Racial Cognition and School-Based Racial Discrimination:
The Role of Racial Identity, Racial Identity Exploration and Critical Race
Consciousness in Adaptive Academic and Psychological Functioning among African
American Adolescents
by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Education and Psychology)
in The University of Michigan
2010

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In loving memory of my mother, Sharon Mae Cogburn:
Love you much, much more.

Acknowledgments

This accomplishment would simply not have been possible without the love and support of my family, friends and colleagues. I will not be able to recount that many ways that you have each helped me through the process. For me, there is nothing more motivating than knowing that at any moment, I can call on the emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual support of those whose love surrounds me. I am a better person and scholar because of all of you.

To my Chair, Dr. Tabbye M. Chavous, who has been nothing short of amazing: You have managed to be both challenging and caring at every turn of this process. Through every revision and massive overhaul, I always felt that I was becoming a better scholar and pushing the quality of my work and ideas. You never allowed me to settle. Thank you for the tremendous investment you've made in my work and in me. I will be certain to pay it forward.

To my committee members and mentors, Dr. James S. Jackson, Dr. Robert Sellers and Dr. Marc Zimmerman a.k.a. "The Dream Team" and Dr. Rossi Ray Taylor: I have never shied away from rigor and wanted my dissertation process to be shaped by a group of thoughtful and uncompromising advisors – my goal was certainly met. Dr. Sellers offered me my first research position while I was a Master's student at the University of Michigan and took great pride in guiding me through this end and beginning. Dr. Jackson has been one of my greatest supporters. In spite of his globally busy schedule, he always had time for my phone calls, e-mails and varied requests. Thank you for believing and investing in me.

To the Black Student Psychological Association (BSPA): I was never alone because of you. I could always find a face to understand, an ear to listen and a mouth to advise. I am so proud to be a part of this 40^+ year legacy. And to the 2004 cohort … we are forever bonded and I'm honored.

To faculty and staff of the Combined Program in Education and Psychology and the University of Michigan at large: Dr. Stephanie Rowley, Dr. Hoa Hguyen, Dr. Phyllis Blumenfeld, Dr. Michael Spencer, Janie Knieper, Marie Bien, Lingling , Dr. Robert Jagers, Dr. Laura Kohn-Wood, Dr. Liz De Groot – thank you for always taking time to help me through this process.

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ABSTRACT

Can understanding promote adaptive functioning among adolescents? The following dissertation project considered this question in the context of African American adolescents' experiences with racial discrimination. This work addressed ways in which youth understand the meaning and functioning of race in their lives and whether these processes can be an adaptive response to race-based adversity. Using secondary survey data, I 1) developed two measures of racial cognition (racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness), 2) used a cluster analysis approach to examine patterns across these forms of racial cognition, creating racial cognitive profiles and 3) assessed associations between the racial cognitive profiles, school-based racial discrimination and adjustment in a sample of 11th grade African American students ($N = 401$, 51% male). The present study addressed the theoretical and empirical development of constructs assessing socio-cognitive processes related to the meaning and function of race, particularly as they may occur during adolescence among African American adolescent in school settings. I also examined way in which these types of processes are associated with academic and psychological adjustment in the context of experiencing racial discrimination.

The primary study objectives were to 1) describe the direct association of youths' racial identity believes, racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness with psychological and academic adjustment outcomes, 2) identify and describe patterns across these constructs, 3) examine whether racial cognitive profile groups vary in their

academic and psychological adjustment outcomes, and 4) evaluate whether the effects of

school-based discrimination on adjustment outcomes vary among youth with different

racial cognitive profiles. Three cluster groups were identified: 1) Alienated/Disengaged,

2) Buffering/Aware and 3) Idealized/Questioning. Having a positive connection to one's

racial group and examining the meaning of one's racial experiences and background,

positively contributed to adjustment. Findings also support that a lack of racial awareness

(or critical race consciousness) may be a risk factor when not also coupled with a strong,

positive connection to one's racial group or racial identity exploration.

Chapter 1

Introduction

From some perspectives, children are moldable beings who mimic and perhaps modify what is impressed upon them. From another viewpoint, children are also defiant and astute creatures who question and create; challenging what may be assumed or presented as fact or reality. As researchers, we cannot afford to underestimate or wholly fail to consider this capability, particularly when our intentions are to understand resilience and adaptive responses to risk. At the time of her interview, Sharon was a 16-year old high school student living in Chicago and participating in a study conducted by Carla O'Connor (1997) examining elements of educational resilience. As part of an interview, Sharon shared her beliefs about the possibility of social change or growth, in spite of challenging circumstances, and offered the following:

> You know they own most everything, control most everything and they got more money. But we can break that hold – we can fight it. If we don't at least try to break that hold we never going nowhere.

Sharon's comment reflects her awareness of social and structural barriers as well as a belief that, in spite of the odds against people like her, there remains the possibility to challenge and overcome oppression (O'Connor, 1997). In this brief statement, Sharon represents a combination of qualities that are arguably key components of resilience. Namely, in addition to an awareness of social barriers, she expresses some understanding

of the nature of those barriers and also has a sense that there are things that can be done to overcome them. Aristotle stated, "The ultimate value of life depends upon awareness and the power of contemplation rather than upon mere survival" and educational theorist Paulo Freire claimed "It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation" (2000, p. 127). Both Aristotle and Freire identify the necessary function of critical cognition in asserting control and bringing about positive change in any given context as well as the importance of finding opportunities to thrive rather than merely survive.

Building upon resilience theory, the present study considers experiences with racial discrimination as a common source of risk among African American adolescents and whether various forms of racial cognition serve as assets that may help youth to avoid or reduce negative effects associated with these experiences (Garmezy & Masten, 1994; Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005; Masten, 2007). Racial discrimination is a common social barrier and source of risk for many African American students. During adolescence, youth become more keenly aware of discrimination (such as noticing differences in treatment relative to others) and eventually gain the capacity to perceive and interpret the meaning and significance of these experiences (Quintana & Vera, 1999). Developmental, structural and social shifts may contribute to adolescents being particularly vulnerable to the effects of discrimination; thus, learning to manage their experiences with race-based discrimination may be a normative process in healthy development for many ethnic minority youth (García-Coll et al., 1996). Given the significance of school settings during adolescence, effectively managing these

experiences may have particular relevance to academic functioning. Arguably, successfully meeting the demands of an academic environment requires more than a mastery of learning tasks. All students manage interpersonal relationships, overcome adversity in various forms, and inevitably make choices with implications that extend well beyond selecting the correct answer on an exam. For many African American students, negotiating school settings often involves contending with negative racial experiences (Harvey, 1984). This dissertation sought to identify race-based cognitive assets that enable African American youth to overcome the negative effects associated with those experiences.

Racial identity is one type of personal and cultural asset. Racial identity scholarship has emphasized the importance of person-environment interactions in understanding how an individual responds to and deals with adversity (Sellers et al., 2003, 2006; Wong et al., 2003). A major focus of this literature examines the functions of racial identity in relation to one type of race-related adversity – experiences of racial discrimination. Over the last decade racial identity theory and research suggest that while aspects of racial identity (e.g. stronger centrality of race to one's overall identity, strong group pride, and awareness of racism) may contribute to discrimination being perceived more frequently (e.g. Sellers & Shelton, 2003), these dimensions of racial identity also show direct, positive relationships with academic and mental health outcomes known to be negatively affected by racial discrimination (Seaton, Maywalt-Scottham & Sellers, 2006; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Additionally, strong, positive group identification and consciousness of the possibility of societal bias against one's group has shown buffering effects against the negative impact of racial discrimination on

psychological well-being (Sellers et al., 2003, 2006; Wong et al., 2003), achievement

motivation and performance (Wong et al., 2003), relative to individuals who report more

positive views of societal regard for Blacks.

While adolescents' racial identity beliefs help to explain disparities in academic

and psychological functioning as well as variation in the impact of racial discrimination,

the psychological mechanisms by which these effects are achieved is less clear.

Interestingly, in the aforementioned studies, social-cognitive attributes such as the ability

to consider both abstract and concrete levels of discrimination have been implicated in

authors' interpretations of their research findings as well as in theoretical frameworks

within racial/ethnic identity scholarship. For instance, Phinney and colleagues' (1990)

developmental model of ethnic identity asserts that exploring the meaning of ethnic

identity and one's role as a member of an ethnic group in society leads to more

internalized, secure identities that allow youth to better adapt to their social and academic

contexts. Sellers and colleagues (2006) contend that a positive private regard,

conceptually related to high group pride, may help to prevent the internalization of

inferiority beliefs conveyed through racial discrimination experiences. Their findings

regarding the protective role of low public regard (awareness of negative societal views

of Blacks) on the impact of racial discrimination on psychological well-being (Sellers et

al., 2006) suggest that thinking about one's own race and racial group experience,

including a broader understanding of how race functions in society, may help individuals

to build resilience or coping repertoires. Similarly, Chavous and colleagues (2003) found

that adolescents with strong, positive racial group identification and more awareness of

societal racial bias were most likely to persist academically two years later, relative to

other youth in their sample. The researchers speculated that youth whose group identification is connected to a sense of pride in their racial group's collective struggle may feel particularly motivated to achieve and persist in the face of adversity. The researchers did not, however, directly test these possibilities.

Implicit in the above examples is the proposition that along with racial identity beliefs, other race-related social cognitions are relevant to understanding adolescents' academic and psychological adaptation in the context of race-related adversity. Very little theoretical or empirical scholarship in this area, however, has explicitly considered such factors along with racial identity beliefs among African American adolescents. Thus, it is not clear whether individual differences in developmental or personality characteristics around cognition (e.g. individuals' personal explorations of the meanings of their societal racial status, their interest or motivation to think about race) and other individual differences in social-cognitive attributes (e.g. consciousness around broader racial structures/systems in society), might contribute to our understanding of adolescents' adaptation outcomes. It is possible, for example, that youth with particular racial identity beliefs are also more likely to engage in exploration about race and racism, in terms of what these constructs mean and how they function in relation to the self as well as society. Alternatively, the protective effects of particular racial identity beliefs on adaptation outcomes in the context of discrimination may differ for youth who vary in how they have explored or understand the nature of racism as it relates to interpersonal, social, and institutional structures.

Dissertation Goals

This dissertation aimed to contribute to a body of research examining the strengths and assets of African American adolescents contending with various forms of risk. Specifically, this work seeks to understand how cognitive processes related to the meaning and function of race may contribute to resilience in the face of race-related adversity. The present study addressed the theoretical and empirical development of constructs assessing socio-cognitive processes related to the meaning and function of race, particularly as they may occur during adolescence among African American adolescents in school settings. Additionally, this works seeks to understand ways in which these types of processes are associated with academic and psychological adjustment in the context of experiencing racial discrimination. In addressing these goals, I draw on social identity perspectives and cultural perspectives in Black psychology in my focus on adolescents' racial identity, which is defined in the present study as youth's beliefs around the significance and meaning of their racial group membership (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Also, I integrate research scholarship suggesting the positive influences of racial identity exploration in promoting positive youth adjustment among ethnic minority adolescents (e.g. Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). Finally, I focus on adolescents' critical consciousness around race in society, drawing on research examining the promotive and protective functions of social awareness and cognitive engagement (e.g. Garton, 2004; Gauvain, 2001), awareness of African Americans' racial heritage and collective struggles (O'Connor, 1997), as well as scholarship focused on race consciousness and critical race theory (e.g., Carter, 2008). Social and cognitive developmental frameworks are also used in considering how unique

characteristics of adolescent development may impact youths' experiences of and responses to racial discrimination.

Racial identity research supports the utility of strong group identification and positive views about one's group on academic and psychological adjustment outcomes (e.g. Chavous, Bernat, Schmellk-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, & Zimmerman, 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Twenge & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). Also, holding these racial identity attitudes, along with perceiving societal bias against African Americans, has been related to protection against the effects of racial discrimination on adjustment. In this literature, other race-related cognitions, such as broader understandings of racism in society, are implicated as mechanisms by which racial identity influences adjustment and protects against discrimination effects. Little racial identity scholarship, however, explicitly considers such cognitive factors along with youth's racial identity beliefs. Within cognitive motivation and racial awareness literatures (Bandura, 1993; Garton, 2004; Gauvain, 2001; Pajares, 2005; Valsiner, 1998b) there is support that seeking to understand the nature of one's experiences can promote positive youth adjustment outcomes. These literatures, however, often exclude youth of color. There are also ecological models emphasizing that dealing with racism is one of a number of unique developmental tasks that are normative for racial/ethnic youth (García Coll et al., 1996; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997), but there remains a need for empirical work supporting the varied and complex components of these models. Across all of these literatures, there is little consideration of connections of developmental attributes along with individuals' cognitions related to race or culture (like youths' racial identity beliefs) (Rowley, Burchinal, Roberts, & Zeisel, 2008). Thus, the primary study objectives are to:

- Describe the direct associations of youths' racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness with psychological and academic adjustment outcomes

- Identify and describe patterns across racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness (racial cognitive profiles)

- Examine whether racial cognitive profile groups vary in their academic and psychological adjustment outcomes

- Evaluate whether the effects of school-based racial discrimination on adjustment outcomes vary among youth with different racial cognitive profiles

The project addressed a key empirical gap in racial identity and racial discrimination research by (1) examining the functions of multiple cognitions related to race (content of racial identity beliefs, level of active exploration around racial identity, and critical awareness around race). The research also contributes to adolescent development research by considering (2) how individual variation in race-related developmental and social-cognitive attributes can help explain variation in African American adolescents' academic and psychological adjustment outcomes. This work also contributes to research on African American youth that moves beyond a focus on minimal survival and deficits (APA Task Force, 2008) and seeks to inform our understanding of multiple, cognitive pathways to resilience in an understudied population. Additionally, examining individual-level attributes and contextual experiences provides insight into how individuals may negotiate challenging school and social environments while also informing how school settings can both hinder and promote youth resiliency and success (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994).

Dissertation Organization

The following discussion is grounded in a historical framing of the importance and relevance of race in terms of representations and use of the construct in educational research as well as framing the focus on racial discrimination in literatures more broadly addressing racism. The first section serves to orient the committee to frameworks that have helped to shape my ideologies regarding theoretical and empirical examinations of race and in turn the directions taken in this dissertation. This foundational discussion is followed by a review of literatures considering the nature and impact of racial discrimination in the lives of African American adolescents. Next I review literatures relevant to my working conceptualizations of the various forms of racial cognition that are central to my study objectives, including racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration, and critical race consciousness. The goals of the present study, methodology, results and discussion of findings and implications are then presented.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Importance and Meaning of Race

Horace Mann boldly claimed that equal educational opportunities would be the "great equalizer" in our country. Following the same logic, if there were interest in creating or perpetuating inequality, education would be an excellent place to begin. Historically, education and access to knowledge have been restricted for the purpose of maintaining oppression among African Americans and other groups in the United States. Though acknowledging that education has been a tool of oppression against certain racial groups can be a difficult pill to swallow, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge and consider the impact of this reality on contemporary issues within and the study of race in education. This history of race in education represents the fundamental importance of race in education today as it not only impacts the experiences of youth in schools but also influences the various scholarly approaches to studying race in education. With a historical perspective in mind, it becomes evident that the challenges of education are not limited to deficits of the individual student, curriculum, in culture or poverty but are also engrained in our educational structures, systems, practices, beliefs and research (Lee, Spencer & Harpalani, 2003). Our approach to educating children, individual experiences

with education and the ways in which we study education are all rooted in the social and political circumstances of the past.

Epistemology of Race

Race does not directly *cause* or *influence* anything (Zuberi, 2001). Being Black does not lead to academic underperformance, but rather factors associated with race contribute to these outcomes. Treating race as a variable rather than as a socially rooted and dynamic phenomenon is the basis of the argument made by scholars who contend that because race lacks a precise meaning, the use of the construct becomes problematic when used by researchers who are unclear about what they are really measuring (e.g., Helms, Jernigan, & Mascher, 2005; Phinney, 1996; Yee, Fairchild, Weizman, & Wyatt, 1993). To avoid this conflict, some researchers purport that the use of race should be dropped altogether (e.g. Dole, 1995) or promote the use of alternative constructs such as culture (e.g. Betancourt & López, 1993) or ethnicity (Phinney, 1996; Yee, et al., 1993). Phinney (1996) has used the term ethnicity to "encompass race" (p. 918), but contends that the term race should be avoided given disagreement about how the term should be used in Psychology as well as the lack of biological evidence supporting across group racial differences. In addition, Yee (1983) argued that the use of ethnicity would help researchers move away from relying so heavily on group-level factors to capturing "individualistic traits" (p. 21) as a source for explaining various social phenomena. Many scholars hold the position that race is an arbitrary and meaningless construct; a convenient source of social distinction that, as intended, creates social inequalities that permeate to the core of societies around the world. The crux of the debate seems to center on whether race matters or whether the study of race lends scientific validity to a

socially constructed categorization. To the contrary, it can also be argued that we would

be remiss to not acknowledge the historic significance given to race, its contemporary

impact on social inequality and the personal meaning individuals have developed out of

these arguably deliberate attempts to organize society. Some scholars affirm that there is

a racial experience in this country that is historically distinct from ethnicity and that race

continues to have relevance in our society. Sellers and colleagues (1998), for instance,

state that race has an indefinite value as an empirical basis for classification, but go on to

state that it has nonetheless had considerable impact in the lives of African Americans

living in the United States. While it is not assumed that the importance of race supersedes

that of culture or ethnicity, the intimate experience and implications of race for certain

groups, both historically and contemporarily, warrant the study of this distinct construct

in psychology.

Frames for Conceptualizing Racism and Racial Discrimination

Although the study of racism and racial discrimination similarly focuses on the

impact external factors have on various educational experiences and indices, scholars

engaged in this area of research make an explicit distinction between racism,

discrimination and prejudice. Prejudice refers to an attitude, discrimination to an action

and racism to a culture and system influenced by the former two constructs. In 1972,

James Jones, defined prejudice as a negative attitude toward an individual or group based

on social hierarchies and racism as "the exercise of power against a racial group defined

as inferior by individuals and institutions with the intentional or unintentional support of

the entire culture" (p. 117). Lott and Maluso (1995) assert that "racism is rooted in a

historical continuity of injustice and disparity that is linked to contemporary

circumstances and systematically influences the conditions and experiences of large groups of people. Racism provides a context for the development and maintenance of-- and endures, in part, due to--stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (p. 43)."

Though distinct from racism, racial discrimination may also be defined as a form of racism (Jones, 1972) or generally as the differential treatment of people based on their race or ethnicity (Lewis-Trotter & Jones, 2004). Each of these phenomena are interrelated but are not synonymous constructs. These distinctions have important implications for theoretical frameworks considering race and racial experiences in education and psychology. Notably, the point of intervention for each model is shaped by beliefs regarding the function and influence of race. Thus, those researchers focusing on stereotypes and stigma likely believe that individual attitudes and interpersonal interactions are most influential in shaping educational experiences and outcomes, while those scholars focusing on racism and racial discrimination are likely to argue that cultures, systems and individual as well as group behaviors are most important. A key distinction in the study of racism from stereotyping is the element of power and a deliberate expansion of individual forms of racial experiences (Harrell, 2000). Power is an essential component to this conceptualization of racism because it speaks to the pervasive presence of prejudice as it manifests in social systems, policies and institutions. Thus theoretical models of racism and racial discrimination help to expand our understanding of the impact race may have on the educational experience of certain individuals in addition to personal markers of academic functioning such as motivation and achievement. Additionally, these models diversify what we may consider as points of intervention and accountability in academic domains.

Schools are microcosms of larger society and thus struggles with racism and discrimination are also endemic within academic environments. As such, theories of racism are often applied to examinations of racism and racial discrimination in relation to educational systems and academic experiences. Theories of racism in Psychology are typically multi-dimensional frameworks that organize racism around various types of racial experiences. Some models of racism contend that there are multiple sources of racist thinking that impact various domains among targets. According to Harrell (2000) racism may impact beliefs about one's own competence and efficacy, body image and representations of the cultures and histories of oppressed groups. This perspective of racism implicates Psychology as well as educational systems in the United States as extensions of a "racist intellectual tradition" (p. 34) and contends that there is a consistent tendency to take an ahistorical perspective in studying racism in these areas (Harrell, 2000). Thus, while some theoretical models may focus on internal factors that influence academic self-efficacy or motivation, this particular model implicates environmental and structural elements related to racism as essential to understanding individual attitudes and behaviors in academic settings.

The present study examines a form of individual racism (Jones, 1997), which encompasses both the attitude and action of an individual based on their beliefs regarding their own superiority over another racial group. Specifically, the impact of adolescents' experiences with individual, interpersonal school-based racial discrimination on academic and psychological adjustment is assessed. In addition, this work also incorporates perceptions of structural and cultural aspects of racism through assessments of critical race consciousness. This construct, which is described in detail later in the text,

reflects perceptions of structural and cultural forms of racism, while the use of racial

discrimination in the present study captures personal experiences with differential

treatment based on race.

Empirical Gaps in the Study of Racial Discrimination in Adolescence

Most research examining experiences with racial discrimination has been

conducted using adult and college samples and as a result we know very little about these

experiences in academic settings among adolescents. There is a lack of research in this

area in spite of evidence that racial/ethnic minority adolescents, particularly African

American youth, report fairly frequent experiences with racial discrimination (Fisher,

Wallace, & Fenton, 2000) and are more likely than their peers to have these experiences

(Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006). Thus, while over 30 years of research has demonstrated

many negative effects resulting from racial discrimination, such as diminished

psychological well-being (Dion & Earn, 1975; Edmunds, 1984; Klonoff & Landrine,

1995), lowered self-esteem (King, 2003; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996), higher levels of

depressive symptoms, anger, a variety of problem behaviors, and psychiatric symptoms

(e.g., Fisher et al., 2000; Simmons et al., 2002; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003), there

remains a great deal to learn about the nature of these relationships among adolescents.

Among the small number of theoretical models considering racial experiences from

this perspective, adolescence is considered a developmental period marked by

increasingly sophisticated cognitive functioning and in turn increasingly complex

perceptions of discrimination (see Spears, Brown & Bigler, 2005, for review).

Adolescents' relative vulnerability to the effects of racism may be partially attributed to

the increased likelihood of exposure to and awareness of race based differential treatment

(Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; DuBois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, & Hardesty, 2002; García Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, Wasik, Vazquez García, 1996; Hughes & Chen, 1997). It has also been suggested that because of the prevalence of these experiences among African American adolescents, learning to cope with racial discrimination may be a particularly important and normative process in healthy development (García Coll et al., 1996; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). García Coll and colleagues (1996) have proposed that understanding normative development among racial and ethnic minority youth requires a consideration of intersections for race, social class, culture, and ethnicity, which explicitly involves an assessment of various social stratification indicators (e.g. racism, discrimination, segregation). The authors propose a theoretical model addressing gaps in existing developmental frameworks that do not account for critical environmental factors that impact the development of social competencies among racial and ethnic minority youth. Essentially, this model seeks to illustrate how individuals may utilize various resources to protect themselves from or compensate for the potentially negative effects of negative social experiences.

Racial Discrimination during Adolescence

Research examining racial discrimination among adolescents provides evidence that it is a common experience for many African American youth (Greene et al., 2006; Pachter, Bernstein, Szalacha, & García Coll, 2010). Even when infrequent, racial discrimination can significantly and negatively impact academic, behavioral and psychological functioning (e.g. Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Brody et al., 2006; Chavous et al., 2008; Fisher et al., 2000; Harrell, 2000; Seaton & Yip, 2009; Sellers, Linder,

Martin & Lewis, 2006). Several scholars assert and have supported empirically that racial discrimination is a relevant and important risk and stress factor in the everyday experiences of African American adolescents (e.g. Coker et al., 2009; Fisher, Wallace & Fenton, 2000; Leadbeater & Way, 1996; McLoyd & Steinberg, 1998, Waters, 2001).

