

## **Ethnic identity typologies among African-American early adolescents**

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Paper to be presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Child Development, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 19-22, 2001. This research was supported by grants to Jacquelynne S. Eccles and Arnold J. Sameroff from the MacArthur Network on Successful Adolescent Development in High Risk Settings (Chair: R. Jessor) and the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development. The authors would like to acknowledge the following people for their assistance on this project, thereby facilitating this research (listed alphabetically): Todd Bartko, Elaine Belansky, Diane Early, Kari Fraser, Leslie Gutman, Yael Harlap, Katie Jodl, Ariel Kalil, Linda Kuhn, Alice Michael, Melanie Overby, Steve Peck, Rob Roeser, Sherri Steele, Erika Taylor, Cynthia Winston, and Carol Wong.

Ethnic identity has been described broadly as "one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership" (Rotheram & Phinney, 1987, p. 13). Implicit in this definition is the idea that ethnic identities entail multiple dimensions, but this idea has only recently begun to receive widespread recognition (Cross, 1991; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Still, even those researchers who have approached the study of ethnic identity from this multidimensional perspective have tended to take a variable-oriented approach, limiting their focus to one or two dimensions at a time and treating them as separate, distinct variables. Although the findings from such studies have helped to advance our understanding of the ways in which the separate dimensions of ethnic identities are related to various behaviors and psychosocial characteristics, the overall role of these identities in individuals' everyday lives remains unclear. In the present research, we take a more person-oriented approach, focusing on multidimensional, ethnic identity typologies and their correlates. Specifically, we explore the simultaneous configuration of multiple ethnic identity dimensions within individuals, and the patterns of similar configurations across individuals.

#### Variable-oriented approaches to studying ethnic identity

Perhaps the two most frequently utilized measures of ethnic identity are the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM, Phinney, 1992) and the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). A more recent measure, the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1997) has been increasingly used in studies among African Americans. Each of these three measures is comprised of a number of subscales presumed to assess separate but related constructs, thus they are all inherently multidimensional. Still, even among those studies testing similar hypotheses regarding ethnic identity, the choice of specific

measures and subscales varies. As a result, such studies often yield conflicting, or at least, inconsistent, findings, making it difficult to generate overall conclusions regarding the general role of ethnic identity in individuals' lives.

For example, many studies have tested hypotheses related to the concept of oppositional ethnic identity, a phenomenon wherein black students who identify strongly with their racial group are resistant to doing well in school because it is considered to be the domain of whites (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Thus, oppositional identity theory would predict ethnic identity to be negatively related to academic achievement among African Americans. Research by Taylor and his colleagues (Taylor, Casten, Flickinger, Roberts, & Fulmore, 1994), however, in a direct test of this hypothesis, indicated that ethnic identity was positively related to achievement among African-American, public high school students but not among their Catholic school counterparts. Similarly, Arroyo and Zigler (1995) found that ethnic identity had small but positive, bivariate relations with academic achievement attitudes among a sample of black high school students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The conflicting findings described above, however, are reconciled by the fact that each of these three studies operationalized ethnic identity in very different ways. Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) ethnographic study was based on inferences regarding the strength with which individuals identified with being African-American, whereas Taylor et al. (1994) measured the degree to which individuals had explored the meaning of being African-American for their sense of self. Arroyo and Zigler (1995) employed the CSES, but revealed positive relations with achievement attitudes for only two of the subscales. Specifically, among African-American students, those who reported that race was an important part of their self-concept (Identity subscale) and that they were worthy members of their racial group (Membership subscale) were also likely to have

positive attitudes toward academic achievement. Nonetheless, although the conflicting findings are reconciled, their integration toward an overall conclusion is not particularly useful because the three studies measured different aspects of ethnic identity.

Interpreting the extant research on the role of ethnic identity in psychological adjustment among African Americans is similarly problematic. Much of the early work linking ethnic identity to psychological adjustment among African Americans made faulty assumptions, based largely on researchers' tendency to make inferences regarding ethnic identity when their studies only included measures of personal identity, or vice versa (for a review, see Cross, 1991). Although contemporary researchers include separate measures of personal and ethnic identity, there has been little overlap in the specific dimensions of ethnic identity that were studied. For example, in the study by Arroyo and Zigler (1995), the importance African-American adolescents attached to their ethnic group membership was positively related to self-efficacy beliefs but unrelated to anxiety and depression. In contrast, another study (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998) failed to reveal any significant relation between the importance attached to ethnicity and psychological adjustment as indicated by self-esteem. Rather, the affective component of the MIBI—private regard, or the esteem associated with one's ethnic group—was positively related to personal self-esteem, but only among those individuals for whom ethnicity was an important part of the self-concept (i.e., high centrality).

Indeed, Rowley et al. (1998) have argued that the research regarding the relation between ethnic identity and self-esteem, in particular, remains inconclusive because researchers have focused on dimensions of ethnic identity that are not conceptually relevant to personal self-esteem. That is, because self-esteem is an affectively-based construct, it is more likely to be related to the affective component of ethnic identity as opposed to, for example, cognitive

endorsements of one's racial group membership. While such a position is logically sound, it does not explain the positive relations that have occurred between ethnic identity importance and evaluations of the self (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995; Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994). Moreover, other studies have examined the relation between psychological adjustment and other dimensions of ethnic identity, such as ethnic identity exploration and commitment (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990), and have yielded positive relations. Thus, as is the case with research on ethnic identity and academic achievement, an integrative conclusion regarding the role of ethnic identity in African Americans' psychological adjustment is likewise difficult to obtain.

