emotions in order to prevent conflict with other people. This reaction may be one way that Black women who internalize the Sapphire stereotype cope, but more research is needed to identify specific coping strategies used by Black women. Given the limited research on Black women's experiences with the Sapphire, we intentionally focused on the Sapphire stereotype in the present study. Our decision was influenced by the negative outcomes associated with this stereotype that Black women experience, such as less self-care, more substance use, and difficulty expressing emotions (Jerald et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2004).

Disengagement as a Coping Strategy

To help manage stressors, such as experiences of gendered racism, Black women have engaged in behaviors to lessen the impact of life stressors, referred to as coping strategies (Hall, 2018; Holder et al., 2015; Jones, 2022; Kilgore et al., 2020). Research has found that access to social resources and networks in Black communities acted as an important coping strategy for managing emotional well-being (Hall, 2018). Black women may also engage in coping strategies such as writing, religion/spirituality, armoring, shifting, and obtaining sponsorships/mentorships to cope with gendered racism (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Holder et al., 2015; Kilgore et al., 2020). Jones (2022) examined how Black women develop responses to racial microaggressions on a predominantly White campus. The most common theme to emerge in participant responses was the use of disengagement coping, such as pulling out of participating in certain activities, groups, or situations (Lewis et al., 2017). In other words, participants refrained from responding to racial microaggressions in general due to not wanting to be perceived as the "Angry Black woman." In addition to choosing to refrain from responding, participants also felt emotionally drained and fearful of the consequences that may follow (Jones, 2022).

Disengagement coping is a seemingly maladaptive strategy because it has been associated with poorer mental and physical health and limitations in behavior (Jones, 2022; Lewis et al., 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Thomas et al., 1995; West, 1995). Research has found increased use of disengagement coping to be associated with more experiences of gendered racial microaggressions (GRMs) and more psychological distress, such as poorer mental and physical health, among Black women (Lewis et al., 2017; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). For example, Black women who used

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more coping methods that involved disengagement strategies had more depressive symptoms when they experienced racism compared to Black women who used these coping strategies less often (West et al., 2010). Additionally, Williams and Lewis (2019) found more experiences of GRMs to be directly related to using more disengagement coping, which was then related to more depressive symptoms among Black women. As previously mentioned, internalizing gendered racial microaggressions, like stereotypes, can lead to Black women feeling responsible for inconveniencing others, which results in them changing their behaviors to avoid conflict (Lewis et al., 2016; West, 1995). Specifically, Thomas et al. (2004) found that internalization of the Sapphire stereotype was associated with an inability to express emotions in Black women. These findings align with the description of disengagement coping, suggesting that Black women who encounter the Sapphire stereotype might use more disengagement as a coping strategy.

Present Study

Previously, disengagement coping has been studied in relation to gendered racism as a whole and GRIC. However, little research has focused on disengagement coping in relation to a specific gendered racialized stereotype. The current study aimed to fill this gap in the research by exploring whether GRIC moderates the relationship between internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement as a coping strategy among Black women. This purpose led to the research question: How does GRIC moderate the relationship between internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement as a coping strategy among Black women? We hypothesized that internalization of the Sapphire stereotype would be positively correlated and GRIC would be negatively correlated with the use of disengagement as a coping strategy (H_1). In other words, increased internalization of the Sapphire stereotype would be associated with increased use of disengagement coping, but higher rates of GRIC would be associated with decreased use of disengagement coping. Additionally, we hypothesized that GRIC would moderate the relationship between internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement coping strategy among Black women (H_2). Specifically, having a greater GRIC would significantly decrease the positive relationship between the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement use.

Method

Participants

The sample included 298 individuals, all of whom identified as Black/African American. Ninety-four percent of

participants identified as women ($n = 280$), and 0.3% identified as transgender women ($n = 1$). Participants ranged from 18 to 52 years old ($M = 27.29$, $SD = 5.78$). Participants reported their marital status, with 55.8% being single and never married ($n = 154$), 21.4% were single, 21.4% were in a committed relationship ($n = 59$), 21% being married ($n = 58$), 0.4% were separated ($n = 1$), 1.1% were divorced ($n = 3$), and 0.4% were widowed ($n = 1$). Participants self-identified as 88.3% straight ($n = 242$), 8.8% bisexual ($n = 24$), 1.8% lesbian ($n = 5$), and 1.1% reported they were unsure of their sexual orientation ($n = 3$). Participants income level varied greatly; 29.3% had an income below \$15,000 ($n = 81$), 21% had an income between \$15,000 and \$30,000 ($n = 58$), 19.9% had an income between \$30,001 and \$50,000 ($n = 55$), 14.5% had an income between \$50,001 and \$75,000 ($n = 40$), and 15.2% had an income of \$75,001 or more ($n = 42$; see Table 1).