In a recent study exploring racial discrimination experiences among racial/ethnic minority adolescents, Pachter and colleagues (2010) found that nearly 90% of their sample reported having at least one experience with racial discrimination and the majority of those experiences were associated with race by the participants. Nearly a quarter of the adolescent sample in Sellers' and colleagues 2006 study reported experiencing each of 17 identified racial hassles (e.g. "Being treated as if you were stupid") in the past year. In addition to evidence that discriminatory experiences are relatively common during adolescence for many African American youth, there are also indications that even a single event of racial discrimination can be problematic (Operario & Fiske, 2001; Sellers & Shelton, 2000). There are also indications that the effects of discrimination are cumulative (Brody et al., 2006; Feagin, 1991; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Harrell, 2000; Mickelson, 2003) and perhaps the coping responses exercised during adolescence impact functioning and one's coping repertoire well into adulthood (Branscombe, Schmitt & Harvey, 1999; Seaton, Yip, & Sellers, 2009). In addition to evidence of longitudinal links between racial discrimination and subsequent levels of depressive symptoms (e.g. Brody et al., 2006), Greene and colleagues (2006) have found that in a multi-ethnic sample of adolescents and adults, Black youth were more likely to increasingly report racial discrimination experiences into adulthood, which is associated

with the long term effect of decreased psychological well-being and increased depressive symptoms over time.

Racial discrimination experiences are not only a common and significant component of adolescence for many youth, there are also several unique developmental and contextual features of adolescence that may contribute to experiences of racial discrimination being distinct from younger children as well as college student and adults. Advances in cognitive functioning, increases in self and social awareness as well as the prominence of school settings may be particularly important to understanding how African American adolescents experience racial discrimination. During adolescence, youth shift from being cognizant of discrimination to gaining the capacity to make meaning of these experiences. Although children as young as 5 years old are able to notice differential treatment across racial groups (Brown & Bigler, 2004), researchers have found that children's understanding of prejudice and discrimination becomes increasingly complex with age (Brown & Bigler, 2004; Quintana & Vera, 1999). Thus, adolescents are potentially engaging their social experiences in ways that are distinct from earlier periods and in a manner that likely shapes how they are impacted and respond.

Some models of adolescent cognitive development suggest that there is an important and reciprocal exchange between cognitive processes and one's social experiences (e.g. Bandura, 1993; Beardslee, 1989; Blank & Blank, 1979; Masten, 2007). For instance, youth may encounter challenges and opportunities, in the form of experiences and resources, which either improve cognitive functioning or inhibit progress (Boyce, 2007; Choudhury, Blakemore, & Charman, 2006; Cichetti & Blender, 2006;

Cichetti & Rogosch, 2006; Masten, 2007). As such, assessments of adolescent experiences with racial discrimination may improve our understanding of the impact of social adversity on various aspects of academic and social development. Perceiving racial discrimination may result in negative cognitions (e.g. perceived loss of control) that can diminish mental health (Jackson et al., 1996). By the same logic, there may also be healthy or adaptive cognitions associated with environmental stressors. Racial identity development frameworks, for instance, suggest that a negative racial experience such as racial discrimination may actually serve as a catalyst for seeking to understand the meaning and function of race, and this type of exploration has been associated with various indicators of positive adjustment (e.g. Phinney & Ong, 2007). As such the current research seeks to consider how adolescents' experiences with racial discrimination are related to their explorations and understandings of their racial group in society as well as implications for academic and psychological adjustment.

Racial Discrimination in Academic Settings

School environments are an important social context for adolescents (Jessor, 1993) and may be particularly important for understanding the nature of racial discrimination (Wong et al., 2003). School settings play a significant role in shaping early development of belief systems regarding personal identity and it is in these settings that youth become more keenly aware of social norms and practices (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Kilhstrom, & Klein, 1994; Spencer et al., 1997). African American youth can experience school settings in ways that are notably distinct from the experiences of their peers (Fisher, Wallace & Fenton, 2000; Greene et al., 2006; Leadbeater & Way, 1996; McLoyd & Steinberg, 1998; Rosenbloom, & Way, 2004; Waters, 2001). They are more likely, for

instance, to contend with lower expectations, negative racial stereotypes, being thought of as less smart and being disciplined more harshly at school due to race than other children and youth (Aronson, Quinn, & Spencer, 1998; Chavous et al., 2008; Fisher et al., 2000; Marcus, Gross, & Seefeldt, 1991; Wong et al., 2003). In a study by Fisher and colleagues (2000), the authors note that 32% of the African Americans reported being discouraged from taking advanced level courses and being treated unfairly in comparison to 13% of the Caucasian youth in the sample. Additionally, African American students are more likely to report receiving negative academic and behavioral feedback from their teachers (Aaron & Powell, 1982) and experience less positive interactions with their teachers than other youth (Byers & Byers, 1972). These self-reports are corroborated by national data indicating African American youth are more likely than many of their peers to be assigned to special education classes[1], suspended and expelled (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Structural, environmental and interpersonal race-based differences in academic experiences are well-established risk factors for behavioral problems (Brody et al., 2006), depressive symptoms (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995; Frable, 1993) and a range of other academic (Wong et al., 2003) and psychological indicators (Spencer, 1999).

Research indicates that negative treatment from an intimate or familiar other may have a different impact than an event involving a stranger (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Feagin, 1991; Wentzel, 1997). Race-based differential treatment from a peer or teacher, for instance, may represent a form of personal rejection, tarnish interpersonal relationships (Ferguson, 1998; 2000) as well as reduce performance on cognitive tasks

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[1] American Indian/Alaska Native students exceeded Black students in enrollment in special education classes.

(Steele & Aronson, 1995), academic engagement and effort (e.g. Crocker & Major, 1989). We also know that teacher feedback is a primary source of input for youths' sense of academic competence and development of their academic self-concepts (Ford, 1994/1995; Good, 1981). Evidence from several studies have demonstrated that, independent of race, adolescents who feel that their teachers do not care for or respect them have an increased probability for negative academic and socio-emotional outcomes (Eccles et al., 1993; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Wentzel, 1997). Thus, differential treatment from a teacher because of race may represent a form of personal rejection as well as damage interpersonal relationship between the student and teacher (Wong et al., 2003). Thus, considering racial discrimination in the school context, which is a primary developmental context for adolescents, is critical to understanding the nature of discrimination among adolescents and its implications for adjustment.

Racial Identity

African American youth encounter a number of race-based risks, but also possess assets that have been shown to promote positive adjustment in the context of negative racial experiences (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994). Racial identity has maintained a central role in theoretical and empirical frameworks for studying the academic, social, and psychological experiences and well-being of African Americans. Historically, it has been assumed that the stigma placed upon African Americans would be internalized, leading to low self-esteem and self-hatred (Allport, 1979; Clark & Clark, 1947; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Pahl & Way, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993). This position builds from psychological perspectives asserting that individuals build an understanding of themselves via social reference or as a result of the feedback they

receive from others (e.g. Cooley, 1956b; Mead, 1934). From this perspective, researchers

often anticipate that strongly identifying with a stigmatized, low status racial group will

result in internalizing negative beliefs associated with that group (see Marks, Settles,

Cooke, Morgan, & Sellers, 2004 for review). These approaches often presume that in

domains where race relevant risk or threat is present, the likely response for a highly

identified member of that group is to disengage, devalue or become cognitively impaired

(Crocker & Major, 1989; Link & Phelan, 2001; Major & Schmader, 1998; Osborne,

1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Most often, however, research based on these approaches

does not examine racial identity explicitly; instead racial group membership is viewed as

synonymous with racial identity beliefs. Furthermore, the above frameworks leave little

room for considering variation in ways that individuals may construct and understand

their racial group identities or ways that identifying with being African American can

promote positive adjustment and adaptation.

In the current study, I view racial identity as representing a lens through which

individuals interpret or appraise situations (Sellers et al., 1998). In taking this approach,

it is assumed that there are multiple, meaningful ways for individuals to relate race to

their self-concept and that the conceptualization and measurement of racial identity

should reflect these elements (Allen, Dawson, & Brown, 1989; Allen, Thornton, &

Watkins, 1992; Cross, 1991; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Myers & Thompson Sanders, 1994;

Phinney, 1990; Romero & Roberts, 1998; Thompson Sanders, 1994, 1996; Sellers et al.,

1998). Specifically, I draw on one such framework, the Multidimensional Model of

Racial Identity (MMRI), to conceptualize and examine adolescents' racial identity. The

MMRI assumes that members of racial groups have multiple, hierarchically ordered

identities, and race represents one of these identities (Sellers, et al., 1997). The model also contends that racial identity can have both stable and situational properties and thus influence behavior in one's immediate situation as well as consistently influence behavior across time (Sellers et al., 1997). The MMRI (Sellers et al, 1997), is based on three assumptions: 1) racial identity represents a stable property that may be influenced by situation 2) an individual may have multiple identities that have varying levels of importance and 3) an individual's perception of what is means to be Black is "the most valid predictor of racial identity" (Marks et al, 2004, p. 397). In contrast to many other models of racial identity, value judgments are not made about what may constitute a healthy or unhealthy identity. Additionally, the authors contend that it is important to distinguish between the significance and meaning of racial identity for individuals. This distinction is made because the importance of group membership to one's self-concept is not necessarily reflective of the meaning one may attribute to being a member of a racial group. For instance, it is possible for two individuals to be "highly identified" with being Black but also vary on their feelings toward the group as well as in their racial ideologies and how they believe others perceive their racial group (Sellers et al., 1998; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Accordingly, the MMRI delineates four dimensions of racial identity (Salience, Centrality, Regard, and Ideology), which represent various aspects of both meaning and significance. The salience and centrality dimensions assess the importance of race to an individual's self-concept, while ideology and regard seek to address the meaning the individual places on race. The present study utilizes the centrality and racial regard dimensions.

Centrality. This dimension of racial identity seeks to assess the extent to which an individual defines his/herself according to race. Although centrality and salience may be related, centrality is considered to remain relatively stable across time whereas salience is less stable and contextually bound. **Racial Regard.** Regard is the affective dimension of racial identity and is comprised of two types of sub-dimensions: 1) *Private regard,* which refers to the positive or negative feelings an individual has about African Americans in general, as well as their membership in that group and 2) *Public regard,* which involves the perception of whether others think positively or negatively about African Americans.

In the context of the current study, taking a multidimensional approach to examining racial identity is particularly relevant. Given my project's focus on how youth understand the meanings of their racial group membership and its implications for personal adjustment, it is important to distinguish the extent that youth identify with their racial group from their affective feelings about their group membership in addition to their affective views about society's regard for their group. In the context of academic adjustment, for instance, models developed to explain African American achievement motivation often assume that youths' group membership is synonymous with their attitudes and beliefs about their racial group. Prevalent frameworks focus on the deleterious effects of racial stigma on African American motivation and performance (Crocker & Major, 1989; Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001; Steele & Aronson, 1995). A primary premise is that African Americans are a stigmatized group in society and those individuals' who are more strongly identified with African Americans would be more aware of their group's low societal status (Schmader et al., 2001) and psychologically

dis-identify with domains in which their group's stigmatized status is salient (i.e., with academics or schooling). This work does not explain, however, the occurrence of success despite experiencing contexts in which racial stigma is present (e.g. through negative racial stereotypes or stereotyped treatment, racial discrimination). The MMRI highlights the theoretical possibility that two individuals may identify with being Black to a similar degree but differ in the meanings they attach to their racial membership, including societal views of their group (Sellers et al., 1998). Furthermore, variation in racial identity beliefs may have important implications for adjustment as well as individuals' appraisals of and responses to racial stigma in their contexts.

Racial Identity and Adolescent Adjustment

There are empirical examples including the MMRI dimensions and related constructs, which demonstrate the utility of a multidimensional conception of racial identity as well as provide evidence that these distinct dimensions have different implications for academic and psychological outcomes (Chavous et al., 2003; Sellers, Linder, Martin & Lewis 2006; Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). According to the MMRI, meanings individuals attach to race (e.g. racial regard and racial ideologies) are more likely to impact behavior and attitudes when an individual's racial identity is an important and relevant component of their self-concept (Sellers et al., 1998). Rowley and colleagues found that private regard beliefs (individuals' own affective feelings about Blacks and being Black) are more predictive of adolescents' and young adults' self-esteem than public regard (perceptions of society's views of Blacks) (Rowley et al., 1998). Furthermore, the relationship between private regard and self-esteem was moderated by individuals' racial centrality, such that private regard predicted self-esteem

only for those for whom race was central to their identities. Similarly, among college students racial centrality has been shown to moderate the relationship between racial ideology and grade point average (Sellers, Chavous, et al., 1998). In these two empirical examples, the relationship between aspects of racial identity that reflect meaning (racial regard, racial ideology) were not significantly related to adjustment for individuals for whom race was not central to their overall self-concept.

Previous research also suggests that private regard has positive associations across a variety of adjustment indicators, independent of or in addition to other aspects of racial identity (e.g. centrality) (Chavous et al., 2008; Eccles et al., 2006; Seaton et al., 2006; Sellers et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2003). Positive feelings toward one's racial group has been directly associated with more positive psychological health (Seaton et al., 2006; Sellers et al., 2006; Twenge & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002), academic functioning (Chavous et al., 2003; Chavous et al., 2008; Eccles et al., 2006; Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001) and healthy cognitive development (Caughy, Nettles, O'Campo, & Lohrfink, 2006). Higher levels of centrality have also been associated with lower levels of psychological distress (Sellers et al., 2003) and higher levels of academic achievement, school importance and academic self-concept (Chavous et al., 2008). Findings across these studies suggest that being positively connected to one's racial group promotes healthy development across several domains of development (Wong et al., 2003). While little research has empirically examined mechanisms that may help explain these relationships, researchers have suggested that both private regard and centrality may be associated with more effective coping repertoires and individuals possessing higher levels of these qualities are able to dismiss or avoid internalizing inferiority beliefs (Cross,

Parham, & Helms, 1998; Sellers et al., 2006). African American youth who connect who they are with others who are like them are thought to have a sense of collective struggle, which may support belief in the possibility of achievement (O'Connor, 1999; Sanders, 1997). Some empirical evidence suggests that youth who have a higher sense of racial centrality are also more likely to place a greater value of the importance of education as well as academic persistence (e.g. O'Connor, 1997), qualities that support academic achievement and attainment.

Racial Identity and the Experience of Racial Discrimination

Racial identity has emerged as a key component to understanding how an individual perceives and is impacted by racial adversity (Chavous et al., 2008; Pahl & Way, 2006; Sellers et al., 2003, 2006; Spencer, 2008; Wong et al., 2003). Racial discrimination is a prominent environmental feature for many racial and ethnic minority youth (Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003) and certain aspects of racial identity may impact how individuals interpret, experience and are impacted by racial discrimination (Sellers et al., 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). According to the MMRI and related research, perceptions of racial discrimination depend on the salience or relevance of those occurrences to one's racial self, which in turn influences whether and in what ways discrimination is perceived and impacts adjustment. Several studies have demonstrated an association of centrality and racial regard attitudes with racial discrimination (Neblett, Shelton & Sellers, 2004; Sellers & Shelton, 2000; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Centrality, as reflected in the MMRI (Sellers et al., 1998), builds upon the notion of chronic salience forwarded by Stryker and Serpe (1982,

1994). According to the MMRI, chronic racial salience (or centrality) is synonymous with race being cognitively accessible and thus more likely to be used (or accessed).

Indeed, certain aspects of racial identity have been associated with a greater likelihood of reporting and experiencing racial discrimination (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002b; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Scott, 2004; Shelton & Sellers, 2000). Specifically, higher levels of centrality and private regard as well as lower levels of public regard have been associated with more frequent reports of racial discrimination. Shelton and Sellers (2000) found that it was easier to make race salient for individuals with higher racial centrality and that higher levels of racial centrality contributed to an increased likelihood of interpreting racially ambiguous events as resulting from racism. Generally, individuals who have a stronger connection to their racial group may be more sensitive to stigma associated with that group (see Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Mendoza-Denton, Purdie, Downey, & Davis, 2002) and are more likely to be aware of social inequality (Crocker & Major, 1989; Shelton & Sellers, 2000). Sellers and colleagues (2006) have also argued that youth with certain racial identity beliefs (e.g. low levels of public regard) may not only perceive events differently, but may be treated differently as well. They contend that members of other racial groups may be detect that certain individuals anticipate being perceived negatively by other groups, which may influence discriminatory behavior.

Recent research, however, indicates that stronger racial centrality may not be associated with an increased perception of racial discrimination (Seaton, Yip, & Sellers, 2009). In their study of relationships between racial identity and racial discrimination over time, they found that racial centrality (importance of race to one's self-concept) was

not associated with more frequent reports of racial discrimination, as previous research has found (e.g. Branscombe et al., 1999; Sellers et al., 2003). The authors contend that perceptions of racial discrimination may be associated with racial identity development or processes associated with the development of racial identity (e.g. exploration) rather than racial identity content (Seaton et al., 2009). Chavous and colleagues (2008) also found little relationship between racial centrality and school racial discrimination experiences, noting a weak, but significant relationship among boys. Chavous and colleagues (2008) speculated that the lack of relationship between centrality and discrimination in their study might have been due to the overt forms of discrimination assessed in their study as well as the study focus on discrimination experiences within a specific context that youth experienced regularly (i.e. school). Overt forms of discrimination may be so blatant that they are salient for youth regardless of centrality level (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Similarly, in contexts that youth experience on a day-to-day basis (like the classroom), discrimination reports may capture a sense of familiarity with social and cultural norms in that context that may inform students' experiences and interpretations of discriminatory events (Chavous et al., 2008).

There are also several empirical examples demonstrating that in addition to possibly shaping the frequency of racial discrimination, centrality and racial regard attitudes also act as buffers against the psychological impact of experiencing racial discrimination in African American young adults (e.g. Sellers et al., 2006). Seller and colleagues (2003), for instance, have found that centrality buffers the relationship between racial discrimination and perceived stress, such that individuals for whom race was a more central identity reported lower levels of stress when experiencing higher

levels of racial discrimination. It has been suggested that high race central individuals may be more sensitive to racial cues in ambiguous situations (e.g. Operario & Fisk, 2001; Sellers & Shelton, 2003) or they are actually treated differently and thus experience more racial hassles (Sellers et al., 2003). In a more recent study, Sellers and colleagues (2006) found that the negative impact of racial discrimination on depressive symptoms, perceived stress and psychological well-being was more pronounced for individuals who reported higher levels of public regard (believing that others view African Americans positively) than those who reported lower levels of public regard. Thus, while lower levels of public regard have been associated with more frequent reports of racial discrimination, this perception can also buffer the impact of racial discrimination on psychological functioning.

Stress and coping frameworks suggest that negative encounters are more stressful when the occurrence is unexpected (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, racial discrimination experiences may be more stressful and potentially have a more negative impact on well-being for individuals who experience racial discrimination and report higher levels of public regard (believing that others perceive African Americans positively). Youth who hold low public regard beliefs may be more likely to engage coping strategies, contributing to more effective coping over time (Sellers et al., 2006). Social cognitive processes are also frequently referenced as possible mechanisms that explain the moderating effects of racial identity beliefs on the effects of racial discrimination. Chavous and colleagues (2008) have argued that racial identity beliefs have implications for interpretations of and responses to experiences that are relevant to their identities. Indeed, several scholars have identified *subjective judgment* (Harrell,

2000), *cognitive appraisal* (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Crocker & Major, 1989;

Feldman-Barrett & Swim, 1998; King, 2005; Sellers et al., 2001, 2003), *meaning making*

(Sellers & Shelton, 2003), *attribution* (Feldman-Barrett & Swim, 1998) *problem solving*

(Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000) *expectations* for discrimination to occur

(Rowley et al., 2008) or *worldview* (Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & Coy, 2007), among other

mechanisms, as important components for how discrimination is perceived and the ways

an individual is impacted. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that social

cognitions, social experiences and racial beliefs interact in ways that may help to explain

why certain aspects of racial identity may serve as resilience factors (Brown & Bigler,

2005; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1991; O'Connor, 1997; Phinney, 2004; Spencer et al.,

1997; Rowley et al., 2008).

Racial Identity Profiles: The Utility of Considering Patterns of Racial Identity Beliefs

Evidence from racial identity research has demonstrated robust findings regarding

relationships among different types of racial identity beliefs, experiences with racial

discrimination, and adolescent adjustment outcomes. Conceptual and empirical

distinctions across dimensions of racial identity and relationships to adjustment

contribute to our understanding of the nature of racial identity and its relation to

adolescent functioning. The various dimensions of racial identity do not, however,

operate independently to influence attitudes and behavior (Chavous et al., 2003; Cross,

Strauss, Fhagen-Smith, 1999; Helms, 1990; Neville & Lilly, 2000; Rowley et al., 1998;

Seaton, 2009a; Sellers, Shelton et al., 1998). Individuals may hold varying beliefs across

these dimensions in ways that help explain even more variation in their contextual

perceptions and responses (Chavous et al., 2003). As noted, the MMRI allows for the

possibility that individuals may hold similar beliefs along some dimensions but vary in others (Sellers et al., 1998). The aforementioned study by Rowley and colleagues (1998), for instance, demonstrated that the interaction of centrality and private regard explained variance in self-esteem beyond the contribution of either centrality or private regard beliefs alone. In this case, private regard beliefs were only predictive of youths' self-esteem when youth viewed race as important, while private regard did not predict self-esteem among those with lower racial centrality. Person-centered or profile approaches allow for these types of patterns, across multiple dimensions of racial identity, to be configured and thus simultaneously account for the role of multiple variables and their collective associations with adjustment. Thus, the unit of comparison becomes individuals rather than variables (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007).

More recently, racial identity researchers have demonstrated meaningful patterns across various components of racial identity using person-centered approaches such as cluster analysis (e.g., Magnusson, 1998), seeking to identify profiles of persons who share qualities across dimensions of racial identity within a given sample (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Chavous, Hilken-Bernat, Schmeelk-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, & Zimmerman, 2003; Rowley, Chavous, & Cooke, 2003; Seaton, 2009a). Chavous and colleagues (2003) asserted that a person-centered approach to racial identity could provide unique insights into individual variation in racial identity beliefs as well as better describe the types of individuals who might function differently in particular social and academic contexts. The authors drew on theoretical discussions by Cross and colleagues (1999) discussing and describing profiles of African Americans in which race was important and meaningful in different ways to them. In addition, Chavous et al. (2003)

examined qualitative studies of racial identity and achievement (e.g., O'Connor, 1999) in which variation in adolescents' achievement attitudes were tied not only to their beliefs about the importance of race but also to their awareness and pride in their group's historical legacy, as well as consciousness of societal racism. In their empirical examination, the authors examined patterns of racial centrality, private regard, and public regard among high school adolescents in an urban community setting.

In their study, four distinct cluster groups were identified (Chavous et al., 2003). A "Buffering/Defensive" cluster was characterized by youth having higher levels of racial centrality and private regard and lower levels of public regard, relative to the overall sample. These youth felt that being Black was important to them, felt pride in being Black, but perceived that society devalued Blacks. Lower levels of racial centrality, higher levels of private regard and lower levels of public regard characterized a second cluster, labeled "Low Connectedness/High Affinity," Adolescents in this cluster felt racial pride and reported awareness of societal bias against Blacks, but being Black was a less central part of their identities. A third cluster, labeled "Idealized," (the largest cluster, capturing 31% of their sample) included youth with higher than average levels across each of the three racial identity beliefs. Thus, relative to the overall sample, this group felt that being Black was a central and positive part of their identities and perceived society to value Blacks more. Finally, the fourth cluster, labeled "Alienated," included youth reporting lower than average levels across all three racial identity beliefs. Youth in this cluster felt less connected to and pride in their Black identities and perceived society to devalue their group as well.