#### Person-oriented approaches to studying ethnic identity

We take the position that a more person-oriented approach to studying ethnic identity may be useful in providing a clearer, more comprehensive picture than that provided by the variable-oriented approaches described above. People are likely to be characterized at any given point in time, for example, by the simultaneous occurrences of some level of importance, affective regard, and ideology associated with their ethnic group membership. Moreover, it is likely that people can be categorized into different types of ethnic identification, based on similar patterns of multiple configurations across individuals. For example, some individuals may be proud of their ethnic group, consider it an important aspect of how they define themselves, and believe that they and the other members of their ethnic group should behave in accordance with the group's collective interests; perhaps other individuals, at the other extreme, are not so proud, do not consider ethnicity an important aspect of the self, and do not endorse collective action. These different types of ethnically identified individuals, and the types that fall in between these two extremes, are also likely to systematically differ from one another on other psychological and behavioral indicators.

We base the assumptions above on both our own previous work and other person-oriented approaches in the literature. We conducted in-depth interviews among African-American youth (Overby, Chatman, Malanchuk, & Vida, 2000), in which one of the major probes regarded what it means to be black or African-American. The youth in our study responded to these probes in diverse ways. Many gave responses that reflected pride in their racial heritage and the challenges they might face because of their race; some stressed the importance of learning more about their heritage and cultural differences between African Americans and other groups. Finally, many stressed the importance of being seen as an individual, often relegating race and ethnicity to the position of a descriptive attribute in their personal identities. Importantly, individual respondents generally expressed several of these positions, and some even expressed ambivalence. For example, some expressed pride in the accomplishments of African Americans, but denied that race or ethnicity had any importance in defining who they were as individuals. The complexity of such ethnic identity profiles suggests that the relation between any one of these dimensions of ethnic identity and any given outcome provides very little information regarding how ethnic identity works overall.

Consistent with our argument that person-oriented approaches to studying ethnic identity are necessary, Cross (1991) has argued persistently that “there is no one way to be black” (p. 149). Likewise, Sellers (1993) has issued a “call to arms” for those studying black identity, imploring that they consider this diversity in their research. Thus, many contemporary researchers of ethnic identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1990, 1994; Landrine & Klonoff, 1994; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Sellers et al., 1997, 1998) have attempted to include measures of ethnic identity content, in terms of specific attributes, behaviors, or ideology that individuals attach to their ethnic group membership. These studies have illustrated that individuals vary

greatly with regard to the subjective meanings they attach to their ethnic group membership. Moreover, subjective meanings are not systematically related to other dimensions of ethnic identity, such as importance or centrality, suggesting that there may be multiple patterns of multidimensional ethnic identification—or ethnic identity typologies.

#### A framework for identifying ethnic identity typologies: Social and cultural embeddedness

Given the many ways in which ethnic identity has been both conceptualized and operationalized in the literature (for reviews, see Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1990; Sellers et al., 1998), identifying comprehensive typologies can be quite cumbersome. Therefore, we simplify this task by focusing first on two dimensions that appear to be consensual throughout this vast literature: Importance and pride. Almost all studies of ethnic identity include both some assessment of the importance to the self that individuals attach to their ethnic group membership and their affective orientation toward that membership. The other dimensions that researchers have focused on vary greatly, but two common themes across these diverse foci appear to be some consideration of culture or heritage, and of the negative social experiences of African Americans relative to other ethnic groups, particularly European Americans.

For example, the Affirmation and Belonging subscale of Phinney's MEIM (1992) assesses both the importance attached to and the affective orientation toward one's ethnic group membership, as well as the extent to which individuals feel connected to the group, its members, and its traditions. Other researchers have explored dimensions similar to this last one, such as having a sense of common fate with other members of one's ethnic group (Allen, 1993; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Oyserman et al., 1995). Studies including such measures have indicated that the consideration of some aspect of ethnicity as culture is important in that it is often related, in different ways than are importance and pride, to various outcomes. In addition, some researchers

have distinguished between ethnic identities and ethnic *minority* identities (Hutnik, 1991; Ogbu, 1978; Oyserman et al., 1995), the latter being based on the recognition by individuals that their ethnic group and its members have been systematically oppressed or otherwise socially disadvantaged. Likewise, many researchers of black identity, in particular, have argued that the historical relationship between blacks and whites in the United States must always be taken into consideration when studying ethnic identity among blacks (e.g., Sellers et al., 1998). Thus, in addition to culture, consideration of the social experiences deriving from one's ethnic group membership appears to be an important dimension of ethnic identity among African Americans.

