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Racial Ideological Beliefs and Racial Discrimination Experiences as Predictors of Academic Engagement Among African American Adolescents

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Adolescents' understandings of their social identities and related personal experiences influence their adaptations and responses within domains in which those identities are salient. The authors explore associations of racial identity beliefs regarding how Blacks should act, think, and behave (racial ideologies) and racial discrimination experiences with academic engagement outcomes among 390 African American adolescents in Grades 7 to 10. Results indicate that youths' endorsement of ideological beliefs emphasizing being more like Whites (assimilation ideology) related to more fears of being viewed as high achievers by peers (public oppositional academic identification), lower academic persistence and curiosity, and more school behavioral problems. Emphasizing commonalities with Blacks and other oppressed groups (minority ideology) related to positive engagement outcomes. Youths reporting more racial discrimination showed lower school engagement. Finally, racial ideologies moderated the relationship between discrimination and academic outcomes, such that youths holding stronger assimilation views showed lower academic identification when reporting racial discrimination, relative to youth who endorsed those views less. Findings are discussed relative to their potential impact on ethnic minority achievement research and educational practice.

Keywords: *academic engagement; racial identity; racial attitudes; discrimination; adolescents*

Although African American youths' academic performance has received a great deal of attention from both popular media and research scholars (e.g.,

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Finn & Rock, 1997; Hoyt, 1989; Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2001), much of this attention has focused on how African Americans compare academically to other racial groups. Less attention has been placed on the factors associated with within-group variation in the academic performance of African American youth. At the same time, little research has explored the individual-level processes that may impact academic performance and help to explain individual differences in academic performance within African American youth. Academic engagement is one such process. Academic engagement consistently has been linked to positive academic performance (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996; Pajares & Schunk, 2005; Pintrich, Roeser, & DeGroot, 1994). It encompasses linking one's personal identity to the roles of student and learner (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994), showing sustained curiosity and interest in class, and displaying intense efforts in learning tasks (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Adolescents' academic engagement has been linked to social identities that are made salient in the academic domain (Garcia & Pintrich, 1994). The academic domain is one in which race often is salient for many ethnic minority students, particularly during adolescence. For instance, entry into secondary schools is associated with increased racial cleavage, social comparison, and heightened salience of racial stereotypes (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000). Thus, it is likely that African American adolescents' levels of academic engagement are influenced, in part, by their beliefs about the meaning of race and their experiences with racial discrimination. Surprisingly, however, there is relatively little theory or research that considers youth of color or how beliefs and experiences related to their racial group membership can help explain variation in their academic engagement (Graham, 1994).

Thus, our objective in the present study was to explore the direct relationships of African American adolescents' beliefs about the meaning of being Black (racial ideological beliefs) and their experiences of racial discrimination with their engagement in school. We also were interested in ways that racial ideologies may indirectly relate to engagement outcomes. Specifically, we examined the extent to which holding racial ideological beliefs that emphasized or deemphasized Blacks' minority group status attenuated or exacerbated the negative impact of racial discrimination on youth's academic engagement.

RACIAL IDENTITY AS RISK FACTOR APPROACH

Within a number of well-known theoretical models, racial group identification has been posited to place African Americans at risk for decreased

academic engagement through the influence of individuals' heightened awareness of the negative status of their racial group in society (Aronson, 2002; Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Mickelson, 1990; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Taylor, Castern, Flickinger, Roberts, & Fulmore, 1994). The cultural-ecological framework of ethnic minority achievement offered by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), for instance, asserts that because African Americans immigrated to the U.S. under conditions of oppression and opportunity constraint, they developed a collective group identity that rejects institutions that are dominated by the oppressive mainstream culture, including the American educational system. As a consequence, youth's identification with a Black identity came to entail a rejection of a proachievement orientation, including attitudes and behaviors associated with being successful in school. Fordham (1988) expanded on this framework, positing that sustained school success for high achieving African American students entails minimizing their connectedness to their racial identity in exchange for mainstream attitudes and values that are better aligned with an academic identity, a process termed becoming "raceless." A similar theme within educational research is the notion that having a "colorblind" perspective is the best way to ameliorate racial group differences in achievement. Within the education field, the majority of teachers are White, are from backgrounds that differ from those of their students of color, and often have had limited multicultural training (Ford & Harris, 1996). A common ideology among teachers entering their professions and classrooms is that it is best to simply not see race or racial group differences at all and view students only as individuals (Markus, Steele, & Steele, 2000; Rousseau & Tate, 2003). However, the underlying presumption is that minority youth must de-emphasize their ethnic/cultural backgrounds to develop a positive academic identity and emphasize thinking and acting in ways more consistent with White middle class norms (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

Other theoretical perspectives positing racial identity as a risk factor for achievement have focused on African Americans as a stigmatized group and the impact of this stigma on academic motivation. Social psychological frameworks focused on the effects of group stigma suggest that African Americans disidentify with school and academics because the academic domain is one in which the group is regarded negatively (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major & Schmader, 1998; Osborne, 1997). Although this coping strategy is theorized to protect individuals' self-concept from the negative impact of perceiving group-based discrimination and devaluation, it inhibits the motivational attitudes and behaviors that lead to good school performance. Similarly, stereotype threat theory posits that African American students' academic underperformance result from fears or apprehensions around supporting racial

stereotypes related to intellectual ability (Steele & Aronson, 1995), and, over time, these threat experiences lead to less personal identification with academics and engagement in the learning process (Aronson & Inzlicht, 2004; Steele, 1997). Implicit across these perspectives is that individuals who perceive societal discrimination against their group or group stigma disengage with the educational process, and those who emphasize their ethnic minority identity are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of this discrimination and stigma on academic engagement (Chavous et al., 2003).

LIMITATIONS OF THE RACIAL IDENTITY AS RISK APPROACH

A major limitation of the identity-as-risk approach to understanding African American academic achievement is that there is very little empirical evidence in support of the major assertions of the approach. First, there have been few studies directly assessing the relationship between racial identity attitudes and academic engagement in African Americans. The few studies that have been used to support the approach do not directly address the question of whether identifying with one's race and perceiving racial barriers explains individual differences in African American students' levels of academic engagement. For instance, in the widely cited ethnographic study of urban African American high school students (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), although lower achieving students perceived particular behaviors associated with school success—for example, spending time in the library studying, reading, and writing poetry, and being on time—as inconsistent with their personal identities, students were not asked about their racial identities, nor did the youth mention race when discussing their academic identities (e.g., youth connected proachievement behaviors to being a nerd or "brainiac," not necessarily as being inconsistent with a Black identity). Other evidence used in support of the risk approach include studies showing smaller associations between African American adolescents' self-concept and their academic grade performance relative to other ethnic groups (Demo & Parker, 1987; Osborne, 1997; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995) and lower academic task performance for ethnic minority college students for whom racial stereotypes are made salient (e.g., Steele & Aronson, 1995). None of these studies, however, directly assess racial identity attitudes, and thus are unable to investigate a link between racial identity attitudes and academic engagement.