The authors' results supported their contention that patterns of racial identity beliefs helped explain motivation and achievement outcomes in ways that might have been obscured by individual variable relationships. For instance, at the bivariate level, higher public regard related to higher school attachment and importance, and private regard was positively related to all motivation attitudes variables. These relationships might lead to the conclusion that perceiving society as devaluing one's group is always de-motivating to youth, while having high group pride (private regard) relates to higher motivation for all youth. The authors found, however, that youth who varied in their patterns of racial identity beliefs also differed in indicators of academic motivation, adjustment, and persistence.

Generally, youth in the clusters characterized by higher levels of centrality and higher private regard (Idealized and Buffering/Defensive cluster groups) reported more positive academic motivation attitudes than youth in the Alienated cluster (those lower on centrality, private regard, and public regard). While the Buffering/Defensive and Idealized clusters did not differ significantly from each other on particular motivation attitudes (e.g., school relevance and school efficacy) or grade performance, the Idealized group reported stronger feelings of school relevance (the extent that what they were learning in school was personally meaningful). Interestingly, the Buffering/Defensive group had the highest rates of high school completion and 2- or 4-year postsecondary college attainment two years following high school relative to all other clusters, while the Alienated group had the lowest high school completion and college attainment rates. Taken together, the findings suggest that having stronger and positive connections to their Black identities promotes positive academic motivation attitudes; however, an

awareness of societal racial bias when coupled with a strong, positive group connection may allow youth to be more persistent academically. In contrast, youth with lower connectedness to being Black, lower group pride, and perceptions that their racial group is devalued are most at risk for academic disengagement.

The authors interpreted their findings as consistent with theoretical perspectives highlighting the historical value of education as a means to mobility among Black communities and families and the connection of personal motivation to achieve to awareness of the group's collective struggle for academic and occupational equality (e.g., Bowman & Howard, 1985; O'Connor, 1999; Sanders, 1997). They speculated that youth in the Buffering/Defensive group might have shown higher academic persistence – even relative to the Idealized group - because their awareness of societal racial bias (low public regard) was rooted in a connection to and pride in the African America experience. As a result, the youth may have been better prepared to maintain their motivation in the face of racial barriers. However, the authors did not test this contention in their study.

Building upon this research, Seaton (2009) sought to replicate the racial identity profiles found by Chavous and colleagues and extend this work by also examining whether the profiles attenuated the negative effects of different forms of racial discrimination (individual, cultural, collective/institutional) on psychological adjustment in a sample of African American adolescents. The clusters identified were theoretically consistent with those found by Chavous and colleagues (2003), with the exception of the Low Connectedness/High Affinity group (low centrality, high private regard, low public regard), which did not emerge in the study sample and was partly attributed to sample differences (e.g. geographic location, social histories). There were no significant cluster

differences in reported frequency of the three types of racial discrimination, but the clusters did vary significantly in self-esteem and depressive symptoms. As in the Chavous et al. study (2003), the Buffering/Defensive and Idealized clusters did not differ significantly from each other but both had higher mean scores for self-esteem and lower mean scores for depressive symptoms relative to the Alienated cluster. Also, individual racial discrimination was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms for the Alienated cluster, but individual discrimination was not associated with depressive symptoms for the Buffering/Defensive and Idealized cluster groups. Findings in this research suggest that experiencing racism is most problematic when youth perceive their group as devalued and also do not also feel positively connected to their racial group. In contrast, youth who vary in their views of bias against their group may show similarly positive adjustment if they have a strong racial group connection and high racial group pride.

Finally, in a study examining racial identity beliefs among 8th grade African American youth, Chatham and colleagues (2001) used cluster analysis to assess racial group importance, racial pride and cultural connection to racial group as well as expectations of race-based challenges. The authors sought to identify prevalent dimensions of racial/ethnic identity, assess whether typologies emerged across those dimensions and if these typologies differentially related to behavioral and psychosocial outcomes. The authors identified six clusters: Low identification (low on all variables), Proud (high racial pride, low racial group importance, average/neutral group connection and expectations of race-based challenges), Superficial (high racial group importance and racial pride, lower racial group connection and fewer expectations of future race-based

challenges), Moderately Socially Embedded (high racial pride and racial group importance, low racial group connection, and moderate expectations of future race-based challenges, Culturally Connected (high racial group importance and pride, high group connectedness, but lower expectations for future race-based challenges), Full Identification (high on all variables). The authors found that the Full Identification group (youth who reported race as being important, had higher racial pride, felt connected to their group and also reported expectations of race-based challenges), reported the highest levels of academic achievement relative to cluster groups with youth who were similarly associated with their racial group but who reported neutral/average or lower expectations of future race-based challenges. However, youth who reported having a strong, positive connection to their racial group but who reported lower or moderate expectations of future race-based challenges reported the highest levels psychological adjustment relative to other clusters.

Taken together, the studies support the idea that person-centered approaches can provide uniquely meaningful information about the nature of youths' race-related cognitions around their racial identities. The studies each suggest that perceiving societal racial bias or racial barriers (e.g., low public regard or expectations of future race barriers) could serve promotive or protective roles in relation to adolescent adjustment when coupled with higher levels of group connection and positive group affect. The studies also suggest that perceiving negative group status and internalizing those perceptions (e.g., as indicated by youth with lower public regard, lower private regard, and lower centrality) could place youth at psychological risk. As such, this body of work also raises questions about the costs and benefits of youth holding more positive or

optimistic views about their racial group's status in society.

Racial Identity Exploration

There are a variety of processes that contribute to individuals' beliefs and perceptions associated with their racial group. Racial identity beliefs are shaped through processes such as racial socialization, personal experience, and personal exploration (Cross, 1991; Neblett, Phillip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006; Phinney, 1990). Racial identity exploration is thought to be a process by which the content of one's racial identity is developed (Phinney, 1990). The individual pursuit to understand the meaning and significance of one's group memberships is a central component of identity and identity development (Cross, 1971, 1991; Erikson, 1968; Gurin, & Townsend, 1986; Marcia, 1966, 1980; Phinney, 1990). Gurin and Townsend (1986) describe, what they term cognitive centrality, thought processes regarding group membership that reflect the importance one places on that identity (e.g. how often in their everyday lives they think about being a woman). Identity development, which has been considered a critical task of adolescence and described as the frame that guides life choices (Erikson, 1968), is also closely associated with exploration processes. Building from the work of Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966, 1980), models of racial identity development position exploration as a critical component of identity development that involves seeking information regarding the meaning and relevance of one's race or ethnicity (Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1989).

The present study examines racial identity exploration as a representation of cognitive engagement that may serve as a source of resilience for African American adolescents. The act or process of questioning is described in identity development literatures as being fundamental to an individual developing a sense of self, including

beliefs about how the world functions and how they function within it. This type of cognition is also conceived in cognitive, socio-cognitive and educational literatures as being beneficial to cognitive functioning (Posner & Rothbart, 2000), competence and positive development (Masten, 2007) as well as effective learning and academic achievement (e.g. Butler & Winne, 1995). Broadly speaking, individuals who are cognitively motivated or demonstrate a desire to question are more likely to be persistent in seeking understanding, may be better able to adequately assess the nature of problems and thus more effective in their responses to those problems (Atkinson, 1957; Bandura, 1997; Dickhauser & Reinhard, 2006; Eccles et al., 1993; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Some individuals, for instance, have been described as having a "need for cognition" and as being relatively motivated to understand ambiguous situations. It has been suggested that these individuals may benefit from noticing nuance and are better able to integrate details that may go unnoticed by someone less motivated to think about complex problems or tasks (Cohen, Stotland, & Wolfe, 1955; Dickhauser et al., 2006). Asking questions and engaging in dialogue with others regarding the meaning and implications of one's racial group in society, including one's experiences with racism and racial discrimination, likely contributes to an understanding of their experiences with prejudice and discrimination (Tatum, 1997). The process of questioning and seeking understanding is associated in other literatures with one's ability to adapt to adversity (Luthar & Brown, 2007) and thus racial identity exploration may also serve as a tool that enhances one's ability to negotiate racial experiences and barriers.

The purpose of the following discussion is to highlight the psychosocial benefits of exploration as represented in developmental frames, with the goal of supporting the

utility of this construct in evaluating adjustment among African American adolescents as well as resilience in the context of adolescent experiences with racial discrimination. This discussion also focuses on the role of exploration processes in assessments of the meaning of racism and racial discrimination. In reviewing these literatures, I focus on the prominence of racial identity exploration during middle adolescence, associations between exploration, adjustment and other aspects of racial identity and examine the role exploration may have in buffering the effects of racial discrimination.

Racial Identity Exploration from a Developmental Perspective

The act of exploring is described by Phinney and Ong (2007) as engaging in a range of cultural activities, including reading, talking to others, learning about cultural practices and attending cultural events. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) describe exploration as a "testing and sorting period that allows a young person to hold up for examination the ideas about race and Black culture which she or he wants to accept or reject" (p. 254). From both of these perspectives, racial identity exploration is self-driven process that enables an individual to become satisfied with themselves as a member of their racial/ethnic group (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006) and contributes to the progression to healthy identity stages or statuses (Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1989).

The racial/ethnic identity development models highlighted in the present discussion share roots in ego and social identity frameworks, and thus each make key assumptions that are particularly relevant to the present study: 1) level of exploration is thought to peak during middle adolescence, but may continue throughout the life course 2) this peak is associated with several features of middle adolescence (e.g. life transitions, encountering increasingly racially/ethnically diverse contexts, increased likelihood for experiences

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with racial discrimination, increased cognitive capacity for engaging experiences with racial discrimination) that are thought to serve as "triggers" for higher levels of exploration during this period and 3) exploration is an essential component of a healthy identity and thus there are social and psychological risks associated with a lack of exploration.

How does Racial/Ethnic Identity Exploration function?

Erikson's (1968) model of identity development emphasized the process of forming a group identity, in addition the strength of one's attachment to that group. As such, he argued that identity formation was based on two processes: 1) Exploration (process of examining the meaning and significance of a group) and Commitment (strength of attachment, clarity of beliefs) (Berzonsky, 2003; Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993; Phinney, 1992). Building from this theoretical conception of identity development and Marcia's (1966) empirical representation of this work, Phinney's (1992) Multi-ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), proposes four types of identity status: Diffuse (low exploration, low commitment), Moratorium (high exploration, low commitment), Foreclosed (low exploration, high commitment) and Achieved (high exploration, high commitment).

Developmental models (Marcia, 1980; Phinney, 1989, 1993) contend that a "confident, mature, achieved identity" (Phinney et al., 2007, p. 272) is the direct result of exploration and cannot be obtained based on the assimilation of others' beliefs (e.g. those obtained through socialization). Thus, according to developmental models of racial/ethnic identity, formation of an achieved identity is an ideal and important contributor to an individual's well-being (Phinney, 1989). Various mechanisms (e.g. parental socialization)

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may contribute to identity development, exploration or engaging in "reflection and observation" (Erikson, 1968, p. 22) is thought to be an essential process for developing a healthy and stable sense of self. The unique benefit of exploration is thought to result from an independent process of evaluation rather than simply internalizing others' beliefs (French et al., 2006; Phinney et al., 2007). Engaging in autonomous exploration is thought to contribute to a degree of agency and competence (French et al., 2006), qualities that are associated with the ability to adapt and respond to adversity and risk (Bandura, 1989). Following this logic, individuals who are unexplored are expected to have a less secure and fully internalized sense of self, which may place them at risk for lower levels of adjustment, particularly when experiencing identity related risk (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Phinney, 1990; Weinreich, 1983).

Considering Associations of Racial Identity Exploration with Racial Identity Content

The present study considers the utility of examining both the content of racial identity beliefs as well as a process through which individuals construct those beliefs. Theoretical and empirical evidence supports the conception of racial identity as a multidimensional and dynamic construct composed of various distinct but related components (e.g. Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Cross, 1991; Lee & Yoo, 2004; Phinney, 1992; Romero and Roberts, 1993, Sellers et al., 1998). Many of the elements of ethnic identity discussed in association with ethnic identity exploration, align with constructs identified throughout racial and ethnic identity literatures. This point becomes particularly relevant and important in research, such as the present project, that combines elements across these models. As such, the following discussion highlights

these relationships and their relevance to the present study; focusing on empirical research in which comparisons across components of racial/ethnic identity development processes and content are made (e.g. Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006).

In a recent study examining relationships between process and content, Yip and colleagues (2006) examined whether the significance and meanings individuals attached to their race/ethnicity (identity content) was related to their racial/ethnic identity development status (the extent that youth had explored and commitment to their ethnic/racial identity). In this study, the authors assessed changes in identity content and status across adolescents, college students, and adults. Accounting for age and age x status group effects, the authors found that high levels of exploration and commitment (achieved) were associated with more positive perceptions of the racial group (private regard) and greater importance attached to race (centrality). Individuals who had only explored (moratorium) or only committed (foreclosed) also reported greater racial centrality than the diffused group (who had low exploration and low commitment). Thus, individuals who were either high on commitment *or* high on exploration (i.e. foreclosed and moratorium) demonstrated more positive private regard in relation to individuals who were low on both (i.e. diffuse). The authors demonstrated that the importance of race to individuals and an individuals' affect for their group could be similar across youth who have committed to their racial identity beliefs but who had explored the meaning of their group more (achieved) or less (foreclosed).

Relevance of Racial Identity Exploration during Middle Adolescence

Racial identity exploration may be a particularly salient component for the sample in the present study, which is composed of African American 11th grade students. Identity

exploration is thought to be prominent during adolescence (Erikson, 1968) and

racial/ethnic identity exploration appears to be uniquely relevant and occur in greater

extents during middle adolescence (Pahl & Way, 2006). Phinney (1992) theorized that

levels of exploration would peak during middle adolescence when youth are believed to

most actively engage that task of identity formation, and thus tapering with age as

individuals become more secure in their identities. This expectation partly stems from

middle adolescence being associated with the development of increasingly complex

cognitive abilities, broadened social awareness and dynamic self-concepts (Erikson,

1968; Garton, 2004; Jaret, 1995; Spencer & Markstum-Adams, 1990).

Pahl and Way (2006) also suggest that advances in cognitive development

coupled with increased exposure to greater ethnic and racial diversity may contribute to

increased exploration during his period. Indeed, they demonstrate empirically that levels

of exploration are elevated during middle adolescence and begin to decelerate after 10th

grade (Pahl & Way, 2006). The transition from middle to high school and associated

changes in the school environment (e.g. increase in racial/ethnic diversity) has been

linked to elevated levels of exploration during middle adolescence as well (French,

Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2000). Increased exposure to racial/ethnic diversity may also be

associated with increased evidence of institutional racism (e.g. Fine, 1997), which may

also contribute to higher levels of racial exploration (Cross, 1991, 1995; Tajfel, 1981).

Benefits of Racial Identity Exploration for Adjustment and Well-Being

The following discussion of adjustment and well-being, as well as the subsequent

discussion examining relationships between racial identity exploration and racial

discrimination, focus on the benefits of engaging in racial identity exploration to adjustment and well-being.

Phinney and colleagues (2007) suggest that the benefit of having engaged in exploration is a clearer understanding of the significance and implications of one's ethnicity, which in turn supports a stable and internalized sense of self. In addition to understanding the implications of ethnic group membership and ethnic group differences, Phinney (2004) contends that ethnic minority youth also face the task of understanding how to relate to both their own group and larger society, establishing and maintaining feelings of self-worth in spite of negative perceptions of their group and discovering effective responses to discrimination and prejudice. Ego identity models (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980) and the race/ethnic identity development models forwarded by Cross (1971, 1991) as well as Phinney and her colleagues (Phinney, 1990, 1991; Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1991) propose that the understanding gained through independent exploration is not merely an added benefit associated with identity formation but rather an essential component of a healthy sense of self. It has also been proposed that the combined qualities of commitment and exploration (shared connection/belonging and group-focused inquiry) support one's ability to adapt (e.g. Marcia, 1989), a necessary element of effectively responding to dynamic social environments youth (e.g. Archer, 1989; Deaux, 1993; Ethier & Deaux). To the contrary, youth who do not engage in exploration processes (or whose identities are unexplored) are expected to face greater social and psychological risk.

These elements of the theoretical models, however, do not fully align with evidence from the empirical literature. The theoretical position that the achieved status

should be associated with optimal psychological functioning is not consistently upheld. As expected, the achieved identity status consistently emerges as being more strongly associated with positive indicators of adjustment and well-being (Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999; Phinney, 1989; Seaton, Scottham, & Sellers, 2006; Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006), supporting the benefits of both exploration and commitment in adolescent adjustment. In their review of adolescent identity development, Meeus and colleagues (1999) found that while individuals with identity achievement generally reported higher levels of psychological well-being across various indicators, there was very little difference among youth who reported a strong group commitment, regardless of exploration level. The authors suggest that level of exploration does not appear to influence psychological well-being, thus for many adolescents the foreclosed status may be a satisfactory identity resolution (Meeus et al., 1999; Waterman, 1982, 1999). While having a low level of commitment can diminish well-being, Meeus and colleagues (1999) found that low commitment is more problematic when coupled with high levels of exploration (e.g. moratorium). The authors describe this status as being characteristic of identity crisis and likely represents a transitory state rather than established identity.

Similar patterns emerge in racial and ethnic identity development literatures focusing on associations between identity status and adjustment. In a study assessing relationships between racial identity status and psychological well-being, Seaton and colleagues (2006) individuals in the achieved and foreclosed status groups faired comparably in terms of general well-being and depressive symptoms relative to youth who were low in commitment and exploration. The authors propose that commitment may be a more important predictor of well-being than development processes, such as

exploration. Indeed, some scholars consider the foreclosed status to be a successful resolution of identity development (Waterman, 1982, 1999) and have suggested that a foreclosed identity status in the context of positive parental racial socialization is normative and likely represents a notable portion of adolescents (Cross and Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

Contrary to the patterns identified in the Meeus et al. (1999) review, the authors also find evidence of a positive association between exploration and general well-being, even among youth who report low levels of commitment (Seaton et al., 2006). Specifically, at the first time point in the study (average age 14), youth in the achieved, moratorium and foreclosed status groups reported higher levels of general well-being than the diffused group. At the second time point, when the youth were a year older, there was still no difference in level of depressive symptoms and psychological well-being for the foreclosed and moratorium groups. These patterns suggest that youth who were either committed (achieved, foreclosed) or engaged in racial identity exploration (achieved, moratorium) have similar associations with psychological well-being, each faring relatively well in comparison to youth who were not committed or explored (diffuse). Thus, exploration may be promotive of adjustment in addition to having a sense of attachment to one's ethnic/racial group. Similar patterns may emerge in the present study given the conceptual alignment between commitment (strength of one's ties with a particular group) and racial centrality or the strong endorsement of other racial beliefs. It may be expected, for instance, that youth who strongly endorse the importance of race to their self-concept will be similarly well-adjusted, even when engaging in varying levels

of exploration.

Racial Identity Exploration and Racial Discrimination.

While a strong attachment to one's racial/ethnic group and high group pride seems to support positive adjustment, regardless of youths' level of racial identity exploration, a lack of exploration may be particularly problematic when adolescents encounter threatening experiences or information. Theoretical models of ego identity (Marcia, 1980) and ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1990) assert that individuals with foreclosed identities lack an understanding of the meaning and implications of their group membership (Phinney et al., 2007) and as a result may be relatively ill equipped in responding to racial experiences or information that challenge their racial beliefs. Although higher levels of ethnic identity exploration have been associated with more frequent reports of racial discrimination (e.g. Pahl & Way, 2006; Romero & Roberts, 1998), there is very little empirical research that has considered variation in adjustment among youth who vary in their levels of exploration, particularly in the context of threats to related identities (e.g. Greene et al., 2006).

In a recent study examining experiences with adult and peer discrimination in a multi-ethnic adolescent sample, Greene and colleagues (2006) examined whether dimensions of ethnic identity varied in the moderation of racial discrimination. Using the MEIM (Phinney, 1992), they examined relationships among ethnic affirmation (sense of pride, positive emotional attachment, conceptually related to private regard), ethnic achievement (high levels of identity exploration and commitment), discrimination experiences and indicators of psychological adjustment (self-esteem and depressive symptoms). It was expected that ethnic affirmation would be more likely to buffer the

negative effects of discrimination on psychological adjustment given that it is more closely associated with feeling good about one's self than achievement. Indeed they found that ethnic affirmation buffered the effects of peer discrimination on self-esteem, such that youth who reported lower levels of affirmation saw a greater decline in self-esteem when experiencing more peer discrimination. The moderating effect for ethnic achievement occurred in the opposite direction: youth higher in ethnic identity achievement (high commitment and exploration) had a stronger, negative association between peer discrimination and self-esteem. There were no significant moderating effects between either achievement or affirmation and depressive symptoms.

These findings support previous research demonstrating benefits of positive affective association with one's ethnic group (e.g. pride, private regard) and also suggest that youth with higher levels of exploration and commitment may not necessarily hold affirmation views. As would be expected given the dearth of research in this area, several questions remain regarding the function of exploration, including associations with adjustment, racial identity beliefs and racial discrimination. While the authors' conclude "ethnic affirmation, in contrast to ethnic identity exploration, was shown to have a protective role in the association between discrimination by peers and self-esteem" (Greene et al., 2006, p. 233), the comparisons made were actually between a composite of exploration and commitment. Thus, associations between exploration and affirmation were not directly assessed. Furthermore, associations between youth's identity achievement and affirmation were not examined, nor how they might interact to predict psychological adjustment. Thus, the study did not account for whether the relation

between identity affirmation was similar or different among youth with particular levels of exploration or commitment.

In addition, the moderating effects for affirmation and achievement were not disaggregated by ethnicity. Given empirical evidence that African American youth report and maintain higher levels of exploration and affirmation in comparison to other ethnic groups, particularly Latino youth (Pahl & Way, 2006), associations between exploration, affirmation and perhaps other aspects of racial identity may function differently for these youth. For instance, some evidence suggests that elevated levels of exploration may be associated with more frequent reports of racial discrimination (Cross, 1995; Pahl & Way, 2006; Phinney, 1990), higher exploration levels have also been associated political consciousness (Pahl & Way, 2006), racial/ethnic centrality and positive group affect (Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006), which are attributes positively associated with both psychological and academic adjustment (e.g. Wong et al., 2001).

Critical Race Consciousness

Critical race consciousness, as used in the present study, captures perceptions of racial subjugation and beliefs about whether it is possible to respond to and overcome those barriers. In developing this construct and considering ways critical race consciousness may relate to adjustment and experiences of school-based racial discrimination, I have drawn on three focal elements across worldview, critical race theory and racial and critical consciousness literatures: 1) protective qualities of congruence between one's worldview and experiences may play an important in role in whether or in what ways individuals are impacted by racial discrimination 2) racism is a pervasive aspect of our society and the lived experiences of Black youth, which should

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serve as a foundation for the analysis of race and racial experiences and 3) critical perceptions of racial barriers in addition to an orientation that allows for the possibility of overcoming those challenges are both important elements of resilience in the context of race-based risk.