In sum, we believe that most individuals are likely to express some level (or lack thereof) of importance and pride attached to their ethnic group membership. Additionally, however, this sense of pride and importance may be embedded in both cultural and social meaning systems, wherein individuals have some sense of ethnic cultural ties and beliefs regarding ethnicity-related social experiences, respectively, attached to that group membership. Accordingly, we take a person-oriented approach to studying ethnic identity in the present research, using cluster analytic procedures to explore multidimensional ethnic identity typologies, based on the following dimensions of ethnic identity: 1) The importance attached to being African American; 2) the extent to which a sense of pride is attached to being African American; 3) the sense of cultural connection with being African-American; and 4) the belief that being black may present social challenges.

This research is mainly exploratory in nature, and thus we do not have any specific hypotheses regarding the number and type of clusters that might emerge from our analyses. Based on our knowledge of the ethnic identity literature and our own previous work in this area, however, we roughly expect at least five groups. Specifically, there are likely to be two extreme



groups: A low identification group and a full identification group. These two groups should be characterized by low and high group means, respectively, on all four dimensions of ethnic identity used to cluster individual cases. We also expect at least two, more moderate groups. First, we expect one group that should be characterized by high scores on all dimensions except for connection to ethnic heritage, and another by high scores on all dimensions except for the belief that being black will present social challenges. Thus, the former can be described as culturally embedded identification and the latter as socially embedded. Finally, we expect one superficially identified group, characterized by high scores on both importance and pride, but low scores on both connection to ethnic heritage and recognition of race-based social challenges. In other words, this group's positive identification with their ethnic group membership would not be embedded in cultural and social meaning systems.

In addition, we examine whether the ethnic identity typologies that emerge in our cluster analyses are differentially related to various behavioral and psychosocial indicators, including ethnic-related behaviors, academic achievement, problem behaviors, and psychological adjustment. We have generated some specific hypotheses with regard to these analyses. First, we treat the analysis of group differences on race and ethnicity related attitudes and behaviors as a way of validating the resulting clusters. Thus, the fully identified group should exhibit more and the low identified group should exhibit less involvement in ethnic behaviors and less extreme ethnic attitudes than any of the other groups. There are also likely to be differences among the moderate groups with regard to these behaviors and attitudes. Specifically, the "proud" and superficially identified groups are likely to be less involved and have less extreme attitudes than both the culturally and socially embedded groups. We also predict, generally, that the more

complex the identification (i.e., scoring high on several dimensions), the more well adjusted the groups will be in academics, problem behaviors, and psychological adjustment.

## Method

### Sample

This research uses data from the longitudinal (5 waves), mixed model (survey and ethnographic) Maryland Adolescent Development in Contexts Study (MADICS). The sample for this larger study was drawn from a large county in the state of Maryland, in which the population in 1991 was 51% black. Further, income distributions were similar for blacks and whites living in this county. The analyses reported here were carried out for a sub-sample of black eighth-graders (average age = 13; N = 625).

### Measures<sup>1</sup>

*Ethnic identity variables.* We chose four variables from our dataset that correspond to the four major dimensions of ethnic identity described in the introduction to this research: Racial importance, racial pride, connection to ethnic heritage, and the expectation of race-based social challenges. Racial importance is a single item asking respondents, on a scale of 1 to 4 (“not at all” to “very”), the extent to which they believe it is important for them to know about their racial and ethnic background. Racial pride was also assessed with a single item, asking respondents to indicate, on the same four-point scale, the extent to which they were proud of their racial or ethnic background. Connection to ethnic heritage was assessed with a 4-item scale ( $\alpha = .72$ ), consisting of items such as “People of my race/ethnicity have a culturally rich heritage.” Responses to these items were given on a scale of 1 to 5 (“not at all true of me” to “extremely true of me”) and an average score across all four items was obtained for each respondent. Finally, expectation of race-based challenges was assessed with two items ( $r = .83$ ):

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<sup>1</sup> Details for all measures are included in an Appendix at the end of this paper.

“Because of your race, no matter how hard you work you will always have to work harder than others to prove yourself;” and “Because of your race, it is important that you do better than other kids at school in order to get ahead.” Responses to these items were given on a scale of 1 to 4 (“strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), then averaged for each respondent.

*Other race and ethnicity related constructs.* We also included data for each respondent on the following race and ethnicity related attitudes and behaviors: 1) Same-ethnicity peer preferences; 2) family’s involvement in own-ethnicity activities; 3) salience of discrimination in the family; 4) perceived racial discrimination at school; and 5) psychological salience of race and ethnicity.

Three of the five measures above include some aspect of the family context in the target youths’ consideration of race and ethnicity. Same-ethnicity peer preference was assessed with three items asking respondents about the extent to which they and their parents preferred that they “hang out with” and date kids of their own race ( $\alpha = .78$ ). Family involvement in own-ethnicity related activities assessed the frequency with which the youths and their families proactively participated in programs and activities that enhanced their knowledge of or involvement with issues related to African Americans and their culture ( $\alpha = .67$ ). This measure included four items, such as “How often do you study the traditions or history of people with your racial background?” Responses to these items were given on a scale of 1 to 5, and averaged across all five items to obtain a score for each respondent. Salience of discrimination in the family assessed the frequency with which issues related to racial discrimination, generally or as it pertained specifically to family members, were discussed among family members ( $\alpha = .71$ ). This measure included three items, also on a scale of 1 to 5.

