THE RELATIONSHIP OF ETHNIC IDENTITY AND BICULTURAL COMPETENCE TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG URBAN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

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of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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by
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ABSTRACT
Title: The Relationship of Ethnic Identity and Bicultural Competence to Academic Achievement Among Urban African-American Adolescents
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This study examined ethnic identity and academic achievement among urban African-American adolescents and investigated how bicultural competence may be related to these variables. There is a dearth of literature in school psychology on how these variables relate to best practices for closing the achievement gap. Seventy-two students in the sixth through eighth grades from three urban parochial schools and one urban charter school participated in the study including African Americans (n=43) and students of other ethnicities (n=29). Students included in the Other category included those who self-identified as Latino, Mixed, Other, Asian American, and Native American. The sample was 65.3% female (n=47) and 34.7% male (n=25) with students who ranged in age from 11 to 15 years of age. Using a correlational design, the participants were interviewed at their schools using a brief demographics questionnaire and the Revised Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). Standardized test scores for each participant and information on socioeconomic status were also examined. No significant relationships were found between ethnic identity and any other variable in African-American adolescents or adolescents from other groups. As their grade levels increased, African-American students' levels of bicultural competence increased while their math achievement decreased. Students from other ethnicities who were high in bicultural competence had higher math

achievement scores. Adolescent girls from the Other ethnicities group who were higher in bicultural competence tended to achieve more highly in math. Students from other ethnicities who were high in bicultural competence were less likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch. Students from other ethnicities whose parents were born in the United States were higher in bicultural competence than students in the same group whose parents were born outside the United States. This study indicated that academic achievement among urban adolescents can be consistent with a number of combinations of ethnic identities and levels of bicultural competence. The results of the present study suggest that, in order to help close the achievement gap, school psychologists and other decision makers should take socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors such as bicultural competence into consideration when making decisions for individual students and when affecting policy at the systems level.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Problem Statement

With growth in school enrollment and educational attainment, African-American students have made noticeable educational progress as a group since the period of the Civil Rights Movement. As one of the largest non-European American groups in the United States, 94% of African-American students attended this country's public schools in the 1993-4 school year. From1968-1994, the population of African American public school students rose from 6.28 million to 7.13 million students, and high school completion rates also climbed for African Americans, from, for example, 64.8% in 1975 to 76.9% in 1995. Some have attributed greater educational advancement among African-American students during this period to an expansion of educational opportunities and programs such as Head Start and Title I. The burgeoning ethnically diverse public school population and the migration of European Americans from urban to suburban areas have carried multiethnic issues to the forefront in urban education (Garibaldi, 1997).

In fall 1995, ethnic minority students comprised 35.2% of the public elementary and secondary school population in the United States. During that year, 16.8% of the public school population consisted of African-American students, and 13.5% of the public school population included Latino students. In fall 2005, ethnic minority students constituted 42.8% of the public

elementary and secondary school population. African-American students accounted for 17.2% of the population and Latino students consisted of 19.8% of the population (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). The surge in cultural and ethnic diversity across the United States (Yancey, Aneshensel, & Driscoll, 2001) underscores the relevance of multicultural and multiethnic awareness in education.

Although African-American students have made academic progress as a group in the decades after the Civil Rights Movement, their achievement levels remain lower than European American students. A review of data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) during the years from 1969-1996, showed that there were steady increases in African-American students' performance in mathematics, reading, writing, and science, although European American students scored between 22 and 47 points higher than African Americans in each of these areas (Garibaldi, 1997). More recent NAEP data revealed that, in 2002, in most states there was a 10-38 point gap in reading between African-American and European-American 8th grade public school students. Additionally, in an assessment conducted in the year 2000, 62% of European-American 12th grade students were found to have skills at the basic level or above in science, whereas only 22% of African-American 12th grade students demonstrated skills at the basic level or above. Furthermore, all the ethnic groups assessed between the years 1990 and 2000 made gains in math, but the data indicate persisting achievement gaps between European Americans and other groups (NCES, 2003b).

In addition to examining the academic achievement gap between African-American students and students of other backgrounds, the achievement gap within this group, particularly the gender gap in achievement among African-American students, has also been investigated. In a

paper reviewing the educational status of African American men and women, Garibaldi (2007) indicated that more African-American men complete high school as older students in the 25-29-year old group than African-American women who usually graduate as 18-24 year-olds. The disparity continues to increase between African-American men and women in college enrollment and the attainment of undergraduate and graduate degrees. For example, in 2003, 1,266,107 African American women were enrolled in college compared with 686,615 African American men, which is 54% higher than this enrollment gap was in 1993. The number of African Americans earning bachelor's degrees increased by 54.6% between the years 1993 and 2003. Although more African-American women than men earned master's and doctoral degrees in 2003-2004, the number of African American men completing doctoral degree programs increased between 1993 and 2003. Garibaldi concluded by stating that although progress has been made in this group as a whole, he pointed out that the gender gap in achievement among African Americans is expanding each year at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels.

School inequities have been found to partially explain these achievement gaps. Based on studies of urban schools that the U.S. Department of Education conducted in 1992 and 1996, the majority of minorities attended schools in urban areas. These schools were found to have a higher population of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who scored the lowest on standardized academic achievement tests and who had reduced access to programs for gifted/talented students. In contrast, students from higher socioeconomic environments were more likely to be academically successful and have greater admittance into enrichment programs for gifted students. Furthermore, African-American students consisted of nearly 30% of students

in special education classes (Garibaldi, 1997), which is disproportionate considering that this group constitutes approximately 12.9% of the total U.S. population (United States Census, 2000). Many schools that were increasingly desegregated between the 1950s and 1980s have regressed (Kozol, 2006). Some researchers believe that factors like these may help explain achievement disparities between ethnic groups (Garibaldi, 1997; see also Kozol, 1991).

The existence of the academic achievement gap between African-American students and students of other ethnic backgrounds has intrigued researchers for decades (Brown, Reynolds, and Whitaker, 1999; Neisser et al., 1996). As groups, students of African-American and Latino descent receive lower grades, have lower standardized test scores, and have higher dropout rates when compared with European-American and Asian-American students, even when students from these backgrounds have had comparable educational preparation (Osborne, 2001). Despite political orientation, socioeconomic status, or expenditure per student, the academic achievement gap continues to exist. For example, on the College Board's Scholastic Achievement Test, the scores of middle-income, African-American students match the scores of students of low socio-economic status from European American and African American backgrounds. African-American students are also less likely to be enrolled in honors and advanced placement classes, and more likely to be suspended from school, enrolled in special education classes, and have significantly lower grade point averages than other students (Ogbu, 1997; Osborne, 2001; Perry, 2003). Researchers have not reached a consensus about the reason for these differences (Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997).

Several theorists have sought to account for the academic achievement gap between African-American students and students of other ethnic groups. Theorists have proposed that cognitive

and genetic differences (Murray & Herrnstein, 1994; Oakland, 1995); cultural test bias (Brown, Reynolds, & Whitaker, 1999); variations in communication styles (Neisser et al., 1996); anxiety and social psychological differences (Steele & Aronson, 1995); cultural orientation differences (Helms, 1992), social risk and protective factors (Burchinal et al., 2008); and environmental and social class differences (Oakland, 1995) may serve as possible explanations for variations in performance.

Federal legislation has been passed under the assumption that social class and other demographic variables, such as area of residence, are responsible for the achievement gap between students of various ethnic backgrounds. This legislation entitled, the 'No Child Left Behind' Act of 2001 [(NCLB)], was created to "close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" (20 U.S.C. § 6301) (Quoted in McLoughlin, 2003, n.p.) The focus of NCLB is creating accountability for outcomes through higher academic standards, increased assessment, better quality instruction, professional development, and increasing parents' choice of school options for their children (McLoughlin, 2003). However, concerns about the lack of federal funding to aid in the implementation of these mandates has led to lawsuits to challenge the act (Peterson, 2005). Hunter and Bartee (2003) are concerned that NCLB will increase the achievement gap between ethnic groups since school districts with fewer resources may have difficulty meeting the federal mandates. They suggest that addressing the "noncognitive factors" (p.157), sociological and historical problems that have influenced the achievement gap is more important than assuming that the discrepancies will disappear with higher standards and additional assessment.

Other researchers have argued that the academic achievement gap can be explained by racial/ethnic identity development (e.g., Cook & Ludwig, 1998; Cross, Strauss, & Fhagen-Smith, 1999; Spencer et al., 2001; Witherspoon et al., 1997). There have also been preliminary investigations of the link between interracial contact, bicultural competence, the situational variability of racial/ethnic identities, and academic achievement among high school and college students (Daniel-Tatum, 1997; Okagaki, 2001; Rowley, 2000; Shelton & Sellers, 2000), but further research is needed in this area within the adolescent population. These researchers view the values and attitudes related to racial/ethnic identity as important contributors to academic achievement for African American students, particularly during the period of adolescence (i.e. Daniel-Tatum, 1997) when individuals are developing their overall identity and values. There is a debate among researchers (Ogbu, 1997; Rowley, 2000) regarding whether strong identification with African American culture and values is compatible with positive attitudes toward education and academic achievement. Theorists, such as Okagaki (2001), have argued that bicultural competence is essential for ethnic minority students like African Americans to help them reconcile their values with those of the mainstream. Other research (Rowley, 2000) has shown that a variety of attitudes and values regarding education exist among African Americans students, that these students can achieve highly even if they do not adopt the values of the mainstream, and these attitudes may be related to the extent of interracial contact African American students have with students of other ethnic groups. The variables of academic achievement, ethnic identity, and interracial contact have been investigated with college students (see Rowley, 2000) and with African American students at private, independent schools (Cooper & Datnow, 2000), but few studies have been conducted to examine ethnic identity, bicultural

competence, and academic achievement among urban African American adolescents. Additionally, researchers who have studied these variables within this population have seldom included students from other ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, there is a dearth of school psychology literature related to these variables which outlines best practices for closing the achievement gap. The purpose of the present study is to further explore the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement among urban African-American adolescents, to investigate how bicultural competence may be related to these variables within this population, and to explore how the relationships among these variables may contribute to the body of school psychology literature in order to help close the achievement gap.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Socio-cultural and psychological explanations for the Academic Achievement Gap

The cultural-ecological perspective. According to Ogbu's (1997) Cultural-Ecological perspective, it is necessary to understand minority status, school structures, climate, resources, family, individual, curriculum, language, and cultural differences in order to explain differences in academic performance between various racial/ethnic groups. Based on this theory, the academic achievement gap can best be understood by considering that the "status mobility system or folk theory of getting ahead" differs for each group and affects group members' attitudes toward education and efforts to achieve. For example, under the European American status mobility system, hard work and education are believed to lead to occupational success, and children witness the payoffs of such a system as they observe their parents and other relatives (Ogbu, 1997). Ogbu (1997) and other researchers such as Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, and Lintz (1996) and O'Connor (1997) have pointed out that European Americans and others who are successful in school hold to the "conventional achievement ideology" (Mehan et al., p.136) or the "dominant theory of upward mobility" (O'Connor, 1997, p.597). According to this ideology, hard work and personal effort lead to achievement, making it possible to rise above the difficult circumstances of one's background. Under this philosophy, a lack of personal responsibility and effort is the explanation for failure.

Ogbu (1997) asserted that minority groups, such as African Americans, on the other hand, have a status mobility system that is based on their observations of discrimination, mistreatment, and a job ceiling which has historically led to low wage jobs and poor advancement. In contrast

to the conventional achievement ideology, Ogbu submits the idea that under the African-American Folk Theory of success, "… school success is necessary *but not sufficient* for them to make it. They wish it were so" (Ogbu, 1997, p.206). In this status mobility system, African Americans are rejecting and changing the conventional rules for success since they cannot make them work for them. Other theorists have also argued that lower academic performance among African Americans is a result of their negative feelings about job advancement (Mehan et al., 1996), which may be attributed to racial factors in a capitalist system. They may desire a status mobility system that is equal to that of European Americans, so African-American students often "express high educational aspirations, but they do not necessarily match these with sufficient effort and perseverance" (p.210), an idea Ogbu labeled "the paradox of high aspiration" (Ogbu, 1997, p.210) and what Mickelson (1990) termed the "attitude-achievement paradox" (p. 45).

Ogbu (1997) has also theorized that groups, such as voluntary minorities (immigrants who chose to come to the U.S.), have higher academic performance due to their type of minority status. According to Ogbu, the cultural models of immigrant minorities are ideal for academic success. Under the immigrant minority cultural model, good educational credentials are considered to be necessary for advancement, as well as overcoming cultural/language differences, and putting trust in schools and school personnel (Ogbu, 1997). Immigrant minorities are able to keep their ethnic identities while maintaining active school involvement and becoming accustomed to the norms of the mainstream (Mehan, et al., 1996). These students generally originate from families who arrived in this country seeking success. In many cases, according to the immigrant minority cultural model, peer pressure and support from the group as a whole promote academic success (Osborne, 2001).

On the contrary, involuntary minorities, such as African Americans, who generally came to this country as slaves, hold to a cultural model in which educational credentials are deemed desirable but infrequently lead to success. Cultural and linguistic differences are seen in this model as part of a group's identity, not barriers to move beyond. Based on past discrimination experiences, involuntary minorities may negatively associate schooling with assimilation into the dominant group's culture, and may resist academically related activities to maintain what they consider to be their group identity (Cross, 1999; Mehan et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1997, 2004; Osborne, 2001) or "collective identity" (Ogbu, 2004, p.3). Instead, these students value the opposite of the perceived mainstream society values, which Ogbu calls "cultural inversion" (Osborne, 2001, p.558) or "oppositional culture" (Harris & Robinson, 2007, p.140). According to this model, some individuals in ethnic minority groups, such as African Americans and Latinos, achieve at lower levels than European Americans because their attitudes are deliberately in opposition to the skills, attitudes, manners, and speech preferred for advancement in a capitalist society (Cross, 1999; Mehan et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1997; Osborne, 2001; Philipsen, 1999). Consistent with the research of Ogbu (1997) and Philipsen (1999), these types of negative attitudes toward achievement are reflected in the peer culture of involuntary minorities in which students who want to do well find it necessary to separate from their peers. Involuntary minority achievers may be accused of acting like their "oppressors" (Philipsen, 1999, p.104), becoming "sell outs" (Philipsen, 1999, p.104), or "acting White" (Witherspoon et al., 1997, p. 345), a phenomenon in which linguistic patterns, dress styles, music, and choice of friends are negatively associated with behavior resembling European Americans (Carter, 2006).

