RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS


In this chapter, I examine the connections between interpersonal racial discrimination, cultural adaptations, including racial socialization, and crime. I focus on racialized experiences as risk factors for crime in the context of a racialized general theory of crime, the social schematic theory (SST), with a particular emphasis on the criminogenic effects of anti-Black interpersonal discrimination. I expound on the evolutionary developmental underpinnings of SST to elucidate both the nature and logic of allegedly ‘maladaptive’ adaptations to racism. Next, I extend this theoretical framework to fill gaps in undertheorized, yet salient, structure shapes culture arguments in criminology. My aim is to unite findings and reframe them within an approach that focuses on harsh, unpredictable environments and contextually appropriate adaptations with an underlying evolutionary developmental logic. The end result is a framework that links racial discrimination and “race-neutral” risk factors (profoundly shaped by racism) to psychosocial orientations that tend to increase the risk of street crime and other behaviors that can reinforce disadvantage through their consequences. I conclude by discussing the implications of this perspective drawing on scholarship that points to the need to ameliorate harsh, racist contexts of development as well as working with rather than against the strengths of stress-adapted individuals.

**People Involved:** Callie Burt  
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