The two remaining ethnicity and race-related constructs pertain more to the target youths' own, individualized experiences with regard to race and ethnicity. Perceived racial discrimination at school included eight items that assessed the frequency with which respondents felt like they were treated negatively by their teachers and peers at school because of their race ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Responses to these items were given on a scale of 1 to 5, then averaged for a complete score. Finally, psychological salience of race and ethnicity consisted of a count, for each respondent, of the frequency with which they spontaneously mentioned race or ethnicity in response to open-ended survey items unrelated to race. The range of scores on this measure was zero to 6.

*Non-race related dependent variables.* In order to examine whether the six ethnic identity typologies differed in terms of developmental outcomes, we included measures of academic achievement, problem behaviors, and psychological adjustment. We constructed what we refer to as megascales for all of these measures, meaning that each of them is based on a standardized composite of multiple indicators of the same construct. Each of these megascales is described in detail below.

Academic achievement was assessed with a standardized composite score ( $\alpha = .86$ ) based on the target youths' letter grades (numerically coded in ascending rank order) in their English, Science, Math, and Health courses at the end of eighth grade, in addition to their total score on the mathematics component of the Maryland Functional Test. Problem behavior was assessed by summing across the target youths' reports of whether they had ever engaged in any of a list of 24 specific behaviors, coded according to the level of severity. For example, "damaging public or private property just for fun" was considered minor, and coded with a zero (absence) or "1" (presence); "being involved in a gang fight" was considered moderate, and

coded with a zero or a “2;” and “being expelled from school” was considered major, and coded with a zero or a “3.” Finally, psychological adjustment was assessed with a standardized composite score ( $\alpha = .80$ ) of the following indicators: Positive coping strategies, satisfaction with self and relationships, resiliency, self-esteem, depression, anger, attentional problems, general confusion, and social self-consciousness.

*Background information.* We also included information regarding gender and socioeconomic status (SES) for each respondent. SES was assessed with three different indicators, each used separately in all analyses: Family income, household education, and household occupational status. Family income was assessed through the youths’ primary caregivers’ self-reports of the total annual household income in the previous year with a question that listed a range of income categories (rather than an exact amount) that went from less than \$5000 to more than \$100,000. The average income for the African-American families was between \$50,000 - \$55,000. Family education was assessed through the youths’ primary caregivers’ self-reports of the highest level of education completed by the most educated adult living in the household, coded for years of completion. The responses ranged from a fifth grade education to completion of a professional degree, with the average for the African-American families falling at two years of college.

Finally, family occupational status was assessed through the youths’ primary caregivers’ responses to open-ended probes regarding the type of employment held by the primary and secondary caregivers in the household. These responses were coded according to the 1980 U.S. Census Bureau’s Occupational Classification System (inter-rater reliability of 90%) and then transformed to match the “Occupational Status Scores of 589 Occupations” presented by Nam and Powers (1983) which rank orders occupations according to a prestige score ranging from 0

to 99. For presentation purposes the occupations have been ordered into five categories based on the level of skill required for a given occupation. The African-American families were primarily represented in the skilled (44%) and professional (30%) categories.

## Results

### Analysis strategy

The analyses for the research reported here were conducted in four separate stages. First, we used cluster analysis to explore and identify ethnic identity typologies based on four major dimensions of ethnic identity, described in detail below. Second, we conducted chi-square analyses and one-way, multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) to examine differences across the resulting clusters on basic demographic variables, namely gender and various indicators of family socioeconomic status (SES). Finally, controlling for family SES, we conducted two MANOVAs, the first of which tested the validity of the groups resulting from our cluster analyses; the second was conducted in order to explore mean differences in various developmental outcomes across the cluster groups.

### Cluster analysis

We chose Ward's (1963, as cited in Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1990) method for clustering individual cases along four dimensions of ethnic identity. Ward's is a hierarchical agglomerative method that optimizes the minimal variance within clusters, and uses squared Euclidian distances as the determinant of similarity among cases. Based on the major dimensions of ethnic identity identified in both the literature and our own previous work, we selected the following four variables on which to cluster individual cases: 1) Importance of racial or ethnic group membership; 2) pride in racial or ethnic background; 3) connection to ethnic cultural heritage; and 4) expectation of having to work harder because of race. Only those cases having

complete data on all four variables were included in the analyses, and these variables were standardized based on this complete sample (N=599).

Although we did not have any specific hypotheses regarding the number and type of clusters that might emerge from our analysis, we roughly expected at least five groups. Therefore, we began our exploration of ethnic identity typologies by examining the five-cluster solution. Because this solution did not generate the conceptually based groups we had identified and was not easily interpretable, we selected the six-cluster solution for subsequent analysis. The six-cluster solution yielded groups that mapped roughly onto the five groups we had identified and included an additional, unexpected group. We describe each of these six clusters in detail below, roughly in order of their complexity (see Figure 1 for Ns and group means on clustering variables).