Recent research findings indicate that African-American and Latino adolescents hold to a variety of viewpoints on the "acting white" phenomenon. Their perspectives are not as homogeneous as they are often presented in cultural-ecological theory (Carter, 2006). Regrettably, cultural-ecological theories about the achievement gap between various ethnic groups in the United States do not take into account the research with students from "involuntary minority group" backgrounds for whom theories like these do not hold true (O'Connor, 1997; Mehan, 1996). Unfortunately, cultural-ecological theories falsely portray involuntary minorities as identical groups with static attitudes and consistently poor academic achievement. In actuality, African-Americans are not a homogeneous group. All experiences and societal structures do not affect individuals in the same way or in a linear way. High success is connected with highly Eurocentric values under this model, and European-American, middle-class people are used as the norm group from which people of color differ (Rowley, 2000; Spencer et al., 2001). As Spencer et al. (2001) stated, "these [cultural-ecological] perspectives lack a dynamic integration of context character, cultural traditions, developmental status, and diverse responsive adaptations" (p.25). Minority groups have in-group differences in terms of attitudes and beliefs which affect individual achievement levels as well as academic engagement and performance. Some involuntary minorities have also been shown to maintain a belief system in which they neither oppose the system nor conform to it, but continue to simultaneously value achievement and their culture (Mehan et al, 1996).

Contrary to ideas proposed in cultural-ecological perspectives, education has traditionally been part of the African-American culture as the key to freedom, mobility, and leadership. The positive values toward education, which some individuals of involuntary minority backgrounds

embrace, originate not only from mainstream values, but also come from the immediate environment such as family values. Far removed from ideas cultural-ecological theorists propose, research has not shown that all African Americans have historically distrusted social structures and school staff. All African-American students are not part of the oppositional culture, they do not all respond similarly to mainstream culture, and can be academically successful (Philipsen, 1999; Cross, 1999; O'Connor, 1997; Okagaki, 2001). O'Connor (1997) stated that:

> … collective orientations, which are embedded in group identities and theories of making it that contest the dominant theory of upward mobility, do not have to produce maladaptive educational consequences or operate in ways that facilitate social reproduction. Rather collective orientations may facilitate rather than inhibit the hopefulness and achievement of African Americans. (p.597-8)

Research has shown how strong, positive African American identities can be associated with academic success (Rowley, 2000; Spencer et al., 2001; see also Daniel-Tatum, 1997). Therefore, African-American culture and positive attitudes toward education are not mutually exclusive.

Gender differences in academic identification, academic achievement, and self-esteem levels. Among the socio-cultural and psychological explanations for the academic achievement gap between various ethnic groups, is the concept of academic disidentification. Researchers such as Steele (1997) and Osborne (1997) theorize that some African Americans do not perform as highly in school as individuals of other racial/ethnic backgrounds because they are not identified with academic achievement. Identification with academics is defined by Osborne (1997) as "the

extent to which one's self-evaluation in a particular area (e.g. academics) affects one's overall self-evaluation (global self-esteem)" (p.728). The above-mentioned theorists deem academic identification as a prerequisite for learning. Students who identify with academics receive higher grades. In addition to grades, other factors found to be associated with academic identification include: goals, competitiveness, school conduct, and attendance rates. For some African Americans and other minority students, academic identification may develop in the early grades, but gradually diminishes in adolescence, especially for African-American males. Theoretically, students who exhibit lower academic identification earn poorer grades and show higher drop-out rates (Osborne, 1997, 2001).

However, Steele (1997) has also called attention the idea of school disidentification among high-achieving, African-American students. He pointed out that, paradoxically, some academically successful African-American students also disidentify with school, which he believes is supported by their higher drop-out rates and lower grade point averages than European American students of similar ability. Osborne (2006) found that, in contrast to European American students, African American, Latino, and Native American students who were highly identified with academics were more likely to withdraw from school, which is consistent with Steel's argument that stereotype threat affects student identification and leads to anxiety about academic situations. Osborne (1997) highlighted the disidentification phenomenon as a group problem among many African-American students rather than the predictable outcome of lower academic performance. In a study using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS: 1988) consisting of a diverse sample of over 15,000, 8th grade students of African-American, Latino, and European-American descent, Osborne (1997) found

that African-American males showed "serious and significant disidentification with academics" (p.734) compared with other groups who did not show signs of significant disidentification. During adolescence, the African-American males in the study began to identify more with popularity and athletics than other groups, rather than academics. African-American female adolescents also showed a decrease in academic identification in comparison to females of other racial/ethnic backgrounds, but this decrease was not found to be significant.

As discussed previously, the literature suggests that there are gender differences in academic identification and achievement among African-American students, with females performing higher than males (Mickelson, 1990, 2006; Osborne, 2001). Among the prominent theorists offering social and cultural explanations for low academic performance in the African-American male population are Steele (1992), Ogbu (1997), and Major and Billson (as cited in Osborne, 2001). According to the "Cool Pose" perspective of Major and Billson, in response to racism, African-American males behave as nonconformists who oppose academic identification. In general, African-American males in more recent times have been found to be significantly less likely to identify with academics than the African American males of three decades ago. African American males who stay in school are significantly more likely to be identified with school than those who drop out (Osborne, 2001).

Sanders and Herting (2000) investigated the effects that variables such as gender, family, and church support have on the academic achievement of African-American adolescents. In their study of 828 African-American 8th graders from eight schools in an urban district, the results showed that there were significant differences between males and females in terms of teacher support, parental support, church involvement, achievement ideology, academic self-concept,

and school behavior. Females received more reported parent and teacher involvement, more involvement with the church, lower levels of disruptive school behavior, positive achievement ideologies and academic self-concepts, and grades which were higher than those of males. For all in the sample, church involvement and academic parental support had a significant, positive effect on academic self-concept. Males who had been retained and lived under the poverty line were found to be less academically successful than other males. The results also suggested that African-American males may disengage from school as they get older and their levels of academic achievement decline. Females in this study were found to spend more time with older family members and boys spent more time with peers. Additionally, females in this sample had more time restrictions set at home, more home responsibilities, and higher achievement expectations. Age was the "only variable that is a significant predictor of parental support for males" (p.157), indicating that males may get less parental support as they age, at the time when they need it most. Additionally, although males in this study reported that they received less teacher support, the influence of this variable seemed to be stronger for males' behavior than for females.

Self-esteem, one socio-emotional factor related to academic identification, has also been shown to vary according to ethnicity and gender. Black females and males show relatively high self-esteem levels, but gender differences in self-esteem exist among European and Latino Americans, with females showing lower self-esteem. Ethnic identity appears to be an important predictor of overall self-esteem in environments that are ethnically diverse. Those adolescents with stronger ethnic identities have higher levels of self- esteem. Grade point average has also been shown to be important in predicting self-esteem in minority adolescents. However, among

African-American adolescents, there are many other predictors of self-esteem, including relationships with parents, teachers, and friends, as well as parental support and approval, which seem to be more important in predicting self-esteem for this group than academics. Interpersonal relationships may be a more important contributor to self-esteem for African Americans than for European Americans (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997).

Unfortunately, the perspectives presented in several theories that attempt to explain gender differences in academic identification and achievement among African-American students are pessimistic and imbalanced. African-American males are regarded in these theories as passive victims (Osborne, 2001), who are trapped in an endless cycle of underachievement. For countless reasons, sufficient research does not exist which examines the achievement of African-American males using a "normative developmental framework" (p.100). Instead, the viewpoint often presented in the literature is that this population deviates from the standards set for the White, male, middle-class (Spencer, 2001). Furthermore, correlational data are frequently used to support this view, which limits the strength of the research findings (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). There is a need for research in this area using a balanced approach and more robust research methods.

Racial Identity Theories and Academic Performance

Okagaki (2001) proposed the "Triarchic Model of Minority Children's School Achievement," as a multiple-factor model of academic performance among students of color. According to this model, schools, families, and the social identities of individual children contribute to the school performance of minorities. As part of the social identity, some

researchers have found that racial identity in African-American adolescents is a significant predictor of school performance among students in this group (Witherspoon et al., 1997; Rowley, 2000; Ford & Harris, 1997). An individual's identity as a group member is viewed as an important component of self-esteem, which may also be associated with academic achievement (Phinney et al., 1997).

Racial/ethnic identity becomes more relevant during adolescence as individuals wrestle with general identity issues. For ethnic minority adolescents, in comparison to other adolescents, the study of racial/ethnic identity is especially important as they may confront issues on a daily basis related to race/ethnicity and discrimination. Adolescents who learn to deal constructively with these issues may realize a more solid ethnic identity by the end of this period of their lives (Phinney, 1992; Phinney et al., 1997). During adolescence, individuals often decide how they will label themselves, who their role models will be, and the norms and values they will embrace (Rotheram-Borus, 1993).

Several theorists have hypothesized about the manner in which individuals arrive at a solid racial/ethnic identity, which they view as a developmental process that occurs during critical periods or in stages throughout the lifespan (Cross et al., 1999; Phinney, 1992, 1997; Shelton & Sellers, 2000). Racial/ethnic identity development theories were introduced in the 1930's (Shelton & Sellers, 2000), and are still in existence today. The use of the terms "racial" and "ethnic" varies by theory, and although some of the theorists use the terms interchangeably, others attempt to make clear distinctions between them. For example, Helms (1990) states that the term "racial identity" relates to "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perceptions that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group" (p.3) and the

"quality or manner of one's identification" (p.5) with one's own racial group. The term "race" is often used as a biological term in order to refer to the shared physical characteristics of a group of people who have a common genetic origin (Helms, 1990; Yancey et al., 2001). It is also important to consider that, in the United States, "race" is typically utilized as a sociological category. One's racial category is not necessarily the racial group with which an individual identifies (Helms, 1990).

Unlike the term "race," the term "ethnicity" refers to "a group classification of individuals who share a unique social and cultural heritage (customs, language, religion, and so on) passed on from generation to generation" (Casas, 1984, quoted in Helms, 1990, p.4). Based on this definition, categories of race and ethnicity sometimes overlap (Helms, 1990). Additionally, ethnic identity suggests formulating the concept of one's group membership as a component of self-perception and positive perceptions of one's ethnic group. Ethnic identity is a characteristic that varies within and between groups (Phinney, 1992; Yancey et al., 2001).

Racial/ethnic identity models. Shelton and Sellers (2000) have divided research on racial identity models into two main approaches: the underground and the mainstream. The focal point of underground approaches is the development, through cultural experiences, of racial identity as a stable, individual personality trait. Theories included in this category often incorporate qualitative descriptions of attitudes and beliefs African Americans may have about their own communities. Researchers whose work on racial/ethnic identity is representative of the underground approach are Cross (1999) and Helms (1990). One of the most widely researched racial identity theories, Cross's Model of Psychological Nigrescence (1999), is the basis for the

Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS), the instrument frequently used to assess racial identity under this model (Ford & Harris, 1997).

Cross, Strauss, and Fhagen-Smith (1999) theorized about the importance of racial identity for African-American students and pointed out related educational implications. According to their theory, African-American racial identity develops across the lifespan, and is a complex concept due to the variety of identities among African Americans. Under this theory, an individual's racial identity is based on the extent to which he/she views issues of race as salient in daily life. In a process described as "Nigrescence," a person with an identity in which race is of minor importance may develop an identity, through a series of stages, in which African-American culture becomes central. More recent research highlights the process of "racial socialization," (p.1220), and focuses specifically on ways in which African-American children's racial identity is developed based on parenting practices as well as in the neighborhood context (Caughy et al., 2006).

Of particular interest are the stages of racial identity development during adolescence, which Cross et al. (1999) based on Erik Erikson's (as cited in Cross et al., 1999) four part model of adolescent identity development: (1) Identity moratorium; (2) Achieved Identity; (3) Diffused Identity; and (4) Foreclosed Identity. Many African-American adolescents undergo an Eriksonian developmental "identity struggle" (p.37) during the five-stage Nigrescence process. In the first part of the process, the Pre-Encounter stage, African-Americans are described as favoring mainstream values over those of their own culture. During the Encounter stage, individuals may have experiences that increase their awareness of racial issues in society. Following this is the Immersion-Emersion stage, in which a number of individuals develop more

extreme, uncompromising views regarding their Black identity, and in the Internalization stage, the individual's new identity is more secure, based in racial pride. In the final stage, Internalization-Commitment, individuals refine their new identities and become more flexible, developing more humanistic ideas concerning racial issues (Cross et al., 1999; see also Shelton & Sellers, 2000; Witherspoon et al. 1997).

Cross et al. (1999) also discussed an area of identity development in adolescence that is unique to some racial/ethnic minority groups: oppositional identity or "nihilistic oppositionalism" (p.40). Similar to Ogbu (1997) and Mickelson (1990), Cross et al. (1999) theorized that oppositionalism among African American adolescents is a counterattack against racism, discrimination, and economic challenges in United States society, in which they reject societal institutions such as the school system. The nihilistic view is contrary to both mainstream culture and traditional African American culture in which education is valued. Cross et al. (1999) concluded with the educational implication that parents and teachers must impart to students the importance of functions such as code-switching in the daily lives of African-American people. Using the code-switching function, individuals temporarily assume the "norms and regulations of a group, organization, school, or workplace" (p.32) by changing their manner of thinking, attire, and self-expression. The use of such a function can enable students to adapt to school environments in which norms, values, expectations, and self-expression may differ from their home environments.