There are multiple dimensions of racial cognition, such as acknowledgment, assessment, understanding and worldview, which may shape the ways individuals experience racial discrimination. Previous research suggests that in addition to being aware of discrimination, the inclination to talk with others about the meaning of race (Phinney, 1990; O'Connor, 1997), beliefs about how one should respond (Baldwin, Brown, & Rackley, 1990), heightened conscious of social barriers and their implications (Carter, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; O'Connor, 1997; Rousseau & Tate, 2003) and believing one is capable of challenging or overcoming racial barriers (e.g. O'Connor, 1997) influence how one is impacted. In the present study, critical race consciousness is defined as an awareness of racism as a pervasive component of one's life experience, as having implications for social mobility, and also captures orientation toward those barriers, in terms of holding a belief that racial barriers can be dealt with or overcome.

In the following discussion I further elaborate on how critical race consciousness is being conceived by drawing comparisons between related constructs, public regard and racial identity exploration. I then discuss worldview as well as racial and critical consciousness, including some consideration of critical race theory, which I broadly frame as racial awareness literatures. These areas of research have informed my conception of critical race consciousness as well as expectations for how critical race consciousness may function in relation to other constructs used in the study, indicators of

adjustment and racial discrimination.

Associations between Critical Race Consciousness, Public Regard and Racial Identity
Exploration

Whereas public regard refers to the extent to which individuals feel others view African Americans positively or negatively (Sellers et al., 1998), critical race consciousness reflects perceptions of the nature of social and structural racial barriers. Though related, each construct captures distinct elements of racial subjugation, which are perceived subordination by others and societal elements intended to restrict mobility. Similarly, racial identity exploration reflects the extent that individuals have sought to understand the meanings of their racial group membership and critical race consciousness, in addition to racial identity beliefs, capture what may be considered the equivalent of answers to those questions or stability in the form of established beliefs. Just as racial identity exploration is linked to racial identity development, this process may also contribute to the development of other racial beliefs, such as critical race consciousness. Unlike exploration, critical race consciousness integrates established beliefs about necessary reactions to race or racial circumstances. In combination with racial identity exploration, critical race consciousness allows for the assessment of key cognitive processes that have largely gone unexamined in empirical research among African Americans adolescents.

Exploration is associated with the development of racial identity beliefs and attitudes and thus often presumed to precede established beliefs (Cross, 1991). Additionally, worldview literatures speak to the importance of congruence between one's worldview and social experiences, such that the alignment (or lack thereof) between

levels of critical race consciousness and racial discrimination experiences may uniquely

explain individual variation in the effects of racial discrimination on adjustment

outcomes. It may also be the case, however, that critical race consciousness absent of or

with low levels of exploration may not be as beneficial as on-going reflection coupled

with those beliefs. In the latter case, an individual may benefit from both forms of

cognition, such that they have the stability of racial identity beliefs while also continuing

to think about and perhaps critique complex social phenomenon that shifts in meaning

across time and context.

Similar to the function of racial consciousness, it has been suggested that various

dimensions of racial identity may provide a sense of support and reduce anxiety in

threatening situations (Chavous et al., 2007). Thus, there may be a benefit to having a

sense that one is connected to a group that shares in their social experiences.

Additionally, Identity Theory and social cognitive frameworks assume that an

individual's perception of who they are has an impact on behavior and choices as well as

the ways they perceive and interact with the world (Styker & Serpe, 1982, 1994). Thus

one would expect that racial identity beliefs would be directly associated with critical

race consciousness as well as racial identity exploration.

Racial Awareness

Race-related questions of self-exploration (e.g. "Who am I racially?" and "What

does being African American mean to me?") are influential in racial identity development

(e.g. Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yip et al., 2006) as well as for African American youth who

are seeking to understand the meaning of race and their experiences with prejudice and

discrimination (Tatum, 1997). Racial exploration alone, however, does not capture

evaluation processes or racial beliefs and ideologies, which also have implications for how individuals perceive and are impacted by discrimination (Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998). From some perspectives, an awareness of social inequity for their group may contribute to diminished expectations for the future or disengagement from domains that are associated with a lack of equal opportunity (Ford, 1992; Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). However, an awareness of race and its various functions in society can also be adaptive (Edward & Polite, 1992; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Rowley, Burchinal, Roberts, & Zeisel, 2008; Sanders, 1997).

Several scholars contend that noticing or being aware of the presence or possibility of racial discrimination is an important aspect of coping (e.g., O'Connor, 1999; Sanders, 1997; Tatum, 1997). In a study relating racial attitudes to social cognition Edwards and Polite (1992) contend that successful Blacks are empowered by an awareness of racism, discrimination and prejudice. They suggest that this awareness allows them to place challenge and barriers into a context of society level racial disparity, which leads them away from attributing these occurrences to personal or even group characteristics (Edwards et al., 1992). Variation in adaptive or maladaptive consequences of racial awareness appear to depend on the distinction between noticing discrimination, recognizing barriers or reporting personal experiences and understanding the nature of that experience. Coping literatures forward that in addition to identifying a source of stress, one's assessment of that stress (e.g. why an event is happening, implications for that occurrence and options for responding) has implications for coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It seems then that awareness may be most protective when linked with

other cognitions around the meaning and function of race (e.g. private regard) and a sense of agency in relation to perceived barriers.

The following discussion highlights various representations of racial awareness, focusing on key areas of worldview research to demonstrate the importance of assessing these beliefs as a part of understanding resilience in relation to discriminatory experiences. Critical and racial consciousness research address the importance of knowledge and orientation toward race and race related struggles as being key aspects of resilience (e.g. Azibo, 1992: Baldwin et al., 1990; Carter, 2008; O'Connor, 1997; Rousseau & Tate, 2003). Collectively, these literatures provide theoretical and empirical support for the critical race consciousness construct, which represents an awareness of barriers associated with race, a sense of efficacy in relation to those barriers as well as implicit beliefs regarding necessary behavioral responses.

Worldview and Critical Race Consciousness

Worldview generally refers to the core assumptions an individual holds about how the world works (Foster, Sloto, & Ruby, 2006; Furham & Proctor, 1989; Koltko-Rivera, 2004; Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998; Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007). This system of beliefs is thought to play an important role in how individuals appraise and adapt to stressful life events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1989; Taylor, 1983) as well as shape appraisal of and response to experiences with prejudice and discrimination (Major et al., 2007; Major & O'Brien, 2005). In a series of studies examining their *worldview verification model*, Major and colleagues (2007) found that among racial and ethnic minorities who ascribe to a meritocracy ideology (e.g. any individual can get ahead if they work hard) may be at greater risk than those whose

worldview reflect some expectation for bias or discrimination. Specifically, they find that individuals whose worldview were disconfirmed (e.g. belief in individual merit and experience group based bias) suffered a decrease in self-esteem, whereas self-esteem increased among individuals whose experiences with bias were congruent with their worldview (Major, Gramzow, et al., 2002; Major & O'Brien, 2005).

Building upon this research, critical race consciousness more narrowly focuses on beliefs regarding social status, mobility and inequality as directly related to race. Race and critical consciousness literatures, discussed in more detail in the following section, argue that race and racism are a ubiquitous feature of our society and in turn pervade the lived experiences of Black youth. Critical race consciousness addresses this important element in examining perceptions of and responses to racial barriers, while also building upon the role of worldview in resilience as well as the notion of congruency as a mechanism that may explain relationships between worldview and adjustment.

Critical Race Consciousness and Psychological Framings of Racial Consciousness

Critical race consciousness is based upon an assumption that racial barriers exist and that one's understanding of these barriers can promote or impede positive adjustment. Racial consciousness, distinct from critical race consciousness, emphasizes individuals espousing a specific set of beliefs and actions believed to be necessary for healthy functioning and elevation of the Black community. Rather than assigning a value to particular beliefs or focusing on specific beliefs, critical race consciousness more generally examines awareness and orientation toward social and structural barriers. Though distinct, the racial consciousness frameworks reviewed in this discussion support the historical and contemporary significance of race in the lives of Black people as well

as the importance of engaging shared and personal experiences and circumstances of race.

Racial consciousness, rooted in Black power movements, reflects both collective and individual sociopolitical awareness, ideologies, action and self-understanding in regards to the Black community and Blackness (Du Bois, 1968; Fanon, 1963, 1967; Ogbar, 2005). Racial consciousness is thought to promote collective political action to support the interests of the Black community as well as improve self-reliance, acceptance and cultural knowledge, which in turn were believed to promote psychological well-being (e.g Van Deburg, 1992). Psychological frames for racial consciousness stem from these tenets forwarded within the Black Power Movement in the United States. Given these roots, Black consciousness is often equated with political consciousness and political action (e.g. Gurin, Miller, Gurin, 1980) in psychological literatures. Thus, it was believed that in order to be "racially conscious" one must study Black history and culture as well as engage the socio-political and economic subjugation of Black people. The psychological undertakings of racial consciousness are largely reflective of the construct's political roots and emphasize the psychological benefits of racially and culturally centered self-knowledge (e.g. Azibo, 1992; Baldwin, 1980; Cross, 1971; Milliones, 1976). The purpose of this type of identity model has been described as seeking to demonstrate that African Americans have a cultural system that is necessarily distinct from dominant White culture, and that ascribing to beliefs consistent with Black cultural systems is necessary for healthy psychological functioning (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009).

Milliones' (1976, 1980) developmental model of Black consciousness suggests that individuals progress through stages of consciousness ranging from being relatively unaware to strong anti-White attitudes and eventually reaching a stage of a pro-Black and action-oriented consciousness. Baldwin's (1984) model of African Self-Consciousness (ASC) also equates worldview with identity and describes Black Personality as being essential to healthy functioning (Baldwin, 1981). In his measure of ASC, Baldwin divides Black personality into two components: African self-extension orientation and African self-consciousness. African self-extension orientation (ASEO) represents a biogenetic component that Baldwin (1990) contends determines a shared psychological disposition among all Black people. African self-consciousness (ASC), influenced by the environment, personal experiences and ASEO, is the conscious process that reflects one's orientation toward Black people (e.g. awareness of African heritage and his/her African identity, promoting the development of Black communities, actively resists oppression). Thus, higher levels of ASC are thought to represent a healthy consciousness associated with higher levels of psychological functioning.

African/Black consciousness models provide theoretical support for the role of racial group connections and awareness of racial disparities in understanding the experiences and psychology of Black people. The models emphasize that being connected to and invested in the well-being of one's racial group provides a sense of self-affirming purpose and challenges externally determined limits on possibility and value. These models have been critiqued, however, for a lack of empirical evidence supporting internal processes and constructs identified in the model as well as for rigid prescriptions regarding ideal racial ideologies (Sellers et al., 1998). While proposing that certain racial

beliefs may be more beneficial than others is not necessarily problematic, some scholars contend that the lack of empirical support for these assumptions is problematic and that it is necessary to allow for variation in the function of these beliefs across individuals, time and contexts (Sellers et al., 1998). Each of these models prescribes specific beliefs and behaviors that are not only deemed healthy but also describe alternative beliefs as pathological. The primary component of the African Self-Consciousness model (ASEO), for instance is immeasurable given its immutable and spiritual nature (Burlew & Smith, 1991). Additionally, the reliance on particular ideologies does not allow for an assessment of how individuals understand and make meaning of race and their racial experiences or whether other types of beliefs also support positive adjustment. Racial consciousness models generally suggest that particular sets of beliefs are ideal and that this particular form of understanding or knowing is necessary for positive adjustment.

Critical Race Theory and Critical Consciousness

Critical Race Theory and critical consciousness provide a foundation for understanding why critical race consciousness is not only relevant but a key component to understanding Black adolescent experiences with race and racial discrimination. According to Critical Race Theory, any effort to understand race, racial experiences or to achieve racial equality should be rooted in an acknowledgment that racism is a normal and pervasive element of U.S. society (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau & Tate, 2003) and is described as a "powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18). This theory builds upon the concept of critical consciousness, which positions critical examinations of race as pivotal to social change and progress (Carter, 2008; Fanon, 1967; Freire, 2000). When applied to

education, Critical Race Theory examines how racism is embedded in and shapes educational structures, content, experiences and outcomes, which in turn creates advantage and disadvantage in schools, with the latter grossly impacting youth of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In addition to the analysis of Black experiences in schools, O'Connor and colleagues (2007) have called for future research to also examine ways students make sense of their racial status in relation to their school experiences as well as consideration of conventional school practices and interactions that affect educational outcomes (O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007), which Rousseau and Tate (2003) would suggest are manifestations of normalized racism.

Whereas Critical Race Theory often focuses on the responsibilities of society or the role of social change agents in various facets of society (e.g. law, education) in analyzing and combating racial subjugation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rousseau et al., 2003), critical consciousness centers on individual perceptions and engagement of race and its meanings as a mechanism for overcoming oppression and resisting internalization of negative images propagated by others (e.g. Freire, 2000). Conceptions of critical consciousness extend the reality of pervasive racism to individual perceptions and beliefs about the nature of racial subjugation. To be both critical and conscious suggests that in addition to being aware, individuals are also engaged in some degree of interpretation or analysis of their perceptions (Freire, 2000). According to Paulo Freire (2000), **"It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation"** (p. 127). In discussing the role of learners in the process of learning, Freire speaks of the vital role of critical consciousness and agency in personal

progression and social change. He describes critical consciousness as the ability to perceive oppression at various levels of society (social, political, economic) and suggests lack of awareness is a form of oppression and fundamentally inhibits learning and progress. Freire's conception of critical consciousness is often applied to building sociopolitical empowerment and development or efforts to assess the ways individuals can promote positive social change (e.g. Champeau & Shaw, 2002; Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998).

O'Connor (1997) uses the term "critical consciousness" (p. 610, 617) to convey the degree to which individuals engage in interpretation of their status and functioning as influenced by race, gender and social class. Unlike other representations of critical consciousness, however, O'Connor did not find that consciousness was necessarily beneficial or protective for youth in her sample. To the contrary she finds that for youth who demonstrate high levels of critical consciousness without a sense of agency in relation to the identified barriers, among other factors, appear to suffer the greatest personal consequences. She states that an awareness of social and structural barriers in addition to youths' disposition toward those struggles (orientation toward potential for transformation rather than resigning to externally determine status and mobility) have implications for their ability to maintain optimism about the future and achieve success in spite of those risks. The youth in her sample who were identified as resilient seemed to be distinct from other, high and low achieving youth in the sample because in addition to perceiving and thinking about social barriers in complex ways they were also optimistic about their ability to overcome those barriers. Other youth in the sample seemed to be a

greater risk when they were aware of barriers but felt helpless in overcoming or relatively simplistic in their assessment of those barriers (O'Connor, 1997).

Based on patterns identified among youth who demonstrated educational resilience, O'Connor (1997) identifies four key characteristics that seemed to promote resilience in her study sample: 1) conceiving of social injustice as something that can be confronted 2) thinking of one's self as possessing qualities needed to challenge or overcome social barriers 3) identifying variation across levels and domains of subjugation (e.g. personal and group; internal and external contributors to success/failure), described by O'Connor as critical consciousness and 4) integrating the discourse and actions of others (e.g. parent challenging school administrators to address a racial incident at school) in forming an understanding of the nature of social injustice. These findings suggest that perceiving or experiencing racial subjugation (e.g. racial discrimination) may be most harmful in situations where individuals do not also have some understanding of the nature of those experiences as well as a sense of efficacy in relation to those barriers.

Chapter 3

The Present Study and Method

Present Study

The present study examined associations of three forms of racial cognition - racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness – with academic and psychological adjustment outcomes among African American adolescents. Using cluster analytic techniques, the study identified distinct patterns or profiles of racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness variables. A primary study goal was to consider relationships among racial cognitive cluster profiles, racial discrimination and indicators of academic and psychological adjustment. A second goal was to examine whether particular racial cognition profiles served as protective factors in the context of school-based racial discrimination. Building from psychological, sociological, educational and historical frameworks and literatures, there are a few key assumptions made in the present work that should be highlighted: 1) Race matters and racial barriers exist and 2) Adolescents are capable of actively engaging complex social phenomena, such as their experiences with race. The following research questions are addressed:

1) Are there meaningful patterns across adolescents' racial identity beliefs, racial exploration, and critical race consciousness?

A person-oriented approach is used to address of a number of contentions from the literature regarding the associations of racial identity exploration, racial identity beliefs, and racial consciousness. Racial identity development scholarship suggests that youth who have explored the meanings of their racial group identity are more likely to develop a strong, positive group connection (e.g. Phinney et al., 2007). The current study tested this proposition from a person-centered perspective. Using this approach, it can be determined whether youth who reported exploring the meaning of their racial identity more would also show higher levels of racial centrality and private regard. Furthermore, other scholarship has suggested significant associations between racial connectedness (centrality) and awareness of racism (race consciousness), but has not examined this empirically (e.g. Chavous et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 2001). Finally, as an explicit test of identity development assumptions, the approach allows for a distinction to be made between groups of youth who hold similar racial identity beliefs and consciousness attitudes but differ in their exploration of these beliefs and attitudes.

Thus, a critical contribution of this approach is the ability to explicitly test some of the primary contentions of racial identity development frameworks by demonstrating empirically: 1) whether youth in the study holding particular racial identity beliefs and critical race consciousness attitudes have explored their racial identities more than those with different racial identity beliefs and racial consciousness beliefs and 2) whether there are meaningful profiles of youth who hold similar racial identity and consciousness

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beliefs, who differ in their racial identity exploration around the meaning of group membership.

2) How are these racial cognitive patterns, or profiles, associated with adolescents' academic and psychological adjustment?

Research suggests positive associations between racial centrality and private regard with academic achievement (e.g. Wong et al., 2003), positive associations with ethnic/racial identities characterized by more exploration with academic outcomes (e.g. Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997), and positive associations between awareness of racial barriers with academic and other youth adjustment outcomes (e.g. O'Connor, 1999; Sanders, 1997). Racial identity development scholarship asserts the importance of exploration in positive psychosocial development (e.g. Phinney, 1989), while some research suggests that the content of beliefs are more important than how individuals came to have those beliefs (e.g. Seaton et al., 2006). Thus, the question remains whether (1) youth with stronger racial centrality, higher private regard, along with higher exploration will show more positive adjustment outcomes relative to youth with high centrality and private regard but low exploration, or (2) youth with stronger racial centrality and higher private regard will fare better than youth with less strong centrality and private regard views, regardless of their level of exploration. The current study will provide an explicit test of these perspectives.

Furthermore, little research has considered racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration, and critical race consciousness in the same study. It is hypothesized that youth in profile groups characterized by higher levels of racial centrality and private regard, higher levels of awareness of racism (indicated by both lower public and higher

critical race consciousness) and who have engaged in more personal exploration of the meaning of race will show the most adaptive adjustment outcomes, relative to youth who have strong group centrality and private regard but lower consciousness. These expectations are based on theoretical and empirical patterns in racial identity, racial/ethnic identity development and critical consciousness research, which support the protective qualities of having a strong, positive group connection (e.g. Sellers et al., 1998), the importance of exploration in promoting stability and the ability to adapt (e.g. Phinney et al., 2007) and the role of race consciousness in promoting a sense of agency or power to alter one's social position and economic opportunities (O'Connor, 1997).

3) Do the associations between racial discrimination and youth adjustment outcomes vary for youth with different racial cognitive profiles?

Research suggests that high racial centrality and awareness of societal racism or bias against African Americans can play buffering roles in the context of experiences of personal racial discrimination (e.g. Sellers et al., 2006). Additionally, it has been suggested that youth whose worldviews include the possibility for bias may be more protected when experiencing discrimination than those whose worldviews do not include that possibility (Major et al., 2007). Thus, it is expected that youth profiles that are characterized by lower public regard and higher critical race consciousness, when also associated with high centrality and private regard (e.g. Seaton, 2009a), will show a less negative association between school-based racial discrimination and adjustment outcomes relative to youth in profiles characterized by higher public regard, low exploration, and low race consciousness.

Method

Participants

The sample is composed of 11th grade high school students ranging from 15-19 years of age (mean age = 16.46). Participants include in the sample self-identified as African American/Black or African American/Black and another racial/ethnic category. The full sample size (including cases with missing data) is composed 950 African American participants and the reduced sample (cases with missing data on any key variable) includes 401 African American participants. Descriptive data reported are based on the reduced sample. The sample is composed of nearly an equal percentage of males (51%) and females (49%) and the median family income is between 45,000-49,000, ranging between $5,000-$75,000. Forty percent of the primary caregivers had completed college at the time of data collection. Data are from a larger study, the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS) conducted by Eccles, Sameroff and colleagues will be used. MADICS was a 9-year longitudinal, community-based study of 1480 adolescents and their families (61% African American; 35% European American) living in Maryland. Data were collected between 1991 and 2000. Data for the sub-sample used in the present study were collected at the end of the 11th grade school year in 1996. The sample was drawn from a county consisting of several ecological settings: low income, high-risk urban neighborhoods; middle class suburban neighborhoods; and rural, farm-based neighborhoods.

Procedure[2]

Beginning in the fall of 1991, 1,700 seventh graders from several schools in
Prince George's County, Maryland were recruited via mail to participate in the research
study. The letters sent to the home requested parental permission for the seventh grade
student (target child) living in the household, a parent and an older sibling (if applicable)
to participate in the study. A letter was also sent to secondary caregivers to ask them to
participate as well. Of the 1,700 students and their families who were contact, 1,482
families elected to participate in the study. Data from the primary caregivers were
collected in face-to-face interviews that lasted approximately 50 minutes and were also
asked to complete a questionnaire that took about 30 minutes to complete. The secondary
caregiver completed a similar questionnaire. The target child was asked to participate in a
50-minute face-to-face interview as well as a questionnaire that took approximately 30
minutes to complete. If the target child had an older sibling, that sibling was asked to fill
out a questionnaire similar to the one completed by the target child. This procedure was
repeated in the spring of 1993. Of the original 1,482 families that participated, 1,449 were
relocated and 1,060 were re-interviewed (76% of those re-interviewed remained in Prince
George's County) of the adolescents (80% of original sample) and 1,223 parents (83% of
original sample) remained in the study. This sample did not differ from the original
sample in terms of parents' education, income, race, marital status or employment.
During the intervening months, the target child's transition into the eight grade was
assessed via phone interviews conducted with both the target child and primary caregiver.
Between July and October 1993 the primary caregivers participated in another telephone

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[2] Information taken from Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study website:
http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/pgc/home.htm

interview regarding their child's transition into ninth grade.

Measures (See Appendix)

Racial Identity

The racial identity items used in this data set were drawn from the

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers et al., 1997) see Table A1.

The MIBI measures three stable dimensions of racial identity proposed in the

Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (Sellers et al., 1998): Racial Centrality, Racial

Regard and Racial Ideology. The current study includes the Centrality and Regard

subscales. **Centrality.** This dimension of racial identity seeks to assess the extent to

which an individual defines his/herself according to race. The centrality scale used in the

present study was composed of 5-items (e.g. "Being Black has little to do with how I

feel" and "I have a strong attachment to other Blacks"). The Cronbach's alpha calculated

for this scale in the present sample ($\alpha = .70$) indicated moderate to adequate reliability

and was at a level consistent with previous research using similar scales (e.g. Seaton et

al., 2009). **Regard.** This dimension entails two types of regard, private and public.

Private Regard refers to the positive or negative feelings an individual has about African

Americans in general, as well as her/his membership in that group (e.g. "I feel good about

other Black people) and was measured using a 7-item scale and 2). The Cronbach's alpha

for the Private Regard scale ($\alpha = .77$) indicated a moderately high level of reliability.