Procedure

Prior to data collection, approval from Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) at Spelman College and Chicago State University were obtained. After IRB approval, Black women 18 years of age or older were recruited via email and several social media sites in order to gain a diverse sample. Eligibility criteria required participants to self-identify as a Black/African American woman, 18 years of age or older, and living in the United States. The original study was part of a larger national study investigating stereotypes, discrimination, and health behaviors among Black women ages 18–35.

Participants completed a web-based survey via Qualtrics. Invitations to participate in the study were distributed nationally, using the online community bulletin boards targeting African American/Black women, social media sites, professional listservs, campus flyers, and personal and professional contacts. The Qualtrics research panel was also utilized to recruit a larger sample of Black women. Before starting the survey, participants were presented with a consent form, in which they declared their willingness to participate in the study. The survey consisted of demographic information first, and then the study's measures. The measures were organized in the following order: depression symptoms subscale, GRIC subscale, anxiety symptoms subscale, identity shifting scale, and gendered racism scale. The questionnaire took participants about 30–45 min to complete. Participants who were not recruited via Qualtrics had the chance to enter a raffle to win one of four \$25 gift cards, and participants recruited through Qualtrics each received \$5 (the standard amount determined by Qualtrics based on survey length and participant demographics).

Measures

Demographic Information

Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. The questionnaire included race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, and household income.

Internalization of the Sapphire Stereotype

Internalization of the Sapphire stereotype was assessed using the Sapphire subscale from the Stereotypical Roles of Black Women Scale (Thomas et al., 2004), a 10-item

scale measuring the presence of attitudes reflecting the Sapphire stereotype. Sample items include: “Black women are usually angry with others.” or “If given the chance, Black women will put down Black men.” Scale items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Responses across items were averaged, in which higher scores indicated higher internalization of the Sapphire stereotype ($\alpha = .85$).

Gendered Racial Identity Centrality (GRIC)

GRIC was assessed by using an adapted version of the

TABLE 1
Demographic Characteristics

N=298		N=298			
Characteristics	M	SD	Characteristics	M	SD
Ethnicity		<i>n</i> %	Sexuality		<i>n</i> %
African American/Black	242	86.7%	Straight/heterosexual	242	88.3%
African	7	2.5%	Bi-sexual	24	8.8%
Caribbean/West Indian	5	1.8%	Lesbian	5	1.8%
African American/Black, African	4	1.4%	Unsure	3	1.1%
African American/Black, Caribbean/West Indian	3	1.1%	(Missing)	24	
African American/Black, Latinx/Hispanic	5	1.8%	Income		
African American/Black, White	2	0.7%	Below \$15,000	81	29.3%
African American/Black, Other	1	0.4%	\$15,000-\$30,000	58	21.0%
African American/Black, Native American	1	0.4%	\$30,001-\$50,000	55	19.9%
African, Caribbean/West Indian	1	0.4%	\$50,001-\$75,000	40	14.5%
Multiracial	8	2.8%	\$75,001 and up	42	15.2%
Gender			(Missing)	22	
Transwoman	1	0.3%	Education Level		
Woman	280	94.0%	Some high school	7	2.6%
Marital Status			High school diploma/GED	62	22.7%
Single, never married	154	55.8%	Some college/technical school	49	17.9%
Single, in a committed relationship	59	21.4%	Associate degree	29	10.6%
Married	58	21%	Bachelor's degree	41	15.0%
Separated	1	0.4%	Master's degree	38	13.9%
Divorced	3	1.1%	Doctoral degree	20	7.3%
Widowed	1	0.4%	Some graduate school	11	4.0%
(Missing)	22		Graduate/Professional degree	16	5.9%
Religion			(Missing)	25	
Christian	211	77.0%	Employment Status		
Buddhist	2	0.7%	Full time employment	131	49.6%
Hindu	3	1.1%	Part-time employment	49	18.6%
Muslim	8	2.9%	Unemployed and looking	49	18.6%
Jewish	2	0.7%	Unemployed and not looking	15	5.7%
Atheist	8	2.9%	Homemaker	14	5.3%
Agnostic	17	6.2%	Disability benefits	6	2.3%
Other	23	8.4%	(Missing)	34	
(Missing)	24				