The first cluster is characterized by low group means (i.e., below the overall, standardized mean of zero) on all four variables used to create the clusters. We refer to this group as having low identification, as opposed to being ethnically unidentified. This is because the means for importance and pride are near the high end of their scales, and so even those having low scores on these measures are reporting relatively high levels of pride and importance. We refer to the second cluster, which is the only one we did not expect to emerge, simply as the “proud” group, as it is characterized by high levels of pride but low levels of importance, and appears to be neutral with regard to cultural connectedness and the expectation of race-based challenges. We describe the third cluster as having a superficial (i.e., not culturally or socially embedded) identification, as it is characterized by high levels of importance and pride, but low levels of cultural connectedness and expectations of race-based social challenges. The fourth cluster is characterized by high levels of pride and importance, moderate expectations of race-

based challenges, and low levels of cultural connectedness. We refer to this group as being moderately socially embedded, or moderately challenged. The fifth cluster, to which we refer as being culturally embedded or connected, is characterized by high levels of pride, importance, and cultural connectedness, but low expectations of race-based challenges. Finally, the sixth cluster is characterized by high levels on all four variables, and thus we refer to this group as having full identification.

### Preliminary analyses

We conducted preliminary analyses in order to explore whether our resulting clusters differed from one another on basic demographic indicators. A chi-square analysis indicated that the six clusters did not differ with regard to gender. Therefore, gender was not considered in our subsequent analyses of differences among the clusters with regard to behavioral and psychosocial outcomes. A one-way MANOVA, however, indicated that the low identified group was characterized by lower household incomes than the fully identified and socially embedded groups. In addition, the fully identified group was characterized by a more educated family background than both the superficially identified and the low identified groups. Therefore, we include both income and education as covariates in all subsequent analyses of group differences.

### External validation of clusters

Because our clusters were conceptually-derived, we were able to generate hypotheses regarding their differential relations to theoretically relevant, external variables. Specifically, we predicted that the cluster groups would generally differ from one another in systematic ways with regard to race and ethnicity-related constructs. Thus, we used the General Linear Model procedure in SPSS to conduct a one-way MANOVA for the following five dependent variables: 1) Youth's preference for same-ethnicity peers; 2) family involvement in own-ethnicity related



activities; 3) salience of discrimination in the family; 4) perceived discrimination at school; and 5) psychological salience of race and ethnicity. Both the multivariate and univariate tests indicated significant differences across the six clusters on all outcomes except psychological salience of race.

For same-ethnicity peer preferences ( $F [5, 504] = 4.21, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$ ), pairwise comparisons indicated that the superficially identified group (proud and important) reported lower preferences than all of the other groups; and the fully identified group expressed greater preferences than all other groups except for the culturally connected group, from which it did not differ (see Figure 2 for means). For family involvement in own-ethnicity related activities ( $F [5, 504] = 7.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$ ), pairwise comparisons indicated that the low identification and proud groups reported less involvement than all other groups (in chronological increments) but did not differ significantly from one another (see Figure 3 for means). For salience of discrimination in the family ( $F [5, 504] = 7.00, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$ ), the fully identified group reported greater salience than all other groups; in addition, the socially embedded (moderately challenged) group reported greater salience than both the proud and culturally connected groups, but did not differ significantly from the low or simple (proud and important) identification groups (see Figure 4 for means).

For perceived racial discrimination at school ( $F [5, 504] = 5.87, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$ ), pairwise comparisons indicated that the simple identification (proud and important) group reported fewer discriminatory experiences than did any other groups; in addition, the fully identified group reported more discrimination than did the low identification and culturally connected groups (see Figure 5 for means). Finally, although the overall, univariate test for psychological salience of race did not reach significance ( $F [5, 504] = 1.08, ns$ ), the fully

identified group spontaneously mentioned race with significantly more frequency than did the proud group (see Figure 6 for means).

### Developmental outcomes

We conducted a one-way MANOVA, controlling for family income and education, for the set of developmental outcomes related to academic achievement, psychological adjustment, and problem behaviors. Both the multivariate and univariate tests were significant for all outcomes.

For academic achievement ( $F [5, 426] = 2.35, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ ), pairwise comparisons indicated that the fully identified group had higher levels of achievement than did both the proud and moderately challenged groups; in addition, the connected group had higher levels of achievement than did the moderately challenged group (see Figure 7 for all group means). For psychological adjustment ( $F [5, 426] = 4.28, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05$ ), pairwise comparisons indicated that the simple identification (proud and connected) group reported better adjustment than did the low identification, moderately challenged, and fully identified groups; in addition, the culturally connected group reported better adjustment than all other groups except the simple identification group (see Figure 8 for means). Finally, for problem behaviors ( $F [5, 426] = 2.27, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ ), pairwise comparisons indicated that the simple identification group reported lower levels of engagement in problem behaviors than did the moderately challenged and fully identified groups; in addition, the culturally connected group reported lower levels than did the moderately challenged and the fully identified groups (see Figure 9 for means).

## Discussion

The present research employed a person-oriented approach to studying ethnic identity by using cluster analysis to identify multidimensional ethnic identity typologies among African-American early adolescents. Our results indicated that, consistent with our conceptual formulations regarding the nature of such typologies, multiple dimensions of ethnic identity can be represented as occurring simultaneously within individuals. Moreover, similar patterns of these configurations can be identified among subgroups of individuals, and these patterns are differentially related to various behaviors and psychosocial outcomes. Together, these findings suggest that ethnic identity typologies may be a useful concept for understanding the overall role of ethnic identity in individuals' everyday lives.

