

RAGE AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE: THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA  
CONSUMPTION ON PERCEIVED RACISM, STRESS APPRAISAL, AND ANGER  
EXPRESSION AMONG YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN ADULTS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

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“No matter what accomplishments you make, somebody helped you”. -Althea Gibson

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**Abstract**

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Recently, social media has become a sociopolitical hotbed for discussions of racism, police brutality, and individuals' reactions to the former. However, no extant studies have questioned if social media use increases how often African Americans vicariously and/or personally experience discrimination in America. The current study sought to answer this question. By examining the relationships between social media use, general stress, race-related stress, and anger expression, and the mediating role of perceived racism, this study explored if frequent social media use influences young African American adults': a) perceptions of racism, b) experiences with general and race-related stress, and/or c) expressions of anger. Guided by the Stress and Coping Model (Lazarus, 1984) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1980), the current study conducted an online survey of 199 young African American adults between the ages of 18-29 using Amazon Mechanical Turk (M-Turk). The following measures were employed: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), The State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI-II), the Prolonged Activation and Anticipatory Race-Related Stress Scale (PARS), Frequency of Facebook and Twitter use scale, Facebook Interactive Questionnaire (FBQ), the Racism and Life Experiences Scale- Brief (RaLES), and Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS). Results showed

Facebook interactive use significantly predicted anticipatory bodily alarm response and anger expression, but not anticipatory race-related stress. Facebook and Twitter use predicted anticipatory race-related stress, anticipatory bodily alarm response, and anger expression. Neither Facebook interactive use or Facebook and Twitter use predicted general stress. However, serial multiple mediation analyses revealed perceived racism and everyday discrimination fully mediated the relationship between Facebook interactive use and anger expression, such that the more young African Americans perceive racism and everyday discrimination via social media the more anger they experience. Findings also revealed perceived racism and everyday discrimination indirectly affected relations between Facebook interactive use and anticipatory bodily alarm response, anticipatory race-related stress, and general stress. Health implications and directions for future research are discussed.