Note. % excludes missing value

8-item Centrality subscale from the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers et al., 1998). The scale was modified to specifically measure GRIC. A sample item includes: "I have a strong attachment to other Black women." Scale items were rated using a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Response options were averaged, with higher scores indicating higher levels of GRIC ($\alpha = .77$).

Disengagement Coping

The use of disengagement as a coping mechanism was assessed using the behavioral disengagement subscale of the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997), which consists of two items measuring how often individuals disengage to cope. The items are: "I've been giving up trying to deal with it." and "I've been giving up the attempt to cope." Scale items were rated using a 4-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*I haven't been doing this at all*) to 4 (*I've been doing this a lot*). Response options were then averaged, with higher scores indicating higher use of disengagement coping ($\alpha = .76$).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

In this study, researchers analyzed secondary data, obtained by the original researchers of a previous study (Jones et al., 2021), to address the specific research question. All the analyses for the current study were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). Preliminary analyses included calculating the mean, standard deviation, and standard error for GRIC, the Sapphire stereotype, and disengagement coping. By exploring patterns, missing data for the variables ranged from 14–18%. There were no transformations performed to normally distribute the data. In our sample, participants on average had high levels of GRIC ($M = 5.05$ $SD = 1.20$) out of 7, meaning that on average, their gender and race combined were central aspects to

their identity. Participants in the sample also had low levels of internalizing the Sapphire stereotype ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.73$) out of 5, and low usage of disengagement coping ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.85$) out of 4. These low levels could suggest that participants did not highly internalize the Sapphire stereotype nor disengage to cope. G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) was utilized to conduct *a priori* power analysis, which determined that a sample size of $n = 89$ is needed for a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$; Cohen, 1988) at $p < .05$ level of significance with power at .95. Thus, the obtained sample size of $n = 298$ exceeds the adequate amount to test the current study hypothesis.

Bivariate correlations between GRIC, internalization of the Sapphire stereotype, and disengagement coping among Black women were analyzed using Pearson's r in SPSS. The results revealed a small negative association between GRIC and the internalization of the Sapphire stereotype, $r(242) = -.14$, $p = .03$, a small negative association between GRIC and the use of disengagement, $r(251) = -.16$, $p = .01$, and a medium positive association between the use of disengagement and the internalization of the Sapphire stereotype, $r(242) = .31$, $p < .001$. These results indicated that more GRIC is associated with less internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and less use of disengagement as a coping strategy. These results also suggested that individuals who use disengagement as a coping strategy are more likely to internalize the Sapphire stereotype. Each correlational result also substantiated the study's first hypothesis, which predicted that high internalization of the Sapphire stereotype would be related with greater use of disengagement coping, and greater levels of GRIC would be related to lower use of disengagement coping.

Moderation Analysis

To test the main hypothesis, whether GRIC moderated the relationship between internalization of the Sapphire stereotype (the predictor) and disengagement as a coping mechanism (the outcome), the researchers used Model 1 from the PROCESS Macro in SPSS version 4.3 (Hayes, 2022). The overall model was significant, $R^2 = .14$, $F(3, 240) = 12.95$, $p < .001$. Both GRIC ($\beta = -.10$, $SE = .04$, $p = .03$) and the Sapphire stereotype ($\beta = .28$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$) significantly contributed to the variance in explaining disengagement (see Table 2). Also, the interaction between GRIC and the Sapphire stereotype was significant, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 240) = 8.54$, $p = .004$, $\beta = -.19$. To understand the significant moderation, a simple effects slope analyses was conducted. For Black women who reported lower GRIC, internalizing the Sapphire stereotype more was associated with more disengagement coping ($b = .51$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = 5.67$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.33, .69]). For Black women who