We interpret our findings within the context of the cultural and social meaning systems within which ethnic identities are formed. The developmental literature regarding racial and ethnic identities indicates that youth are just beginning to actively explore race and ethnicity, as it pertains to the self-concept, in early adolescence (Branch, 1999; Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Rotheram, 1987). Prior to such exploration, most youth are believed to be foreclosed with regard to ethnic identity, passively accepting the labels and relevant proscriptions proffered by the socializing agents in their lives, particularly their parents. Thus, at such early stages, race and ethnicity are likely to be seen as little more than categorically defining attributes of the self, not likely to be attached to any cultural foundation or social meaning system. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fully identified cluster—that which was positively identified and both culturally and socially embedded—that emerged in our findings was small relative to the entire sample. In other words, the majority of these youth appeared in those clusters characterized by

only low or moderate connections to ethnic heritage and expectations of race-based social challenges.

Nonetheless, the differential relations of the six ethnic identity typologies to the various race and ethnicity related constructs included in this study provide some evidence for the validity of the clusters. We generally expected that those ethnic identification typologies that were culturally and socially embedded would differ from those that are not so embedded. Our results were generally consistent with these predictions. For example, the fully identified group expressed greater preferences for same-ethnicity peers and salience of discrimination in the family than did nearly all of the other groups; additionally, this group reported more instances of personal discrimination at school than did the culturally connected, superficially identified, and low identification groups. Although we did not find as consistent a pattern as we expected for the low identification group, the three clusters characterized by low or neutral levels of cultural and social embeddedness—that is, the low identification, proud, and superficial (proud and important) groups—together generally expressed lower levels than the remaining three groups on almost all of the race and ethnicity related outcomes.

This pattern of results appears, at first, to suggest that the person-oriented approach to studying ethnic identity does not offer much beyond the information provided by variable-oriented approaches. For example, it might be argued that, because the pattern of results roughly corresponds to considerations of whether ethnic identity is culturally and/or socially embedded. In other words, why not simply study the relation of ethnic identity to outcomes based on variables corresponding to these two dimensions? We argue that identifying typologies is still useful in different ways than is such a variable-oriented approach because the pattern of results, upon closer examination, is somewhat more complex than this dichotomous conclusion. For

example, the proud group, despite being characterized by greater cultural and social embeddedness (slightly above the mean) than the superficially identified (proud and important, low cultural connection and expectation of race-based challenges) group, reported lower family involvement in ethnicity-related activities than the latter group. Similarly, the superficially identified group, despite being characterized by very little cultural and social embeddedness, expressed lower preferences for same-ethnicity peers than all other groups, including the low identification group.

The usefulness of the present, person-oriented approach is also supported by the pattern of results across academic achievement, psychological adjustment, and engagement in problem behaviors. These results can be interpreted in two ways. First, there are different patterns of group differences for each of the three outcomes. For academic achievement, the fully identified group reported higher levels of performance than any of the other groups, but this difference was statistically significant only for the moderately socially challenged and proud groups. The failure to reach significance for differences with the superficial and low identification groups may be due to small sample sizes for those analyses. Nonetheless, there were no other significant group differences except for that between the culturally connected and moderately socially challenged groups, with the former having higher levels of achievement than the latter.

The pattern of results is different for psychological adjustment and engagement in problem behaviors. Specifically, for psychological adjustment, the culturally connected group reported higher levels of adjustment than did all other groups; the superficially identified group reported higher levels of adjustment than did all other groups other than the connected and proud groups. Finally, for problem behaviors, the simple identification and culturally connected groups

reported having engaged in problem behaviors with more frequency and severity than did the moderately socially challenged and fully identified groups.

The second way of interpreting these results is to examine the patterns of adjustment for each of the six typologies. The low identification and proud groups appear similar to one another in this respect. Both groups appeared to have lower levels of overall adjustment (i.e., poorer academic performance and psychological health, below average engagement in problem behaviors) than all other groups, although the difference did not always reach statistical significance. The superficially identified-group appeared to have poorer academic, but better psychological adjustment and lower engagement in problem behaviors than the more complexly identified (i.e., culturally and/or socially embedded) groups. The moderately socially embedded, or challenged, group is characterized by relatively low levels of adjustment, whereas the culturally connected group is characterized by high levels of adjustment. Finally, the fully identified group had the highest levels of academic achievement, but were also the least well adjusted psychologically and relatively highly engaged in problem behaviors.

These patterns suggest that, in early adolescence, low levels of ethnic identification on multiple dimensions may not be associated with positive development. In contrast, individuals who are positively identified with their ethnic group and have a strong sense of connection to their ethnic heritage appear to be relatively well-adjusted unless they also believe their ethnicity will present social challenges for them. This is likely because African-American early adolescents are just beginning to learn about both the contemporary and historical achievements of African Americans, thus fulfilling for them a positive sense of history and connection. Such positive affirmations are likely to contribute to a sense of belonging among these adolescents, thereby facilitating their positive development. On the other hand, these early adolescents are not

likely to have the cognitive sophistication to reconcile their own positive sense of ethnic identity with the societally ubiquitous stigma associated with their ethnic group. Thus, among those for whom this stigmatized status is salient, even when it co-occurs with positive ethnic identity overall, positive development may be hindered.