Our review of the research literature indicates that despite the popularity of risk perspectives for explaining the connection between Black identity and achievement, there actually is more empirical support for the notion that

a stronger Black identification and feelings of group pride relate to more positive achievement values and attitudes (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Chavous et al., 2003; Ford & Harris, 1997; Phinney, 1989, 1990; Rivas & Chavous, in press; Sanders, 1998; Thomas, Townsend, & Belgrave, 2003; Ward & Simmons, 1990; Zirkel, 2006) and may buffer adolescents from the negative impact of perceiving racial barriers and discrimination on their academic motivation, engagement, and performance (Chavous et al., in press; Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; O'Connor, 1999; Spencer, Noll, & Stoltzfus, 2001; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003).

A second area in which the existing research literature in support of the identity-as-risk approach to viewing African American academic achievement is limited is in its examination of the link between experiences of racial discrimination and academic outcomes. Part of the foundation for the identity-as-risk approach is the idea that, for African Americans, identifying with one's race means identifying with a stigmatized status. It is this stigmatized status that places the individual at risk for processes that ultimately lead to academic disengagement. What is overlooked is the fact that African Americans differ with regard to the extent to which they define their racial group in terms of their stigmatized status in society (Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998). This variation in African American youths' racial identity beliefs is likely to be influenced by a variety of racial socialization processes (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Sanders Thompson, 1995; Stevenson, 1995). One important source of variation in African American youths' beliefs about their stigmatized status in this society is their own personal experience with racial discrimination (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). Unfortunately, very few studies have directly assessed the impact of racial discrimination on academic outcomes of African American youth (Davidson, 1996; Powell & Arriola, 2003; Rivas & Chavous, in press; Wong et al., 2003). In one of the few studies, Wong et al. (2003) found that perceived discrimination from peers and teachers was negatively related to indicators of academic motivation and self-concept in a sample of African American early adolescents. Further research is needed to investigate the interplay among racial identity attitudes, personal experiences with racial discrimination, and academic engagement before any definitive evaluations of the utility of the identity-as-risk approach can be made.

RACIAL IDENTITY AS A PROMOTIVE FACTOR APPROACH

Although the identity as a risk approach has received a great deal of attention, African American racial identity traditionally has been conceptualized

as an important psychologically protective set of beliefs that African Americans have developed to buffer against the impact of racial discrimination and stigmatized status (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1998). Researchers have begun to conceptualize racial identity as an important resilience resource in the normative development of African American youth (Cross, Strauss, & Fhagen-Smith, 1999; Spencer, Cunningham, & Swanson, 1995; Spencer et al., 1997). This view of racial identity, although it recognizes the significant challenges that confront African American youth, also acknowledges the fact that many youth are resilient in the face of those challenges. An approach that views racial identity as a promotive factor in African American achievement is consistent with a historical view of the African American community that recognizes that because African Americans were denied opportunities for education and advancement during and after slavery, they often placed a stronger emphasis on the importance of learning and education as the primary route to mobility (Chavous et al., 2003; O'Connor, Horvat, & Lewis, 2006; Perry, 1993; Tyson, 2006).

Unlike the identity-as-risk approach that assumes uniformity in the way in which African Americans define what it means to be Black, the identity-as-promotive approach does not assume that African Americans are monolithic in the ways they define what it means to be Black. Because of its focus on racial identity as a source of resilience, the identity-as-promotive approach explicitly assumes individual differences in racial identity attitudes that help account for individual differences in academic outcomes. Racial identity is seen as a meaning-making process that affords African Americans an opportunity to define their racial membership in such a way that academic success can be seen as valuable despite structural and individual level racial barriers (such as stigma and racial discrimination) to academic success (Oyserman et al., 1995). For instance, findings from a recent study by Altschul et al. (2006) indicate that African American middle school students who felt more connected to their Black identity and who linked their Black identity to a value for achievement were more academically motivated and performed better than youth with lower group connection and who linked their racial group membership to achievement values to a lesser extent.

Also as a result of its focus on African American resilience, a racial identity-as-promotive approach is explicitly interested in the interplay between racial identity and individual experiences with racial stigma and discrimination. Recent studies of adolescents' racial discrimination experiences provide evidence that negative race-based treatment, such as being harassed or judged as inferior because of race, are not uncommon for many African American adolescents (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Romero & Roberts, 1998; Sellers, Caldwell, & Schmeelk-Cone, 2003;

Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006) and that these experiences serve as risk factors for negative psychological and behavioral problems (see Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Brody et al., 2006; Brown & Bigler, 2005; Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004; Dubois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, & Hardesty, 2002; Fisher et al., 2000; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Seaton, 2005; Sellers et al., 2003; Wong, et al., 2003), including lower academic efficacy and school performance (Powell & Arriola, 2003; Wong et al., 2003). There is also growing evidence that certain racial identity attitudes may protect African American adolescents from the negative influence of racial discrimination (Sellers et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2003). For instance, Sellers et al. (2006) found that more positive feelings toward Blacks (private regard) were associated with more positive psychological functioning in the context of racial discrimination compared to those African American adolescents with less positive attitudes toward Blacks. They also found a buffering relationship such that there was significantly less of an association between racial discrimination and psychological functioning for those adolescents who felt that other groups held less positive attitudes toward Blacks (public regard) than those adolescents who felt that other groups held more positive attitudes toward Blacks. In one of the only studies to examine the interaction among racial identity, racial discrimination, and academic outcomes, Wong et al. (2003) found that African American adolescents who held a strong connection to Blacks were buffered from the negative impact of personal racial discrimination experiences on academic attitudes and performance relative to those with less of a connection with their racial group.