TABLE 2						
Moderation Between the Sapphire Stereotype, Identity Centrality, and Disengagement Coping						
Variable	β	SE	t	p	95% CI	
					LB	UB
Constant	1.75	.05	33.65	<.001	1.64	1.85
Sapphire Stereotype	.28	.07	3.77	<.001	0.13	0.43
Gendered Racial Identity Centrality	-.10	.04	-2.24	.03	-.18	-.01
Interaction	-.19	.06	-2.92	.004	-.32	-.06

Note. Dependent Variable = Disengagement Coping

reported higher GRIC, the relationship between internalizing the Sapphire stereotype and the use of disengagement coping was no longer significant ($b = .05$, $SE = .12$, $t = 0.40$, $p = .69$, 95% CI $[-.20, .29]$; see Figure 1). Overall, Black women with higher levels of GRIC internalized the Sapphire stereotype much less and in turn were less likely to engage in disengagement as a coping strategy, compared to Black women with lower levels of gendered racial identity, in which they internalized the Sapphire stereotype more and were more likely to use disengagement to cope.

A multiple linear regression was conducted to test if Black women's GRIC and their internalization of the Sapphire stereotype significantly predicted Black women's use of disengagement as a coping strategy. The fitted regression model was $\text{Disengagement} = 1.29 - 0.08 (\text{identity centrality}) + 0.35 (\text{Sapphire stereotype})$. The overall regression was statistically significant, $R^2 = .11$, $F(2, 241) = 14.71$, $p < .001$. It was found that GRIC did not significantly predict Black women's use of disengagement as a coping strategy, ($\beta = -.11$, $p = .09$). It was also found that internalization of the Sapphire stereotype significantly predicted Black women's use of disengagement as a coping strategy, ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$).

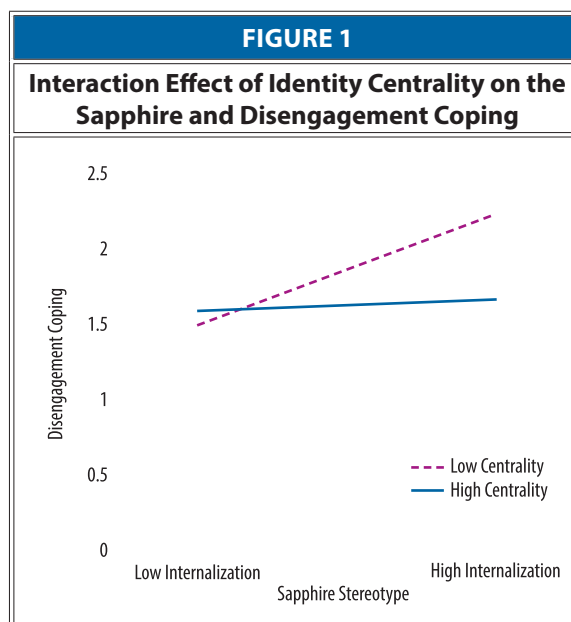
Discussion

The purpose of this research was to understand how the relationship between internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and the use of disengagement was moderated by GRIC. Acknowledging the role of GRIC in this relationship could confront the maladaptive coping mechanisms concerning gendered racial stress and aid in creating messages promoting healthy gendered racial identity, specifically among Black women. Based on the previous literature, researchers predicted that internalization of the Sapphire stereotype would have a positive association and GRIC would have a negative association with the use of disengagement to cope. Thus, it was also hypothesized that GRIC would decrease the positive link between internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement coping.

The results confirmed each of the hypotheses, revealing a small negative relationship between participants' sense of GRIC and the internalization of the Sapphire stereotype, indicating that individuals whose gendered racial identity was central to their overall identity was associated with less internalization of the Sapphire stereotype. Similarly, a negative association between GRIC and the use of disengagement suggested that participants high in identity centrality were less likely to utilize disengagement as a coping strategy. This finding relates to Williams and Lewis' (2019) study, which indicates that Black women with negative

perceptions of their identity were more likely to use disengagement to cope with gendered racial stressors. The correlation results also suggest that a positive, medium association between the use of disengagement and the internalization of the Sapphire stereotype exists, in which participants who use disengagement as a coping strategy were more likely to internalize the Sapphire stereotype. This finding complements previous work by Thomas et al. (2004), which established an existing relationship between internalizing the Sapphire stereotype and the inability to express emotions. The multiple linear regression preliminary results revealed that although there is a relationship between GRIC and Black women's use of disengagement as a coping strategy, GRIC does not predict the level of Black women's use of disengagement as a coping strategy. We can conclude that regardless of how important Black women's social identities are to them, this does not mean that they will refrain from using disengagement as a coping mechanism. However, results also reveal that Black women who personalize the Sapphire stereotype are more likely to use disengagement as a coping strategy.