In contrast to the underground approach, the mainstream approach to racial identity highlights the universal aspects of group identity. Researchers with this line of thinking often compare different ethnic groups using the same measures of racial/ethnic identity, and have

established that racial identity is a construct that has stability over time (Shelton & Sellers, 2000). The most well known research under this approach is the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Model (MEIM) developed by Jean Phinney (1992). Like Cross et al. (1999), Phinney's (1992) ideas were derived from Eriksonian ego identity formation theory in addition to Marcia's research (as cited in Shelton & Sellers, 2000). Phinney described the ethnic identity development of different groups using four identity states: diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved (Shelton & Sellers, 2000; Phinney, 1992). In the MEIM model, Phinney presented ethnic identity as a universally relevant phenomenon, assuming that group identification is a human commonality, which is an especially significant part of adolescent development. Ethnic identity formation, like ego identity formation, comes about as a result of a period of exploration during adolescence. A "consistent movement toward ethnic identity achievement" (p.160) happens during the period between the ages of 16 and 19 years. Under the MEIM model, attitudes toward other ethnic groups, which may be influenced by one's ethnic identity, are also considered even though they are not identified under this model as components of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992). Phinney (2007) found that minority group members who were more strongly identified with their own ethnic group were more likely to be responsive and approachable to members of ethnic groups other than their own, whereas there was no relationship found between ethnic identity and other group orientation for European Americans.

Shelton and Sellers (2000) proposed an additional racial identity model, known as the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), in order to combine the strengths of the underground and mainstream approaches. Unlike these approaches, the MMRI is described as a "phenomenological approach . . . embracing individuals' perceptions of both the meaning and

significance of their race" (p.33), which takes into account the situational variability of this construct as well as its stability across time. The MMRI consists of four dimensions including: racial salience, racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology. Racial salience refers to the degree to which race is relevant to an African American in a particular situation. Racial centrality represents the degree to which African Americans define themselves in racial terms. Racial regard, which is made of the two components, private regard and public regard, is related to how African Americans see themselves and how others see African Americans. Racial ideology refers to the beliefs, opinions, and attitudes about the manner in which African Americans should act including four subdimensions: (1) nationalist (2) oppressed minority, (3) assimilationist, and (4) humanist ideologies. Under this model, racial centrality, regard, and ideology are considered to be stable across situations. However, race salience is influenced by the context, and thus, varies according to the situation. This was supported in the Shelton and Sellers (2000) research which showed that the more central race is to a person's self-concept, the more salient race will be to them in a variety of situations, particularly ambiguous situations.

One criticism of some of the above-mentioned racial/ethnic identity development theories is the erroneous assumption that individuals of ethnic minority backgrounds define their identity only in relation to European Americans. An additional criticism is that the instruments based on these theories, which researchers frequently use to measure racial/ethnic identity, are often limited in their examination of the components of identity, and have been "culturally tailored to a particular ethnic group (e.g. the Racial Identity Scale)" (Yancey et al. 2001, p.193). Furthermore, some racial/ethnic identity theorists such as Cross et al. (1999) have investigated racial/ethnic

identity development as a linear construct, but have failed to consider this idea as a many-sided, complex, and changing phenomena (Branch, 1994).

Racial/ethnic identity and academic performance. Several researchers (Cooper & Datnow, 2000; Rowley, 2000; Sheets, 1999; Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997) uphold affirmative racial/ethnic identity development as beneficial for academic achievement as well as for overall psychological development. Sheets (1999), purported that students who can exhibit rather than suppress their ethnic identity experience showed increased competence in school. In a study using a sample of 27 high school students of various ethnic background, which focused on student competence and ethnic identity, Sheets (1999) defined student competence as "… positive ethnic identity development, accelerated achievement in school work, and social adjustment" (p.160). The results of this qualitative research indicated that students demonstrated increased competence when the classroom instruction and climate were altered to include cultural knowledge. Same-race friendships were believed to have led to increased student competence as well as further ethnic identity development. However, the results of this study are limited since ethnic identity was not measured quantitatively. For this reason, the concrete gains in ethnic identity development were unknown since their measurement was based solely on descriptions such as increases in self-labeling and other behaviors indicative of positive ethnic identity. Overall, the results of this study showed that ethnic identity is an important part of daily social and academic experiences in school.

Researchers such as Cook and Ludwig (1998) have also investigated racial/ethnic identity and its impact on academic performance/motivation. The purpose of their study was to

investigate whether African American adolescents experience increased school alienation in comparison to European-American students. Cook and Ludwig (1998) also sought to discover if academic success results in social rejection for Black adolescents, and whether the social advantages and disadvantages of academic achievement differ according to race. The researchers utilized data derived from a self-administered questionnaire given to eighth grade students in 1988 and who were interviewed in 10th grade in 1990 and 1992 as part of the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), a study supported by the U.S. Department of Education. The sample was comprised of 17,544 students from 815 public schools and 237 private schools, 12,311 of whom identified themselves as European American and 1,742 identified themselves African American. The sample did not include students with identified mental, physical, or emotional disabilities.

The results of this study showed that African-American adolescents did not exhibit increased levels of school alienation in comparison to European American adolescents, and were found to be just as likely as European American students to finish high school when the researchers controlled for socioeconomic status. Both Black and White students who do well in school are no more likely to be unpopular than those who do not do well. Students who achieve highly are able to locate peer groups that will accept them. Contrary to previous research (i.e. Ogbu, 1997), the results of this study showed that African-American adolescents who were high achievers were more popular than those who had lower grades. According to these results, the researchers concluded that the social benefits of academic achievement for African Americans are greater than they are for White adolescents. These researchers pointed out that research on “acting white” has excluded an examination of the social benefits of high achievement, not just the social

costs. The benefits and costs may "offset" (p.392) each other. There may be little difference between the manner in which Black and White students who are high achievers are treated by their peers. White students may not use the term "acting white," but they may use other derogatory terms for students who achieve highly (Cook & Ludwig, 1998). Other research has also shown that adolescents in all ethnic groups may ridicule peers for academic success, indicating that this experience is not specific to one particular ethnic group (Okagaki, 2001; Boyer & Mendelsohn, 2007). Cook and Ludwig (1998) concluded that the achievement gap between Black and White students is not accounted for by group differences in peer attitudes. Instead, disparities in family backgrounds may help to explain the differences that do exist.

Altschul, Oyserman, and Bybee (2006) also investigated the manner in which beliefs about academic achievement in relation to group membership influence achievement levels over time in adolescents. These researchers based their study on a "Tripartite Model" (p. 1156) of academic achievement which includes the following three aspects of racial-ethnic identity: 1) Awareness of Racism: an awareness of negative view others may hold about one's racial/ethnic group; (2) Embedded Achievement: "the belief that achievement is an in-group identifier, a part of being a good in-group member, and the related sense that achievement of some in-group members helps other in-group members succeed" (p.1156); and (3) Connectedness: a "positive sense of in-group belonging… a pride in … history, traditions, and ways of being in one's group" (p.1156). In a study of 139 eighth graders, including 98 African-American students and 41 Latino students, from three low-income, urban middle schools, the researchers found that Connectedness, Awareness, and Embedded Achievement are stable during mid-adolescence in

both male and female students. They also discovered that African-American and Latino students with high scores in all three of these areas earned higher grades.

Rowley (2000) is another researcher who has studied the connection between racial/ethnic identity and academic performance. Rowley suggested that one problem with previous research on this topic has been that it has been conducted with the assumption that all African American students react to racism in a similar manner and many of these studies have only centered on cases in which African-American students have failed. Rowley's study showed that there are many perspectives among African Americans about educational utility regardless of their level of academic performance.

Rowley (2000) defined educational utility as, "the value a student places on doing well in school and on getting a good education" (p. 5). A student who possesses a positive sense of educational utility feels that hard work and academic achievement result in better employment prospects and success. According to Mickelson (1990) and Rowley (2000), who both proposed a dichotomous model of educational utility, one dimension of educational utility is "idealistic educational utility" (p. 5) in which hard work is linked with success, and the second dimension of educational utility is "context-specific educational utility" (p.5), the idea that due to background factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, effort in education does not necessarily lead to success in one's occupation. The dichotomous model of educational utility is one explanation for positive attitudes towards education that some African American students hold simultaneously with an awareness of discrimination. Some African-American students may use what they perceive about discrimination as a motivator to help them achieve more in order to disprove stereotypes about inferiority related to this group.

In this study, the sample was comprised of 126 African-American college students from predominantly White universities and historically Black universities (Rowley, 2000). The sample was approximately 74.6% female. Using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) consisting of 52, 7-point Likert scale items, the Utility of Education for Blacks Scale (UEB) self-reported information on grade point averages (G.PA.), and an instrument measuring interracial contact, Rowley (2000) found that African-American students who achieve highly are not homogeneous regarding their analysis of educational utility, but rather hold to a variety of perspectives. The results showed that there were high-achieving students who held both idealistic and context-specific ideas in relation to educational utility. Contrary to what some researchers such as Ogbu (1997) purport, some underachieving students strongly feel that education is useful for their future. The students in this group showed high scores in idealistic utility and average scores in context-specific educational utility. Other results indicated that students who have lower Assimilation beliefs and low educational utility beliefs did well in school whereas those with higher Assimilation scores who were idealistic about education did not do well, which is contrary to the well-publicized ideas of some theorists (i.e., Ogbu, 1997; Philipsen, 1999).

Rowley (2000) also discovered a group of students, known as the "aware achievers" (p.20), who were perceptive about societal obstacles such as racism and classism that have the potential to block their success, but did well in school despite this perception and continued to place a high value on education. The aware achievers were found to be moderate in terms of their attitudes about each of the racial ideologies such as assimilation, humanism, and nationalism, which may have permitted them to attach importance to education while continuing to be aware of the part that discrimination plays in the lives of African Americans. Rowley believes that the "aware

achievers" profile may indicate the use of "flexibility or code-switching ability" (p.20), an ability that is functional in a variety of situations.

Another cluster of students Rowley (2000) found were idealistic low achievers. These students held positive views about the value of education and believed strongly in assimilation, but these ideals were not reflected in actual school success. Additionally, a cluster of low-utility low achievers was also found that consisted of students who were considered to be the traditional underachievers with a negative perspective about education. Furthermore, other students exhibited high levels of academic achievement who also had surprisingly low educational utility levels. This cluster of students showed low scores in assimilation and humanism indicating that they were slightly nationalistic, having the least contact with European Americans before entering higher education, ignoring mainstream educational values, but continuing to do well in school. It is possible that students in this group assume that a positive response to racism is high academic achievement. The results of this study suggest that students who "act white" are not necessarily high achievers, which is consistent with the findings of Carter (2006).

Among the limitations in Rowley's (2000) research include its small sample size which limits the generalizability of the results. According to the researcher, the small sample size limited the number of clusters, and larger samples make the results of cluster analytic research more generalizable. Secondly, the study was cross-sectional, but it would be ideal to study these variables as a longitudinal investigation. Furthermore, the study included a limited number of variables that are associated with academic achievement.

Other researchers who have studied racial/ethnic identity attitudes and their effect on academic achievement are Witherspoon, Speight, and Thomas (1997). According to these

researchers, racial identity among African-American students is strongly connected with peer acceptance, in which a negative relationship is drawn between high-achieving students and the strength of their racial/ethnic identities. With views that are representative of the cultural-ecological perspective on the achievement gap, these researchers proposed that peer influence may be one of the primary obstacles to achievement for African American adolescents (see also Ogbu 1997; Philipsen 1999). The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which racial identity, self-esteem, and academic self-concept would result in academic success in African-American high school students. The researchers defined academic self-concept as "…one's sense of personal efficacy about academic activities" (p.347).

Eighty-six African-American high school students from Upward Bound programs at Midwestern universities participated in this study (Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997). Thirty-five percent of the sample was male and 65% was female. Utilizing the Personal Orientation Inventory/Self-Regard subscale to measure self-actualization, the Academic Concept-Scale to measure positive feelings about individual academic ability, and the Racial Identity Attitude Scale- Short Form B to assess racial identity, the researchers found that none of the racial identity attitudes were significantly related to academic self-concept or self-actualization. They also discovered that self-actualization scores were positively related to academic self-concept scores, indicating that increases in self-esteem were associated with increases in academic self-concept. Internalized racial identity appeared to be the only racial identity attitude which was positively associated with high academic self-concept. Additionally, academic self-concept was significantly related to GPA and the lower a student's GPA, the stronger their Encounter and Immersion attitudes. This result led the researchers to conclude that

African-American students who are strongly identified with African-American culture may view school achievement as exclusive to European American culture and find themselves lost in academic-related settings for this reason, which is consistent with the theories of Fordham and Ogbu (1986).

Research that contrasts this cultural-ecological perspective is the work of Cooper and Datnow (2000) who examined the influences of family, school, and peers on the academic success of African-American adolescent students who attend independent schools. In this study, in which they utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the sample consisted of 31 African-American 11th and 12th grade students from independent schools in the Baltimore Educational Scholarship Trust (BEST) program who completed surveys. Additionally, 42 students completed semi-structured interviews, 28 of whom also completed the survey. The results indicated that most of these students had feelings of isolation at independent schools, and although most considered themselves to be middle class and were children of college graduates, they felt that White students perceived them as economically deprived, which contributed to their feelings of isolation. Although these students perceived themselves to be isolated at their schools, they also reported having the support of their teachers and believed that their schools made efforts to integrate them in the environment. Furthermore, the majority of these students felt that their peers were also academically successful and that the African-American peer group networks at their schools were one of the most important factors in aiding them in dealing with their school environments. The researchers posited that these peer networks encouraged achievement and the African-American students in these schools did not equate academic success with “acting White” (p.202), but instead rejected peers who were not academically

successful, which is contrary to the cultural ecological perspective of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Ogbu (1997).

One interesting finding of Witherspoon et al., (1997) was that males showed significantly higher Immersion attitudes, which may have detached them from the academic environment. In connection with this finding, females were found to have significantly higher GPAs than males. Similar to the findings of Rowley (2000), the results of the Witherspoon et al. (1997) study suggested that there were a variety of racial identity attitudes among African-American students. They found that high school students who had positive Black identities also received good grades. In contrast to the findings of the Rowley (2000) study, the results revealed that students who held pro-Black/anti-White views received low grades.