The *Public Regard* subscale included 4 items assessing individuals' perceptions of

whether others feel positively or negatively about African Americans (e.g. "Others

respect Black people"). The Cronbach's alpha for the Public Regard scale ($\alpha = .58$)

indicated low to moderate reliability. For each subscale, respondents answered on a 1 to

5 Likert-type scale indicating 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree. In calculating

scale means, items were recoded such that higher scores indicated higher centrality,

private regard, and public regard.

Racial Identity Exploration and Critical Race Consciousness

The Racial Identity Exploration (Table A2) and Critical Race Consciousness

(Table A3) measures were developed through an iterative process, including theoretical

classification of items based on face validity, exploratory and confirmatory factor

analysis from existing items in the data set. The procedures used to develop these

measures are described in detail in the Results section.

Racial Identity Exploration

The Racial Identity Exploration items measure the extent to which individuals

report engaging actively in discussion about the meaning and social implications of race

with family and friends as well as studying traditions and history associated with their

racial background (e.g. "I talk with my friends about our racial/ethnic group and how it

affects our lives"). The items originally represented different scales and anchors for

participant responses. Thus the items were re-scaled to align with the shortest range of 1

– 4, which was used to compute any reports of raw scores. Each of the items was also

standardized and centered before being entered into analysis models. Cronbach's alpha

indicated adequate scale reliability ($\alpha = .71$). (Chatman, Malanchuk, & Eccles, 2001)

Critical Race Consciousness

This measure included three items representing individuals' consciousness around

the extent that societal mobility (e.g., in occupational, social, and academic domains) is

circumscribed by potential racism. Thus, the items tap into an understanding of the nature of social barriers associated with race as well as beliefs about implications of those barriers for personal educational and occupational mobility (e.g. "In order to get ahead, I will almost always have to work harder than Whites"). Participants were asked to respond on a 1 – 5 scale of ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale indicated moderate reliability $\alpha =.62$.

School-Based Racial Discrimination

Youths' racial discrimination experiences (Table A4) reported by youth in their 11th grade year were assessed using a School Discrimination Scale developed by the MADICS primary investigators.   The scale was made up of two subscales, a peer/social discrimination subscale as well as a teacher/classroom discrimination subscale. Only the teacher/classroom discrimination subscale was used in the present study. The classroom discrimination scale included five items evaluating students' experiences of race-based discrimination in class settings by teachers in the past year (e.g., being disciplined more harshly, graded harder because of race). Responses to items were on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = everyday. Cronbach's analyses indicated high scale reliability ($\alpha = .88$). The subscale has shown similarly high internal consistency in other studies drawn from the larger MADICS sample (Chavous et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2003).

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status was assessed using a composite variable including family income, highest level of education and highest occupational status of either caregiver. The mother or primary caregiver provided this information. This composite was created

following criteria of the Nam-Powers Socioeconomic Index (Nam & Powers, 1983), which in addition to median level of education and income, ranks occupation on a scale of 0-100 according to prestige.

Grade Point Average

Grade point average was measured on a 4-point scale (1 = D, 2 = C, 3 = B, 4 = A) and was calculated based on student self-reports of how many As, Bs, Cs, and Ds they received in the second term of the 11th grade year.

School Importance

The school importance scale (Table A5) consists of three items. Some of the items were adapted from the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (Midgley, Maehr, & Urdan, 1993). The scale assessed the importance youth place on school for meeting personal and future goals (e.g. "I have to do well in school if I want to be successful in life" or "School is not so important for kids like me"). The Cronbach's alpha for the scale indicated moderate reliability (α = .64).

Depressive Symptoms

Depressive symptoms were assessed using an adapted version of the Child Depression Inventory (Kovacs, 1992) (Table A6), which is designed to assess depression for children between the age of seven and 17 years. The scale consists of 26-items, asking youth about affect and behavior over a 2-week period on a 3-point scale (1 indicating no symptomatology and 3 indicating high symptomatology). Response anchors are unique for each item. Sample items include "I am fun (in many things, in some things, in nothing)" and "I do (most things ok, many things wrong, everything wrong). The Cronbach's alpha for the present sample indicated high scale reliability (α = .85).

Self-Esteem

The 5 items that compose the self-esteem measure (Table A7) were adapted from

the global self-worth subscale of the Self Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985).

Example items include, "How often do you wish you were different than you are" and

"How happy are you with the way you act." The Cronbach's alpha for the scale indicated

high scale reliability (α = .79). The original global self-worth subscale, intended to tap

into how much individuals like or dislike themselves, used a "structured alternative

format" (Harter, 1985, p. 7) response scale. This scale asked respondents to identify a

target person with whom they most identified and rate the degree of similarity between

them ("really true of me" to "sort of true of me"). In the adapted version used in this

study, respondents were asked to respond to single items assessing how often the wished

they were different according to different criteria and degree of self content with who

they are and how they behave.

General Self-Efficacy

In the present study, general self-efficacy (Table A8) is conceptualized as the

belief that one has the ability to overcome challenges or solve problems across a variety

of domains or tasks (Bandura, 1997). To represent this construct, the current study used

the 4-item Psychological Resilience measure developed by the MADICS researchers.

The items asked participants how often they are very good at "figuring out problems and

planning how to solve them" "carrying out the plans you make for solving problems"

"bouncing back quickly from bad experiences and "learning from your mistakes." The

scale has been used in previous studies including the current data sample (e.g., Bartko &

Eccles, 2003) and has showed good reliability (α = .73) For the current study sample, the

Cronbach's alpha also indicated good reliability (α = .74).

Chapter 4

Results

Measure Development: Process of Developing Critical Race Consciousness and Racial Identity Exploration Measures

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Before addressing the primary study objectives, it was necessary to develop and test measures of racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), using principal axis factoring extraction, was conducted to identify constructs underlying a collection of items associated with thought processes around the meaning and function of race, both personally and in society more broadly. It was expected that the identified factors were theoretically correlated, thus orthogonal (varimax) and oblique (oblim with Kaiser) rotations were done (KMO = .785, n = 519). The correlations among the factors were weak, suggesting that the varimax rotation was most appropriate. The results suggested that both the 2-factor and 3-factor constructions could adequately represent the underlying structure (see Table 2). The 2-factor model explained 25% of the shared variance, while the 3-factor model explained 30% of the shared variance. The 5% increased in shared variance explained fell into what would be considered a moderate gain (Zhang, 2009). As such, both the 2- and 3-factor structures identified using EFA were examined using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Based on the moderately low correlation between factors in the Oblique rotations (2-factor, r =.39; 3-factor, r =.26-.21), only the Orthogonal rotation have been summarized.

Two-factor Solution. The 2-factor solution reflects the initial 2-factor categorization based on face validity with one factor reflecting "racial identity exploration" and another reflecting "critical race consciousness." An exception is that one item ("I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me…") did not load as part of racial identity exploration as originally predicted and instead loaded with items reflecting critical race consciousness. Additionally, a few items did not load on either factor ("Being Black will make it harder for me to succeed in my job as an adult" "Because of racism things are not as good in my community as they could be" and "I'm confused about my race"). The 2-factor solution explained 25% of the shared variance.

Three-Factor Solution. The EFA suggests that while a 3-factor solution was plausible, the categorizations represent constructs that seemed to reflect "Racial Identity Exploration," "Critical Race Consciousness," and "Collective Struggle/Achievement." One item that was initially associated with racial identity exploration ("I thought about whether my racial/ethnic group membership will affect my future goals") loaded slightly higher on the racial identity exploration factor (.417), but it was also associated with critical race consciousness (.338). There were also a few items that did not load in the 3-factor solution: "Because of racism things are not as good in my community as they could be" and "I'm confused about my race." One item that did not load as part of the 2-factor solution ("Being Black will make it harder for me to succeed in my job as an adult") loaded in the 3-factor solution as part of the critical race consciousness factor (.389). The 3-factor solution explained 30% of the shared variance.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Both the 2- and 3-factor solutions were viable based on the exploratory factor analysis, thus confirmatory factor analysis was conducted testing fit for both (See Table 2 for fit statistics for all models). **Three-Factor Model**. The 3-factor solution was tested first, which was based on factor loadings from the EFA (Critical Race Consciousness, Racial Identity Exploration, Collective Struggle/Achievement). The fit indices for this model were inconsistent, suggesting that the model may need to be modified ($\chi^2 =$ 255.34, $df = 87$, $\chi^2/df = 2.94$, TLI = .90, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .05). Given that one item slightly overlapped on both factors ("I thought about whether my racial/ethnic group membership will affect my future goals," $r = .42$ on racial exploration and $r = .34$ on critical race consciousness) in the 3-factor solution, a model that linked this item to both factors was examined. The fit improved, also indicating good fit. Given the overlap, this item was removed from the analysis. The 3-factor model with this item removed also indicated good fit ($\chi^2 = 169.71$, df = 74, $\chi^2/df = 2.29$, TLI = .91, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .04).

Two-Factor Model and Alternative 1. The 2-factor model identified in exploratory factor analysis was also tested. The fit indices indicated inconsistent and poor fit ($\chi^2 = 309.06$, df = 76, $\chi^2/df = 4.01$, TLI = .79, CFI = .85, RMSEA = .06). An alternative 2-factor model was then tested, based on 2 of the 3 factors identified as part of the 3-factor model (racial exploration and critical race consciousness). Given that constructs reflected in the "racial identity exploration" and "critical race consciousness" factors were the central to the focus of the project, a 2-factor model removing the third factor (Collective Struggle/Achievement) was tested. It should be noted that this 2-factor model is distinct from the aforementioned model because items that were previously

included as part of the second factor in the EFA was represented as a separate, third

factor, which are not included in this model. This model also demonstrated good fit (χ^2 =

87.95, df = 34, χ^2/df = 2.58, TLI = .90, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .04). There were several

items, however, that had reasonable estimates but very low multiple squared correlations,

suggesting that these items may not be reliable indicators of both critical race

consciousness and racial identity exploration. As such, a second alternative 2-factor

model with these items removed was tested.

Two-Factor Model-Alternative 2. Two items ("Some people will treat me

differently because I am Black," r = .19; "Being Black will make it harder for me to

succeed in my job as an adult," r = .13) were removed from the critical race

consciousness factor, and one item ("I understand pretty well what my ethnic group

membership means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups," r

=.12, was removed from the Racial Exploration factor. The fit indices for this model were

also good (χ^2 = 35.54, df = 13, χ^2/df = 2.72, TLI = .93, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .04). A chi-

square difference test was used to determine whether the two 2-factor models tested were

significantly differently from each other. The test indicated that the tests were

significantly different. The second version of the 2-factor model has the lowest chi-

square and, thus, was determined to be the better model. Based on both the EFA and CFA

analyses conducted, the 2-factor model representing Racial Exploration and Critical Race

Consciousness was used in project analyses.

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics for each of the study variables and differences by sex and

socioeconomic status are shown in Table 1. Students reported moderately high scores for

centrality (M = 3.27, SD = .64), a high mean for private regard (M = 4.33, SD = .58), and

a moderately high mean for public regard ($M = 3.27$, $SD = .64$), Youth in the sample

reported moderately high levels of racial identity exploration ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .71$) and

critical race consciousness ($M = 3.40$, $SD = .88$). The sample generally reported low

frequencies of school-based racial discrimination ($M = 1.43$, $SD = .69$). With regard to

academic outcomes, students reported average school grades equaling about a B-average

($M = 2.81$, $SD = .70$) and high school importance scores ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .68$). In terms

of psychological adjustment indicators, students reported relatively low depressive

symptoms scores ($M = 1.35$, $SD = .26$) with little variability, high levels of self-esteem

($M = 3.94$, $SD = .75$) and a high general self-efficacy ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .67$).

Zero Order Correlations among Study Variables (see Table 1)

In examining associations among racial identity variables, it is of note that private

regard was positively correlated with centrality ($r = .35$) but was not associated with

public regard. Centrality and public regard were not correlated. Higher private regard ($r =$

$.19$, $r = .21$) and centrality ($r = .30$, $r = .30$) were associated with higher racial identity

exploration and critical race consciousness. Public regard was negatively associated with

racial identity exploration ($r = -.12$) and critical race consciousness ($r = -.23$). Critical

racial consciousness and racial identity exploration were also positively correlated ($r =$

$.20$).

Racial identity variables also varied in their associations with racial

discrimination. Lower public regard ($r = -.11$) and private regard ($r = -.30$) were

associated with higher frequencies of reported racial discrimination, while racial

discrimination and centrality had a positive association ($r = .13$). More racial identity

exploration was associated with higher racial discrimination scores ($r = .13$), but discrimination was not significantly associated with critical race consciousness. With regard to adjustment outcomes, analyses showed a positive correlation between school importance, self-esteem and grade point average and a negative association with depressive symptoms. Critical race consciousness was correlated positively with school importance ($r = .18$). Racial identity exploration was positively associated with grade point average ($r = .12$) and general self-efficacy ($r = .21$).

Racial Cognition Profiles

As previously discussed, a primary goal of this study was to address of a number of contentions from the literature regarding the associations of various forms of racial cognition. Using cluster analytic techniques, the study identified distinct patterns or profiles of racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration and race consciousness variables. The following section details findings from these analyses.

Latent Class Analysis. A latent cluster analysis (LCA) approach was used to assess patterns of variation in adolescents' racial identity beliefs (centrality, private regard, and public regard) as well as racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness. Latent class clustering estimates the probability that an individual is part of a cluster according to assigned characteristics, by accounting for associations between variables in the smallest number of clusters (Magidson & Vermunt, 2004). This approach has become an increasingly popular alternative to hierarchical clustering methods (e.g. *k*-means) given its relative flexibility and sensitivity to probabilities of variation across

clusters (Magidson & Vermunt, 2004). These analyses were conducted using Latent Gold software (Vermunt & Magidson, 2005).

There are several criteria that may be used to identify the most appropriate cluster solution. Firstly, a model is assumed to have adequate fit if the *p*-value is greater than .05. For each of the alternative models, percentage of reduction in the likelihood ratio chi-squared statistics (L^2), which captures the association explained for each of the models, is compared to the baseline model. The baseline model (one-class) represents the total association among indicators with reduction in L^2 being compared to determine the total association explained as the number of classes increase. When there are a large number of indicators or categories, however, L^2 may not be the best approximation. In these cases, it is recommended that the bootstrap *p*-value be used as an alternative (Langeheine, Pannekoek, & Van de Pol, 1996). Additionally, the solution with the lowest Bayesian information criterion (BIC), which reflects model fit and parsimony, is also preferred. Lastly, the Latent Gold program also provides bivariate residuals (BVR) for each model, which accounts for bivariate associations between indicators (Magidson & Vermunt, 2004), allowing for more parsimonious models to be estimated. The criterion for BVR is that each of the residuals should not be substantially larger than 1.

Based on the mean scores from the three racial identity subscales, racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness, four latent class models (ranging from 1-4) were estimated (see Table 3 for summary statistics for the four models). The three-cluster model had the lowest BIC, 5230.65, a non-significant bootstrap *p*-value (.43) and a notable reduction in L^2 (16%) in comparison to the baseline model. Although the four-cluster solution explained an additional 1% of the association between indicators, this

solution was less parsimonious. The three cluster solution model was also more

parsimonious as indicated by a fewer number of parameters than the four-cluster solution

as well as the largest BVR not substantially exceeding 1. As such, the three-cluster model

was determined to be the most appropriate solution.

The raw and standardized means for the racial cognition variables (private and

public regard, centrality, racial exploration and critical race consciousness) were utilized

to describe and label each of the three clusters that emerged (see Table 4). Patterns across

dimensions of racial identity for the three clusters identified were reflective of patterns

from previous research with African American high school students (Chavous et al.,

2003; Seaton, 2009a). As such, clusters in the present study were labeled according to

two criteria: 1) according to patterns in racial identity beliefs, used in previous research

and additionally 2) based on level of racial identity exploration and critical race

consciousness (e.g. Identity Pattern/Exploration-Consciousness Pattern). The first and

largest cluster was labeled *Alienated/Disengaged* (n = 214, 56%) given scores below the

sample mean across all five variables. This group reported that being Black was less

important to their overall identities (about .5 SD below sample mean), was nearly one

standard deviation below the sample mean on private regard, and felt others perceived

African Americans negatively (about .3 SD below sample mean). They also engaged in

less racial identity exploration and reported lower levels of critical race consciousness

(about .3 SDs below mean for both). Cluster 2 was labeled *Buffering/Aware* (n = 102,

26%). Youth in this cluster reported a stronger than average connection to African

Americans (about .7 SD above sample mean for centrality), felt positively about African

Americans (about .5 SD above sample mean for private regard), but felt others perceived

African Americans more negatively (almost .9 SD below sample mean for public regard). Also, youth in this group reported engaging in relatively high levels of racial identity exploration (around .6 SD above sample mean) and higher critical race consciousness scores (about .7 SD above sample average). Cluster 3 was labeled *Idealized/Questioning* (n = 69, 18%) and was composed of youth whose average scores were above the sample mean for each of the variables, except for critical race consciousness. This group reported that race was important to their personal identities (about .5 SD above sample mean), positive affective feelings about African Americans (.8 SD above sample mean), and were nearly one standard deviation above the sample mean on public regard. Also, youth in this group reported engaging in a moderate level (slightly above the sample mean) of racial identity exploration. Finally, youth in this group were about .2 SD below the sample mean on critical race consciousness. See Figure 1, which summarizes the standardized variable scores for each cluster and Figure 2, which presents the clusters' raw scores for each variable.

Cluster Differences in Racial Cognition Variables

To describe meaningful cluster group differences on the racial cognition variables, Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine differences on each of the cluster variables.

Racial Identity. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster (*M* = 2.87, *SD* = .58) had significantly lower levels of centrality than the Buffering/Aware (*M* = 2.95, *SD* = .54) or Idealized/Questioning clusters (*M* = 3.73, *SD* = .57). The Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning clusters did not significantly differ from one another on centrality, however. Similarly, while the Alienated/Disengaged cluster (*M* = 4.08, *SD* = .56) had

significantly lower levels of private regard than either the Buffering/Aware ($M = 4.67$,

$SD = .32$) or Idealized/Questioning clusters ($M = 4.80$, $SD = .20$), the Buffering/Aware

and Idealized/Questioning clusters did not significantly differ from one another in private

regard scores. The clusters each differed from one another in public regard, with the

Idealized/Questioning ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .48$) cluster reporting the highest scores, than the

Alienated/Disengaged cluster ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .51$), and the Buffering/Aware ($M = 2.59$,

$SD = .52$) reporting the lowest public regard scores.

Racial Identity Exploration. The clusters each varied from one another in their

racial identity exploration scores.   The Buffering/Aware had the highest exploration (M

$= 2.85$, $SD = .66$) followed by the Idealized/Questioning ($M = 2.51$, $SD = .58$) and the

Alienated/Disengaged clusters ($M = 2.26$, $SD = .69$).

Critical Race Consciousness. The Buffering/Aware cluster ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .66$)

had significantly higher scores for critical race consciousness than did the

Alienated/Disengaged ($M = 3.07$, $SD = .74$) and Idealized/Questioning ($M = 3.13$, $SD = $

$.84$) clusters. The Alienated/Disengaged and Idealized/Questioning clusters did not differ

significantly in reported critical race consciousness.

In sum, the emerging cluster groups were consistent overall with theoretical

expectations and prior empirical analyses. The Buffering/Aware and

Idealized/Questioning clusters both had similarly high centrality and private regard

beliefs but differed significantly in views of society's regard for their group (public

regard), with the Buffering/Aware group reporting more negative public regard. The

Buffering/Aware group also reported more racial identity exploration and higher critical

race consciousness than did the Idealized/Questioning group. Relative to the other two

clusters, the Alienated group had lower scores on all racial identity variables and was lower in racial identity exploration. The Alienated/Disengaged and Idealized/Questioning clusters, however, were similarly low in reported critical race consciousness. The similarities and differences in variables across the groups suggest the utility of considering youths' patterns of race-related cognitions rather than particular beliefs in isolation of one another.

Background Descriptive of Cluster Groups

Next, I explored how cluster groups related to youth demographic characteristics. Chi-Square analysis and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs) were used to examine cluster differences in background variables. Chi-square analyses indicated no significant difference in girls' and boys' representation across cluster groups $\chi^2(2, N = 385) = 7.31, p = .12)$. One-way ANOVA indicated that the clusters did vary significantly by socioeconomic status, $F(2, 385) = 5.83, p < .01$. Post hoc analysis (Scheffé test) indicated that the Alienated/Disengaged cluster ($M = 23.40, SD = 5.9$) had significantly lower scores for the socioeconomic status variable than did the Buffering/Aware cluster ($M = 25.42, SD = 5.7$) or Idealized/Questioning cluster ($M = 25.43, SD = 5.3$). The Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning clusters did not differ significantly from one another in socioeconomic status. The cluster groups were also compared by the individual components of the SES composite variable (family income, mother's education). The Alienated/Disengaged cluster ($M = 10.50$) had a significantly lower family income than the Idealized/Questioning ($M = 14.54$) and Buffering/Aware ($M = 14.84$) clusters, which did not differ from one another. There were no significant cluster differences in mother's education.

Also, to provide more descriptive information about the racial cognition cluster groups, I conducted analyses examining various race-related attitudinal and experiential variables from the current and prior data waves. The analyses allowed for examination of whether racial identity clusters related to other race-related characteristics in ways that would be expected theoretically. While they do not allow for causal claims to be made, such analyses help provide some context around individuals in each cluster, including factors that may relate to how or why particular youth were in a particular cluster group.

First, I explored whether racial cognition cluster group membership related to intergroup attitudes and interactions. The Buffering/Aware cluster reported having a stronger personal preference for hanging out with kids of the same race ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .77$) than the Alienated/Disengaged ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .86$) and the Idealized/Questioning Clusters ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .94$). The Buffering/Aware cluster was also more likely than individuals in the other clusters to report that their parents preferred that they hang out with kids of the same race ($M = 2.45$, $SD = .70$). The Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning clusters did not differ in the number of Black friends they reported having, but the Alienated/Disengaged ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .93$) cluster reported significantly fewer Black friends than the Buffering/Aware cluster group ($M = 4.44$, $SD = .70$). Individuals in the Buffering/Aware cluster ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .61$) also reported fewer White friends than the Idealized/Questioning cluster ($M = 2.00$, $SD = .75$).

Findings also suggested cluster differences in how youth experienced the importance and connectedness of race in the family and community. Individuals in the Alienated/Disengaged cluster reported that race was less important in their families' day-to-day lives ($M = 2.56$, $SD = .99$) than those in the Buffering/Aware ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .94$)

and Idealized/Questioning ($M = 3.15$, $SD = .87$) clusters. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster was also less likely than the other two clusters to perceive members of their racial group as supportive ($M = 2.83$, $SD = .11$). The Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning clusters did not vary in the importance of race in their families or in perceptions of support from other racial group members.

Finally, I considered whether clusters varied in previously reported experiences of racial discrimination and discrimination-related beliefs. The cluster groups did not differ significantly in their reports of school-based racial discrimination in the 8th grade, but the Buffering/Aware cluster reported a higher expectation that racial discrimination would prevent them from getting the education they want ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.09$). See Appendix, Table A9 for items examined in these descriptive analyses.

General Linear Model Analysis of Covariance

General Linear Model (GLM) Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine cluster group differences in racial discrimination and relationships between racial discrimination and adjustment outcomes across racial cognition clusters. Each model controlled for socioeconomic status. Although previous research would suggest possible sex differences in some of the adjustment indicators examined in the study (e.g. grades and depressive symptoms), it was not included as a control variable given that there was no variation in cluster group membership for girls and boys. Though not a primary consideration, secondary models were run including sex as a control variable. Any changes in results are discussed, as relevant, following primary results.