Overall, GRIC did moderate the relationship between internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and the use of disengagement, confirming the research hypothesis. For Black women with low identity centrality, they used more disengagement coping when they highly internalized the Sapphire stereotype. For Black women with high identity centrality, there was no longer a significant relationship between disengagement coping and internalization of the Sapphire stereotype. Women with low identity centrality might be internalizing the



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stereotype at higher rates and increase their use of disengagement coping, or they might not have good coping strategies when encountering gendered racism so they just choose to limit their interactions in general. Sellers et al. (1998) suggests that individuals with a greater sense of identity centrality are able to recognize encounters of oppression more readily instead of internalizing the previous event. Based on this research, women with low GRIC may not be able to identify when they are experiencing gendered racism, leaving them to be more susceptible to internalizing gendered racial microaggressions.

Previous work also suggests that Black women with lower gender racial private regard use disengagement coping to protect themselves from psychological distress caused by gendered racial stressors (Williams & Lewis, 2019). This finding shows that having a high GRIC does decrease the relationship between the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement coping, which is consistent with the finding that less GRIC increases the relationship between gendered racism and disengagement coping (Lewis et al., 2017). However, it is not consistent with previous work that has found more GRIC to increase the positive relationship between identity shifting and depression symptoms (Jones et al., 2021) and between gendered racism and disengagement coping (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). Considering the current study's findings, having a high GRIC might mean that Black women recognize the value in their identities, so they are not as susceptible to internalizing messages associated with stereotypes, such as the Sapphire stereotype. Additionally, this finding could potentially explain the negative relationship between GRIC and the use of disengagement coping among the current study's participants. Because GRIC was found to buffer the positive relationship between internalizing the Sapphire and the use of disengagement coping, it is possible that Black women with higher GRIC are using less disengagement coping and internalizing the Sapphire stereotype less; if they internalize the Sapphire stereotype less, then they might use less disengagement coping.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite these important results, a couple limitations were present in the current study. Although this study found significant results for the moderating role of GRIC, there might be other variables that influence the relationship between the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement coping. Other aspects of gendered racial identity, like regard (i.e., how positively one feels about their own race/ethnicity) and ideology (e.g., one's beliefs about how African Americans should behave in society; Sellers et al., 1998), might moderate this relationship.

Specifically, high regard and ideologies that promote African American culture might decrease the positive relationship between the Sapphire and disengagement coping. It would also be useful for future research to consider how experiencing stressful life events or having a general positive attitude may change this relationship as well (Spencer et al., 1997). In addition to these variables, future researchers should expand the research on the Sapphire stereotype by studying it in relation to various health outcomes in Black women. For example, researchers could examine how depression, anxiety, and other coping strategies (e.g., identity shifting) may relate to Black women's internalization of the Sapphire stereotype. Additionally, researchers should explore Black women's uses of adaptive, in addition to maladaptive, coping strategies in response to experiences of gendered racism. As an example, a recent study found that distraction (i.e., stepping away from the stressor to do something enjoyable) to be an adaptive form of disengagement coping that increased positive emotions (Waugh et al., 2020; Waugh et al., 2021).

Another limitation was the average age of the study participants. On average, participants were approximately 27 years old, meaning they were relatively young. Younger participants might have had fewer experiences with gendered racism, relative to older Black women, given their age. If young Black women have had few experiences with the Sapphire stereotype, then they would not have as many opportunities to internalize it. In the future, researchers should consider how the results of the current study may differ with an older sample of Black women. It is possible that an older sample of Black women might have higher rates of internalization because they have had more opportunities to encounter experiences of discrimination and being stereotyped, such as with the Sapphire stereotype. A younger sample should be examined as well because adolescence is a crucial time for identity development (Spencer et al., 1997). Additionally, adolescents may experience gendered racism differently and choose different coping strategies (Sellers et al., 2006; Spencer et al., 1997; Velez & Spencer, 2018). It would also be critical for future researchers to conduct a longitudinal study to see how internalization of the Sapphire stereotype and the use of disengagement coping changes over time for Black girls and women.