Among the limitations to this research were the limited generalizability of the sample given that all of students were from the Upward Bound program. Additionally, using cumulative GPA as an outcome measure may have been problematic because it is a "distal measure" (p.355), and more "proximal" (p.355) measures of school performance may have been more appropriate such as time spent doing homework. Other limitations to this study were that the instruments utilized were normed on college students rather than a high school population, and the language used in instruments, such as that of the RIAS, may have been considered out-of-date from the perspective of adolescents (Witherspoon, et al., 1997).

In contrast to the research findings of Witherspoon et al. (1997), in a study that included a sample of 562 African-American, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, Spencer et al. (2001) found that students who were high achievers were more likely to have highly Afrocentric identities, rather than highly Eurocentric identities. Additionally, similar to the other researchers (i.e. Phinney,

Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997), Spencer et al. (2001) determined that high self-esteem was related to high academic achievement. Furthermore, in African-American students, high self-esteem was associated with low Eurocentric value, which is contrary to the theories of Fordham and Ogbu (1986).

Other research has investigated racial/ethnic identity and gender differences in achievement between African-American males and females. In their study of 152 African-American middle and high school students, Ford and Harris (1997) found that 40% of these students achieved below the expected level. Most of the students identified as underachievers in this study were African-American males in general education. Females had significantly higher grades than males, but a significant difference in standardized test scores was not shown. In terms of racial identity, the majority of the students in this study had strong, positive identification with African Americans as a group, but males seemed to be more strongly identified with their ethnicity than females. Females in this study appeared to have identities that were more multicultural and pluralistic than males. Females enjoyed being African American, but also saw worth in other racial and cultural groups (Ford & Harris, 1997). The findings of many of these studies suggest that in order for African-American adolescents to be academically successful, it is not necessary for them to espouse solely Afrocentric or mainstream values. Positive educational outcomes can occur when African-American students have a positive sense of their ethnic identities as well as when they exhibit flexibility in their attitudes.

Along with physical, emotional, and psychological changes that occur during adolescence are other developmental changes such as the ability to think logically. Recent research which has investigated ethnic identity in African American adolescents and academic performance has also

explored the development of logical reasoning, socioeconomic status, and self-esteem. Of the researchers who have explored this area are Chapell and Overton (2002) who were interested in studying the development of deductive reasoning in African-American adolescents. The researchers defined deductive reasoning as, ". . . an inference process that moves from general to particular propositions, where general premises provide absolutely certain evidence for the truth of particular conclusions" (p.296). The sample in this study included 330 African American students in the 6th, 10th, and 12th grades from middle and high schools in an urban area as well as 115 undergraduate students who completed demographic information forms, self-reported their GPAs, completed Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, and completed Overton's selection task which measured deductive reasoning. The selection task consisted of 10 problems in test booklets which were written in the form "if p, then q", such as "If a person is drinking beer, then the person must be over 21" (p.303). The students also completed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM).

The results of Chapell and Overton's (2002) research revealed no gender differences on any of the dependent variables, but did show as a cross-sectional study, that formal deductive reasoning performance rose in African-American adolescents over time, with college students having the highest performance, showing that this ability develops over the course of adolescence. As the researchers expected, African-American students who were from high socioeconomic backgrounds performed more highly in school and on the deductive reasoning task than African American students of lower socioeconomic status. In contrast to the theory of Ogbu (1997), this research showed that African-American students with higher identification with their ethnic group had higher performance on the logical reasoning task, and an association

between ethnic identity level and GPA was not discovered. The results of this study also indicated, as per Steele's (1997) stereotype-threat theory, that there was support found for school disidentification in some grades based on the decrease in the relationship between GPA and self-esteem after the 6th grade. However, the relationship between these two variables increased in college students, which the researchers felt was reflective of equal educational opportunity for African- and European- American students at this level.

Racial/ethnic identity and bicultural competence. As mentioned previously, many African-American students, who are positively and strongly identified with their own ethnic group, perform well academically (Rowley, 2000; Mehan et al., 1996; Okagaki, 2001; Spencer et al., 2001). Some of these students demonstrate a flexibility or code-switching ability in their racial/ethnic identity. These students tend to view issues of race moderately, which may inspire idealistic views about education and permit them to adapt to a variety of situations. One finding of Rowley (2000) that leads to more questions is that college students who had low educational utility and achieved highly also tended to have less contact with people of other ethnic groups (Rowley, 2000). In contrast, Okagaki (2001) stated that a bicultural attitude contributes to academic achievement as students of ethnic minority backgrounds maintain a strong, positive identification with their own ethnic group while simultaneously adopting mainstream values (i.e., a positive value of education). Unfortunately, this assumes that a secure ethnic identity and the values connected with it are always contrary to the values of the mainstream. The question remains about whether the amount of contact ethnic minority adolescents have with individuals of other ethnic backgrounds influences whether they become bicultural competent, and adopt

"mainstream" values such as the high educational utility discussed in the Rowley (2000) study. More research is needed in this area.

Rotheram-Borus (1993) has pointed out that, in this multicultural society, adolescents of many ethnic backgrounds can be considered "bicultural" (p.83) since they are exposed to and associate with people of other groups than their own. Some adolescents demonstrate "bicultural competence" (p.86), in which they show flexibility in using various types of social and cultural norms that depend on the environment and situation. Framboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1995) described biculturally competent individuals as those who are secure in their own ethnic identities and who also have an awareness of the beliefs and values, social and emotional behavior, and communication of another culture/ethnic group. These individuals are able to engage in positive social interaction within another cultural/ethnic group, function properly within their own culture and another culture, communicate verbally and nonverbally, and develop a role within another culture.

Spencer et al. (2006) highlighted the "cultural dissonance" (p.654) that is often experienced by ethnic minority adolescents when they encounter "conflicting cultural values and norms … in "culturally salient situations" (p.654). In this diverse society, African American, Latino, and Native American adolescents may find it necessary to use various coping strategies depending on their environmental situations in schools and neighborhoods in order to decrease their cultural dissonance. In this process, maintaining a solid sense of identity across various settings is essential, and it is important to learn how to function successfully in different contexts.

Individuals who effectively use code switching in communication demonstrate bicultural competence. One example of this type of code-switching is the use of varying language and social interaction patterns in different contexts often observed in African-Americans and Spanish-speaking adolescents. The term code -switching is often used to refer to the act of alternating between two languages, tones, or dialects within the same language (Greene & Walker, 2004). Perry (2003) stated that the use of standard English or "standard African-American language" (p.84) can vary with the context, such as informal or formal settings. For example, one can be seen as "uppity" (p.84) if formal language is used in informal settings or one can be disregarded if one uses informal language in a formal situation. Carter (2006) suggested that bicultural identity is not a linear phenomenon. There is also significant variability among students with bicultural identities, with some who easily traverse environments while switching between "cultural codes" (p.322) and with others who blend different cultural identities. Miller (1999) deduced that a bicultural identity is beneficial in the educational environment because the students continue to have a strong identification with their own ethnic group, but they learn how to adapt to the academic environment. However, more empirical investigations of how bicultural competence relates to the academic achievement gap in adolescence are needed.

In summary, existing research leads to many questions regarding the connection between racial/ethnic identity development in adolescence, bicultural competence, and academic achievement. Several previous studies of racial/ethnic identity and academic performance in African-American adolescents have been qualitative with small sample sizes or have combined qualitative with quantitative methodologies. While qualitative research is valuable, there is a

need for a more quantitative investigation of this topic. The quantitative studies that exist in this area often rely heavily on archival data, which can also be valuable, but the conclusions the researchers draw from these data should be viewed with caution since they are often formulated after-the-fact and based solely on correlations. Additionally, many of these studies only utilize self-reported measures of academic achievement which are sometimes unreliable since some individuals overestimate their academic performance to appear socially desirable (Cook & Ludwig, 1998). A study is needed on this topic that utilizes a more reliable measure of academic achievement than a self-reported one (Chapell & Overton, 2002). Furthermore, many of these studies utilized measures of racial/ethnic identities with age groups for which the scales were not normed, which calls into question the validity of the results. Finally, many of these studies assess the ethnic identity of African-American students in isolation without considering this variable along with variables such as bicultural competence.

The present study was an investigation of the relationship between ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and academic achievement among urban African-American adolescents. To review, the term "ethnic identity" refers to a "sense of belonging, positive attitudes, commitment, and involvement with one's group" (Phinney et al., 1997, p.178), and biculturally competent individuals are those who are secure in their own ethnic identities, are knowledgeable about the beliefs and values, social/emotional behavior, and communication of another culture/ethnic group, and engage in positive social interaction with other groups. Measures of ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and academic achievement were administered that were normed for use with a multicultural adolescent population. Additionally, rather than assessing African-American

students in isolation, the study included adolescents from other ethnic backgrounds. The following major research questions that were investigated:

- What is the relationship between ethnicity, ethnic identity, bicultural competence, gender, and academic achievement? In other words, are ethnicity, ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and gender related to reading achievement and math achievement?
- Are there ethnic group differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement?
- Are there ethnic group differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement?
- Are there gender differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement?
- Do gender differences exist among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement?

The minor questions that will be investigated in this study are:

- Are urban adolescent students who are high in bicultural competence also likely to have strong ethnic identities?
- Are urban adolescent students who are high in bicultural competence likely to have higher socioeconomic status?
- What is the relationship between achievement and socioeconomic status for urban African-American adolescents and urban adolescents of other ethnicities?

- What is the relationship between place of birth and socioeconomic status?
- Are there ethnic group differences in the relationship between student place of birth and academic achievement levels?
- Do ethnic group differences exist in terms of the relationship between parent place of birth and academic achievement for students from these two groups?
- What is the relationship between parent place of birth and bicultural competence?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Participants

Administrators and other school personnel from public, parochial, and charter middle schools were contacted in two Northeastern states. Urban schools in two public school districts, 16 parochial schools, and 20 charter schools in addition to several school psychologists were contacted by phone, fax, electronic mail, and in person in order to obtain permission for access to the schools as research sites. School personnel were provided with a written description of the study, the permission/consent form for parents, and the adolescent assent forms. The study was open to students of all ethnic backgrounds. The consent and assent forms were made available in both English and Spanish for schools with a bilingual, English/Spanish speaking student population. The principal was asked to distribute this information to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers who identified potentially eligible students and distributed permission and assent forms to students. Informed consent/assent was obtained in writing from parents and students who wished to participate. Participants who were included in the study were those who returned both the permission/consent form from their parent/legal guardian and who also signed the adolescent assent form. Participants took part in this research on a voluntary basis.

The participants in the current study included a total of 72 students who represented a variety of ethnic backgrounds including students who self-identified as African American (n=43), Latino (n=11), and Other (n=18). Students included in the Other category included students who self-

identified as Mixed, Other, Asian American, or Native American. Twelve sixth grade students, 23 seventh grade students, and 37 eighth grade students from three urban parochial schools and one urban charter school participated. The sample was 65.3% female (n=47) and 34.7% male (n=25). The students ranged in age from 11 to 15 years of age. Approximately 85% of the sample reported being born in the United States, and 15% of the sample reported having a birthplace outside the United States. Approximately 2% of African-American participants reported that they were born outside of the United States, and 34.5% of students who self-identified with other ethnicities reported having a birthplace outside of the United States. Eighty-five percent of the participants attended schools in which African-American students consisted of 97% or more of the school's population. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch at each school ranged from 48% to 95% (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008).

Design

Using a correlational design, ethnic identity, ethnicity, and bicultural competence were examined as independent variables. The dependent variables in this study were reading and math achievement. Students were grouped according to their ethnicity, which was determined by self-report on the ethnic identity measure and a brief demographics information form.

Setting and Apparatus

The data in this study were collected working with the students individually at their participating school. Individual students completed each measure in a classroom that had been

set aside for the purpose of the interview. The equipment used in this study included copies of the MEIM, the Demographic Information Form, and a stopwatch to record the time elapsed during the interview session with each student.

Measures

Measures of participant characteristics. Each participant completed a brief demographic information form at the beginning of the testing session to obtain information about age, date of birth, gender, country of origin, and parent's country of origin. This form, consisting of five items, was designed by the primary researcher. Additionally, information on socioeconomic status (SES) was estimated for each student using information about the percentage of students in each school who received free or reduced-priced lunch, which has been used as a measure of SES in previous research (Spencer et al., 2001).

Ethnic identity. The Revised Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999) was used to measure the ethnic identity of the participants in the sample. English and Spanish translations are available (Thomas, 2006). This instrument has been used in numerous studies with ethnically diverse adolescent samples (Yancey et al., 2001). The Revised MEIM is a 12-item questionnaire that measures two ethnic identity factors: (1) ethnic identity search attitudes and (2) affirmation, belonging, and commitment. Specifically, the Revised MEIM consists of the Affirmation/Belonging subscale which is made up of 7 items, and the Exploration subscale, which consists of 5 items. Some items are also included in the MEIM, which are not part of the score, such as items that examine

self-identification and ethnicity of parents. Using a 4-point Likert-type scale, the items are rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with scores ranging from 1 to 4 for each item. The MEIM is scored by calculating the mean of the item scores to obtain an overall score. The overall reliability for the Revised, 12-item MEIM was found to be .85, and ranged from .81 to .89 across 10 different ethnic groups. Evidence of the measures validity has been found in positive correlations with measures of psychological well-being, such as self-esteem (.20) and optimism (.19), and negative correlations with qualities such as depression(-.09) and loneliness (-.09) (Phinney, n.d.; Roberts, et al., 1999).

Ethnic identity, as measured by the MEIM, has been found to contain two factors; belonging and exploration, which are separate, but highly correlated with each other. This scale includes items such as "I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments," and "I participate in cultural practices of my own ethnic group, such as special food, music, or customs." High scores on the MEIM suggest stronger ethnic identities and low scores suggest weaker ethnic identities (Chapell & Overton, 2002; Phinney, 1992; Roberts, et al., 1999).