RACIAL IDEOLOGICAL BELIEFS AND AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT ACHIEVEMENT

Although most of the empirical studies of racial identity and achievement have examined individuals' level of group identification (centrality) and affective beliefs about their group (e.g., Chavous et al., 2003; Wong et al., 2003), there have been few empirical investigations of the link between racial ideology and academic outcomes (e.g., Sellers, Chavous, et al., 1998). Sellers, Chavous, et al. (1998) define racial ideologies as African Americans' attitudes and beliefs regarding the way that they believe that Blacks should act, think, and behave. Several qualitative studies of African American adolescents suggest the utility of considering Black youth's racial ideological beliefs in studying achievement processes (Carter, 2006; O'Connor, 1999; Sanders, 1998, Ward, 1990). For instance, O'Connor (1999) speculated that an emphasis on

the historical status and struggles of Blacks in America allowed some of the higher achieving youth in her study to maintain their academic motivation when they perceived barriers and discrimination against their group. In contrast, lower achieving youth were more likely to express that Blacks should deemphasize the relevance of race and not continue to focus on past discrimination and Blacks' status as an oppressed group. Similarly, Carter (2006) conducted ethnographic research with African American urban adolescents and found that although it was not uncommon for youth to use the term "acting White" to describe their peers at school, the term was used more often as a social marker—to characterize the use of behaviors, dress, speech, and attitudes conveying social distancing from the group. Although it was the case that higher achieving youth were more likely to be accused of "acting White" by lower achieving peers, the higher achieving youth themselves did not view their achievement as inconsistent with a Black identity. Although these studies did not explicitly assess youths' racial ideologies, they do suggest that an emphasis on experiences related to Blacks' minority status in society can represent psychological resources that enhance academic engagement and can help protect youth from the negative effects of perceiving societal racism on academic engagement.

In one of the few studies to empirically investigate the association between racial ideologies and academic outcomes, Sellers, Chavous, et al. (1998) examined racial ideological beliefs among African American college students, and their findings support both the risk and protective perspectives on Black identification. Among youth who identified more with being African American, higher endorsement of beliefs embracing integration into the mainstream (assimilation) and beliefs emphasizing African Americans' unique social status in America (nationalism) were associated with lower college grade point average. In contrast, stronger endorsement of views emphasizing common experiences between African Americans and different oppressed groups (minority) predicted higher grade performance. The researchers speculated that, in the college setting, students feeling that Blacks should adopt a mainstream American identity and focus less on their identities as African Americans (assimilation) and feeling as though their group is unique in the ways they have been oppressed in American society (nationalism) both may be psychologically isolating and stressful in ways that lead to lower motivation attitudes and efforts. In contrast, emphasizing Blacks' experiences as an oppressed group and the experiences shared with other oppressed groups may have provided a sense of support that boosted their academic motivation. However, the researchers did not examine motivational factors in their study, so the potential mechanisms through which racial beliefs may influence performance (e.g., through engagement attitudes and behaviors) were not

explored. The study also did not examine how racial ideologies related to academic outcomes in the context of experiences of racial discrimination. Furthermore, it is unclear whether similar types of relationships would be found among younger adolescents who have not attained higher education and whose understandings of the meanings of their group may differ.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study incorporated a racial identity-as-promotive approach to investigate the relationships among racial ideology beliefs, experiences with racial discrimination, and indicators of academic engagement in a sample of African American middle school and high school students. In doing so, we also investigated the validity of some of the assertions of the racial identity-as-risk approach. Our guiding framework for considering African American adolescents' racial ideological beliefs was the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). The MMRI is a model developed to distinguish components of racial identity that tap into both the significance of being African American and the qualitative meanings that individuals attribute to being African American (Sellers, Smith, et al., 1998). Our present study focuses on the *ideologies* related to individuals' racial group (the meanings individuals attach to membership in the African American racial group), and distinguishes it from a second model component, the *centrality* of race (the extent to which individuals normatively define themselves in terms of their racial group). The MMRI outlines four ideological subdimensions—two that are characterized by a de-emphasis on ethnic minority status (assimilation and humanism) and two that are characterized by an emphasis on African Americans' oppressed history and status in America (nationalism and minority). An assimilation ideology involves emphasizing a mainstream American identity versus an African American one, whereas a humanist perspective emphasizes the commonalities of all human beings versus viewing people in terms of ethnic/racial groups. A minority perspective involves seeing similarities between African Americans and other oppressed social groups, and a nationalist ideological view is focused on Blacks' uniqueness in their experience as an oppressed group in America. (See Sellers, Shelton, et al., 1998 for detailed conceptual discussion of the ideological subdimensions).

Based on the previous study by Sellers, Chavous, et al. (1998), we expected that youths' endorsement of racial ideological beliefs emphasizing their ethnic minority group status that also incorporated shared experiences with other oppressed groups (minority ideology), would be positively related

to academic engagement outcomes. In contrast, we expected that views of one's group as unique in its status as an oppressed group (nationalism) and beliefs that emphasize the goal of being more like the White mainstream (assimilation) would be negatively related to these outcomes. Additionally, given previous research indicating the negative impact of racial discrimination on psychosocial and achievement adjustment outcomes (Branscombe et al., 1999; Sellers et al., 2003; Wong et al., 2003), we expected that experiencing more racial discrimination would function as an academic risk, relating to more concerns about being viewed as having a strong academic identity by other peers (lower public academic identity), lower academic persistence and curiosity, and more negative school-based behaviors. Finally, based on previous research suggesting the protective properties of Black identification and awareness of Blacks' social status (Chavous et al., 2003; O'Connor, 1999; Sellers et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2003), we expected that racial ideological beliefs would moderate the relationship between racial discrimination and academic engagement outcomes such that more endorsement of beliefs emphasizing minority group status (nationalism and minority) would relate to a diminished relationship between discrimination and engagement outcomes relative to those who endorsed those beliefs less. Similarly, we expected that stronger endorsement of beliefs de-emphasizing minority group status (assimilation and humanism beliefs) would relate to more academic risk in the face of experiencing racial discrimination relative to those who endorsed those ideological beliefs less.

METHOD

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 390 self-identified African American middle and high school students (Grades 7 to 10) from a larger sample of youth recruited from a large midwestern school district. The majority of the participants were either seventh (33.6%) or eighth (31.8%) graders ($M = 8.16$, $SD = 1.05$). The sample was fairly balanced in terms of gender (56.2% female). A little more than 46% of the participants reported that their parents had attained a college degree or more, suggesting that the sample on average was middle class. Sixty percent of the participants reported that their average grade for the previous academic year was a B- or higher. The racial composition of the school district in which the study took place was 58% White, 15% Black, 12% Asian, close to 4% Latino, and 11% other racial/ethnic minorities. Only participants who self-identified as African American were included in the final

sample ($N = 390$). Youth who identified as biracial or multiracial ($n = 89$) or as members of other ethnic/nationality groups ($n = 14$) were excluded from the present analyses because of conceptual considerations. In addition, youth who did not have complete data on all study measures of interest were excluded from our study analyses ($n = 47$). The students excluded on this basis did not differ from included students on parent education or average grade variables.

