

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF-CONCEPT ON ETHNIC-RACIAL IDENTITY AND
SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT FOR BLACK ADOLESCENTS

A Dissertation

by

SOPHIA SHERRELL HOWARD

Submitted to the Graduate and Professional School of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Chair of Committee,
Committee Members,

Jamilia Blake
Chanda Elbert
Tamika Gilreath
Wen Luo
Jeffrey Liew

Head of Department,

August 2023

Major Subject: School Psychology

Copyright 2023 Sophia Howard

ABSTRACT

Despite the racial/ethnic diversity of the United States, a significant difference remains between the standardized achievement scores of White students and Black students, most commonly known as the achievement gap or the opportunity gap. Although it is recognized that the opportunity gap is rooted in structural racism, scholars have examined micro-level factors to close the opportunity gap that drives underachievement in Black youth. The present study explored the connections between ethnic-racial identity and factors related to academic achievement: global self-concept, academic self-concept, and student engagement. This study also evaluated the ethnic-racial identity process from a gendered lens. This study used data from the Peer Relations as Moderators of Success (PRAMS) 2008-2010 study. Survey data and demographic information were collected from 68 male and 98 female preadolescent and adolescent Black students in the 5th-8th grades. Data was evaluated as adequate using preliminary statistics. The hypothesized relationships between global self-concept, academic self-concept, ethnic-racial identity, and student behavioral engagement were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). In Model 1, analyses of direct effects indicated a significant pathway between global self-concept and behavioral engagement; however, ethnic-racial identity did not have a significant direct effect on global self-concept or behavioral engagement. Similarly, Model 2 resulted in academic self-concept having a significant direct effect on behavioral engagement, whereas ethnic-racial identity did not have a direct effect on academic self-concept or behavioral engagement. Due to all direct pathways and indirect pathways not being significantly predictive, preliminary assumptions to test for a mediation effect were not met for Model 1 and Model 2. Overall findings indicated global self-concept and academic self-concept as stronger indicators of achievement outcomes, specifically for behavioral engagement for

Black students. Results further illustrated gender differences for the relationship between global self-concept and achievement outcomes for Black girls and boys. This study suggests finding ways to facilitate greater global and academic self-concept for youth will be beneficial for strengthening the likelihood of youth behaviorally engaging in classes at school. Limitations and future directions were further discussed.

Keywords: ethnic-racial-identity, Black adolescents

DEDICATION

First, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving, kind, and warm parents. Thank you Mom and Dad for always being a rock for me during this long and challenging journey towards this Ph.D. The abundance of support and love you have given me my entire life is what has gotten me this far. Thank you!

I also wish to dedicate this dissertation to all of my family! My Howard, McAdams, and Guillory tribe has supported me emotionally, spiritually, and financially! Thank you for all of the prayers, check-ins, and encouragement. I am so grateful God has blessed me with a true village that I am always able to lean on near and far.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my heavenly family: Uncle Lonnie Taylor, Grandma Mary McAdams, Uncle Frank Nealy, and Papa Joseph Guillory. Thank you for the love and support you showered me with while on earth. I can feel you all shining down on me from heaven.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank God for being the firm foundation on which I can stand. With Him, I have been able to endure anything that comes my way. I thank Him for instilling in me a purpose to serve children/adolescents and their families.

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Jamilia Blake, for your mentorship, encouragement, wisdom, patience, and continued support on this journey. You told me many times there is a method to your madness. As I near the end of this journey, I am so grateful to be a witness of it! Furthermore, I would like to thank my committee members, Drs. Elbert, Gilreath, and Luo, as well as Dr. Webb who served as an alternate committee member for my dissertation proposal. I thank you all for the encouragement, as well as your kind and invaluable feedback.

Thank you to my tribe of friends and family for encouraging me to press on. I garnered so much strength from you all and I am so grateful.

Lastly, I would like to thank the staff and faculty at Texas A&M University for giving me the tools, training, and support needed to grow into a future psychologist. I would like to give a special thanks to Drs. Castro, Riccio, Simmons, Smith, and Newell who served as my primary professors these past 5 years and were instrumental in my training.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supported by dissertation committee chair, Dr. Jamilia Blake, of the Department of Health Behavior. The data analyzed for Chapter 4 was provided by Dr. Blake. The analyses depicted in Chapter 4 was conducted by the student with consultation with Dr. Kwok of the Department of Educational Psychology. All other work conducted for the dissertation was completed by the student independently.