Bicultural competence. Six additional items, that are included on the original MEIM (Phinney, 1992), but are considered to be a separate scale on the questionnaire, measure "other-group orientation" (p.164). These items were used to measure the variable "bicultural competence." Scoring for this subscale requires reversing the scores of negatively worded items, adding together the scores of each item on the subscale, and obtaining the mean score. Internal consistency reliability for the other-group orientation scale was found to be .71 for high school

and .74 for college students (Phinney, 1992) Other research including individuals ages 13 – 26 as participants has shown a reliability coefficient of .79 (Branch 2001).

The separate six-item, "other-group orientation" (Phinney, 1992, p.164) scale measures "attitudes toward and interaction with" (Phinney, 1992, p.161) people from ethnic groups other than the group to which an individual belongs. This brief scale includes items such as Item 4, "I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own," and Item 17, "I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups."

Overall, the MEIM is considered to be a reliable instrument that can be utilized to explore the "similarities and differences in ethnic identity and its correlates among youths from different ethnic groups" (Phinney, 1992, p.156). Other literature also points out that the MEIM is psychometrically adequate for use with youth of various ethnic groups (Burlew, Bellow, & Lovett, 2000; Roberts et al., 1999; Yancey et al., 2001).

Ethnicity. Each student was asked to identify his/her ethnicity as part of the administration of the MEIM. The item reads as follows: "In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be _____."

Reading and math achievement. Reading and math achievement data were based on standardized test scores collected from school records for each participant. The standardized test scores available in school records included data from the TerraNova, Second Edition or the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA).

The TerraNova, Second Edition, is an achievement test which supplies both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced information for skills and concepts acquired by students in

grades K-12. Norming samples for the test were designed to accurately represent the diverse backgrounds of students in the United States population. Alpha coefficients representing internal consistency reliability for the total test range from .95 to .96. For individual subareas such as reading, internal consistency was found to be in the mid- to low .90s across grade levels. Validity evidence suggests that the TerraNova measures the same achievement constructs across racial/ethnic groups. Differential item functioning (DIF) analyses revealed that a small percentage of items functioned in favor of or against African American, Hispanic, or Other students (Cizek, Johnson, & Mazzie, 2004). Predictive validity for the TerraNova has been found to range from .67 to .82 (Brown & Coughlin, 2007).

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a criterion-referenced test taken annually by Pennsylvania students in grades 3 through 8 and in grade 11 in reading and math. This assessment is used to measure achievement of academic standards by individual students, and is also used to evaluate how well schools help their students attain academic standards (PA Department of Education, n.d.). The PSSA has reliability coefficients of 0.9 or greater in the areas of reading and math. It is also reported to have high internal consistency reliability coefficients, which are believed to be related to the high number of items on each subtest. The PSSA correlates positively and significantly with other standardized tests such as the Terra Nova and the California Achievement Test, Fifth Edition (CAT-5). Correlations between the PSSA and these tests range from 0.7 to 0.9 (Thacker, 2004).

Procedure

During a total period of approximately 10 minutes, each student participated in an individual administration of the measures mentioned above. The administration of these measures took place in the students' schools. Data were collected throughout the regular school year. When the participant entered the testing room with the examiner, the purpose of the project was reviewed for the participant using the adolescent assent form. Participants were informed that they had the right to ask questions about the process at any time and had the option to choose not to participate. Two students chose not to participate when given the option.

Following the completion of assent, the MEIM was administered. Each item of the MEIM was read aloud to the participants to avoid any problems with literacy. This procedure has been successfully used in previous studies (Yancey et al., 2001). There was only one investigator who met with all the participants. All participants were debriefed before they left the testing area, which included additional opportunities for the participants to ask questions or make comments about the measures and their participation.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions of the study, two groups were compared: African American (n=43) and Other (n=29). Students included in the Other category included students who self-identified as Latino, Mixed, Other, Asian American, and Native American.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were used to answer the following research questions:

- Are ethnicity, ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and gender related to reading achievement and math achievement?
- Are there ethnic group differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement?
- Are there ethnic group differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement?
- Are there gender differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement?
- Do gender differences exist among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement?

Standard multiple regression analyses were utilized to further investigate the relationship between academic achievement and the other primary variables in this study. In the multiple regression analyses, the dependent variables included reading and math achievement, and the predictor variables included ethnicity, ethnic identity, bicultural competence, gender, and grade level. These analyses were used in order to examine trends.

Pearson product-moment correlations were also used to answer the following additional research questions:

- Are urban adolescent students who are high in bicultural competence also likely to have strong ethnic identities?

- Are urban adolescent students who are high in bicultural competence likely to have higher socioeconomic status?
- What is the relationship between achievement and socioeconomic status for urban African-American adolescents and urban adolescents of other ethnicities?
- What is the relationship between place of birth and socioeconomic status?
- Are there ethnic group differences in the relationship between student place of birth and academic achievement levels?
- Do ethnic group differences exist in terms of the relationship between parent place of birth and academic achievement for students from these two groups?
- What is the relationship between parent place of birth and bicultural competence?

CHAPTER 4

Results

Primary Analyses

Descriptive statistics were computed by ethnicity for the following variables: variables ethnic identity, bicultural competence, achievement, grade, gender, age, student place of birth, parent place of birth, and free or reduced-price lunch. Descriptive statistics were also computed by gender for the following variables: ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and achievement. The descriptive statistics for these variables are summarized in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations by Ethnic Group for Each Variable

	African American			Other		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Ethnic Identity	3.27	0.31	43	3.24	0.30	29
Bicultural Competence	3.52	0.40	43	3.54	0.39	29
Reading Achievement	50.91	23.16	43	45.11	21.11	29
Math Achievement	53.91	24.64	43	41.91	23.43	29
Grade	7.47	0.74	43	7.17	0.76	29
Gender	1.47	0.50	43	1.17	0.38	29
Age	12.88	0.88	43	12.52	0.91	29
STPB	1.02	0.15	43	1.34	0.48	29
PPB	1.05	0.21	43	1.28	0.45	29
FRLnch	55.57	7.24	43	70.08	20.09	29

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages by Ethnic Group for Grade, Gender, Student Place of Birth, and Parent Place of Birth

	African American		Other	
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
Grade				
6	6	14.0	6	20.7
7	11	25.6	12	41.4
8	26	60.5	11	37.9
Gender				
Girls	23	53.5	24	82.8
Boys	20	46.5	5	17.2
STPB				
In USA	42	97.7	19	65.5
Outside USA	1	2.3	10	34.5
PPB				
In USA	41	95.3	21	72.4
Outside USA	2	4.7	8	27.6

In Tables 1 and 2: STPB= Student Place of Birth; PPB= Parent Place of Birth; FRLnch= Free-Reduced Lunch

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations by Gender for Ethnic Identity, Bicultural Competence, and Achievement

	Girls			Boys		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
African American						
Ethnic Identity	3.34	0.35	23	3.20	0.24	20
Bicultural Competence	3.60	0.34	23	3.43	0.45	20
Reading	51.26	19.45	23	50.50	23.34	20
Math	48.17	23.53	23	60.50	24.82	20
Other						
Ethnic Identity	3.28	0.31	24	3.05	0.19	5
Bicultural Competence	3.53	0.38	24	3.60	0.48	5
Reading	47.26	17.82	24	34.8	33.66	5
Math	44.72	22.02	24	28.40	27.90	5

Eth ID= Ethnic Identity; BC = Bicultural Competence

Relationship between identity variables, gender, and achievement. Are ethnicity, ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and gender related to reading and math achievement? To answer this question, bivariate correlations were computed for each ethnic group with each of the other variables. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Bivariate Correlations for Each Variable by Ethnicity

		BC	Gender	Grade	Reading	Math
African American						
	Eth ID	.21	-.23	.19	-.07	-.26
	BC		-.20	.40**	-.03	-.20
	Gender			-.47**	-.02	.25
	Grade				.04	-.31*
	Reading					.65**
Other						
	Eth ID	.03	-.30	-.21	.17	.32
	BC		.07	-.09	.28	.51**
	Gender			-.11	-.23	-.27
	Grade				-.02	.05
	Reading					.72**

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
Eth ID= Ethnic Identity; BC = Bicultural Competence

No significant relationships were found between ethnic identity and any other variable among African-American adolescents or adolescents from other groups. A significant positive relationship was found between bicultural competence and grade level for African-American students, indicating that African-American students' levels of bicultural competence increased as their grade levels in school increased ($r=.40$, $p<.01$). No other significant relationships were found between bicultural competence and other variables for African-American adolescents. For African-American adolescents, a significant negative relationship was found between math

achievement and grade level, indicating that math achievement decreased for African-American students as their grade levels increased ($r=-.31$, $p<.05$). A significant positive relationship was found between bicultural competence and math achievement for students in the Other ethnicities group, suggesting that students from Other ethnicities who were high in bicultural competence also had higher math achievement scores ($r=.51$, $p<.01$). The strongest relationship was found between reading and math achievement for both African Americans ($r= .65$, $p<.01$) and adolescents in the Other ethnicities group ($r=.72$, $p<.01$). Students from both groups tended to score higher in reading if they also had high achievement in math.

Prediction of academic achievement from identity variables, gender, and grade level. In order to further investigate the relationships between achievement and the other primary variables in this study, a multiple regression analysis for the dependent variables, reading and math achievement, was computed using the predictor variables ethnicity, ethnic identity, bicultural competence, gender, and grade level (see Phinney et al., 1997). The results of this standard multiple regression analysis indicated that no significant overall relationship was found between these variables and reading or math achievement. As a result of the limitation in sample size which reduced the statistical significance of the multiple regression results, these results are only presented to indicate trends.

Relationship between bicultural competence and achievement by ethnicity. Are there ethnic group differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement? Pearson correlations were computed to answer this question. The results suggested that there were no significant relationships between academic achievement and bicultural competence for African-American adolescents. For students from

other ethnic groups, a significant relationship between reading achievement and bicultural competence was not found, but a significant positive relationship between bicultural competence and math achievement was revealed for students from other ethnic groups ($r=.51$, $p<.01$).

Relationship between ethnic identity and achievement by ethnicity. Are there ethnic group differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement? Pearson correlations were utilized to answer this question. The results showed that there were no statistically significant relationships between academic achievement and ethnic identity for African-American adolescents. Similarly, for students from other ethnic groups, a significant relationship was not found between academic achievement and ethnic identity.

Relationship between bicultural competence and achievement by gender. Are there gender differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement? Pearson correlations were computed to answer this question. The results revealed no significant relationships between bicultural competence and academic achievement in African-American students of either gender. No significant relationships were found between bicultural competence and reading achievement among boys and girls of other ethnic groups. However, a significant correlation was found between bicultural competence and math achievement among girls of other ethnic groups, suggesting that adolescent girls from the Other ethnicities group who were higher in bicultural competence tended to achieve more highly in math ($r=.52$, $p<.01$).

Relationship between ethnic identity and achievement by gender. Do gender differences exist among urban adolescents in the relationship between ethnic identity and academic

achievement? To answer this question, Pearson correlations were calculated. The results did not indicate significant relationships between ethnic identity and academic achievement in African-American students of either gender. No significant relationships were found between ethnic identity and academic achievement among boys and girls of other ethnic groups.

Table 5

Bivariate Correlations for Additional Analyses by Ethnicity

		BC	FRLnch	Reading	Math	STPB	PPB
African American							
	Eth ID	.21	.01	-.07	-.26	-.14	-.17
	BC		.26	-.03	-.20	-.14	.04
	FRLnch			-.20	-.35*	.30	.26
	Reading				.65**	.31*	.09
	Math					.26	.02
	STPB						.70**
Other							
	Eth ID	.03	.24	.17	.32	.01	.08
	BC		-.52**	.28	.51**	-.26	-.70**
	FRLnch			-.31	-.50**	.61**	.73**
	Reading				.72**	-.30	-.45*
	Math					-.40*	-.55**
	STPB						.53**

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
Eth ID= Ethnic Identity; BC = Bicultural Competence; FRLnch= Free-Reduced Lunch
STPB= Student Place of Birth; PPB= Parent Place of Birth
Note: STPB and PPB are dichotomous: 1=Born in U.S.A.; 2=Born outside U.S.A.

Additional Analyses

Relationship between bicultural competence and ethnic identity. To answer the additional questions in this study, Pearson correlations were calculated. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 4. Are urban adolescent students who are high in bicultural competence also likely to have strong ethnic identities? The correlation results revealed no significant relationship between bicultural competence and ethnic identity for either African Americans or students of other ethnicities.

Relationship between bicultural competence and socioeconomic status. Are urban adolescent students who are high in bicultural competence likely to have higher socioeconomic status? For African American students, no significant relationship was found between bicultural competence and eligibility for free or reduced-priced lunch. For students of other ethnicities, a significant negative relationship was found between bicultural competence and eligibility for free or reduced priced lunch ($r=-.52$, $p<.01$). Students from other ethnicities who were low in bicultural competence were more likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Relationship between achievement and socioeconomic status. Pearson correlations were also computed to explore the relationship between achievement and socioeconomic status for urban African-American adolescents and urban adolescents of other ethnicities. The Pearson correlations indicated that there was no significant relationship between reading and receiving free or reduced-price lunch for African-American students and students of other ethnicities who

participated in this study. However, a significant negative relationship was found between math achievement and free or reduced-price lunch for both African-American students ($r= -.35$, $p<.05$) and students from other ethnicities ($r=-.50$, $p<.01$). Students from both ethnic groups who achieved higher in math were less likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Relationship between place of birth and socioeconomic status. What is the relationship between place of birth and socioeconomic status? For African-American students, no significant Pearson correlation was found between these variables. However, for students from other ethnicities, a significant positive relationship was shown between student place of birth and free or reduced-price lunch ($r=.61$, $p<.01$) as well as between parent place of birth and free or reduced-price lunch ($r=.73$, $p<.01$). Students from other ethnicities who were not born in this country were more likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch. Furthermore, students from other ethnicities whose parents were not born in this country were also more likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Relationship between place of birth and academic achievement. Are there ethnic group differences in the relationship between student place of birth and academic achievement levels? For African-American students, a significant positive correlation was found between student place of birth and reading achievement ($r=.31$, $p<.05$). For students from other ethnic backgrounds, a significant negative relationship was revealed between student place of birth and math achievement ($r= -.40$, $p<.05$). Urban African-American students who reported that they were born outside of the United States were more likely to achieve highly in reading. Urban

students from other ethnicities who reported that they were born outside the United States tended to score less well in math.