PROCEDURES

The data were collected as part of a longitudinal investigation focused on racial identity, racial socialization, and racial discrimination experiences among African American adolescents. Data presented in this study represent the initial wave of the investigation. Students in 7th to 10th grades were recruited to participate in the present study based on a list of eligible students provided by the school district. The school district comprised six middle schools and five high schools in southeastern Michigan. The research team primarily consisted of undergraduate and graduate students who self-identified as African American. Letters detailing the study, its procedures, and consent forms were mailed to parents of eligible students to elicit participation. Parents were asked to verify the race of their child, identify the child's primary caregiver, provide contact information, and provide the signature of both the parent and child if they chose to participate. Those parents who did not respond to the initial mailing were called by members of the team, given an overview of the research study, and asked once again to provide consent for their child to participate in the study. Those students who met the requirements of the study, had obtained parental permission to participate in the study, and gave their assent were administered the survey battery after school under the supervision of research assistants. The final household response rate for the adolescents in the study was 74%. The administrations took approximately 50 minutes to complete and were monitored by research assistants. Participants were compensated for their participation with a \$20 gift certificate.

MEASURES

Public Oppositional Academic Identity. To assess the extent to which youth were comfortable in identifying with an academic orientation within their social/peer contexts, we used an adapted version of the impression management subscale from Arroyo and Zigler's (1995) Racelessness Scale, which we call Public Oppositional Academic Identity (POAI). For adolescents, peer groups are particularly relevant in their personal identity development. The

ways in which peers perceive and approve of adolescents often are important influences on their self-images and behaviors (Ryan, 2001). Thus, we were interested in youths' concerns about the ways in which their peers viewed them in the context of educational success. We used two items from the POAI scale to assess students' concern regarding their peers' evaluation of their academic performance and engagement ("I feel I must act less intelligent than I am so other students will not make fun of me" and "I could probably do better in school, but I don't try because I will be labeled a "brainiac" or a "nerd") and combined them with an additional item developed by the research team ("I worry a lot about students teasing me for getting good grades") to create the POAI. The 3-item scale ($\alpha = .59$) was scored on a 3-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 3 (*very true*). A higher score was indicative of a higher level of public oppositional identity.

Academic persistence. Participants' levels of academic persistence were evaluated using adapted items from the Scale for Academic Engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). The original 20-item scale was designed to evaluate students' attention, participation, effort, and persistence when presented with new learning material. The present study used 8 items from the original scale. An exploratory factor analysis of the 8-item scale resulted in two distinct factors. We named the first factor Academic Persistence because the theme of the four items that loaded on this factor was perseverance in the face of academic difficulty. Sample items are "If I can't get a problem right the first time, I just keep trying" and "When I do badly on a test, I work harder the next time." Participants responded to the items using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not very true*) to 4 (*very true*) ($\alpha = .71$), with higher scores reflecting greater academic persistence.

Academic curiosity. The second factor that emerged from the factor analysis of the Scale for Academic Engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993) focused on students' interest and excitement in engaging in new academic tasks in class. As a result, we named this four-item scale Academic Curiosity. A sample item is "I participate when we discuss new material." The subscale was developed from 4 items ($\alpha = .59$) that were scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 4 (*very true*). A higher mean score on the scale reflected a higher level of academic curiosity.

Negative school behaviors. Youths' engagement in negative behaviors at school was assessed using the mean of four items from a problem-behaviors scale developed by the research team. For each item, adolescents reported how frequently they engaged in the listed behavior within the past year using

a response scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*more than 20 times*). The four negative school behaviors included: (1) skipped a class without a valid excuse; (2) got into a fight at school; (3) been sent to the principal's office for doing something wrong; and (4) cheated on tests or exams.

Racial ideology and racial centrality. The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t; Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyễn, 2007), a developmentally appropriate version of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997) was used to assess two dimensions of students' racial identity attitudes—racial centrality and racial ideology. In measuring both racial centrality and racial ideology, participants responded to a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*really agree*) to 5 (*really disagree*) for each subscale. Adolescents' level of identification with their race was assessed by the three-item Racial Centrality scale ($\alpha = .57$). A sample item from the Racial Centrality scale is "Being Black is an important part of who I am." A higher score indicated that race was more central to the individual's self-concept.

The ideology dimension was assessed using four subscales from the Ideology scale of the MIBI-t. The three-item assimilation subscale ($\alpha = .70$) evaluated the extent to which respondents stress an American identity versus an African American identity (e.g., "Blacks should act more like Whites to be successful in this society"). The three-item humanist subscale ($\alpha = .51$) evaluated the individual's beliefs about the similarities between all individuals regardless of race, and stressed the commonalities between humans versus thinking about group differences. A sample item from this subscale is "Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as Blacks." The minority subscale ($\alpha = .56$) assessed the individuals' belief that they shared a mutual experience with other oppressed minority groups (e.g., "Being the only Black kid in class is no different than being the only Latino or Asian kid in class"). The nationalist subscale ($\alpha = .72$) measured the extent to which individuals stress the uniqueness of being Black in society. This three-item subscale included items such as "Black parents should surround their children with Black art and Black books." For each subscale, higher scores indicated greater endorsement of the racial ideological view. The psychometric properties for the subscales are similar to other studies using the measure with adolescents (see Scottham et al., 2007, for detailed discussion of the racial identity measure development tests of validity and reliability).

Racial discrimination. The Daily Life Experience subscale was adapted from the Racism and Life Experience Scale (Harrell, 1997) to assess adolescents' day-to-day experiences with racial discrimination over the past

year. The measure included 17 experiences for which respondents indicated how often the event happened as a result of their race (with scores ranging from 0 = *never* to 5 = *once a week or more*) and how bothered they were by the discrimination experience (with scores ranging from 0 = *has never happened* to 5 = *bothers me extremely*). A composite score was created by multiplying respondents ratings of the frequency of each event with their ratings of how much the event bother them and then averaging across the product scores for the 17 events to create a composite racial discrimination score. Examples of the racially discriminatory events include: (1) having your ideas ignored; (2) being treated rudely; and (3) being insulted, called a name, harassed. Higher scores were indicative of more negative experiences of racial discrimination.

Average grade achievement. Students' self-reported average grade was assessed using a single item in which participants were asked to indicate, "Which category best describes your average grade last year?" Participants responded on a 9-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*A [93–100]*) to 9 (*D or below [69 or below]*). The variable was coded such that higher scores indicated higher average grade performance.

Demographic background. Students self-reported their gender (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*) and their current grade level. Students' reports of their primary caregivers highest level of educational attainment were assessed based on an 8-point scale ranging from 1 (*attained junior high or less*) to 8 (*attained PhD/MD/JD or similar level degree*).

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSES

The means and standard deviations of the study variables are reported in Table 1. With regard to dependent variables, as a whole, students reported low levels of endorsement of public oppositional academic identity ($M = 1.48$, $SD = .32$), indicating that they did not generally feel highly self-conscious about being viewed as an academic achiever among peers. Generally, the sample had fairly high levels of academic persistence ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .61$) and moderately high scores for academic curiosity about new classroom topics and activities, ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .57$). Finally, students on average reported low engagement in negative school behaviors ($M = 1.63$, $SD = .61$).