Implications

These limitations do not take away from the implications from the findings of the current study. The findings still demonstrate the importance of healthy gender and racial identity development for Black girls and women (Jacobs, 2016; Lewis et al., 2017). GRIC can be a useful tool for

combatting gendered racism (Lewis et al., 2017), so it is important to cultivate a strong sense of gendered racial identity in young Black girls. Past research has suggested for schools to take an active role in combatting negative messages about Black girls and women to help show Black girls that those messages are not true (Burnett et al., 2022; Jacobs, 2016).

The development of educational programs may also be useful to show schools and parents how they can help young Black girls proudly build these parts of their identity. For example, schools could include positive examples of Black women in their curriculum to expose Black girls to positive representation, and parents could incorporate daily words of affirmation to foster self-love in their Black daughters. Schools and parents should also work together to promote positive messages about Black girls and women (Burnett et al., 2022). With this cooperation, the messages at home are being corroborated at school, and Black girls are receiving positive messages from multiple sources. Furthermore, there is a need for programs, like Afrocentric community-based programs, that teach Black women how to use healthy coping mechanisms to combat gendered racism (Gibbs & Fuery, 1994; Lewis et al., 2013; Linnaberry et al., 2014; Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Unhealthy coping mechanisms, like disengagement coping, may lead to negative health outcomes, like anxiety and depression. Healthy coping mechanisms, such as religion and social support, give Black women an outlet to deal with gendered racism in a more beneficial manner (Linnaberry et al., 2014; Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

Conclusion

Using PVEST, the current research explores Black women's experiences with gendered racialized stereotypes and their choice of coping strategies. Having a strong gendered racial identity can help Black women deal with internalizing the Sapphire stereotype. The present study has implications for schools and parents to support their Black children, indicating the importance of cultivating a strong, positive gendered racial identity in Black girls and women. Developing programs that aim to increase GRIC will give Black girls and women the tools to use their identity as a shield against gendered racism. By studying the Sapphire stereotype and disengagement coping, this research shows the negative toll that gendered racialized stereotypes can have on Black women.

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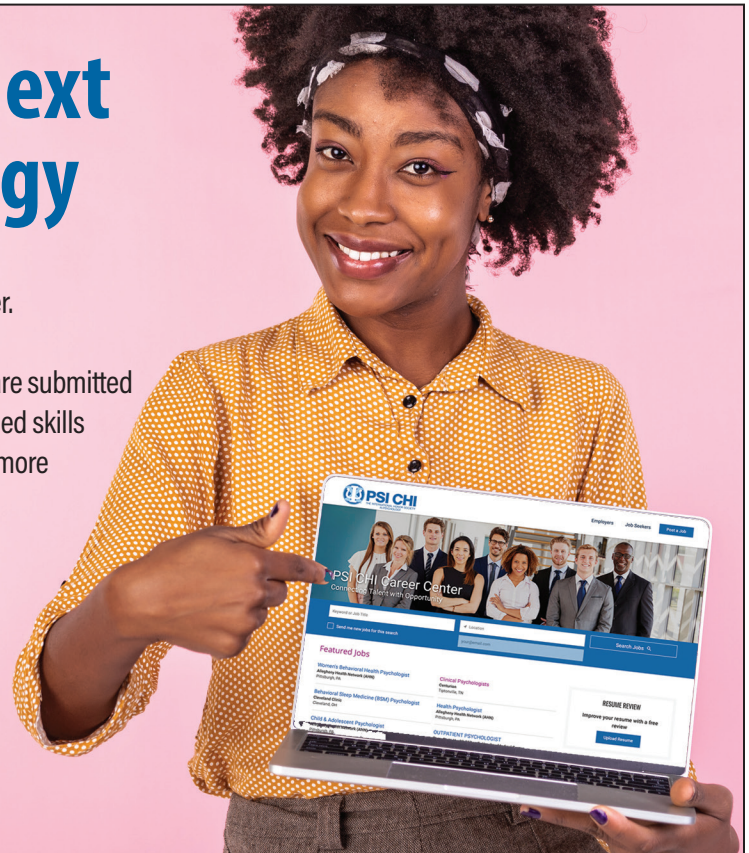


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