Cluster Differences in 11th Grade Reported Classroom Racial Discrimination

The next analyses considered cluster variation in racial discrimination experiences. A General Linear Model (GLM) Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine cluster group differences in youths' 11th grade reported racial discrimination in their classroom settings. There was a significant cluster effect, $F(2, 385) = 5.30, p < .01$. Post hoc analysis (Scheffé test) indicated that the Buffering/Aware cluster ($M = 1.54, SD = .72$) reported significantly more teacher/classroom racial discrimination than did the Idealized/Questioning cluster group ($M = 1.28, SD = .54$). The difference between the Alienated/Disengaged cluster ($M = 1.43, SD = .72$) and the Idealized/Questioning cluster ($M = 1.28$ $SD = 54$) approached significance ($p < .10$). There was no significant difference in reports of racial discrimination between the Buffering/Aware and Alienated/Disengaged cluster groups.

Relationships between Racial Discrimination and Adjustment Outcomes Across Racial Cognition Clusters

The GLM technique Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to assess whether racial discrimination served as a risk factor for adjustment as well as to examine whether racial cognition cluster membership moderated the association between racial discrimination and adjustment outcomes among African American adolescents. Five models were estimated with academic and psychological adjustment variables entered as dependent variables. Socioeconomic status was entered as a covariate also. Cluster group

membership and racial discrimination[3] were considered as main effects and the product of these two variables was also used to create an interaction term.

Overall Models for Adjustment Outcomes

The GLM ANCOVA for school importance ($F(7, 379) = 17.07$ $p < .00$, partial eta squared = 24%), grade point average ($F(6, 375) = 7.54$, $p < .00$, partial eta squared = 11%), depressive symptoms ($F(6, 375) = 6.13$, $p < .00$, partial eta squared = 9%), genera self-efficacy ($F(6, 375) = 3.69$, $p = .00$, partial eta squared = 6%), self-esteem ($F(6, 375) = 2.30$, $p < .05$, partial eta squared = 4%) were all significant.

Racial Discrimination as a Risk Factor for Academic Adjustment

Significant main effects for racial discrimination experiences were found for grade point average and school importance. Controlling for SES, individuals who reported more racial discrimination reported lower grade point average ($b = -.15$; $p < .01$), lower school importance attitudes ($b = -.23$; $p < .00$). The main effect for general self-efficacy was not significant.

Racial Discrimination as a Risk Factor for Psychological Adjustment

Significant main effects for racial discrimination experiences were found in the depressive symptom model. Controlling for SES, individuals who reported more racial discrimination had higher levels of depressive symptoms ($b = .07$; $p < .00$). The main effect for self-esteem was not significant.

Patterns of Racial Cognition as Compensatory Resilience Factors

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[3] Because the racial discrimination variable was continuous, it was actually entered as a covariate in the GLM ANCOVA but evaluated for main effects on the dependent variables.

Compensatory factors are those that are associated with positive outcomes across level of risk (Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Notaro, 2002). GLM ANOVA was used to assess the compensatory qualities associated with racial cognitive cluster membership. The GLM models for school importance (Table 6), grade point average (Table 7), general self-efficacy (Table 8) and self-esteem (Table 9) yielded significant main effects for cluster group membership, suggesting that certain patterns of racial cognition served as compensatory resilience factors. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster reported a significantly lower grade point average than the Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning cluster groups. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster reported the lowest grade point average ($M = 2.70$) in comparison to the Idealized/Questioning ($M = 2.90$) and Buffering/Aware ($M = 2.99$) cluster groups. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster also reported the lowest levels of school importance ($M = 4.01$) relative to the and Buffering/Aware ($M = 4.31$) and Idealized/Questioning ($M = 4.39$) clusters. The Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning cluster groups did not significantly differ in grade point average or school importance levels.

The Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning clusters did not differ in terms of general self-efficacy. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster ($M = 3.86$), however, reported significantly lower levels of general self-efficacy than the Idealized/Questioning ($M = 4.12$) and Buffering/Aware ($M = 4.16$) clusters. The Alienated/Disengaged ($M = 3.83$) also reported lower self-esteem than the Buffering/Aware ($M = 4.09$) cluster. The difference between the Alienated/Disengaged and the Idealized/Questioning ($M = 4.01$) cluster group in self-esteem was approaching significance ($p < .10$).

There were no significant differences in depressive symptoms by cluster membership (Table 10).

Patterns of Racial Cognition as Protective Resilience Factors

According to resilience frameworks, protective factors are those that buffer the relationship between risk exposure and related negative effects (Zimmerman, et al., 2002). GLM ANOVA was used to assess the protective qualities associated with racial cognitive cluster membership. The GLM ANCOVA model was run using all three cluster groups and the racial discrimination x racial cognition cluster interaction was significant in the school importance $F(6, 385) = 5.61, p < .01$) model and approached significance $F(6, 385) = 2.55, p = .08$ for the grade point average model. It should be noted that the moderating effect for grade point average, which was marginally significant in the primary model, was no longer significant when sex was included in the model.

To determine which cluster groups differed each of the clusters was used as a reference group (e.g. Idealized/Questioning used as a reference group to determine differences between Buffering/Aware and Alienated/Disengaged). Thus, multiple sets of analyses were conducted, with each cluster group serving as a reference group, in order to identify differences across the clusters. Post hoc analysis indicated no significant difference in the association between racial discrimination and school importance between the Idealized/Questioning and Buffering/Aware clusters, but the Alienated/Disengaged cluster differed significantly from the other two clusters. As such, reported statistics are based on use of the Idealized/Questioning cluster as the reference group.

Differences in slope were also made in comparison to the Idealized/Questioning cluster. These comparisons were achieved by changing the cluster used as the reference group and then conducting post hoc pairwise tests to determine which slopes were significantly different across cluster groups. Results indicated that the slope of the Alienated/Disengaged cluster ($B = -.28$, $p < .05$) was significantly different from the Buffering/Aware ($B = .07$, *ns*) and Idealized/Questioning ($B = .35$, *ns*) cluster groups. Figure 3 summarizes plots of the relationship between racial discrimination and school importance for each cluster group. While each of the cluster groups demonstrates a decrease in school importance levels when reporting higher levels of racial discrimination, the Idealized/Questioning and Buffering/Aware cluster groups did not differ significantly in this pattern. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster, however, reported significantly lower levels of school importance when reporting both lower and higher levels of racial discrimination.

Although the racial discrimination x racial cognition cluster interaction only approached significance for grade point average, the post hoc analysis (Scheffé test) indicated cluster differences in the relationship between racial discrimination and grade point average. Again, significant differences were only identified between the Alienated/Disengaged cluster and the other two clusters, while there was no difference between the Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning clusters. A plot of these relationships (see Figure 4) suggests the negative association between racial discrimination and grade point average is stronger for the Alienated/Disengaged cluster ($B = -.14$, $p < .05$) in comparison to the Buffering/Aware ($B = .11$, *ns*) and Idealized/Questioning clusters ($B = .13$, *ns*).

Chapter 5

Discussion

In his recent Presidential Address at the Society for Research on Adolescence Biennial Meeting, Dr. Reed Larson claimed "To get from A to B in the real world, you need cognitive skills to navigate ecological complexity." He emphasized the fundamental importance of perception, understanding and adaptive action to successfully negotiate the varied and challenging contexts youth encounter. This call and the focus of the present research beg the question: *can understanding promote resilience?* This dissertation project served as a preliminary step in addressing this very question among African American adolescents and the ways understandings of race can promote their ability to overcome racial barriers. The purpose of this final chapter is to reflect on contributions of the present project as well as to consider limitations and future directions for this work.

Racial Cognition Variables: Who am I in relation to my racial group? How have I actively tried to understand my racial identity? How does my racial group status in society impact me?

A first step in the study was to examine relationships among the different racial cognition variables examined in this study (racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness). Doing so demonstrated that while interrelated, the variables tapped into qualitatively different and empirically distinct race-related beliefs and attitudes. The racial cognition variables were generally correlated in

directions that would be expected based on previous theory and research. Phinney's ethnic identity development model and research assert that ethnic identity exploration leads to higher affirmation and belonging with one's racial/ethnic group (e.g. Phinney, 1989), resulting from the self-driven process of exploration rather than assimilating the ideas and beliefs of others (e.g. parents). Consistent with empirical findings based on Phinney's model (e.g., Yip et al., 2006), it was expected that youth with higher levels of private regard and centrality (conceptually similar to Phinney's conceptualization of affirmation and belonging) would be more likely to have engaged in exploration around the meaning of their racial identity. Phinney's conceptual framework and ethnic identity exploration measure (1989; 1992), however, did not explicitly consider adolescents' exploration around racial discrimination specifically. Similarly, because Phinney's framework took a developmental approach drawing on the work of Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980), she was concerned with the role of exploration in leading to identity achievement, a state where the individual is clear about the meanings of their group membership (commitment) as a function of the exploration process. Phinney's conceptualization model made no assumptions about the nature of youths' identity commitment, or their certainty around the content of their understandings about the meanings of their racial group membership in society.

The current study viewed the extent to which youth endorsed specific beliefs about the importance and meaning of their racial identities (centrality, private, and public regard) as an indicator of their commitment to those racial identity beliefs. Also, the study addressed the need for considering the nature of adolescents' identity explorations, in this case, their explorations around racial discrimination. The need for such a focus is

warranted by the ample evidence of the prevalence of racial discrimination among ethnic minority adolescents (e.g., Fisher et al., 2000), and the ecological models suggesting that dealing with discrimination is a normative experience in the lives of many ethnic minority youth (e.g., García-Coll et al., 1996; Spencer et al., 2001). Thus, the present study findings add to and extend the above literatures on ethnic identity development by showing that the youth's explorations around racism specifically relate to their commitments around the content of their racial identity attitudes.

Associations among Racial Cognitive Variables. Racial centrality and private regard showed, moderate and positive associations with both racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness. Thus, youth who viewed race as more central to their self-concepts and those who had positive affective connections to their racial group reported more active exploration of the meaning of their racial group identity (in terms of background and history as well as the roles of racial discrimination in their lives). Youth who reported more positive views of society's regard for Blacks also reported less personal exploration around their group's status and racial discrimination.

With regard to critical race consciousness, the present study findings indicated that higher racial identity exploration related to higher endorsement of beliefs that suggest an understanding of the pervasive nature of societal racism and its personal implications. It would be expected that youth actively exploring their racial identity by talking with others and making attempts to learn about their racial experiences and group's background, would be more likely to construct beliefs around the pervasive nature of racism in societal systems and view it as personally relevant to their life chances. As would be expected, youth with higher centrality and those with higher

private regard also had higher critical race consciousness, but youth with more positive

public regard endorsed the consciousness view less. Noteworthy was the fact that the

correlations between public regard and critical race consciousness were small to

moderate. This suggests that the constructs are related, yet distinct. In other words,

youths' views of the societal value for Blacks differ from how they view the personal

implications of racism, which in turn may function in different ways.

   Racial Cognition Variables and Discrimination. Correlational relationships of the

racial cognitive variables with racial discrimination and adjustment variables were also

consistent with study expectations overall. Youth who reported race as a more central

aspect of their identity also reported more racial discrimination (e.g., Sellers & Shelton,

2003). To the contrary, youth who perceived Blacks as being valued and viewed

positively by others (high private regard) reported lower levels of racial discrimination

(e.g. Sellers et al., 2006). Those who more actively engaged in identity exploration

reported more discrimination (Cross, 1995). Surprisingly, critical race consciousness was

not significantly associated with reported experiences of personal racial discrimination.

The lack of a relationship may be partly explained by differences in the types of racism

assessed, namely personal discrimination versus racism at the level of culture and

systems (Jones, 1972). While it would be expected that an awareness of structural racism

would be interrelated to some degree with racial discrimination, they are not synonymous

(Lewis-Trotter & Jones, 2004). Furthermore, adolescents may vary in their capacities for

linking interpersonal and institutional/structural levels discrimination, as the latter relates

to understandings of more abstract and distal phenomena (Seaton, 2009b). Thus, while

surprising from one perspective, this finding supports the multidimensional nature of

racism and the need for distinguishing between different elements of this phenomenon and for considering how youth experience them differently.

Racial Cognition Variables and Adjustment. Consistent with previous research, high centrality and private regard, or having strong and positive attachment to one's racial group, were generally associated with positive academic and psychological adjustment outcomes (e.g. Sellers et al., 2006). A belief that others negatively perceived Blacks (low public regard) was associated with higher reported depressive symptoms (e.g. Yip et al., 2006), but critical race consciousness was not associated with depressive symptoms. To the contrary, critical race consciousness was positively associated with school importance. Thus, it may be that youths' views of public regard may derive from perceived views of more proximal others, which may have more detrimental effects on psychological well-being than more abstract views around racism. However, an understanding of societal racism and the necessity of working to overcome it (critical race consciousness) may be personally empowering and motivating.

Finally, actively engaging in racial identity exploration was associated with a greater sense of self-efficacy and higher grade point average. Seeking information likely serves a purpose. One asks questions, particularly in the context of racial identity exploration because they are seeking understanding. Thus, questioning and seeking information about one's racial group and racial experiences reflects a fundamental belief or orientation that questions can be asked and answers can be obtained, a central characteristic of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Individuals who demonstrate a desire to question are more likely to persist in seeking understanding, may be better able to adequately assess the nature of problems and thus more effective in their responses to

those problems (Atkinson, 1957; Bandura, 1997; Dickhauser & Reinhard, 2006; Eccles et al., 1993; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), qualities that likely support academic performance.

In sum, the findings suggest the utility of considering distinct aspects of adolescents' cognitions around race and their racial group identity. While conceptually and empirically related, the variables showed both similar and different associations with the experience of racial discrimination as well as indicators of psychological and academic adjustment.

Patterns of Racial Cognition: The Utility of a Person-Oriented Approach

While the variable-level correlations described previously highlight how individual racial cognition variables relate to one another, perceptions of racial discrimination, and adjustment, the use of a cluster analysis approach allowed for examination of particular patterns of race-related cognitions. Adolescence is a particularly interesting and relevant developmental period for such an analysis. During this period, a primary task is the exploration and construction of personal identities, so youth may be in various states of considering who they are and the meanings of their social identities. At the same time, youth during this period may vary in their perceptions and understandings of how race functions at interpersonal, social, and institutional levels. Additionally, the cluster approach made possible the consideration of whether youth with differing patterns of racial cognitions varied in their experiences of racial discrimination and in the association of discrimination with adjustment. Thus, in using this approach it was possible to explore whether particular types of youth fared better or worse in the context of race-related risk rather than considering how particular variables moderated discrimination.

Findings from the cluster analysis indicated distinct patterns across racial identity beliefs, racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness. The patterns in racial identity beliefs across these three profiles were theoretically consistent with cluster groups identified in previous research (Chavous et al., 2003; Seaton, 2009a). The present study builds upon this work by considering whether youth in the sample with particular racial identity beliefs were also more likely to have engaged in racial identity exploration and show higher or lower levels of critical racial consciousness. Alternatively, it was possible theoretically that different youth could hold similar patterns of racial identity beliefs but vary in the extent that they had explored the meanings of their racial identity and/or vary in their levels of consciousness around racial barriers. The study findings provided more support for the former than the latter.

In an effort to provide a more qualitative description of the types of youth composing each of the cluster groups, analyses were conducted to provide more descriptive information about cluster variation in various race-related attitudinal and experiential variables from the current and prior data waves. Below, the three clusters resulting from analyses are described:

Alienated/Disengaged. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster included youth who, relative to the broader sample, had lower centrality, private regard, and public regard, as well as lower racial identity exploration and critical racial consciousness. Thus, this group of youth reported feeling less connected to their Black identity, felt less positive about Blacks, and perceived more societal bias against Black people, relative to the overall sample. Also, they had engaged in relatively less active exploration of their group's history/traditions or the role of racial discrimination in their lives. Finally, they

were less conscious of the ways that racial barriers might circumscribe their life chances. This cluster composed over half of the sample (53%) and did not vary in composition of females and males. In previous research, the Alienated clusters (based on racial identity beliefs) composed between 19-25% of the total sample (Chavous et al., 2003; Seaton, 2009a).

There are several factors that may contribute to the large representation of this cluster in the present sample. While individuals in this sample reported relatively low levels of each racial cognitive indicator, these levels are not necessarily low according to the scale ranges. The average level of private regard and race consciousness for the alienated/disengaged cluster, for instance, were both above the midpoints of the respective scales. While youth in the alienated cluster report relatively low levels of private regard and consciousness, they still are reporting fairly positive perceptions of African Americans and demonstrate some awareness of racial barriers. Thus, there did not appear to be a sizable portion of the sample reporting very low levels of these indicators. While the group was labeled according to similarity of the overall patterns of variables with those found in Alienated clusters in prior research (Chavous et al., 2003; Seaton, 2009a), the Alienated cluster in this sample may represent moderate levels of the racial identity variables.

Interestingly, youth in this group reported that race was a less important part of their daily family experiences and perceived people in their racial group as less supportive than other clusters. Because race was less central to them and they held more negative private regard views, having same race friendships may have been less important to them as well. While previous research has not indicated strong connections

between racial identity and SES (e.g., Chavous et al., 2003, 2008), this cluster had lower family income backgrounds than other clusters, raising important questions for future work around the association of social class and race-related beliefs systems.

Buffering/Aware. The *Buffering/Aware* cluster included youth with higher centrality, and private regard, and lower public regard, as well as higher exploration and critical racial consciousness relative to the sample mean. These youth viewed race as more central to their overall identities, had more positive personal affect about Blacks, and perceived society as valuing Blacks less than the overall sample. In addition, they reported more active exploration of their racial identity and higher consciousness of around societal racial barriers and how they might affect them personally.

Descriptive analyses were consistent with theoretical expectations. The Buffering/Aware cluster expressed a stronger preference than the other cluster groups for having friends of the same race and reported more Black friends, which may have been a function of their high centrality and private regard, as well as their more negative views of society's regard for Blacks and higher consciousness around racism. As being Black was more central to how they defined themselves, they may have perceived themselves to have more in common with other Blacks as well as have more skepticism regarding out-group friendships due to more exploration and pessimistic beliefs regarding societal racial bias against Blacks. Relative to the Alienated/Disengaged cluster, they perceived members of their racial group as more supportive and reported that race more central to day-to-day family life. Thus, the group's strong, positive group connection, higher identity exploration around discrimination, and perceptions of societal bias and racism

also may have derived from a supportive context for racial socialization (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997).

Idealized/Questioning. The *Idealized/Questioning* cluster included youth with similarly high racial centrality and private regard as the Buffering/Aware cluster. However, this cluster had the highest public regard of all clusters. Interestingly, this group reported slightly higher than average racial identity exploration, but lower critical race consciousness relative to the overall sample.

This cluster may be reasonably described as those wearing "rose colored glasses" as is suggested by their optimistic views of societal regard for their racial group and the implications of societal racism for their personal mobility. The cluster's low critical racial consciousness coupled with their substantially higher levels of public regard may be indicative of lower awareness of or belief in the existence of racial barriers. The public regard measure captures beliefs of how others view Black people (e.g. "In general, others respect Black people") and the critical race consciousness measure taps into perceptions of broader structural and social barriers (e.g. "In order to get ahead, I will almost always have to work harder than Whites"). While positive public regard does not preclude an awareness of racial barriers, if one strongly believes that others perceive their racial/ethnic group positively they may be less likely to acknowledge structural racism as well. It is not accurate, however, to characterize this group's views as naïve or uninformed, as they also reported notable levels of exploration around their racial group background and the role of racial discrimination, specifically. While reporting low critical race consciousness, this cluster group also reported moderate racial identity

exploration; thus, they demonstrated some interest in thinking and learning more about their racial identity as it relates to racial discrimination.

The Idealized/Questioning cluster did not differ from the Buffering/Aware cluster in reported number of Black friends but did report more White friends and less preference for same race friends only. Individuals in the Idealized/Questioning cluster generally have an optimistic view of race and race relations and as a result may have been more likely to pursue friendships across racial lines (i.e., their higher reported White friends). According to research conducted by Graham and colleagues, cross-ethnic friendships may actually support better intergroup attitudes (e.g. Graham, Taylor, & Ho, 2009). This presents the possibility that individuals in the Idealized/Questioning cluster may have developed their optimistic attitudes as a result of positive intergroup contact.

Taken together, the cluster groups' patterns suggest that youth who think about racism and discrimination may vary in the extent that they come to endorse views about the nature of discrimination. Engaging in exploration does not necessarily lead to an awareness of racial barriers or endorsement of particular racial beliefs. In more recent discussions of his Nigrescence model, Cross (2001) allows for this distinction, stating that racial identity exploration may lead to the formation of different racial identity beliefs and that rather than a single ideal identity profile, there may be multiple sets of beliefs that are adaptive. The characteristics of the clusters also suggest that we cannot assume that strong group attachment is necessarily associated with perceptions of group stigma or racial barriers in the same ways (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Spencer et al., 2001). Social identity models do not account for this potential variation and often conflate an awareness of stigma and barriers with level of group identification (Crocker & Major,

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1989). Although the Idealized/Questioning and Buffering/Aware clusters both engaged in

some level of exploration, the nature of this process may vary considerably (e.g. source

of information, types of questions asked, how the discussion is engaged, critiques of

information received, interpretations and conclusions drawn), which may also contribute

to different associations with between racial identity exploration and critical race

consciousness. These aspects of exploration were not assessed in the present study but

should be considered in future research. Nevertheless, the current study provides an

important starting point for considering associations among racial identity beliefs, racial

identity exploration, and critical race consciousness.

Racial Cognition Profiles, Racial Discrimination and Adjustment

Cluster Variation in Perceptions of Racial Discrimination

The racial cognition variables composing the cluster groups have each been

associated with perceptions of racial discrimination in different ways. Having a strong

connection to one's racial group, believing others may not view Blacks positively and

engaging in identity exploration, for instance, have all been associated with more

frequent reports of racial discrimination (e.g. Cross, 1995; Sellers et al., 2006).

Accordingly, I examined variation across cluster groups in perceptions of racial

discrimination. While the Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning clusters had

similarly high levels of racial centrality, a quality associated with more frequent reports

of racial discrimination (e.g. Sellers et al., 2003), the former cluster reported significantly

higher levels of racial discrimination than did the latter. This may be partly explained by

the Buffering/Aware cluster's significantly lower levels of public regard relative to other

cluster groups, which also has been associated with more frequent reports of racial discrimination (e.g. Branscombe et al., 1999). The significantly higher levels of racial identity exploration among the Buffering/Aware cluster may also contribute to more frequent reports of racial discrimination. Recent research in racial identity development literatures suggest that processes associated with racial identity development (e.g. exploration) may have a unique influence on perceptions of racial discrimination, beyond the impact of racial identity beliefs, such as centrality (Seaton et al., 2009). Thus, youth who had explored their identities more (and specifically the role of racial discrimination in their lives) may have been more likely to recognize direct and subtle racial cues in the classroom and make race-based attributions around classroom interactions. Alternatively, given that the racial discrimination measure assessed race-based negative treatment in the classroom over the past year, it may be that among youth with strong, positive racial group connections, those who experienced more racial discrimination were more likely to develop low public regard beliefs and higher consciousness around the personal implications of societal racism (Buffering/Aware) than those experiencing less discrimination (Idealized/Questioning).