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Background and Predictor Variables (N = 390)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Grade level	1.00												
2. Average grade	-.03	1.00											
3. Parent education	.13***	.24***	1.00										
4. Centrality	.04	-.02	-.02	1.00									
5. Assimilation	.02	.05	-.03	-.10*	1.00								
6. Humanism	.05	.09	.05	-.13***	.06	1.00							
7. Minority	.04	.14***	.09	.15***	-.12**	.26***	1.00						
8. Nationalism	.19***	.14***	.03	.42***	.07	-.07	.22***	1.00					
9. Racial discrimination	.01	.02	.06	.12**	.002	-.05	.07	.12**	1.00				
10. Public opp. academic identity	-.14***	-.08	-.11**	.03	.25***	-.10*	-.16***	.01	.16***	1.00			
11. Academic persistence	-.06	.20***	.05	-.02	-.19***	.07	-.13***	-.08	-.10**	-.26***	1.00		
12. Academic curiosity	-.02	.21***	.09	-.03	-.10*	.04	.07	-.04	.09	-.14***	.50***	1.00	
13. Negative school behaviors	.09	-.26***	-.11**	.01	.12**	-.10*	-.07	.01	.12**	.14***	-.27***	-.26***	1.00
M	8.16	5.19	4.58	3.87	1.83	3.68	4.07	3.32	4.08	1.48	3.23	2.93	1.63
SD	1.10	2.25	1.76	.81	.88	4.07	.71	.96	4.39	.32	.60	.57	.61

p* < .06. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01. *****p* < .001.

With regard to primary predictor variables, we found that participants on average reported experiencing racial discrimination infrequently ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 1.05$ on a scale of 1 to 5). However, only 3.6% of participants reported experiencing none of the racial discrimination events over the past year, and participants' Frequency \times Bother scores ranged from 0 to 23.53 (out of a possible 25). Youth reported fairly high racial centrality ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .81$). With regard to ideologies, participants reported generally low assimilation scores ($M = 1.82$, $SD = .89$) and fairly high humanism, minority, and nationalism scores ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .86$; $M = 4.06$, $SD = .71$; and $M = 3.31$, $SD = .97$, respectively).

We found gender differences in the dependent variables, with girls reporting lower public oppositional academic identity attitudes than boys ($M = 1.24$, $SD = .38$; and $M = 1.38$, $SD = .43$, respectively). Girls also reported less engagement in negative behaviors at school ($M = 1.54$, $SD = .55$ for girls and $M = 1.73$, $SD = .67$ for boys). Boys and girls did not differ significantly in their academic persistence and curiosity. With regard to racial identity, girls and boys differed in racial centrality scores ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .80$; and $M = 3.78$, $SD = .81$, respectively) and assimilation ideology scores, with boys endorsing assimilation beliefs ($M = 2.01$, $SD = .90$) more strongly than girls ($M = 1.69$, $SD = .85$).

CORRELATIONS AMONG STUDY VARIABLES

Pearson product-moment correlations among dependent variables (public oppositional identity, academic curiosity, academic persistence, and negative school behaviors) and predictor variables (racial discrimination, the four racial ideology subscales, centrality, average grades, current grade level, and parent education) were conducted (see Table 1). A number of significant relationships resulted. With regard to student background factors, findings indicate that students' prior achievement level (average grades) showed small, positive correlations with academic persistence and curiosity variables ($r = .20$, $p < .001$ and $r = .21$, $p < .001$). Higher grade achievement also related to fewer negative school behaviors ($r = -.26$, $p < .001$). Youth with higher reported average grades more strongly endorsed minority and nationalism ideology beliefs ($r = .14$, $p < .01$ and $r = .14$, $p < .01$, respectively). Students in higher grade levels had lower public oppositional academic identity scores ($r = -.14$, $p < .01$). Grade level also was positively associated with nationalism scores ($r = .24$, $p < .001$). Students from households with higher parental education levels had higher average grades ($r = .24$, $p < .001$), lower public oppositional academic identity scores ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$), and lower negative school behaviors ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$).

The correlations among dependent variables were as expected, with analyses indicating small to moderate negative correlations between public oppositional academic identity and academic persistence ($r = -.26, p < .01$) and curiosity ($r = -.14, p < .01$) and a small, positive correlation with negative school behaviors ($r = .14, p < .01$). There was a strong, positive association between academic curiosity and academic persistence ($r = .50, p < .001$).

Among primary predictor variables, analyses indicated significant relationships among several of the racial ideology variables. Assimilation scores showed a small negative association with minority scores ($r = -.12, p < .05$). Humanism was positively related to minority ideology views ($r = .26, p < .001$). Higher nationalism scores were associated with higher minority scores ($r = .22, p < .001$). A small, significant negative correlation was found between racial centrality and humanism ($r = -.13, p < .01$), and centrality scores were positively related to minority and nationalism scores ($r = .15, p < .01$ and $r = .42, p < .001$, respectively).

Finally, higher racial discrimination scores were related to higher public oppositional academic identity scores ($r = .16, p < .001$) and more negative school behaviors ($r = .12, p < .05$). Discrimination also was positively associated with nationalism ($r = .12, p < .05$) and centrality ($r = .12, p < .05$).

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND RACIAL IDENTITY AS PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Separate hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted to predict students' public oppositional academic identity, academic persistence, academic curiosity, and negative school behaviors. We entered the direct effects of each of the predictor variables in the first block of each model, including background factors, racial identity variables, and racial discrimination. We created interaction terms for racial discrimination and each ideology variable and entered these variables in the second block of each model. Each regression model was tested and significant interactions were probed using guidelines outlined by Aiken and West (1991), Cohen and Cohen (1983) and Rogosa (1980).

POAI. The final model for POAI was significant ($F(14, 390) = 5.96, p < .001$) and accounted for 16% of the variance in public oppositional identity (see Table 2). Participants' grade level was associated with POAI ($\beta = -.15, SE = .02, p < .01$), such that participants in higher grade levels were less concerned with being viewed as a higher achiever than their counterparts in lower grade levels. With regard to the racial identity variables, we found that the assimilation and minority ideology variables were significant predictors

TABLE 2
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Public
Oppositional Academic Identity (POAI; N = 390)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE_b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE_b</i>	β
1. Gender	-.12	.04	-.15***	-.12	.04	-.14***
Grade level	-.06	.02	-.15***	-.06	.02	-.15***
Average grade	-.02	.02	-.05	-.02	.02	-.05
Parent education	-.02	.02	-.06	-.02	.02	-.05
Racial centrality	.02	.02	.05	.03	.02	.06
Assimilation	.10	.02	.22****	.10	.02	.21
Humanism	-.02	.02	-.04	-.02	.02	-.04
Minority	-.08	.03	-.14***	-.08	.03	-.13***
Nationalism	.01	.02	.03	.01	.02	.02
Racial discrimination	.02	.01	.16****	.02	.01	.17****
2. Racial Discrimination × Assimilation	—	—	—	.01	.01	.12***
Racial Discrimination × Humanism	—	—	—	.02	.01	.02
Racial Discrimination × Minority	—	—	—	.02	.01	.07
Racial Discrimination × Nationalism	—	—	—	-.001	.01	-.01

NOTE: $R^2 = .16$ for Step 1, $F(10, 390) = 7.45, p < .001$; and $\Delta R^2 = .02$ for Step 2, $F(14, 390) = 5.96, p < .001$.

*** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

of participants' concern about their peers viewing them as academically identified. Higher assimilation scores were related to higher levels of POAI ($\beta = .21, SE = .02, p < .001$). In contrast, higher endorsement of the minority ideology was associated with lower POAI ($\beta = -.13, SE = .02, p < .01$). Additionally, adolescents' experiences with racial discrimination were significantly related to POAI ($\beta = .17, SE = .01, p < .001$), such that participants who reported experiencing more racial discrimination also reported higher levels of POAI.

The interaction variables significantly increased the variance explained in POAI an additional 2%. There was a significant coefficient for the Discrimination × Assimilation variable ($\beta = .13, SE = .01, p < .01$). We plotted the significant interaction by selecting conditional values of assimilation (one standard deviation above the mean and one standard deviation below the mean) at which to evaluate the relationship between discrimination and POAI (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Rogosa, 1980). Our plot results indicated a stronger positive relationship between racial discrimination and

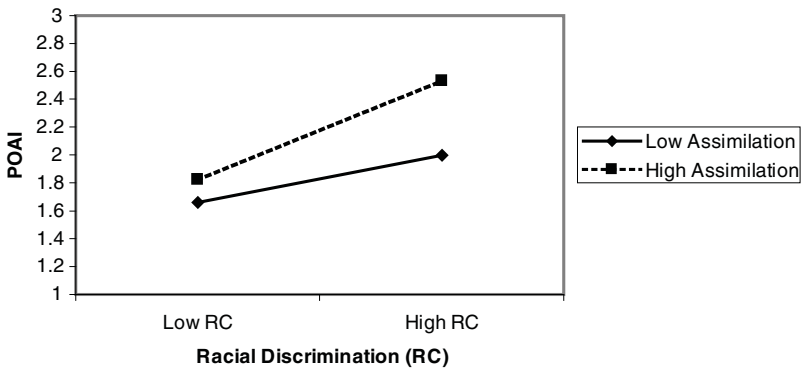


Figure 1: The Relationship Between Racial Discrimination and Public Oppositional Academic Identity (POAI) Scores for Adolescents Varying in Endorsement of Assimilation Ideological Views

POAI among youth with higher assimilation scores relative to youth with lower assimilation scores. (See Figure 1.)

Academic persistence. The model for academic persistence also was significant, ($F(10, 390) = 4.76, p < .001$), and the predictor variables in Block 1 accounted for approximately 12% of the variance in persistence (see Table 3). Participants' average grade achievement showed a significant positive association with academic persistence ($\beta = .20, SE = .03, p < .001$). The regression coefficients for assimilation and nationalism were significant, indicating negative associations between endorsing these ideological views and academic persistence ($\beta = -.17, SE = .03, p < .001$; and $\beta = -.11, SE = .04, p < .05$, respectively). Minority ideology scores were positively related to persistence ($\beta = .11, SE = .05, p < .05$). Finally, racial discrimination was a significant predictor of academic persistence ($\beta = -.10, SE = .01, p < .05$), and higher discrimination scores predicted lower persistence. Adding the interaction variables in Block 2 did not result in a significant increase in the variance explained in academic persistence, nor did it result in any significant interaction coefficients.

Academic curiosity. The final regression model for academic curiosity was significant ($F(14, 390) = 2.81, p < .002$). Block 1 explained 7% of the variance in curiosity (see Table 4). Participants' average grades were positively related

TABLE 3
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Academic Persistence ($N = 390$)

	b	SE_b	β	b	SE_b	β
1. Gender	.04	.06	.04	.04	.06	.04
Grade level	-.01	.03	-.03	-.01	.03	-.02
Average grade	.12	.03	.20****	.12	.03	.20****
Parent education	-.001	.03	-.002	-.01	.03	-.002
Racial centrality	.01	.03	.01	.01	.03	.01
Assimilation	-.11	.04	-.17****	-.12	.04	-.17****
Humanism	.01	.04	.03	.01	.04	.03
Minority	.09	.05	.11**	.09	.05	.11**
Nationalism	-.07	.04	-.11**	-.06	.04	-.11**
Racial discrimination	-.01	.01	-.10**	-.01	.01	-.10**
2. Racial Discrimination \times Assimilation	—	—	—	.01	.01	.02
Racial Discrimination \times Humanism	—	—	—	-.001	.01	-.02
Racial Discrimination \times Minority	—	—	—	-.001	.01	-.004
Racial Discrimination \times Nationalism	—	—	—	-.001	.01	.001

NOTE: $R^2 = .11$ for Step 1, $F(10, 390) = 4.76, p < .001$; and $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 2, $F(14, 390) = 3.39, p < .001$.

** $p < .05$. **** $p < .001$.

to academic curiosity ($\beta = .20, SE = .03, p < .001$). Of the racial identity variables, only assimilation ideology scores were related to academic curiosity. A marginally significant regression coefficient indicated that individuals who endorsed the idea that Blacks should be more like Whites (assimilation) reported lower levels of academic curiosity ($\beta = -.09, SE = .03, p < .06$). Racial discrimination also was a marginally significant predictor of academic curiosity ($\beta = -.09, SE = .01, p < .06$). The addition of the variables in Block 2 resulted in no additional explanatory power in academic curiosity, nor were any of the coefficients for the interaction variables significant.

Negative school behaviors. The model for academic persistence was significant, ($F(10, 390) = 5.54, p < .001$). The variables in Block 1 accounted for approximately 13% of the variance in negative school behaviors (see Table 5). Gender was a marginally significant predictor of negative school behavior, and girls reported fewer such behaviors than did boys ($\beta = -.09,$

TABLE 4
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting
Academic Curiosity ($N = 390$)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE_b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE_b</i>	β
1. Gender	.04	.06	.03	.04	.06	.04
Grade level	-.01	.03	-.02	.003	.03	.006
Average grade	.11	.03	.20****	.11	.03	.20****
Parent education	.02	.03	.04	.02	.03	.04
Racial centrality	-.004	.03	-.01	-.003	.03	-.01
Assimilation	-.06	.03	-.09*	-.06	.03	-.09*
Humanism	-.001	.04	-.01	-.01	.04	.01
Minority	.05	.04	.06	.04	.04	.05
Nationalism	-.03	.04	-.05	-.04	.04	-.07
Racial discrimination	-.01	.01	-.09*	-.01	.01	-.10**
2. Racial Discrimination \times Assimilation	—	—	—	-.001	.01	-.01
Racial Discrimination \times Humanism	—	—	—	.003	.01	.03
Racial Discrimination \times Minority	—	—	—	.001	.01	.001
Racial Discrimination \times Nationalism	—	—	—	.01	.01	.08

NOTE: $R^2 = .07$ for Step 1, $F(10, 390) = 2.82, p < .002$; and $\Delta R^2 = .075$ for Step 2, $F(14, 390) = 2.18, p < .008$.