Funding Sources

All work conducted for this dissertation was completed without outside financial support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDINGSOURCES.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Ethnic-Racial Identity.....	5
Study Purpose.....	8
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
Ethnic-Racial Identity.....	10
Ethnic-Racial Identity and Student Self-Concept.....	25
Student Engagement.....	28
Student Engagement and Student Self-Concept.....	32
Ethnic-Racial Identity, Student Self-Concept, and Student Engagement....	33
Purpose of the Study.....	34
Hypotheses	35
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	38

Participants	38
Measures	38
Procedures	40
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS	43
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION	49
REFERENCES	55

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 1	Descriptive Statistics.....	42
Table 2	Correlational Analyses	43

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1	Hypothesized Global Self Concept Model 1.....	36
Figure 2	Hypothesized Academic Self Concept Model 2.....	37
Figure 3	Global Self-Concept Mediation Model.....	45
Figure 4	Global Self-Concept Mediation Model With Significant and Nonsignificant Pathways.....	46
Figure 5	Academic Self-Concept Mediation Model.....	47
Figure 6	Academic Self-Concept Mediation Model With Significant and Nonsignificant Pathways.....	47

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States has become increasingly diverse with 4 out of 10 Americans identifying as a race other than White (Frey, 2020). These trends reflect a nation diversifying at a faster rate than predicted, with 2019 the first year that over half of the United States population under age 16 identified as a racial or ethnic minority (Frey, 2020). Despite the racial/ethnic diversity of the United States, a significant difference remains between the standardized achievement scores of White students and Black students, most commonly known as the achievement gap (Gloria Ladson-Billings, 2006). This gap exists not only between racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups, but also persists between gender and by parental education attainment (Hung et al., 2019). Achievement gaps for Black students are detrimental as education is seen as an equalizer in the midst of structural inequalities (Hung et al., 2019). Ultimately, the roots of the achievement gap are ongoing socioeconomic and social stratification differences due to race that enables social systems to privilege White Americans and disadvantage people of color (Hung et al., 2019; Merolla & Jackson, 2019). According to a review of the literature on the achievement gap spanning 10 years, structural racism was identified as the fundamental cause of the achievement disparities that allows for significant inequalities along racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and identity lines (Merolla & Jackson, 2019). In light of systemic forces driving educational disparities, some suggest that the achievement gap actually represents an opportunity gap for Black students (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Flores, 2007; Hung et al., 2019; Tabron & Chambers, 2019; Verstegen, 2015).

Research further suggests underlying opportunity gaps create and sustain the achievement gap between Black and White students (Hung et al., 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2006). An

opportunity gap involves the resources or opportunities available for those belonging to higher socioeconomic statuses that allow them to excel academically. Venzant Chambers (2019) extends the discussion of the opportunity gap by examining what she identifies as the racial opportunity cost, or the costs Black students face in U.S. schools who make the choice to pursue academic success in racialized, desegregated school contexts. In “racialized, dominant-normed spaces” (Venzant Chambers, 2019, p. 537) such as schools, Black students face psychosocial, community, and representation costs due to their racial and other identities. Unfortunately, schools permeated with a culture that embraces White middle-class norms and values, utilize tracking, and exist within school segregation exacerbate the racial opportunity costs for students of color (Venzant Chambers, Huggins, Locke, & Fowler, 2014).

Scholars agree it is not merely individual factors driving Black students’ underlying achievement, but structural inequities that permeate educational systems (Hung et al., 2019). As such, Ladson-Billings (2006) indicates addressing the underlying issues, such as structural inequities firmly rooted in discriminatory housing and employment opportunities is key to closing the achievement gap. Ladson-Billings (2013) further states that to “truly understand achievement disparities is to understand the larger context in which they develop” (p. 14). Similarly, Flores (2007) challenges disparities in achievement being framed as the achievement gap and calls for researchers to reframe the problem as students of color experiencing unequal opportunities to learn in schools. In reference to achievement disparities, Flores (2007) highlights the importance of finding an appropriate way to frame a problem as this not only allows us to better understand, but also impacts how we address the problem to solve it. In essence, the education system enables opportunity gaps that ultimately leads to unequal outcomes, including the underachievement of Black students relative to their peers (Ladson-Billings, 2013). In other

words, the achievement gap is a symptom of the disease of opportunity gaps, and even more so, “historical, economic, political, and moral decisions that we as a society have made over time” (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 13). In order to appropriately frame the problem of educational disparities for Black youth in schools, the opportunity gap will be used moving forward.