Relationship between parent place of birth and academic achievement. Do ethnic group differences exist in terms of the relationship between parent place of birth and academic achievement for students from these two groups? The Pearson correlation results revealed no significant relationship between these variables for African-American students. However, for students from other ethnic groups, significant negative relationships were found between parent place of birth and reading achievement ($r= -.45$, $p<.01$) as well as between parent place of birth and math achievement ($r=-.55$, $p<.01$). Students from other ethnicities whose parents were born in the United States were more likely to achieve highly in reading and math.

Relationship between parent place of birth and bicultural competence. What is the relationship between parent place of birth and bicultural competence? No significant relationship was found between these variables for African-American students. A significant negative relationship was found between parent place of birth and bicultural competence for students from other ethnicities ($r= - .72$, $p<.01$). Students from other ethnicities whose parents were born in the United States were higher in bicultural competence than students in the same group whose parents were born outside the United States.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The current study: a) explored the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement among urban African-American adolescents, b) investigated how bicultural competence is related to academic achievement within this population, and c) compared urban African-American adolescents with urban students of other ethnicities. An examination of the relationships between the identity variables, gender, and achievement revealed that there were no significant relationships between ethnic identity and any other variable among African Americans or adolescents from other ethnicities. Previous research has shown that African-American middle school students who are higher in ethnic identity earned higher grades (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Spencer et al. 2001). Other research has shown that African American students with strong racial-ethnic identity had lower GPAs (Witherspoon et al., 1997). The difference between these findings and those of the present study may be related to differences in sample size and other sample differences such as the types of schools the participants attended. Seventy-two students, the majority of whom attended urban parochial schools, participated in the current study. Other samples in previous studies typically included 80 or more participants (see Phinney, 1997), the participants typically attended urban public schools, were racially/ethnically homogeneous samples (Cook & Ludwig, 1998; Sheets, 1999; Spencer et al., 2001) or were in college (Rowley, 2000). With a larger sample size in the present study, it is possible that there would have been a greater likelihood of finding significant results

when examining the relationships between ethnic identity, bicultural competence, gender, and achievement. Another reason for this difference in findings may have been a result of variations in the manner in which the constructs of ethnic identity and academic achievement were measured. Sheets (1999), looked for outcomes in "student competence" (p.160), which included qualitatively measured descriptions and observations such as "positive ethnic identity development, accelerated achievement …, and social adjustment" (p.160), whereas in the present study, reliable and valid quantitative measures of ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and academic achievement, were utilized. The findings of the present study, in regard to the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement may have been limited due to the cross-sectional nature of the study design. A need exists for more longitudinal research in which the development of ethnic identity and bicultural competence are measured over time among African-American students and students of other ethnicities to determine the stability of these variables and the manner in which they relate to academic achievement among urban adolescents (Altschul et al., 2006; Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2006).

An examination of the relationships between the identity variables, gender, and achievement also revealed that African-American students' levels of bicultural competence increased as their grade levels in school increased. This is similar to the findings of Altschul et al. (2006) who discovered a rise in racial-ethnic identity over time in African-American and Latino adolescents. It is possible that as students become more mature, their understanding and opinions about bicultural competence change. As adolescents become older and contemplate achievement goals, they may experience an intensified consciousness of racial-ethnic identity issues and bicultural competence, particularly as they transition to high school and other

environments that may be more diverse (Altschul et al, 2006). Again, the findings of the current study regarding the relationship between bicultural competence and grade level are limited in that they are cross-sectional in design. Perhaps a longitudinal study would be valuable in clarifying the relationship between these variables.

Additionally, an examination of the relationships between the identity variables, gender, and achievement indicated that math achievement decreased for African-American students as their grade level increased. This is consistent with previous studies, which suggest that the achievement levels of urban African-American adolescents decrease over time (Altschul et al., 2006; Burchinal, Roberts, Zeisel, & Rowley, 2008). In the present study, students of African-American descent and other backgrounds tended to achieve higher in reading if they also achieved highly in math. It is possible that African-American adolescents who attend urban schools may not receive adequate or challenging math instruction (Boyer & Mendelsohn, 2007), and, for this reason, may be less likely to do well on the standardized measures such as the Terra Nova or PSSA, which were used as dependent measures in the present study. Perhaps, for these reasons, standardized measures of achievement are less valid for African-American students as their grade levels increase. Furthermore, African-American students may be more likely to disengage from challenging academic tasks, such as math, as they get older (Chapell & Overton, 2002; Osbourne, 1997; 2001). This study is limited in that there was no comparison between the curriculum of each school and the standardized tests utilized as dependent measures. Additionally, other factors, such as cognitive ability, could have influenced math achievement among urban adolescents (Chapell & Overton, 2002). However, cognitive ability was not measured in this study. Perhaps, most importantly, school factors such as teacher qualification

and instructional quality could have influenced the results. These factors were not measured in the present study. Eighth grade students comprised the largest grade group in the study, and the number of students in each grade group increased as grade level increased, which also may have influenced the results. Future research should examine the relationship between the curriculum of each school and the dependent measures used; take into account factors such as cognitive ability, teacher preparation, and instructional quality; and ensure that there are comparable numbers of participants in each group.

Ethnicity, ethnic identity, bicultural competence, gender, and grade level were not found to predict reading or math achievement. Again, this may have been related to a small sample size, which did not lend itself to multiple regression analyses. Previous studies, which included more participants have shown that ethnic identity and racial socialization are predictors of achievement (Altschul et al., 2006). Contrary to the findings of this previous research, the results of the present study did not indicate that ethnicity, ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and gender predicted academic achievement among urban African American adolescents. One of the primary reasons for this may have been the small sample size of the present sample. With a larger sample size, it is possible that more of the variance in academic achievement in this population may have been explained by this combination of variables. Additionally, it is important to consider that all of the participants were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Perhaps including students of European American backgrounds would have added more diversity to the types of responses provided for the ethnic identity and bicultural competence measures as well as achievement scores, thus contributing to the variance found in the standard multiple regression

analyses. Larger sample sizes and more ethnically diverse samples are needed in future studies in order to examine predictors of achievement among urban adolescents.

The current study shows that there are ethnic group differences among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement. Bicultural competence was not significantly related to academic achievement among urban African American adolescents. However, students from other ethnic groups were found to achieve higher in math when they had increased levels of bicultural competence. This is consistent with the findings of researchers such as Ogbu (1997, 2004) and Philipsen (1999), who suggested that students with greater assimilation beliefs have higher academic achievement. On the other hand, bicultural competence was not found to be significantly related to reading achievement among students from other ethnicities. Previous research with a college-level sample showed that some African American students who were moderately identified with their own ethnic group and competent in interacting with other ethnic groups had higher academic performance and placed a high value on education (Rowley, 2000). Again, it is important to consider that most of the students in the present study were urban, African-American adolescents attending racially/ethnically homogeneous schools, whereas the older, college-level students included in the Rowley (2000) study may have had greater exposure to ethnically diverse environments and more highly developed attitudes about ethnic identity and bicultural competence. Students in the present study who were included in the Other ethnicities group often identified themselves with more than one ethnic group, possibly having more actual exposure outside of school to ethnic diversity, similar to the subgroups of students in the Rowley (2000) study or the “straddlers” (p.306) identified in the research of Carter (2006), who are associated with higher achievement.

The findings of the current study are limited in that more variables, such as language skills, were not taken into account, and may have helped to explain why math (rather than reading), is related to bicultural competence among urban adolescents in the Other ethnicities group. Additionally, there were no measures of actual exposure outside the school environment to individuals of other ethnicities, just measures of beliefs about exposure. Perhaps knowing about actual exposure outside the school environment to other ethnic groups may explain more about achievement. Future research in this area should include measures of additional factors such as language skills and a measure of actual exposure outside the school environment to individuals of other ethnicities.

Ethnic group differences were not found among urban adolescents in terms of the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement. The academic achievement levels of African-American adolescents and students from other ethnicities do not appear to be related to the extent to which they identify with their own ethnic group. This finding is similar to the findings of previous research, such as Altschul, Oyserman, and Bybee (2006), which indicated that there were no differences between African-American and Latino adolescents in terms of the relationship between racial-ethnic identity and achievement. The present study did not include European American students. There is a need for more research which examines the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement, but which also includes and compares students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Bicultural competence was not significantly associated with reading achievement for students from other ethnic groups, but adolescent students from other ethnic groups, particularly girls, tended to have higher achievement in math if they were also high in bicultural competence.

No gender differences were found among urban African American adolescents in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement. African American adolescent boys and girls showed similarities in the manner in which their ideas regarding bicultural competence related to academic achievement. Contrary to previous research (Ford & Harris, 1997; Mickelson, 2006; Witherspoon et al., 1997), African-American boys were not found to differ from African American girl adolescents in terms of the relationship between these variables, and did not have significantly weaker assimilation attitudes, and in turn, lower academic achievement. However, a significant relationship was found between bicultural competence and math achievement among students of other ethnic groups. Girls from other ethnic groups who were higher in bicultural competence tended to achieve more highly in math. There were no significant gender differences among students from other ethnicities in terms of the relationship between bicultural competence and reading achievement. It is possible that adolescent girls from other ethnic groups may have developed the type of flexible ideology which may contribute to higher educational attainment in math earlier than boys (Carter, 2006; Rowley, 2000). It is important to consider that almost five times as many girls as boys were included in the Other Ethnicities group, which may have influenced these results. More research is needed to investigate the relationship among these variables in students from other ethnicities. Future studies should also include an equal number of students from each gender as well as take into account other factors related to achievement such as cognitive ability (Chapell & Overton, 2002).

Additionally, ethnic identity was not found to be significantly related to reading or math achievement for any of the urban adolescent groups of either gender who participated in this

study. No gender differences were found among African American adolescents or adolescents from other ethnicities in terms of the relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement. This is contrary to previous research (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006), which showed gender differences in both African American and Latino middle school students in terms of the relationship between racial-ethnic identity and academic achievement. The Altschul and colleagues (2006) study included a larger sample, and also incorporated specific dependent measures of ethnic identity such as awareness of racism and embedded achievement, an indicator of the extent which a person associates educational attainment with their own group. Altschul et al. (2006), also utilized report card grades as a dependent measure of achievement, and examined changes in these variables over time, which may also explain the difference in findings with the present study. Further research is needed which examines more specific aspects of ethnic identity and gender differences in ethnic identity which are related to academic achievement.

Additional analyses indicated that there was no significant relationship between bicultural competence and ethnic identity for either African American adolescents or students of other ethnicities. Students who were higher in bicultural competence were not necessarily more likely to be higher in ethnic identity. Urban adolescents hold a variety of views about bicultural competence and ethnic identity. This is consistent with some of the findings of Carter (2006), Ford & Harris (1997), and Rowley (2000). Some urban adolescents may be highly identified with their own group and less likely to interact with people from other ethnic backgrounds, whereas others may strongly identify with their own ethnic group, yet still feel comfortable interacting with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Others may not identify with their own ethnic group, and may feel more comfortable associating with individuals from other ethnic

backgrounds. The results of the present study are limited in that the students all attended urban schools. Perhaps comparing urban and suburban students may help answer more questions about the relationship between bicultural competence and ethnic identity, especially considering that ethnic minority students in suburban environments often highly conscious of these factors (Daniel-Tatum, 1997).

The additional analyses also examined the relationship between bicultural competence and socioeconomic status. The findings indicated that, for African-American students, no significant relationship was found between bicultural competence and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, but for students from the Other Ethnicities group, a significant negative relationship was found between bicultural competence and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch. Students from other ethnicities who were high in bicultural competence were less likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch, suggesting that students of other ethnicities from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to be biculturally competent. It is possible that urban adolescents of other ethnicities who are from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be exposed to a variety of cultural ideas, thus increasing their bicultural competence. It is also possible that, although African-American students of higher socioeconomic status may be exposed to people of ethnic backgrounds different from their own in school and in their neighborhoods, for social reasons, they sometimes maintain closer relationships with students of similar ethnic backgrounds (Daniel-Tatum, 1997), whereas students of other minority backgrounds who are of higher socioeconomic status may associate with a more diverse group of people and may be more biculturally competent. Few studies have been conducted which examine the relationship between bicultural competence and socioeconomic status among urban

adolescents (Kulis, Napoli, & Marsiglia, 2002). Additional research is needed which examines the relationship between these variables within the urban adolescent population.

Additional analyses also showed that there was no significant relationship between reading achievement and socioeconomic status for African-American students or students of other ethnicities. These results support the findings of researchers, such as Osborne (1997, 2001), Steele (1997), and Yeung & Conley (2008), who suggested that achievement was not significantly related to socioeconomic status. However, these results differ from the overwhelming body of literature which indicates that reading achievement is related to socioeconomic status across ethnic groups (Chapell & Overton, 2002; Garibaldi, 1997). In the present study, African-American students and students of other ethnicities from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to do well in math than those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This is consistent with previous research (Chapell & Overton, 2002; Yeung & Conley, 2008). It is important to consider that the measure of socioeconomic status used in the present study, the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch at each school, is actually a measure of school factors rather than an individual measure of socioeconomic status. Perhaps measuring individual factors such as parents' occupations, household income, and parents' education levels, may have yielded different results and shown a relationship between socioeconomic status and reading achievement.

The results of the present study also indicated that place of birth was related to socioeconomic status for students of other ethnicities, but not for African American students. The findings suggested that, for students of other ethnicities, who come from families in which

they or their parents were not born in this country, were more likely to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, urban African American students who reported being born outside the country were more likely to achieve highly in reading. Additionally, students from other ethnicities who were born outside the country were less likely to do well in math. Students from other ethnicities whose parents were born in the United States were more likely to achieve highly in reading and in math, and were also more likely to be high in bicultural competence. It is possible that parents who were born in this country are more likely to be exposed to people of different cultural backgrounds from their own and knowledge of mainstream culture, which they are able to share with their children. It is also plausible that achievement levels are affected by exposure to mainstream culture and being socialized in a home environment in which knowledge of mainstream culture is available. It should be noted that the number of students who reported that they or their parents were born outside this country was a small percentage of the sample (15%). These findings highlight the importance of considering socioeconomic status and place of birth when investigating the relationship between bicultural competence and academic achievement. In addition, future research should also take into consideration factors such as the length of time students' families have resided in this country.