### Limitations

Although our results indicated significant differences on all outcomes among the ethnic identity typologies we have identified, it should be noted that these differences were very small in magnitude. This is probably largely because the dimensions of ethnic identity we included in this study did not vary greatly across individuals. This is particularly true for ethnic pride and importance, which were highly skewed. In addition, these two measures were based on single indicators.

A second limitation, more germane to cluster analytic procedures in general, is that the typologies we have identified here are greatly biased by our own preconceived notions regarding their nature. Different typologies are likely to emerge with the use of different dimensions, different methods of clustering, and different samples. Nonetheless, because our interpretation of these clusters was based heavily in the theory regarding ethnic identity, we are confident that such biases indeed play a role but are likely to be minimal here. Moreover, the typologies identified here are consistent with patterns observed in our qualitative research regarding the subjective meanings of being black (Overby et al., 2000).

### Directions for future research

Many researchers have suggested that the general ethnic and racial context within which human development occurs be taken into consideration when studying ethnic and racial identity among both children and adults (Allen, 1993; Cross, 1991; Oyserman et al. 1995; Sellers, 1993).

We concur, but we also suggest that race and ethnicity might be conceptualized as socially contextualized meaning systems. That is, as many have argued before, race and ethnicity and the issues related to it are pervasive and potentially pernicious, even as early as during the preschool years (e.g., Aboud, 1987; Branch, 1999). As children mature, they are exposed to new experiences and expanding sources of socialization, including schools, peers, and the media. Depending on the type and extent of information they receive, as it pertains to their race or ethnicity, they are likely to develop some sort of schema for interpreting subsequent racial stimuli, including information related to the self. Likewise, many have argued that ethnic and racial identities are continually developed, negotiated, and revised across the entire lifespan (Cross, 1991; Cross, Strauss, & Fhagen-Smith, 1999). Thus, individuals are likely to follow various developmental trajectories based on their acquisition and refinement of an overall racial belief system (Allen, 1993) and the ways in which these belief systems are related to the sense of self.

Therefore, we are hopeful that other researchers might examine such trajectories, and include aspects of a multi-dimensional racial and ethnic belief system other than the dimensions on which we have focused in the present research. We plan to extend our own work this way, in addition to examining individual trajectories in ethnic identity development. Specifically, we have begun to examine, longitudinally, whether the same typologies can be identified when the youth in this study are in high school and college. Moreover, we will examine the patterns of change and stability in terms of individuals' movement in and out of specific typologies over time. For example, we are interested in whether individuals who are only culturally connected at eighth grade begin to expect social challenges as well by the time they are in high school. We are hopeful that such person-oriented approaches can further our understanding about the role of



race and ethnicity in identity development in adolescence and early adulthood, and in predicting other developmental outcomes.

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Figure 1: Ethnic identity Configurations

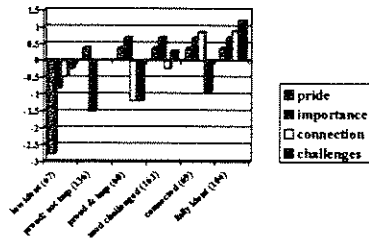


Figure 2: Preference for Interacting with Peers of Own Ethnicity

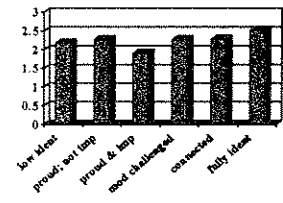


Figure 3: Family Involvement in own Ethnicity-Related Activities

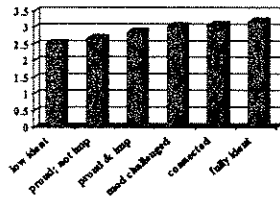


Figure 4: Salience of Discrimination in Family

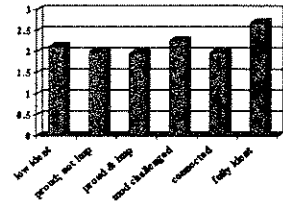


Figure 5: Perceived Discrimination at School

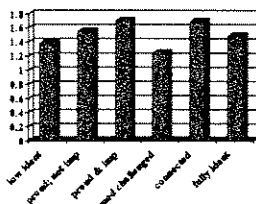


Figure 6: Psychological salience of race

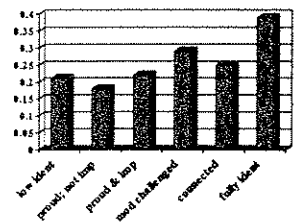


Figure 7: Academic achievement

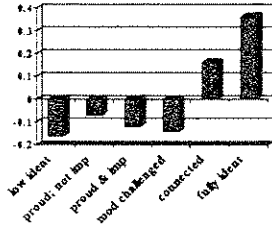


Figure 8: Psychological Adjustment

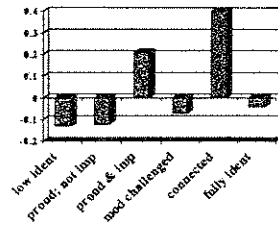
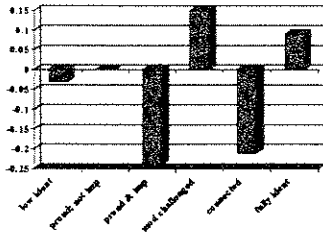