Interestingly, the Alienated/Disengaged cluster was not statistically different from the other two clusters in reported frequency of racial discrimination experiences. Taken together, the findings regarding associations between cluster group memberships and discrimination suggest that youth with lower and higher levels of racial centrality and higher or lower racial identity exploration may be similar in their racial discrimination perceptions. The findings, however, also raise the question of whether similar levels of racial discrimination perceptions across cluster groups may be a function of different

social-cognitive processes. In this case, the Alienated/Disengaged cluster reported low levels of public regard relative to the sample mean (and lower than the Idealized/Questioning cluster but higher than the Buffering/Aware cluster). While the Alienated/Disengaged cluster did not perceive that societal racism had personal implications for their life chances (indicated by the cluster's lower critical race consciousness), holding the general belief that others negatively perceive Blacks (low public regard) may relate to interpreting negative classroom/teacher experiences in terms of personal racial discrimination.

Alternatively, as racial discrimination experiences were those reported over the past year, it may be that some youth who experienced more classroom discrimination developed racial identity beliefs indicating low group connection, low group pride, and perceptions of lower public regard for Blacks. The cluster's lower racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness may suggest that the youth were less inclined to try to understand their personal racism experiences. The above reasoning includes reasonable speculations, but I am limited in my ability to confirm the reasoning due to the cross-sectional nature of the study. The findings do warrant raising questions, however, about variation in ways that racial discrimination may shape youths' race-related beliefs and cognitions.

Cluster Variation in Adjustment Outcomes

Previous research indicated direct associations between racial identity beliefs and both academic and psychological functioning (e.g. Wong et al., 2003) and positive associations between ethnic identity exploration and adjustment (Phinney et al., 2007. Accordingly, I examined differences in adjustment variables across cluster groups.

Although some research contends that being connected to a stigmatized racial group can undermine academic and psychological functioning (e.g. Crocker & Major, 1989; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), other research provides evidence that having a strong affiliation with a stigmatized group is not necessarily problematic and the ways in which individuals think about and experience race may have a greater influence on adjustment (e.g. D'Amato, 1993; O'Connor, 1997). More specifically, empirical studies including Black samples consistently find that when coupled with a strong, positive association with one's racial group, an awareness of racial barriers may actually facilitate youths' development of positive achievement beliefs and promote academic adjustment (e.g. Chavous et al., 2003; O'Connor, 1999; Sanders, 1997).

Findings from the present study support this position, demonstrating that racial group centrality, cognitively engaging the meaning and function of race as well as having an awareness of racial barriers can promote positive adjustment. Specifically, cluster groups who reported some combination of a strong, positive attachment to their racial group, racial exploration and critical race consciousness also reported more positive adjustment. To the contrary, youth composing the cluster group that was disconnected, had negative perceptions and were not cognitively engaging race, reported relatively low levels of both academic and psychological adjustment. In previous research examining racial identity profiles, cluster groups with positive and strong connections to their racial group but varied in levels of public regard (Buffering and Idealized clusters) both demonstrated positive adjustment (Chavous et al., 2003; Seaton, 2009a). Chavous and colleagues (2003) found, for instance, that among youth who reported a strong, positive group connection but low perceptions of racial subjugation, had more positive school

relevance attitudes, while youth who were positively connected but aware of racial subjugation reported higher rates of high school completion and college attainment.

Previous research has consistently demonstrated a positive association between certain racial identity beliefs and both academic and psychological adjustment. Higher levels of private regard and centrality, for instance, have been associated with better academic and psychological adjustment, across youth with higher or lower public regard (e.g. Chavous et al., 2003). Similarly, current findings suggest having a strong, positive sense of racial identity seems to promote positive adjustment regardless of one's beliefs about societal views of Blacks and racism (public regard and critical race consciousness). This is demonstrated by the comparably high levels of adjustment among the Idealized/Questioning and Buffering/Aware cluster groups in the present study, which share a strong and positive connection to their racial group, moderate to high levels of exploration but vary in their perceptions of racial subjugation and barriers. Also, engaging in racial identity exploration may be relatively more important for adjustment than holding specific beliefs about racial barriers or subjugation for this particular cross-section, age group and sample. The positive adjustment for the Idealized/Questioning cluster may signal that lower levels of race consciousness can be adaptive if developed as a result of one's personal exploration around race. In contrast, it is possible that youth with similarly optimistic beliefs might show more negative adjustment if they had not engaged in racial identity exploration. This cannot be definitely supported based on the present study, however, given that the relationships between racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness were not assessed over a period of time. Also, as the clusters were sample specific, it may be that in other ecological contexts, we might see

youth with optimistic societal racism views with both high identity exploration and low identity exploration

Cluster Variation in Associations of Racial Discrimination with Youth Adjustment

In addition to direct associations of cluster groups, discrimination and adjustment, I was also interested in whether racial cognitive patterns moderated the association of discrimination with adjustment. Racial identity research provides evidence that a strong racial group connection may serve as a protective factor in relation the negative impact of racial discrimination on African American adolescent academic and psychological adjustment (e.g., Chavous et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2003). Other research provides evidence that when experiencing racial discrimination, the congruence (or lack thereof) between individuals' beliefs and their experiences can play a significant role in how individuals are impacted by those experiences (e.g. Major et al., 2007). For instance, empirical studies indicate that while lower levels of public regard can be a psychological risk factor for experiencing more racial discrimination, but may also serve a protective role in relation to psychological and social adjustment (e.g., Caldwell et al., 2004; Sellers et al., 2006). Thus, it was expected that youth with a strong racial group connection, who also held less optimistic views about society's regard for Blacks and higher consciousness around societal racism, would show less negative academic and psychological adjustment when reporting higher levels of racial discrimination, relative to youth reporting lower racial centrality and holding more optimistic public regard and critical race consciousness views. This expectation was partially supported by findings in the present study.

The Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning clusters faired comparably well regarding the adjustment outcomes assessed. The Alienated/Disengaged cluster generally reported less positive adjustment than both the Buffering/Aware and Idealized/Questioning cluster groups. Although both the Idealized/Questioning and Alienated/Disengaged cluster groups both reported low levels of critical race consciousness, the Alienated cluster appeared to be at greater risk for relatively low adjustment and reduced adjustment when experiencing racial discrimination. This supports the position that a lack of racial awareness may be a risk factor when not also coupled with a strong, positive connection to one's racial group or racial identity exploration (e.g. Sanders, 1997). As previously discussed, the Idealized/Questioning cluster may benefit from a sense of support or shared experience gained through their group connections as well as from engaging in exploration, which may contribute to understanding or also reflect a sense of agency regarding their ability to understand. To the contrary, the lower levels of racial cognition reported by the Alienated/Disengaged cluster may not afford them the benefits associated with group connection or racial awareness.

The particularly strong moderation effects with academic outcomes (grade point average and school importance) is reasonable considering the measure of racial discrimination focused on school/classroom based experiences. Thus, the lack of moderation with psychological indicators may speak to the importance of examining different types of race-related experiences. The cluster groups may also vary in attributes not assessed in this study that may additionally explain how or why discrimination was not related to particular adjustment outcomes. For example, there may be within-cluster

differences in the impact of discrimination on psychological adjustment. Among youth in the Idealized/Questioning group, for instance, those who report having more positive intergroup contact or friendships may be more protected against the negative psychological associated with discrimination than youth in the same cluster with less positive intergroup contact.

I draw several comparisons between the present study and Carla O'Connor's (1997) study examining youth perceptions and reactions to social barriers. It is worth noting, however, that O'Connor's demonstration that a degree of critical consciousness can promote achievement and adjustment was conducted among youth from a lower-income context, unlike the youth in the present study who live in a suburban context and varied substantially in terms of their access to family, neighborhood and school resources. O'Connor's finding that an acute awareness of racial barriers as an important element of resilience may be particularly relevant for youth who experience a certain degree of ecological risk and may be less essential for youth in different ecological contexts. In the present study, the low critical race consciousness and high public regard reported by youth in the Idealized/Questioning cluster did not appear to be a risk factor at this stage and in relation to the adjustment outcomes assessed, as would be predicted based on previous racial identity research (e.g. Sellers et al., 2006). This may be at least partly explained by the relatively low levels of ecological risk factors, which may include negative racial experiences being a less salient feature of their personal experiences, suggested by the low levels of racial discrimination reported across the sample.

Considerations, Limitations, and Future Directions

The current study review and findings provide a foundation for fruitful exploration in future research, but there are also several limitations that should be addressed. Based on the findings, contributions and limitations of this study, two key areas of future research are suggested. Firstly, there is a need for further empirical examination of different racial cognitive processes among Black adolescents. Measures used in the present study were limited by the use of secondary data and thus the development of measures that even more precisely align with theoretical constructs is needed. Adolescents' ability to adaptively respond to race-based adversity may vary according to qualities of racial cognition that are not presently assessed.

For instance, the current data set allowed for examination of one important and understudied aspect of youth's racial identity exploration - exploration around racial discrimination, specifically. Given the prevalence of racial discrimination experiences among African American youth, identity exploration around these experiences may be a normative process for many of these youth. While racial/ethnic identity exploration measures more generally focus on youths' efforts to understanding the meaning of race in their lives, the current measure contributes a more specific understanding of ways youth examine experiences with racial discrimination. The data did not, however, allow for nuanced examination of other aspects of youths' racial identity (e.g., exploration around cultural assets or strengths). Also, the available items used to compose the measure of exploration, examined youth's active efforts, behaviors, and interactions with others to learn about their racial group. Again, while this type of exploration is an important aspect of adolescents' identity exploration, data were not available to allow for examination of non-behavioral forms of identity exploration, e.g., how youth process,

reflect, or internalize information about their racial identities, nor the complexity of their explorations around their identities. For instance, an individual may assimilate the information they obtain from others or they could also identify contradiction, critique information and reconcile these data in a manner that reflects a complex and well-informed process by which their understanding and beliefs are formed. Indeed, Erikson (1968), a seminal theorist of identity development critiqued the tendency to predominantly focus on behaviors and dialogue when examining identity exploration.

Another measurement consideration relates to critical race consciousness. The current measure assessed youths' awareness of societal racism as well an understanding that personal mobility – academically and occupationally - can be circumscribed by race. Racial consciousness literatures emphasize the importance of not only noticing racism but also having some understanding of how that phenomenon impacts one's self and racial group (e.g. Baldwin, 1981). Critical race theory further elaborates on the importance of an awareness of ways racism intertwine with all facets of life (institutional, social, interpersonal) or one's life circumstance (e.g. Charles, 2008; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The measure of critical race consciousness used in the present study captures the duality of awareness and assessment of barriers as well as beliefs regarding necessary personal behavior or action to account for those barriers (e.g., working twice as hard, being twice as good as Whites). This measure also compliments evaluations of public regard, yet is distinct conceptually. While public regard entails individuals' perceptions of perceived devaluation of Blacks by others, critical race consciousness reflects an awareness of systemic devaluation and structural barriers and their personal implications. This level of understanding may allow for some degree of

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abstraction through which an individual is able to make attributions beyond the self in terms of racial stigma, circumstance or experience (e.g. these occurrences are not necessarily personal). Thus, an individual reporting high levels of critical race consciousness may be better able to assess race as a social and structural phenomenon that helps to protect them from personalizing social status or circumstance linked to race or internalizing racial events or stigma.

There are, however, some limitations to measuring consciousness in this way. Higher scores on the critical race consciousness measure reflect an awareness of racial barriers and their personal implications, while the meaning of lower scores is less clear-cut. For instance, youth who strongly disagree with the idea that they must work twice as hard as Whites due to racism may disagree because they do not believe that racial barriers exist. Alternatively, an individual answering on the lower end of the scale may be aware of barriers associated with race but may not agree with the personal implications expressed in the items (e.g. they may not believe they have to work harder to overcome racial barriers or may not connect those barriers to their life chances). In spite of these measurement limitations, the relatively clear meaning of a higher score on this scale is supported by findings in previous research that awareness of barriers coupled with a sense of efficacy may be beneficial (e.g. O'Connor, 1997). Future work might consider different ways of capturing how youth connect their views of racial barriers to the self.

Methodology. Findings in this study raise questions about the directional influences between race-related experiences and race-related beliefs, suggesting that longitudinal methods may provide additional insight into the formation of cluster patterns identified here and their relationships with discrimination and adjustment. Social and

cognitive development frameworks indicate that adolescence represents an early phase of improvements in self and social awareness. Models of adolescent cognitive development also suggest that individuals increase in the complexity of cognition and cognitive processes over time (Piaget, 1967) and that the challenges and opportunities youth encounter can shape cognitive development (e.g. Masten, 2007). Examining changes and development in racial cognition using longitudinal approaches would allow for the assessment of changes in complexity over time as well as relationships between one's earlier experiences and later manifestations of cognition. For instance, future research may consider the possible risk or benefit associated with engaging these processes over time.

Erikson (1968) expressed that exploration was at the heart of adolescent transition and is thus a necessary component of personal growth. According to this frame, one may expect a waxing and waning of exploration processes; personal growth is not limited by age or time and thus may remain relevant throughout one's life course. Although racial identity development models would suggest that exploration processes would peak during middle adolescence (Pahl & Way, 2006; Phinney, 1992), recent research suggests that levels of exploration may be maintained for a longer period for Black adolescents (Pahl et al., 2006). As such, considerable shifts in levels of racial exploration as well as possible associations with racial awareness may occur well into adulthood. Indeed, identity exploration has been described as one of the most distinctive features of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Arnett & Brody, 2008; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). It has also been suggested that for African American emerging adults the process of determining who and what they want to be is further complicated by the need to reject

and overcome negative racial stereotypes (Arnett & Brody, 2008; Way, Santos, Niwa, & Kim-Gervey, 2008). Exploration processes are also thought to be particularly relevant during this period given the increased likelihood for African Americans to enter increasingly diverse social and academic settings (Arnett et al., 2008) and generally moving further beyond their immediate social enclaves (Phinney, 2006).

Racial cognitive developments may be highly variable with marked shifts occurring throughout adolescence and adulthood. For example, do individuals who compose the Idealized/Questioning cluster increase in critical race consciousness across time? Is that increase dependent upon maintaining a certain level of racial identity exploration? Will individuals in the Buffering/Aware cluster, who developed an awareness of racial barriers earlier in life, have an advantage as race and racial experiences become increasingly complex? Will their beliefs change? Are there some disadvantages to such an orientation later in life? Will the Alienated cluster continue to face challenges in terms of adjustment? Is cluster membership stable across time? As previously discussed, it is unclear from existing research what role racial cognitions may play over a period of time. Reasonable arguments can be made for both protective as well as detrimental effects of racial cognitive processes. Developmental psychopathology frameworks, for instance, suggest that there are multiple pathways to adaptive and maladaptive outcomes that are not necessarily contingent upon early experiences (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996). Future research should consider the multiple forces that influence the ways adolescents understand race and their racial experiences and the implications for long-term adjustment.

Conclusions

Based on the present and previous research, racial awareness can be an asset when coupled with a sense of connection and positive perceptions of one's racial (e.g. Cross, 1991; Sanders, 1997). The present study sought to develop a theoretical foundation for examining race-related cognition among adolescents and to explore whether these types of processes may benefit youth in terms of academic and psychological adjustment. While exploratory, this work provides theoretical and empirical support for the relevance constructs such as racial identity exploration and critical race consciousness have in understanding meaning-making processes related to race among African American adolescents as well as ways they may manage experiences with racial discrimination. Future research should further develop tools for assessing racial cognitive beliefs, attitudes, and characteristics, including measure development, longitudinal assessments and examining additional facets of racial cognition that may contribute to individual variation, such as differences in cognitive development characteristics.

Overall, I seek to develop a program of research to help us better understand ways African American adolescents make meaning of themselves and their experiences as well as how these understandings enhance or inhibit their ability to adapt and respond to the personal and social challenges they face. While my work focuses predominantly on African American youth, I contend that understanding resilience processes in this group can inform our understanding of adolescent resilience and development more broadly as well. I will continue to draw upon and integrate theoretical and empirical research from fields that soundly address the concerns of my research. I am specifically interested in how youth develop complex racial cognitions, exploring ways to help adolescents develop a broadly critical sense of self, their environments and people around them in

ways that promote adaptive academic, social and psychological functioning. I will also continue to draw from cultural ecological frameworks (e.g. Spencer et al., 1997). I am particularly interested in exploring a burgeoning theoretical model that has drawn from these frameworks and grown out of my dissertation research, which examines relationships between adaptive and maladaptive cognitive, behavioral and affective responses to adversity.

Table 1. *Means, Standard Deviations and Zero Order Correlations among Control, Predictor and Outcome Variables for the Sample*

Variable	Mean	SD	Sex	SES	Priv. Reg.	Pub. Reg.	Cen.	Racial Disc.	Racial Exp.	Racial Con.	GPA	Sch. Imp	Dep. Sym.	Self Est.	Gen. Eff..
1. Sex	1.50	.50	–												
2. SES	24.23	5.8	-.06	–											
4. Priv. Reg.	4.33	.58	.02	.12*	–										
5. Pub. Reg	2.98	.62	-.03	-.01	.10*	–									
6. Centrality	3.27	.64	-.15**	.12*	.35**	-.00	–								
7. Racial Disc.	1.43	.69	-.29**	-.03	-.30**	-.11**	.13*	–							
8. Racial Exp.	2.46	.71	-.08	.16**	.19**	-.12*	.30**	.13**	–						
9. Racial Con.	3.39	.88	-.09	.09	.21**	-.23**	.30**	.04	.20**						
10. GPA	2.81	.70	.25**	.14**	.21**	.01	.05	-.22**	.12*	.07	–				

11. Sch. Imp.	4.17	.68	**.15****	**.16****	**.46****	.05	**.10***	**-.40****	.03	**.18****	**.28****	_			
12. Dep. Sym.	1.35	.26	.01	**-.11***	**-.26****	**-.13***	-.07	**.12***	-.08	.03	-.18**	**-.26****	_		
13. Self-Est.	3.94	.88	-.07	-.02	**.22****	.02	.03	-.08	.09	.03	**.28****	**.11***	**-.43****	_	
14. Gen. Eff.	4.00	.67	**-.12***	.10	**.20****	-.03	.06	-.05	**.21****	-.02	**.28****	**.15****	**-.25****	**.37****	_

Note. +*p* < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. Priv.. Reg. (Private Regard); Pub. Reg. (Public Regard); Racial Disc. (School Based Racial Discrimination); Racial Exp. (Racial Identity Exploration); Racial Con. (Racial Consciousness); Sch. Imp. (School Importance); Dep. Sym. (Depressive Symptoms); Sefl-Est. (Self-Esteem); Gen. Eff. (General Efficacy)

Table 2

Fit Statistics for Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Alternative Models

Models	χ^2	df	χ^2 /df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
3-Factor	255.34	87	2.94	.90	.90	.05
3-Factor Alternative	169.71	74	2.29	.91	.94	04
2-Factor	309.06	76	4.01	.79	.85	.06
2-Factor Alternative	87.95	34	2.58	.90	.94	.04
2-Factor Alternative	35.54	13	2.72	.93	.97	.04

Note. Df = degrees of freedom; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative
Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation; *n* = 385

Table 3

Model Fit Statistics for Latent Class Analyses of Racial Cognition Scales (N=385)

Model	BIC(LL)	L²	*df*	Bootstrap *p*-value	% Reduction in L²	Maximum BVR
1-class	5310.6	936.9	370	.00	—	47.14
2-class	5230.4	821.0	364	.22	12.3	11.99
3-class	5230.7	785.6	358	.43	16.2	1.44
4-class	5256.9	776.1	352	.43	17.1	.91

Note. BIC(LL) = Log-likelihood based Bayesian information criterion, L² = Likelihood ratio chi-square, BVR = Bivariate residuals

Table 4

Raw Means (Standard Deviations) and Standardized Means of Racial Cognition Scales by Cluster Group (N=385)

Racial Cognition Variable	Alienated/Disengaged (Alienated/D)	Buffering/Aware (Buffering/A)	Idealized/Questioning (Idealized/Q)
Raw Means			
Centrality	2.95(.54)$_B$***$_I$***	3.73(.56)$_A$***	3.59(.53)$_A$***
Private Regard	4.01(.56)$_B$***$_I$***	4.67(.32)$_A$***	4.81(.20)$_A$***
Public Regard	2.96(.51)$_B$***$_I$***	2.59(.52)$_A$***$_I$***	3.68(.48)$_A$***$_B$***
Racial Identity Exploration	-0.27$_B$***$_I$*	0.53$_A$***$_I$*	0.04$_A$*$_B$*
Critical Race Consciousness	3.07(.74)$_B$***	4.18(.66)$_A$***$_I$***	3.13(.84)$_B$***
Standardized Means			
Centrality	-0.48$_B$***$_I$***	0.72$_A$***	0.50$_A$***
Private Regard	-0.56$_B$***$_I$***	0.59$_A$***	0.82$_A$***
Public Regard	-0.37$_B$***$_I$***	-0.65$_A$***$_I$***	1.13$_A$***$_B$***
Racial Identity Exploration	-0.27$_B$***$_I$*	0.53$_A$***$_I$*	0.04$_A$*$_B$*
Critical Race Consciousness	-0.29$_B$***	0.69$_A$***$_I$***	-0.21$_B$***

Note. Subscript letters denote significant mean differences among cluster groups. A significant difference from the Alienated/Disengaged cluster is indicated by a subscript "A", Buffering/Aware by "B" and Idealized/Questioning by "I." $+p < .10$, $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

Table 5

Means of Adjustment Variables and Racial Discrimination by Cluster Group

	Alienated/Disengaged		Buffering/Aware		Idealized/Questioning	
	M	SD	M	SE	M	SD
Depressive Symptoms	1.37	.28	1.34	0.23	1.31	.24
Self-Esteem	3.83 $_B$**	.74	4.08 $_A$**	0.74	4.04	.75
General Self-Efficacy	3.86 $_B$**$_I$**	.66	4.17 $_A$**	0.60	4.13 $_A$**	.70
School Importance	-.174 $_B$***$_I$***	.69	.189 $_A$***	.62	.206 $_A$***	.67
Grade Point Average	2.69 $_B$***$_I$**	.71	2.99 $_A$***	.66	2.94 $_A$**	.55
Racial Discrimination	1.43 $_I$+	.72	1.54 $_I$**	.72	1.28 $_{A+B}$**	.54

Note. Subscript letters denote significant mean differences among cluster groups. A significant difference from the Alienated/Disengaged cluster is indicated by a subscript "A", Buffering/Aware by "B" and Idealized/Questioning by "I." $+p < .10$, $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .00$.