Implications for School Psychologists

One of the prevailing theories in the study of socio-cultural factors and the achievement gap is the cultural-ecological model (Ford & Harris, 1997; Mickelson, 1990, 2006; Ogbu, 1997,

2004; Philipsen, 1999), which postulates that African-American students who are strongly identified with their own ethnic group may view school achievement as exclusive to European American culture and find themselves lost in academic-related settings for this reason. This model assumes that African-American cultural values about education are mutually exclusive with high achievement, and often that African-Americans are a homogenous group. The cultural-ecological model would have predicted that the students who participated in the present study would not achieve highly if they strongly identified with their own ethnic group. This pattern was not supported in the current study, but rather this study indicated that a variety of views on ethnic identity and bicultural identity may be held by both high and low achievers. Many studies under the cultural-ecological model are qualitative in nature, which may explain some of the differences between these studies and the present study. Future research should examine urban students' views using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to obtain a more complete picture about the variety of views represented within the group.

Other studies of socio-cultural factors and the achievement gap suggest that African-American students who strongly identify with their own ethnic group tend to be high achievers (Altschul et al., 2006; Cooper & Datnow, 2000; Spencer et al, 2001). The findings of the present study did not support this view. A significant relationship was not found between ethnic identity and academic achievement and among urban African-American adolescents. In terms of the relationship between bicultural competence, the levels of bicultural competence among African-American students in this study increased as they got older, whereas there was a persistent pattern among African-American students of lower academic performance with increasing grade levels. These results seem to be most consistent with the study results of Rowley (2000), which

suggest that a variety of views are held by both high and low achievers. This view assumes that no one type of ethnic identity or bicultural competence leads to academic achievement. Academic achievement can be compatible with a number of combinations of ethnic identities and levels of bicultural competence. Future research can examine both these theories by conducting longitudinal research, which is both qualitative and quantitative in nature, and investigates not only the manner in which ethnic identity and bicultural competence develop, but also the manner in which children are socialized regarding educational attainment. The question arises as to whether African-American students are socialized differently, regarding educational attainment, as they become older. If there are differences in socialization between ethnic groups as well as between older and younger African-American students, are these differences related to socioeconomic status?

One of the assumptions of some of the prevailing theoretical models in this area is that individuals usually identify with one ethnic group (see Phinney, 1999). In the current study, 25% of the participants self-identified as “Mixed” or “Other.” The population of individuals who identify with more than one ethnic group is increasing (Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2006). Theoretical models should evolve to reflect these societal changes. Even when individuals define their identity by choosing one ethnic group, the diversity of viewpoints among members of the same ethnic group is great. This idea is consistent with the work of Cross, Strauss, and Fhagen-Smith (1999). Future research should analyze the differences between individuals who identify with a single ethnic group and those who identify with more than one ethnic group. In addition, future research should also combine both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in order to

obtain a clearer picture of the diversity of perceptions among individuals and aid in understanding how these perspectives may influence achievement.

Similar to Branch (1994), the present study shows that the achievement gap is a complicated phenomenon that cannot be reduced to linear relationships between a finite set of variables. Multiple factors influence the academic achievement of individuals and groups. Additionally, ideas about ethnic identity and bicultural competence vary among individuals who self-identify with the same ethnic group. Furthermore, factors such as socioeconomic status are often associated strongly with achievement. Perhaps theories in this area must shift to include not only racial/ethnic identity, but also bicultural competence and socioeconomic factors while taking into account the diversity of attitudes among members of the same ethnic group.

The present study specifically examined the relationships between ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and academic achievement in order to understand how these variables are related to the achievement gap among urban adolescents. Numerous researchers have studied the relationship between racial/ethnic identity and academic achievement among African American adolescents (Ford & Harris, 1997; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Mickelson, 2006), but few have included ethnically diverse samples and examined bicultural identity/bicultural competence (Altschul et al., 2006; Carter, 2006). Furthermore, these studies have infrequently investigated these variables with students who identify themselves as “Mixed” or “Other.” The present study revealed some of the perspectives of students of other ethnic backgrounds and compared them to the perceptions of African-American students. Unfortunately, in much of the literature on the achievement gap, African American students are presented as a homogenous group. With the

addition of the bicultural competence variable, the present study emerges as showing that urban African American adolescent middle school students have a variety of ideas regarding ethnic identity and bicultural competence. Like previous research (Chapell & Overton, 2002; Zarate, Bhimji, & Reese, 2005), the current study highlights the significance of factors such as socioeconomic status and immigration status in their relationships to academic achievement in an urban middle school population. The present study also contributed results based on the use of reliable and valid quantitative measures of ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and academic achievement that were normed for use with the adolescent population.

The results of the current study suggest that practitioners and policy makers should consider socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors as they attempt to understand and rectify the achievement gap. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 makes several provisions for accountability and assessment as a means of closing the achievement gap, but fails to take into account factors such as socio-cultural issues, school funding, and other socioeconomic concerns. This legislation ignores portions of the U.S. school population such as students who are immigrants to this country or have parents who were born outside this country, and students whose primary language is a language other language than English. Differences in the value that individuals and families may place on education as well as the exposure that ethnic minority students have to the mainstream knowledge base generally presented in the school curriculum also needs to be taken into consideration when determining how to close the achievement gap. The present study underscores the idea that policy-makers should take into account the myriad of factors contributing to the achievement gap.

According to Boyer and Mendelsohn (2007), instead of protecting students from the effects of poverty, schools actually contribute to the achievement gap by failing to academically challenge minority students who attend schools in areas with increased poverty; providing these students with uncertified and inexperienced teachers; and continuing to employ teachers who have lower expectations for these students. Some states such as Pennsylvania are beginning to implement programs to help close the achievement gap by addressing the above factors. In addition, efforts are also being made to promote initiatives such as early intervention, standards-based curricula, data-based decision making, increased learning opportunities, and tutoring. School psychologists have long been involved in similar measures for closing the achievement gap for individual students, but need to be involved in efforts at the systems level to make a significant impact. School psychologists are in a unique position to assist in closing the gap by offering consultation as part of the Response to Intervention (RTI) process for multi-tiered systems. Rosenfield (2005), suggested that school psychologists participate in Instructional Consultation Teams in order to use available resources in schools to help close the achievement gap. The results of the current study suggest that such consultation should also take into consideration issues such as bicultural competence and immigration status as well as socioeconomic status. Change needs to take place at the systems level and in partnership with communities to help address socioeconomic issues such as school funding the achievement gap. In addition, curriculum modifications need to occur in order to place learning in the appropriate cultural context for students, providing background knowledge when necessary. Although bicultural competence was not found to be consistently critical, students who have greater exposure to the general cultural knowledge of the mainstream might perform differently. School

psychologists can also serve as advocates for children in school systems by promoting the idea that cultural exposure may be an important factor in the achievement of African-American students and students of other ethnicities. In addition to individual factors, the context of the school environment as well as instructional quality and teacher preparation also affects exposure to cultural knowledge and should be taken into consideration.

The findings of the present study together with the review of literature point to the idea that socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors such as bicultural competence should be taken into consideration when making decisions for children in schools. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), among the factors that school psychologists are required to consider when determining whether a child has a learning disability is whether measured deficits in achievement are related to the effects of socioeconomic, environmental, cultural, or linguistic issues. Unfortunately, these factors are often examined lightly when making such determinations, and there is often no concrete, measureable way of making these decisions. Many ethnic minority students are overidentified for special education classes when socioeconomic, cultural, and/or linguistic factors are the primary reasons for their low performance. Students are identified with learning disabilities unnecessarily when they have received poor instruction in schools with mismanaged economic resources. The findings of the present study highlight the importance of school psychologists using both quantitative and qualitative methods for determining the extent to which culture influences the acquisition of academic skills for students they evaluate and for whom they make critical educational decisions.

Limitations

Due to the correlational design of this study and lack of random assignment, the significant findings cannot be attributed to causal relationships between the variables. For example, it is unclear whether higher math achievement causes students from other ethnicities to become more biculturally competent or whether being high in bicultural competence leads individuals from other ethnicities to become higher achievers in math. The possibility exists that other variables such as self-esteem and perceptions of educational utility may mediate between these two variables (Phinney et al, 1997; Rowley, 2000). It is also unclear whether being born in this country actually leads to higher achievement for students from other ethnic groups. Perhaps socioeconomic status may have been confounded with ethnicity and immigration status in this study. Students from the charter school were primarily Latino, and were among the most likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch, have a birthplace outside of this country, and have parents who were not born in this country. These are all variables that may have influenced the results of this study.

The external validity of this study is limited due to the sample size, the number of ethnic groups represented, the number of students from each ethnic group, the number of males from each ethnic group who participated in the study, lack of diversity in socioeconomic status, the types of schools attended by the students in the sample, and the participant selection process. Seventy-two adolescents participated in this study. Quantitative studies in this area typically include between 80 and 100 participants. In order for the results to generalize to the population of urban adolescents, it may have been helpful to have a larger sample. Additionally, it would

have been helpful to include more ethnic groups, particularly European American adolescents in order to compare their perceptions to those of ethnic minority students, and possibly gain a better understanding of the underlying beliefs of the achievement gap. Including more students from each ethnic group in order to more closely resemble the population could have also contributed to the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, only 34.7% of the sample consisted of male adolescents. Increasing the number of male adolescents in the study would have been beneficial in order to more accurately represent the urban male adolescent population. The majority of students attended schools where a high number of students received free or reduced-price lunch. Although this may reflect the socioeconomic status of some urban adolescents, it may have been helpful to include more students of higher socioeconomic status in order to generalize the results to the larger urban population and better reflect the economic diversity that exists in urban settings. It is also important to consider that the sample was drawn from parochial and charter schools which may not necessarily be representative of the urban population of African American adolescents and adolescents of other ethnic backgrounds. The African-American participants were all parochial school students, many of whom had families who paid tuition for their education. Lastly, the method for selecting students was not controlled in each school. Some principals distributed consent and assent forms to each student in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades at their schools. Others remarked that they gave priority to well-behaved and high achieving students. There was no instruction from the primary investigator to be selective on this basis. In order for the results to generalize to the urban population, it would be beneficial to randomly choose students to participate rather than basing participation on preexisting categories and characteristics.

Measurement issues such as self-identification of ethnicity and social desirability may have influenced the results of this study. Students were permitted to report their own ethnicity on the first item of the MEIM, and again on the final items. These are important items since the remainder of the MEIM items are based on the extent to which a person identifies with the ethnic group chosen in the first item and the extent to which a person interacts with other groups. Some students provided different responses for the final items than they did for the initial item when asked to identify their ethnic group. Furthermore, due to the method used for administering the MEIM which involved reading the items aloud and having the students respond aloud may have affected the results if students responded in a socially desirable manner. Perhaps the students would have responded differently if they had the opportunity to circle their own responses rather than provide them orally.

In terms of the statistical analyses, the data met the assumptions of the statistics. However, the small sample size did limit the power of these analyses. Having a larger sample would have increased the power of the statistical tests utilized, particularly the multiple regression analysis.

Future Research

Future studies should continue to investigate the relationship between bicultural competence and socioeconomic status as well as between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. It may be helpful to conduct longitudinal studies with larger samples to examine

the relationships between these variables over time, particularly during the transition between middle school and high school, in order to obtain a better understanding of the achievement gap. Additionally, future studies should try to discover more about why African-American students have an increase in bicultural competence as they mature, while their achievement decreases. Future research should also attempt to discover why students from other ethnic groups achieve higher when they have increased levels of bicultural competence, but African American students do not. Future studies should examine bicultural competence more closely in students who identify themselves as other or mixed in the hope that this may help researchers understand more about the achievement gap as well as help the field, and how bicultural competence relates to socioeconomic status in both urban and suburban students. Future research should also further investigate the relationship between immigration status and academic achievement, especially as these variables relate to bicultural competence. Controlling for socioeconomic status may also be a valuable consideration in upcoming studies to determine whether other important factors arise that help explain the variance in academic achievement. Additionally, a closer investigation of the relationship between bicultural competence and math achievement among students who identify with other ethnic groups may also be beneficial. Researchers in the field of school psychology should continue to explore quantitative and qualitative methods for measuring socio-cultural and socioeconomic influences on achievement when making learning disability determinations.

In conclusion, the results of the present study point to the fact that the United States is becoming a more diverse, multicultural/multiethnic society. The findings also highlight the importance of considering socio-cultural and economic issues such as bicultural competence,

immigration status, and socio-economic status when examining the academic achievement of African-American adolescents and students of other ethnic backgrounds. Educational decision-makers, such as administrators, teachers, and school psychologists need to take these issues into account as their school populations become more culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse. It is inevitable that schools will also have students with different learning styles and achievement levels. A variety of factors will influence the achievement levels of each student. Furthermore, factors such as race, ethnicity, and economics are very complex issues in this country. For these reasons, studying the achievement gap is also a complicated issue. Many studies have established the idea that the achievement gap exists, but researchers in the field of school psychology should further investigate individualized and system-wide solutions to the achievement gap which take into consideration the importance of factors such as ethnic identity, bicultural competence, socioeconomic status, and linguistic status. Again, school psychologists are in a unique position to help school systems close the achievement gap, and create lasting changes for all students. School psychologists can expand their roles and transform schools as they facilitate teams in deciphering the variety of factors which influence achievement and problem solving. Ultimately, understanding the relationship between ethnic identity, bicultural competence, and achievement among urban African-American students and students of other ethnicities may conceivably generate theories, research, and positive educational outcomes for students of these socio-cultural backgrounds.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

Principal's Permission Form for School Participation

TITLE: The Relationship of Ethnic Identity and Bicultural Competence to Academic Achievement among African-American Urban Adolescents

Investigators: Robynn Pitts, M.Ed., Dr. Trevor Sewell, Department of Psychological Studies in Education, School Psychology Program, (215) 204-8075

Dear Principal,

We are completing a project to help us understand 6th, 7th, and 8th graders' academic performance in school. We are trying to find out how adolescents feel about their ethnic group, and how they are performing academically in school. Hopefully, this project will help us understand more about why adolescents do or do not do well in school.