Figure 9: Problem Behavior





## APPENDIX

### Racial Configuration Items

#### Importance

- How important is it for you to know about your racial background?  
(1=not at all; 2=a little; 3=somewhat; 4=very)

#### Pride

- How proud are you of your racial background?  
(1=not at all; 2=a little; 3=somewhat; 4=very)

#### Connection to Ethnic Heritage – (alpha = .72)

- I have a close community of friends because of my race/ethnicity.
- People of my race/ethnicity have a culturally rich heritage.
- I have meaningful traditions because of my race/ethnicity.
- People of my race/ethnicity are very supportive of each other.  
(1=not at all true of me; 2=a little true of me; 3=somewhat true of me; 4=very true of me; 5=extremely true of me)

#### Expectation of Race-based Challenges (alpha =.83)

- Because of your race, no matter how hard you work, you will always have to work harder than others to prove yourself.
- Because of your race, it is important that you do better than other kids at school in order to get ahead.  
(1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree)

### Ethnicity Items

#### Same Ethnicity Peer Preferences (alpha=.78)

- In general, your PARENTS prefer that you hang out with kids of your own race.
- In general, your PARENTS prefer that you date kids of your own race.
- In general, YOU prefer to hang out with kids of your own race.  
(1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree)

#### Family involvement in own-ethnicity activities (alpha=.67)

- How often do you talk in the family about your racial background?  
(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 every day) (nb: 5+6 were combined for scale purposes)
- How often do you study the traditions or history of people with your racial background?
- How often do you participate in community activities with people of your racial background?
- How often do you celebrate any special days connected to your racial background?  
(1=almost never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently; 5=almost always)

### **Saliency of Discrimination in the Family (alpha=.71)**

- How often do you talk in the family about discrimination you may face because of your race?  
(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 every day) (nb: 5+6 were combined for scale purposes)
- How much do you think discrimination because of your race might keep you from getting the amount of education you want?
- How much do (your parents) worry that ...
  - you will be discriminated against at school because of your race?
  - you will be discriminated against at work when you grow up because of your race?(1=not at all; 2=a little; 3=some; 4=quite a bit; 5=a lot)

### **Perceived Racial Discrimination at School (alpha=.89)**

- How often do you feel...
  - like you are not picked for certain teams or other school activities because of your race?
  - that you get in fights with some kids because of your race?
  - that kids do not want to hang out with you because of your race?
- At school, how often do you feel..
  - that teachers call on you less often than they call on other kids because of your race?
  - that teachers grade you harder than they grade other kids because of your race?
  - that you get disciplined more harshly by teachers than other kids do because of your race?
  - that teachers think you are less smart than you really are because of your race?(1=never; 2=a couple times each year; 3=a couple times each month; 4=once or twice each week; 5=every day)
- How often have you felt...
  - that teachers/counselors discourage you from taking certain classes 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)

### **Psychological salience of race and ethnicity**

- A frequency count of several open-ended survey questions unrelated to race for instances of spontaneously mentioned race or ethnicity. The scores range from zero to six.

## Outcomes

### Academic Achievement - Grade 8 - ( $\alpha = .86$ )

Standardized composite score of:

- Final English Grade
- Final Science Grade
- Final Math Grade
- Final Health Grade
- Total Math Score Maryland Functional Test

### Youth Involvement in Problem Behavior

Standardized and summed score of:

- *minor* problem behaviors, including (the following are scored as '1' if yes, '0' if no):
  - damaging public or private property just for fun
  - taking something from a store without paying for it
  - skipping class without a valid excuse
  - skipping school or cutting classes
  - being sent to the principal's office
  - lying to your parents
  - doing some pretty risky things because it was a real kick
  - hitting someone because you didn't like what they said or did
  - cheating on tests or exams
  - drinking alcohol in last 30 days
  - smoking cigarettes in last 30 days
  - smoking marijuana in last 30 days
  - start having sex too young
- *moderate* problem behaviors, including (scored as '2' if yes, '0' if no):
  - being involved in a gang fight
  - being suspended from school
- *major* problem behaviors, including (scored as '3' if yes, '0' if no):
  - being expelled from school
  - stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle
  - bringing alcohol or drugs to school
  - using crack in last six months
  - using cocaine in last six months
  - using heroin in last six months
  - taking pills in last six months
  - being a member of a gang
  - being involved with the police

### Psychological Adjustment - ( $\alpha = .80$ )

Standardized composite score of the follow scales:

- Youth Preference for Improvement Based Coping Strategies
- Youth Satisfaction with Self and Relationships
- Youth's Resiliency
- Youth's Self-Esteem
- Youth Depression (R)
- Youth Anger (R)
- Youth's Problem Paying Attention (R)
- Youth's General Confusion (R)
- Youth's Social Self-Consciousness (R)