Table 6

General Linear Model Analysis of Variance Predicting School Importance from Racial Discrimination, Racial Cognition and SES (N = 385)

Source	df	B(SE)	Type III Sum of Squares	Partial Eta Squared	F	p
Corrected Model	6		47.521	.27	23.328	.000
Intercept	1	4.08(.15)	310.229	.70	913.749	.000
SES	1	.010(.01)	1.254	.010	3.694	.055
Racial Discrimination	1	-.231(.13)	11.513	.082	33.909	.000
Cluster Group	2	--	9.756	.071	14.368	.000
Cluster Group x Racial Discrimination	2	--	3.811	.029	5.613	.004
Error	378		128.336			
Total	385		6848.778			
Corrected Total	384		175.856			

Table 7

General Linear Model Analysis of Variance Predicting Grade Point Average from
Racial Discrimination, Racial Cognition and SES (N = 385)

Source	*df*	*B(SE)*	*Type III Sum of Squares*	*Partial Eta Squared*	*F*	*p*
Corrected Model	6		19.26	.11	7.541	.000
Intercept	1	2.65(.17)	129.17	.45	303.495	.000
SES	1	.010(.01)	1.32	.008	3.105	.079
Racial Discrimination	1	-.153(.15)	3.04	.019	7.153	.008
Cluster Group	2	--	5.66	.035	6.660	.001
Cluster Group x Racial Discrimination	2	--	2.166	.014	2.545	.080
Error	368		156.619			
Total	375		3149.791			
Corrected Total	374		175.877			

Table 8

General Linear Model Analysis of Variance Predicting General Self-Efficacy from Racial Discrimination, Racial Cognition and SES (N = 385)

Source	df	B(SE)	Type III Sum of Squares	Partial Eta Squared	F	p
Corrected Model	6		9.445	.055	3.689	.001
Intercept	1	3.94(.17)	291.067	.64	682.066	.000
SES	1	.007(01)	.687	.004	1.611	.205
Racial Discrimination	1	-.034(.15)	.147	.001	.346	.557
Cluster Group	2	--	7.271	.043	8.519	.000
Cluster Group x Racial Discrimination	2	--	.003	.000	.004	.996
Error	378		161.309			
Total	385		6292.813			
Corrected Total	384		170.754			

Table 9

General Linear Model Analysis of Variance Predicting Self-Esteem from Racial Discrimination, Racial Cognition and SES (N = 385)

Source	df	B(SE)	Type III Sum of Squares	Partial Eta Squared	F	p
Corrected Model	6		7.536	.035	2.303	.034
Intercept	1	4.18(.19)	333.781	.618	612.018	.000
SES	1	-.007(.01)	.597	.003	.296	.296
Racial Discrimination	1	-.220(.17)	1.316	.006	2.413	.121
Cluster Group	2	--	4.956	.023	4.544	.011
Cluster Group x Racial Discrimination	2	--	.620	.003	.568	.567
Error	378		206.153			
Total	385		6184.760			
Corrected Total	384		213.689			

Table 10

*General Linear Model Analysis of Variance Predicting Depressive Symptoms from
Racial Discrimination, Racial Cognition and SES (N = 385)*

Source	*df*	*B(SE)*	*Type III Sum of Squares*	*Partial Eta Squared*	*F*	*p*
Corrected Model	6		2.291	.089	6.133	.000
Intercept	1	1.43(.06)	40.399	.632	648.951	.000
SES	1	-.004(.00)	.205	.009	3.286	.071
Racial Discrimination	1	.07(.06)	.044	.042	16.426	.000
Cluster Group	2	--	.085	.004	.679	.508
Cluster Group x Racial Discrimination	2	--	.044	.002	.354	.702
Error	378		23.531			
Total	385		730.758			
Corrected Total	384		25.822			

Table 11

*Parameter estimates for ANCOVA with Racial Discrimination X Cluster Group associated with School Importance*

	B	*SE*	*p*
Intercept	4.08	.15	.00
SES	.01	.01	.05
Racial Discrimination	-.23	.13	.08
Alienated/Disengaged (Cluster 1)	-.30	.09	.00
Buffering/Aware (Cluster 2)	.04	.09	.00
Idealized/Questioning (Cluster 3)	.27	.09	.02
Alienated/Disengaged * Racial Discrimination	-.28	.14	.04
Buffering/Aware * Racial Discrimination	.02	.15	.89
Idealized/Questioning * Racial Discrimination	.19	.15	.22

Table 12

Parameter estimates for ANCOVA with Racial Discrimination X Cluster Group associated with Grade Point Average

	B	*SE*	*p*
Intercept	2.65	.17	.00
SES	.01	.01	.08
Racial Discrimination	-.15	.15	.29
Alienated/Disengaged (Cluster 1)	-.20	.10	.04
Buffering/Aware (Cluster 2)	.08	.11	.43
Idealized/Questioning (Cluster 3)		.10	.06
Alienated/Disengaged * Racial Discrimination	-.14	.11	.03
Buffering/Aware * Racial Discrimination	.11	.19	.51
Idealized/Questioning * Racial Discrimination	.13	.17	.48

Figure 1. Racial Cognition Cluster Groups (Standardized Scores)
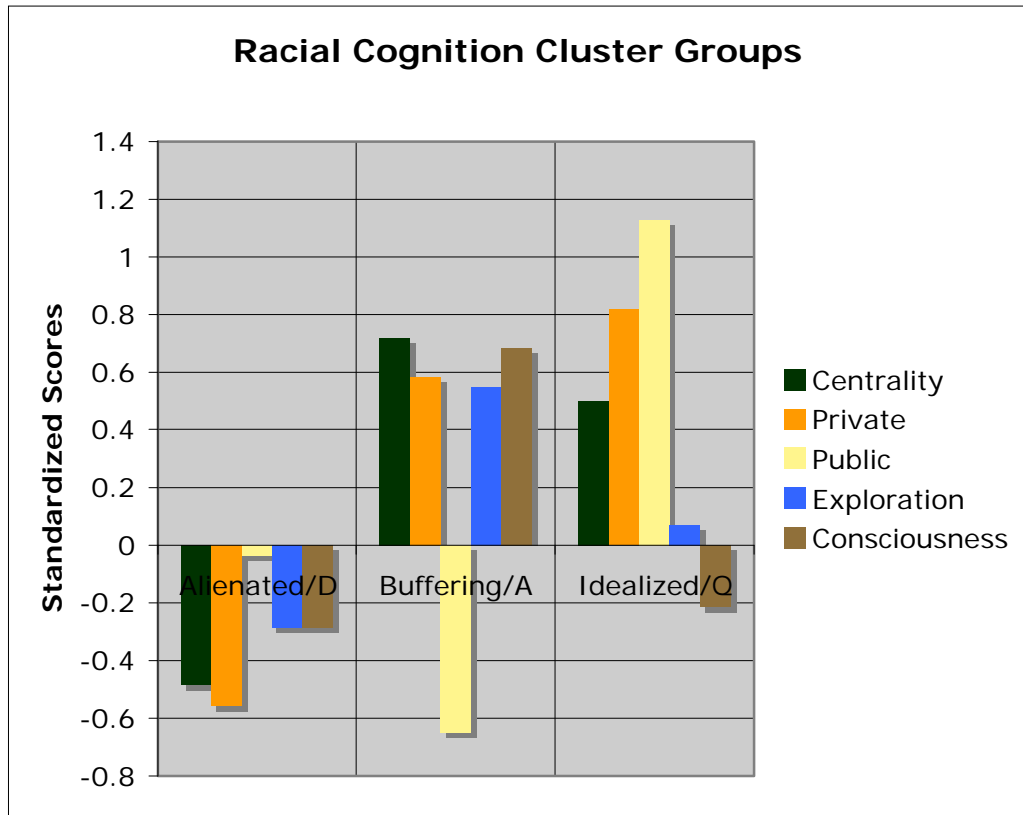
Note. Cluster 1: Alienated/Disengaged (*N* = 214), Cluster 2: Buffering/Aware
(*N* = 102), Cluster 3: Idealized/Questioning (*N* = 69)

Figure 2. Racial Cognition Cluster Groups (Raw Scores)
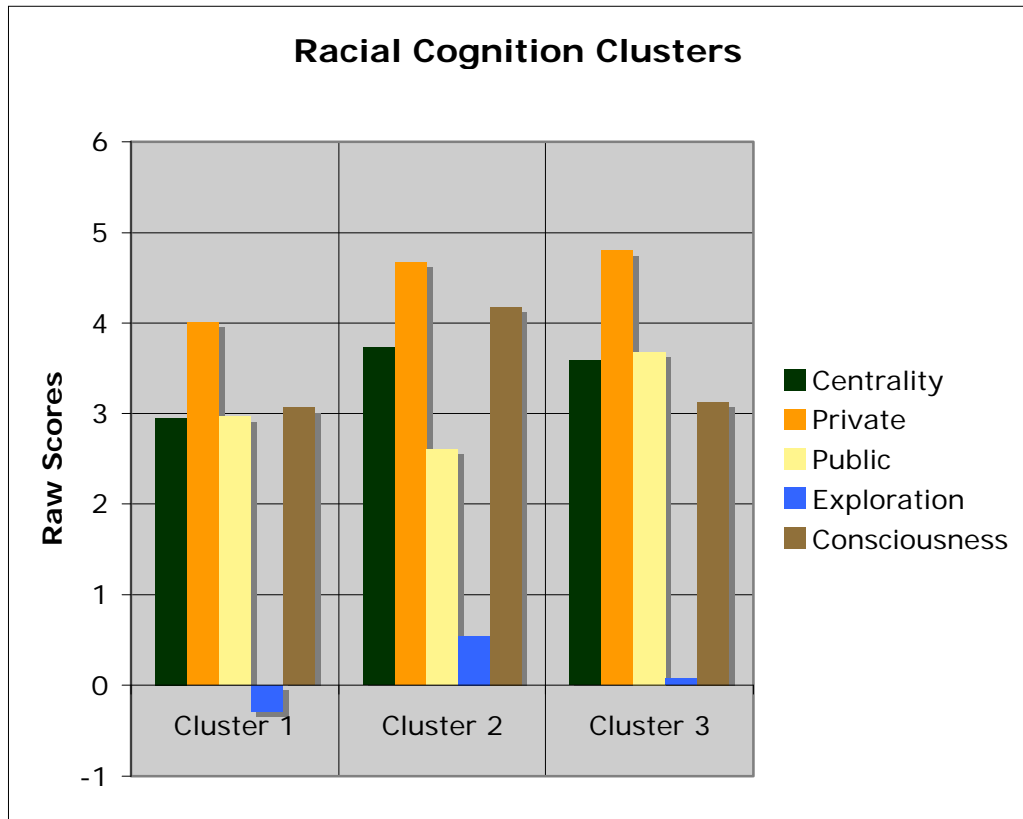
Racial Cognition Clusters

Note. Cluster 1: Alienated/Disengaged (*N* = 214), Cluster 2: Buffering/Aware (*N* = 102), Cluster 3: Idealized/Questioning (*N* = 69). Racial Identity Exploration is a standardized variable.

Figure 3. Interaction Plot for Racial Discrimination X Cluster Predicting School Importance
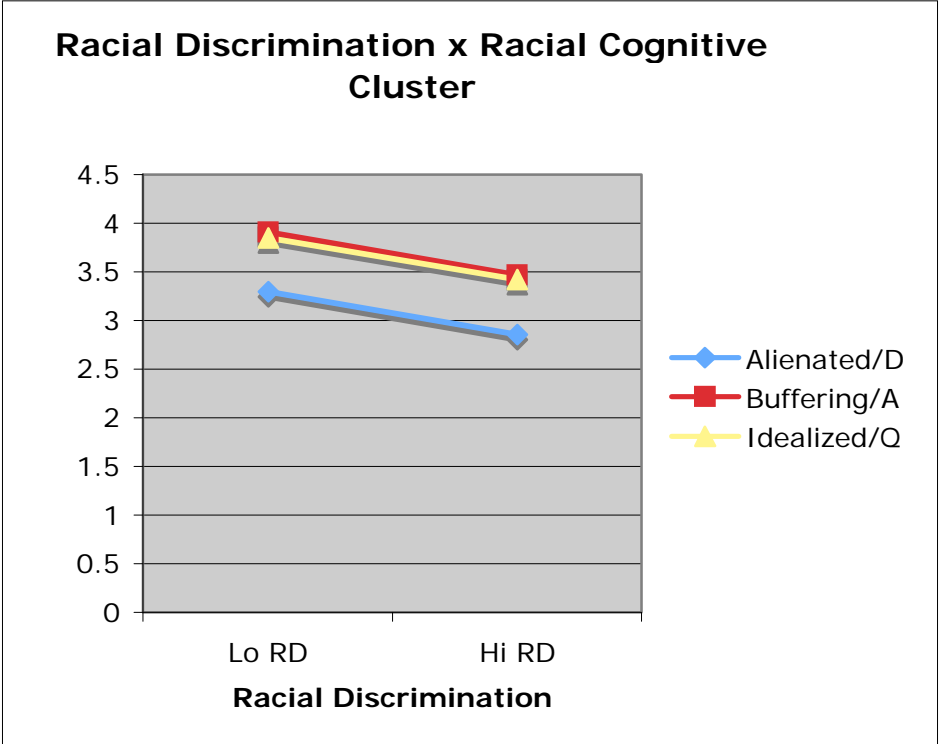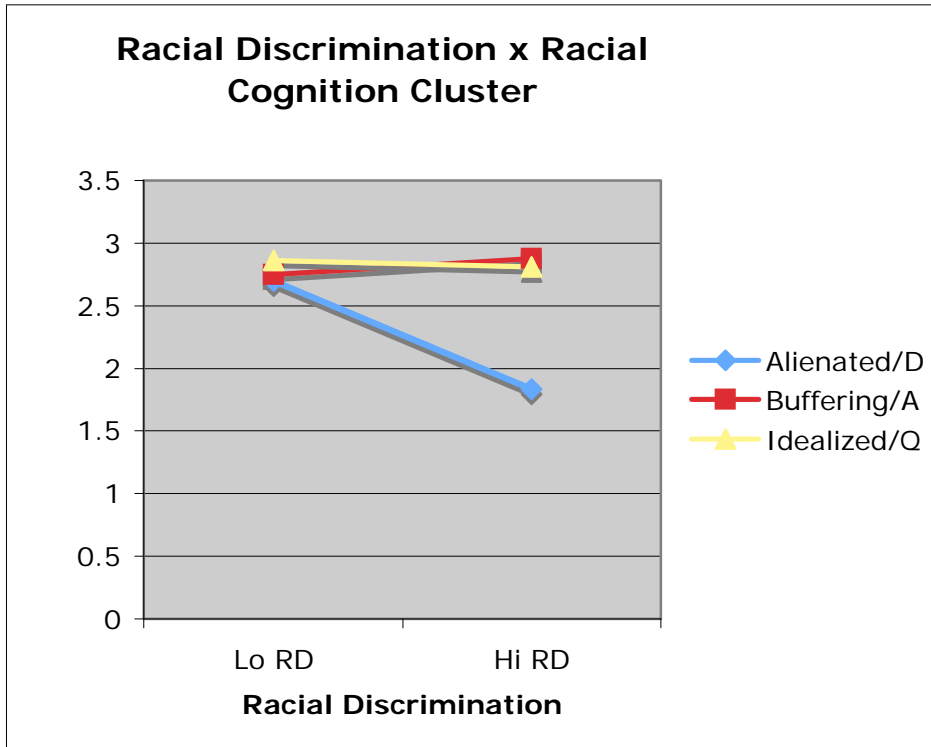
Figure 4. Interaction Plot for Racial Discrimination X Cluster Predicting Grade Point
Average

Racial Identity Beliefs

Centrality

1 =strongly disagree 2 =disagree 3 =neither agree nor disagree 4 =agree 5 =strongly agree
Overall being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself *
Being Black is an important part of my self-image
I have strong attachments to other Blacks[4i]
Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships *
Being Black is an important reflection of who I am

Private Regard

1 =strongly disagree 2 =disagree 3 =neither agree nor disagree 4 =agree 5 =strongly agree
I feel good about other Black people[5]
I am happy that I am Black
I feel that Blacks have made major advancements and accomplishments.
I often regret that I am Black *
Blacks contribute less to society that others[6]*

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[4] Actual MIBI item reads: "I have a strong attachment to other Black people"

[5] Actual MIBI item reads: "I feel good about Black people"

[6] Actual MIBI item reads: "I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society"

Public Regard

1 =strongly disagree 2 =disagree 3 =neither agree nor disagree 4 =agree 5 =strongly agree
In general, others think that Black people are unworthy *
In general, others respect Black people
Most people consider Blacks to be less effective than other racial groups[7] *
Overall Blacks are considered good by others

Note. Items noted with an asterisk (*) have been reverse coded. Original scales developed by Sellers and colleagues (1997, 1998). The MIBI scales were still under development when originally included as part of the MADICS study, thus some items from the final versions were not included or item wording differed or was adapted for use in the MADICS study. Items with modified wording are listed in footnotes. The Centrality scale is composed of 5-items, $\alpha = .70$, the Private Regard scale is composed of 5-items, $\alpha = .77$, and the Public Regard scale is composed of 4-items, $\alpha = .58$.

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[7] Actual MIBI item reads: "Most people consider Blacks, on average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups"

Racial Identity Exploration Scale

1 =Almost Never 2 =Less than once a month 3 =1-3 times a month 4 =About once a week 5 =A few times a week 6 =Almost everyday
How often do you talk in the family about discrimination you may face because of your race? How often do you talk in the family about your racial background?
1 =Not at all true 2 =Not very true 3 =Sort of true 4 =Very true I talk with my friends about our racial/ethnic group and how it affects our lives.
1 =Almost Never 2 =Rarely 3 =Occasionally 4 =Frequently 5 =Almost Always How often do you study the traditions or history of people with your racial background?

Note. MADICS Primary Investigators created the individuals items used to compose the Racial Identity Exploration scale. Some of these individual items were used as part of a study conducted by Chatman and colleagues (2001). The scale is composed of 4-items, $\alpha = .71$. The original scale scales for each item is listed for reference, but all items were standardized to account for differences in scale ranges and anchors.

Critical Race Consciousness Scale

1 =strongly disagree 2 =disagree 3 =neither agree nor disagree 4 =agree 5 =strongly agree
Because I am Black, I probably won't get ahead if I do not go far enough in school.
Because I am Black, I must take advantage of all opportunities that come my way.
In order to get ahead, I will almost always have to work harder than Whites.

Note. MADICS Primary Investigators created the individuals items used to compose the Critical Race Consciousness scale. The scale is composed of 3-items, $\alpha = .62$.

School-Based Racial Discrimination Scale

> At school, how often do you feel…
>
> 1 =never 2 =a couple of times each year 3 =a couple of times each month 4 =once or twice each week 5 =each day
> …like teachers call on your less often than they call on other kids because of your race?
> …teachers grade you harder than they grade other kids because of your race?
> …like you get disciplined more harshly by teachers than other kids because of your race?
> …that teachers think you are less smart than you really are because of your race?
>
> 1 =never 2 =once or twice 3 =three or four times 4 =five or six times 5 =more than six times
>
> How often have you felt that teachers/counselors discourage you from taking certain classes because of your race?

Note. MADICS Primary Investigators created the individuals items used to compose the School-based Racial Discrimination scale. The scale is composed of 5-items, $\alpha = .88$. The School-based racial discrimination items from 8th grade used as part of the additional background description of clusters use the same items as the 11th grade version described above. The 8th grade scale was composed of 5-items, $\alpha = .87$.

School Importance Scale

> 1 =strongly agree 2 =agree 3 =neither agree nor disagree 4 =disagree 5 =strongly disagree
> I have to do well in school if I want to be a success in life. *
> Schooling is not so important for kids like me.
> Getting a good education is the best way to get ahead in life for the kids in my neighborhood. *
> 1 =not very likely 2 =a little likely 3 =somewhat likely 4 =very likely
> Suppose you don't get a good education in high school. How likely is it that you will end up with the kind of job you want? *

Note. Items with an asterisk (*) are reverse coded. Original items were created by Midgley and colleagues (1993). The scale is composed of 3-items, $\alpha = .64$.

Child Depression Inventory

Please pick out the sentences that best describe feelings and ideas you have had in the <u>past two weeks</u>.
I am sad. 1 =once in awhile 2 =many times 3 =all the time
I feel like… * 1 =nothing will ever work out for me 2 =I'm not sure if things will work out for me 3 =things will work out for me ok
I do… 1 =most things ok 2 =many things wrong 3 =everything wrong
I have fun 1 =in many things 2 =in some things 3 =in nothing
I am worthless… * 1 =all the time 2 =many times 3 =once in awhile
I … 1 = think about bad things happening to me once in a while 2 =worry that bad things will happen to me 3 =am sure that terrible things will happen to me
I feel like… * 1 =I hate myself 2 =I do not like myself 3 =I like myself

I think that… * 1 =all bad things are my fault 2 =many bad things are my fault 3 =bad things are usually not my fault
I feel like crying… * 1 =every day 2 =many days 3 =once in awhile
Things bother me… * 1 =all the time 2 =many times 3 =once in a while
I like being with people 1 =all of the time 2 =some of the time 3 =only once in awhile
Usually… * 1 =I can not make up my mind 2 =it is hard to make up my mind about things 3 =I make up my mind about things easily
I think… 1 =I look okay 2 =there are some bad things about my looks 3 =I look ugly
I find that… * 1 =I have to push myself all the time to do my schoolwork 2 =I have to push myself many times to do my schoolwork 3 =doing schoolwork is not a big problem
I have trouble sleeping… * 1 =every night 2 =many nights 3 =almost never
I am tired… 1 =once in a while 2 =many days 3 =all the time
I find that… * 1 =most days I do not feel like eating 2 =many days I do not feel like eating 3 =I eat pretty well

I worry about aches and pains… 1 =almost never 2 =many times 3 =all the time
I feel alone… 1 =almost never 2 =many times 3 =all the time
I … * 1 =never have fun at school 2 =have fun at school once in a while 3 =have fun at school many times
I feel… 1 =I have plenty of friends 2 =I have some friends but I wish I had more 3 =I do not have any friends
My school work 1 =is alright 2 =is not as good as before 3 =is bad in subjects it used to be good in
I think… * 1 =I can never be as good as other kids 2 =I can be as good as other kids if I want to 3 =I am just as good as other kids
I feel like… * 1 =nobody really loves me 2 =I am not sure if anybody loves me 3 =I am sure that somebody loves me

Note. Items noted with an asterisk (*) have been reverse coded. Items were created by Kovacs (1992).
The scale is composed of 24-items, α = .85.

Self-Esteem Scale

1 =almost never 2 =once in awhile 3 =sometimes 4 =often 5 =almost always
How often do you wish you were different than you are? *
How often would you like to change lots of things about yourself if you could? *R
How often are you pretty sure about yourself?
1 =not at all happy 2 =not very happy 3 =happy 4 =very happy 5 =extremely happy
How happy are you with the kind of person you are?
How happy are you with the way you act?

Note. Items noted with an asterisk (*) have been reverse coded. The self-esteem items are part of the General Self-Worth subscale of the Perceived Self-Competence scale developed by Harter (1985). The scale is composed of 5-items, $\alpha = .79$.

General Self-Efficacy Scale

How often are you very good at…
1 =almost never 2 =once in awhile 3 =sometimes 4 =often 5 =almost always
…figuring out problems and planning how to solve them?
…carrying out the plans you make for solving problems?
…bouncing back quickly from bad experiences?
…learning from your mistakes?

Note. The general self-efficacy items were originally developed by Bandura, Cook and Eccles for the MacArthur Network on Successful Adolescent Development and published as part of a study conducted by Bartko and Eccles (2003). The scale is composed of 4-items, $\alpha = .74$.

Racial Attitudes and Experiential Items (Background Descriptions)

1 = strongly agree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree In general, YOU prefer to hang out with kids of your own race In general, your PARENTS prefer that you hang out with kids of own race
1 = none of them 2 = a few of them 3 = about half of them 4 = most of them 5 = all of them How many of the friends that you spend most of your time with … …are Black? …are White?
1 = not at all 2 = a little 3 = somewhat 4 = very How important is your racial or ethnic background to the daily life of your family?
1 =not at all true 2 =a little true of me 3 =somewhat true of me 4 =very true of me 5 =extremely true of me People of my race/ethnicity are very supportive of each other
1 =not at all happy 2 =not very happy 3 =happy 4 =very happy 5 =extremely happy Racial discrimination will prevent me from getting the education I want

Note. Items noted with an asterisk (*) have been reverse coded. The self-esteem items are part of the General Self-Worth subscale of the Perceived Self-Competence scale developed by Harter (1985). The scale is composed of 5-items, α = .79. Earlier experiences with school-based racial discrimination, included as part of the background description of the cluster groups, are identical to the 11th grade measure and thus is noted and described as part of that measure above.

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