* $p < .06$. ** $p < .05$. **** $p < .001$.

$SE = .06, p < .06$). Adolescents in higher grade levels reported more negative behaviors ($\beta = .09, SE = .03, p < .06$), and higher average grade achievement related to fewer reported negative behaviors at school ($\beta = -.23, SE = .03, p < .001$). Of the racial identity variables, only the regression coefficient for assimilation was significant, indicating a positive relationship between assimilation and negative school behaviors ($\beta = .12, SE = .04, p < .05$). Finally, experiencing more racial discrimination related to more negative behaviors at school ($\beta = .13, SE = .01, p < .01$). The addition of the interaction variables in Block 2 did not add significantly to the model prediction.

DISCUSSION

A primary aim of this study was to explore the roles of racial ideological beliefs and racial discrimination in the academic engagement of

TABLE 5
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting
Negative School Behaviors (*N* = 390)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE_b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE_b</i>	β
1. Gender	-.12	.06	-.09*	-.11	.06	-.09*
Grade level	.06	.03	.09*	.06	.03	.09*
Average grade	-.14	.03	-.23****	-.14	.03	-.23****
Parent education	-.03	.03	-.06	-.04	.03	-.06
Racial centrality	-.002	.03	-.003	-.003	.03	-.01
Assimilation	.08	.04	.12**	.08	.04	.12**
Humanism	-.05	.04	-.07	-.05	.04	-.06
Minority	-.01	.05	-.01	-.01	.05	-.02
Nationalism	.001	.04	.002	.01	.04	.01
Racial discrimination	.02	.01	.13***	.02	.01	.13***
2. Racial discrimination \times assimilation	—	—	—	-.01	.01	-.04
Racial discrimination \times humanism	—	—	—	-.01	.01	-.07
Racial discrimination \times minority	—	—	—	-.01	.01	-.03
Racial discrimination \times nationalism	—	—	—	-.004	.01	-.03

NOTE: $R^2 = .13$ for Step 1, $F(10, 390) = 5.54$, $p < .001$; and $\Delta R^2 = .14$ for Step 2, $F(14, 390) = 4.19$, $p < .001$.

* $p < .06$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

African American adolescents. Our results provide empirical evidence for the importance of examining African American students' beliefs around the meaning of their racial group and their proximal experiences related to race when studying the ways that racial group membership influences academic engagement. Generally, our results do not align with the risk perspective on Black identity suggested by the cultural ecological perspective, that an emphasis on being like Whites promotes academic identification (e.g., Fordham, 1988), nor do our data support the idea that an emphasis on ethnic minority status is deleterious to achievement motivation (Aronson, 2002; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Instead, our results more strongly support the promotive approach and suggest that embracing an ethnic minority group identity may enhance school engagement. Below we discuss our findings and their implications for psychological and educational theory, research, and practice.

RACIAL IDEOLOGIES AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

One contribution of the present study is that we addressed explicitly several primary assumptions underlying prevalent models of ethnic minority achievement. Specifically, our examination of youths' racial ideological beliefs provided tests of the raceless and colorblind perspectives, as well as the idea prevalent in stigma and stereotype threat research that an emphasis on ethnic minority status should relate to lowered school identification and motivation. Our assessment of assimilation ideological beliefs was conceptually similar to the "racelessness" orientation as defined by Fordham (1988), in that it was concerned with Blacks needing to assimilate into mainstream culture to be successful and to de-emphasize a Black identity. In contrast to the view espoused by Fordham (1988), our results indicate that holding ideological beliefs that Blacks should be more like Whites (assimilation) was associated with more concern that their peers would view them as identified with academics, with less interest or curiosity around new class material and activities, with lower reported persistence on classroom tasks, and with more school problem behaviors. Furthermore, this was the case even when accounting for youth's level of racial centrality and prior achievement. This finding is in direct contradiction to the racelessness hypothesis. Given the dearth of empirical support in the research literature on the utility of such a strategy for African American academic achievement, it may be time to reconsider this approach.

We believe that the humanism ideology subscale tapped into adolescents' endorsement of the "colorblind" perspective (e.g., Markus et al., 2000; Rousseau & Tate, 2003) prevalent in educational discourse, which advocates a de-emphasis on racial group membership in favor of viewing people as individuals. We found no significant relationship between adolescents' endorsement of a humanism ideology and any of our school engagement measures. As a result, we are unable to make any conclusions with regard to the utility of the colorblind perspective for the academic engagement of African American adolescents. It is possible that context may matter with regard to the efficacy of the humanism ideology. For instance, it is possible that our lack of direct associations between endorsement of humanism ideology and school engagement may be masking important interactions that were beyond the scope of the present article. Research has found that the match between students' racial identity attitudes and such contextual factors as teacher expectations and school racial climate have implications for African American adolescent school achievement (Chavous et al., in press). Similarly, in our study, contextual factors may be important to consider. The youth in our study were in a school district where issues of race and the "achievement gap" often were salient. It is possible that holding particular ideological beliefs within this type of climate relates to youth

being more vulnerable to stigma and stereotype effects—for instance, heightened concerns about being perceived in terms of group stereotypes around academics that can inhibit academic motivation. Further research clearly is needed examining youth in varying school and community contexts.