After parents give permission and students choose to participate in this project, each student will be asked to spend some time away from his/her classroom in order to be interviewed and asked questions by a project assistant from a university. Each student will be asked for information such as his/her age, date of birth, grade, gender, and ethnic background. In addition, each student will be asked to complete a questionnaire, which will be read to him/her by an adult, about how he/she feels about his/her ethnicity. He/she will also take short reading and math test. All of this will take about 25-30 minutes, so each student will miss this time from class. We will attempt to schedule this time when your students would be less likely to miss schoolwork. A note will be written to the teachers asking for permission for your students to make up work at a convenient time if necessary. Some students will have the option of participating in this project at your school during summer school hours if this is more convenient. Additionally, with your permission, records of your students' most recent standardized test scores will be reviewed.

Each student's participation will be completely on a volunteer basis if his/her parent(s) give permission for him/her to take part in this project. He/she can choose not to participate at any time and this will not affect the student's grades or any other part of their schooling experience in a negative way. All information such as age, date of birth, standardized test scores, and any other information about each student as part of this project will be kept confidential. After each student answers the questions, neither his/her name nor any other identifying information will be connected with his/her scores. Numbers will be used instead of names so that each student's privacy will be protected.

Principal's Permission Form for School Participation, page 2

TITLE: The Relationship of Ethnic Identity and Bicultural Competence to Academic Achievement among African-American Urban Adolescents

Please feel free to contact Robynn Pitts or Dr. Trevor Sewell at (215) 204-8075 in order to find out more information about this project. Thank you.

Signing my name below indicates that I have read and understand the information written on this form. I give permission for my school to participate in this project. I understand that if I would like further information regarding my child's rights as research participants, I may contact Mr. Richard Throm, Office of the Vice President for Research, Institutional Review Board, Temple University, 3400 N. Broad St., Phila., PA, 19140, (215) 707-8757.

_____

Principal's Signature Date

_____

Investigator's Signature Date

_____

Investigator's Signature Date

Parental Consent Form for Student Participation

TITLE: The Relationship of Ethnic Identity and Bicultural Competence to Academic Achievement among African-American Urban Adolescents

Investigators: Robynn Pitts, M.Ed., Dr. Trevor Sewell, Department of Psychological Studies in Education, School Psychology Program, (215) 204-8075

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are completing a project to help us understand more about why some 6th, 7th, and 8th graders do well in school. With this project, we would also like to find out how students feel about their cultural backgrounds.

If you give your permission and your child chooses to help bus with this project, a project assistant from a university will interview your child at his/her school. During this interview, your child will be asked for information about his/her age, grade, and cultural background. In addition, your child will also be asked to take short reading and math tests. All of this will take about 25-30 minutes. We will attempt to schedule this time when your child would be less likely to miss schoolwork. Some students will have the option of participating in this project at a neighborhood school during summer school hours if this is more convenient. Additionally, we are asking for your permission to review records of your child's most recent standardized test scores such as the Terra Nova or PSSA.

Your child will only be asked to help with this project if you give permission and your child chooses to help. If you decide at any time that you do not want your child to take part in this project, your child will not get lower grades or have any other negative consequences in school. He/she can choose not to participate at any time. If your child does help us with this project, any information about your child as part of this project will be kept confidential. To ensure that your child's privacy is protected, his/her name will not be used in any way. Please feel free to contact Robynn Pitts or Dr. Trevor Sewell at (215) 204-8075 in order to find out more information about this project.

Parental Consent Form for Student Participation, page 2

TITLE: The Relationship of Ethnic Identity and Bicultural Competence to Academic Achievement among African-American Urban Adolescents

Signing my name below indicates that I have read and understand the information written on this form. I give consent for my son or daughter to participate in this project. I understand that if I would like further information regarding my child's rights as a research participant, I may contact Mr. Richard Throm, Office of the Vice President for Research, Institutional Review Board, Temple University, 3400 N. Broad St., Phila., PA, 19140, (215) 707-8757.

_____

Parent/Guardian's Signature Date

_____

Investigator's Signature Date

_____

Investigator's Signature Date

Forma del consentimiento parental para la participación del estudiante

Título: La relación de la identidad étnica y de la capacidad bicultural al logro académico entre adolescentes urbanos Africano-Americanos

Estimados padres,

Estamos hacienda un proyecto para ayudarnos a entender más sobre el logro academico de los adolescentes. Con este proyecto, también quisiéramos descubrir cómo los estudiantes se sienten sobre sus propias culturas.

Si usted da su permiso y su hijo(a) elige ayudarnos con este proyecto, una ayudante del proyecto de una universidad se entrevistará a su niño en su escuela. Durante esta entrevista, pedirán su hijo(a) información tal como su edad, grado, y su cultural. Todo esto tomará cerca de 25-30 minutos. Además, estamos pidiendo su permiso de repasar los resultados estandardizados más recientes de la pruebas de su hijo(a) tales como la Terra Nova o el PSSA.

Su hijo(a) participara con este proyecto solamente si usted da su permiso y si su hijo(a) elige ayudar. Si usted decide en cualquier momento que usted no quisiera que su hijo(a) participara en este proyecto, su hijo(a) no tendrá ningunas consecuencias negativas en escuela. El (ella) puede elegir no participar en cualquier momento. Si su hijo(a) nos ayuda con este proyecto, cualquier información sobre su hijo(a) será mantenida confidencial. Para asegurarse de que la information de su hijo esté protegida, su nombre no será utilizado en ninguna manera. Si tienen uds. preguntas, deben ponerse en contacto con los investigadores Robynn Pitts o Trevor Sewell al (215) 204-8075.

Acuerdo de los padres:

He leído la información proporcionada más arriba. Otorgo mi autorización voluntariamente para permitir que mi hijo(a) participe en este estudio de investigación. La firma de mi nombre abajo indica que he leído y entiendo la información escrita en esta forma. Doy el consentimiento para que mi hijo o hija participe en este proyecto.

Forma del consentimiento parental para la participación del estudiante, pagina 2

Título: La relación de la identidad étnica y de la capacidad bicultural al logro académico entre adolescentes urbanos Africano-Americanos

Si yo tenga preguntas acerca de los derechos de mi hijo(a) como sujeto de una investigación, puedo ponerse en contacto, de manera anónima si lo desea, con el Institutional Review Board (Comité de revisión institucional, IRB por sus siglas en inglés) al: Richard Throm, Temple University, 3400 N. Broad St., Phila., PA 19140, (215) 707-8757.

_____

Firma del padre o de la madre Fecha

_____

Firma del investigador Fecha

_____

Firma del investigador Fecha

Adolescent Participant Assent Form

Project Title: The Relationship of Ethnic Identity and Bicultural Competence to Academic Achievement among African-American Urban Adolescents

Investigators: Robynn Pitts, M.Ed., Dr. Trevor Sewell, Department of Psychological Studies in Education, School Psychology Program, (215) 204-8075

I am being asked to help Robynn Pitts and Dr. Sewell with a project that will help them find out more about how teenagers achieve in school. If I say that I want to help with this project, I will be asked to answer questions about my age, gender, grade, and how I feel about my culture. During this project, I will also be asked to read sentences and do math problems. This will take about 25 or 30 minutes, so I will miss some class, but I understand that my teacher will give me a chance to make up work that I missed if I need to.

I understand that I will only have to participate in this project if I say I want to, and if I say I do not want to help with this project, I will not get a lower grade in my classes, be suspended, or be affected in any negative way. I understand that I can say at any time that I do not want to participate in this project. Anything that I say when I participate will be kept private. This project has been explained to me in a way I can understand, and I know that I can ask questions about it when I need to. I understand the way the project has been explained to me and what I have read on this form. I agree to participate in this project.

_____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Investigator's Signature Date

_____

Investigator's Signature Date

Forma Adolescente Del Asentimiento

Título Del Proyecto: La relación de la identidad étnica y de la capacidad bicultural al logro académico entre adolescentes urbanos Africano-Americanos

Investigadores: Robynn Pitts, M.Ed., Dr. Trevor Sewell, Departamento de Estudios Psicologicos en la Educacion, Programa de la Psicologia Escolar

Me están pidiendo ayudar a Robynn Pitts y al Dr. Sewell con un proyecto que les ayude a descubrir más sobre el logro academico de los adolescentes. Si digo que deseo ayudar con este proyecto, me pedirán contestar a preguntas sobre mi edad, grado, y cómo me siento sobre mi cultura. Esto tomará cerca de 25 o 30 minutos después de la escuela.

Entiendo que solamente participare en este proyecto si digo que deseo, y si digo que no desee ayudar con este proyecto, no me afecte de cualquier manera negativa. Entiendo que puedo decir en cualquier momento que no deseo participar en este proyecto. Cualquier cosa que digo cuándo participo será mantenida privado. Este proyecto se ha explicado a mí de una manera que puedo entender, y sé que puedo hacer preguntas en cualquier momento del estudio. Además, si decido que no quiero terminar el estudio, puedo parar cuando quiera. Entiendo la manera en que el proyecto se ha explicado a mí y qué he leído en esta forma. Acuerdo participar en este proyecto.

_____

Firma del participante del estudio Fecha

_____

Firma del investigador Fecha

_____

Firma del investigador Fecha

APPENDIX B

MEIM AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

In this country, people come from many different countries and cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or <u>ethnic groups</u> that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian American, Chinese, Filipino, American Indian, Mexican American, Caucasian or White, Italian American, and many others. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in: In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be _____

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

(4) Strongly agree	(3) Agree	(2) Disagree	(1) Strongly disagree

1. **I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.** (***please circle a number***)

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

2. **I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.** ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

3. **I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.** ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

4. **I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.** ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

5. **I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.** ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

6. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group. ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

7. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me. ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

8. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group. ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

9. **I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.** ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

10. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs. ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

11. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group. ***(please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

12. I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own. (***please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

13. I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn't try to mix together. (***please circle a number***)

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

14. I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than my own. (***please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

15. I don't try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups. (***please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

16. I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups. (***please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

17. I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own. (***please circle a number)***

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

18. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background. (***please circle a number***)

4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

19. My ethnicity is

(1) Asian or Asian American, including Chinese, Japanese, and others
(2) Black or African American
(3) Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American, and others
(4) White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American; not Hispanic
(5) American Indian/Native American
(6) Mixed; Parents are from two different groups
(7) Other (write in): _____

20. **My father's ethnicity is** (use numbers above)_____

21. **My mother's ethnicity is** (use numbers above)_____

En este país, la gente viene de muchos diversos países y culturas, y hay muchas diversas palabras para describir a los grupos diversos o a los grupos étnicos de los cuales la gente viene. Algunos ejemplos de los nombres de grupos étnicos son Hispános o Latinos, Africano Americano, Americano Asiático, Chinos, Filipino, Europeo Americano, Italiano, Americano Nativo, Mexicano, y muchos otros. Estas preguntas están sobre su grupo étnico y cómo usted se siente sobre o reacciona a su grupo etnico.

En términos de grupo étnico, me considero _____.

Situación Respuesta (Circule uno correspondiente a su respuesta).

(4) Totalmente de Acuerdo	(3) De Acuerdo	(2) En Desacuerdo	(1) Totalmente En Desacuerdo

1. **He tratado de buscar más información acerca de mi grupo étnico, como por ejemplo su historia, tradiciones y costumbres.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

2. **Estoy activo en una organización o grupo cívico donde la mayoría de sus miembros son de mi mismo grupo étnico.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

3. **Estoy bien claro de cuales son mis raíces culturales y lo que significan para mí.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

4. **A menudo pienso acerca de como mi vida sería afectada por pertenecer a mi grupo étnico.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

5. **Estoy feliz que pertenezco a mi grupo etnico.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

6. **Yo me siento que pertenezco a mi grupo étnico.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

7. **Yo entiendo completamente lo que significa pertenecer a mi grupo étnico, en términos de como relacionarme con ellos y con otros grupos.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

8. **Para aprender más acerca de mis raíces culturales, he tenido que hablar con otras personas acerca de mi grupo étnico.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

9. **Me siento bien orgulloso de mi grupo étnico y sus logros.**

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

10. Participo en actividades culturales de mi grupo étnico, tales como cenas, eventos musicales o tradiciones.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

11. Siento una conexión fuerte con mi propio grupo étnico.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

12. Me gusta conocer a personas de otros grupos etnicos diferentes de mi propio grupo etnico.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

13. Algunas veces siento que sería mejor sino se mezclaran diferentes grupos étnicos.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

14. A menudo comparto con personas de otros grupos étnicos diferentes de mi propio grupo étnico.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

15. No trato de hacer amigos con personas de otros grupos étnicos.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

16. Estoy participante en actividades con la gente de otros grupos étnicos.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

17. Disfruto compartir con personas de otros grupos étnicos diferentes de mi propio grupo étnico.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

18. Me siento bien como mi grupo cultural o etnico.

4	3	2	1
Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente En Desacuerdo

19. Mi grupo etnico es:

a.) Asiatico
b.) Africano Americo
c.) Latino
d.) Europeo Americano
e.) Americano Nativo
f.) Mi Padres son de dos grupos diferentes.
g.) Otro

20. El grupo etnico de mi padre es:_____

21. El grupo etnico de mi madre es: _____

Demographic Information Form

Participant #:

Age:

Date of Birth:

Gender:

Have you lived in this country since you were born?

Have your parents lived in this country since they were born?

Forma De la Información Demografico

 # de Participante:

Edad:

Fecha de nacimiento:

Género:

¿Ha vivido ud. en este país desde que usted nació?

¿Han vivido sus padres en este país desde que nacieron?