Our findings regarding the direct association between racial ideology and academic engagement are consistent with the previous research by Sellers, Chavous, et al. (1998). They found that stronger assimilation and nationalism beliefs related to lower grade performance, and stronger minority views predicted higher grades with African American college students. Taken together with the findings from Sellers, Chavous, et al. (1998), the results from the present study provide some very limited support for the possibility that academic engagement may be an important mediating process in linking African American students' racial ideology beliefs to their academic performance. The fact that we find very consistent relationships as those reported by Sellers, Chavous, and colleagues in a completely different sample at a different developmental period is quite striking. The fact that previous research has linked academic engagement to academic achievement provides further limited support for such a mediational process (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996; Pajares & Schunk, 2005; Pintrich, Roeser, & DeGroot, 1994). Further research is needed, however, that directly tests potential mediation between racial ideology, academic engagement, and academic performance before definitive conclusions can be made. Nonetheless, the present findings do provide an intriguing first step.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, RACIAL IDENTITY, AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

An examination of our results from a promotive/resilience perspective clearly suggests that experiencing racial discrimination is an important risk factor for lower academic engagement. Although adolescents in our sample, on average, reported that they experienced racial discrimination somewhat infrequently, the overwhelming majority of our sample reported experiencing some racial discrimination in the past year, suggesting that racial discrimination represents a normative developmental risk factor to many children and adolescents of color (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Spencer, 1999, Spencer et al., 1997). Consistent with both the racial identity-as-risk and racial identity-as-promotive factor approaches, greater experiences with racial discrimination consistently were associated with lower levels of engagement across all of our outcome measures. These findings lend support to work from the social identity literature that suggests that the more individuals experience group devaluation, the more likely they are to disconnect their personal identity from domains in

which they are expected to do poorly—in school or other status-based domains (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). It is still speculation, however, as to whether students who experienced more discrimination in the present sample have actually disidentified with school.

Our results are also consistent with a view of racial ideologies as important resilience factors in the context of racial discrimination. Our findings of significant direct associations between minority ideology and school engagement outcomes in the context of racial discrimination are consistent with a compensatory model of resilience (Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Notaro, 2002; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). The compensatory model argues that the resilience factor is associated with a positive outcome across all levels of risk. In the present study, regardless of their level of experiences with racial discrimination, adolescents endorsing an ideology that Blacks should emphasize their ethnic minority group status in the context of a shared experience and history of oppression with other ethnic minority groups (minority ideology) reported being less fearful of being viewed as academically oriented and more academically persistent in the face of challenges. A minority ideology may provide African American adolescents with a worldview in which oppression is recognized and is possibly to be expected. Such a worldview may motivate some African American students to achieve even in the face of racial obstacles to their academic achievement (O'Connor, 1999).

Interestingly, we found little evidence that endorsing particular racial ideology views buffers the negative influence of racial discrimination. In fact, endorsing an assimilation ideology seems to exacerbate the association between experiencing racial discrimination and public oppositional academic identity. Research on African American adolescents' mental health has suggested that the negative impact of racial discrimination on psychological well-being and behavioral problems is increased for youth who identify with their Black identity less (Neblett, Shelton, & Sellers, 2004; Wong et al., 2003) and who are less aware of Blacks' status as an oppressed group (Caldwell et al., 2004; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Similarly, the results for adolescents in our study suggest that youth who de-emphasize their ethnic minority identity and advocate being like Whites in contexts where they are likely to be discriminated against based on their racial group may be particularly vulnerable to the negative impact of experiencing racial discrimination on academic motivation and school engagement. Our reasoning is somewhat speculative because of the cross-sectional nature of the study, but the findings do provide a foundation for future longitudinal inquiries on the impact of discrimination and the ways youths' racial ideological beliefs may moderate its effects.

LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Based on our study findings, we assert that African American adolescents' beliefs about the meaning of their racial group membership, along with their racial discrimination experiences, relate to their academic engagement attitudes and behaviors. In interpreting our findings, however, we also consider several issues. First, we must emphasize that although we were interested in the ways that particular ideological beliefs related to school engagement, our study analyses and findings should not be interpreted as categorizing youth in terms of one ideology, for example, as being an "assimilationist person" or a "humanist person," as youth responded to items from each of the ideology subscales and could endorse beliefs across the different subscales. Instead, we only address the direct and independent contributions of scores for each ideology subscale with study outcomes. We acknowledge that youth may endorse views across ideologies, for example, have the assimilation perspective that Blacks should integrate into the mainstream, yet agree with nationalist views that Blacks should have primarily same racial group social relationships (Rowley, Chavous, & Cooke, 2003). Our goal in the present study was to highlight the fact that African American adolescents might endorse multiple meanings around being Black but that particular beliefs may be more or less predictive of academic engagement. Future research might begin to examine patterns of ideological beliefs among adolescents using person-centered techniques (as Rowley et al., 2003, did in a study of college students) and the ways these patterns might predict adolescents' academic attitudes and behaviors.

Another issue to consider is that our measure of racial discrimination focused on day-to-day hassles that might occur in youths' lives in and out of school and in various domains (in public institutions, in the neighborhood, from strangers, etc.). It is possible that experiencing the types of racial discrimination assessed in our study may relate less directly to academic engagement outcomes than racial discrimination experiences based in the school context specifically (e.g., feedback from and interactions with teachers in class settings or other adult school personnel; peer exclusion or harassment based on race at school) that have been used in other studies (Chavous, Rivas, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2007; Wong et al., 2003). Thus, our analysis may underestimate the potential impact of racial discrimination on adolescents' academic engagement. More research is needed that examines how particular types of discrimination experiences influence adolescents' academic identities and adaptations and the extent to which youth with certain racial ideologies differ in their race-related school experiences and respond differently to those experiences.

Our study also examined youth across different age groups, and although we controlled for age and grade differences in our study outcomes, it is possible that youths' beliefs about the meaning of their racial group and their experiences with racial discrimination may have different implications for younger and older adolescents, who may differ in their social cognitive characteristics as well as in their experiences related to their racial group membership (Brown & Bigler, 2005). For instance, Greene et al. (2006) reported that African American adolescents' reports of racial discrimination increased from mid to late adolescence. Future research might consider the ways that age and grade level may relate to youth's endorsement of beliefs about their racial group and the frequency of discrimination they experience, as well as how the relationships among racial ideology beliefs, racial discrimination, and academic engagement may differ for early and late adolescents. Similarly, although we statistically accounted for gender variation in study outcomes in our analyses, given the consistent gender differences found in achievement among African American students (e.g., Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004) and gender variation we found in our study variables, future research should examine gender differences in African American youths' racial identity beliefs and race-related experiences that contribute to gender differences in achievement.

CONCLUSIONS

In sum, a strength of our study is that it addressed explicitly a number of implicit assumptions within the ethnic minority achievement literature regarding the associations among racial identity beliefs, societal racial discrimination, and achievement, and demonstrated the impact of both youths' beliefs and their experiences related to their racial group on their academic engagement. Our findings challenge the underlying assumption of the risk perspective reflected in much of the research and discourse on African American achievement—that an academic identity is inconsistent with an African American identity. Additionally, we provided a framework for thinking about the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement that recognizes both the risks and promotion factors associated with membership in this racial group, as well as the utility of considering the variation in how African Americans think about their group membership. Much more research, however, is needed to understand variation in African American adolescents' constructions of the meaning of their racial group membership in relation to their personal and academic identities, their experiences related to race, and how these beliefs and experiences may influence their academic motivational attitudes and behaviors.

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