Although it is recognized that the opportunity gap is rooted in structural racism and persists due to societal barriers such as economic inequality and segregation, scholars have examined micro-level factors to close the opportunity gap that drives underachievement in Black youth. Parental education, in particular, a mother’s educational attainment has been found in previous research to significantly predict academic achievement for children (Peters & Mullis, 1997); however, recent research indicated this effect was found to be weakened for Black youth (Assari et al., 2020). Findings from Hung et al (2019) further contrasted previous research as they found household adult education significantly contributed to achievement disparities. Instead of higher adult education benefiting Black youth, findings from the study illustrated higher levels of adult education were correlated to a larger achievement discrepancy (Hung et al., 2019). Hung and colleagues (2019) discussed these findings possibly being attributed to high education communities also being high resource communities in which access to “good” schools are insufficient in closing the opportunity gap due to economic barriers persisting.

Other micro-level factors, such as individual student factors have also been researched in efforts to close the opportunity gap between Black and White youth. One significant factor that has been found to mitigate the influence of the opportunity gap is student engagement in school. Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2011) found student engagement at school, along with attendance, helped to further close the opportunity gap in an urban high school. This is not surprising since student engagement is consistently and significantly linked to higher student grades (Darensbourg

& Blake, 2013; Reyes et al., 2012; Schendler, 2012). Sbrocco (2009) further illustrated support for the importance of student engagement in remediating underachievement as their results highlighted how student engagement can reduce ethnic-racial differences in academic outcomes. Sbrocco (2009) found behavioral engagement lessened the effect of race on student achievement. This was an important finding, as Black students in their study were more likely to experience disengagement at school. Thus, behavioral engagement represents a microlevel malleable process for addressing achievement disparities (Sbrocco, 2009). When considering the potential impact of student engagement on academic achievement outcomes for youth, it's vital to evaluate developmental factors that can facilitate greater student engagement for Black youth. Understanding the developmental factors that can lead to greater student engagement, and as such, positive academic outcomes for ethnically and racially diverse youth are central when making efforts to close the opportunity gap.

Even more so, it's important to evaluate possible gender differences present in developmental and academic outcomes for Black youth. Research highlights differences in academic trajectories between Black girls and boys. In particular, Black girls outperform Black boys in nearly every academic domain (Young, Foster, & Druery, 2018). Additionally, Black boys consistently earn lower grades and test scores across all K-12 grades, but especially in middle school than Black girls (Young et al., 2018). The academic gap between Black girls and boys continues into higher education as well, as Black females have higher rates of obtaining post-secondary degrees (e.g. Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate degrees) in comparison to Black males (Young et al., 2018). Scholars have also highlighted the different experiences Black girls and boys have due to racial/ethnic socialization and racial discrimination intersecting with their gender (Seaton & Tyson, 2019; Thomas, Caldwell, Faison, & Jackson, 2009). These experiences

can inform ethnic-racial identity development for Black youth. Since ethnic-racial identity is a protective factor for Black youth in particular and is linked to positive academic trajectories, it is important to flesh out differences in the role that ethnic-racial identity can play on Black girls' and boys' self-concept and engagement in school to close the opportunity gap.

Ethnic - Racial Identity

An important factor that has been studied when examining Black youth development and positive academic, psychosocial, and health trajectories is ethnic-racial identity (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Ethnic-racial identity describes the process of an individual understanding and identifying their sense of self in relation to their ethnic heritage and racial background (Williams et al., 2020). Ethnic-racial identity is further conceptualized as a multidimensional construct involving the beliefs and attitudes an individual has about the ethnic-racial group they identify as belonging to, with these beliefs and attitudes further developing and cementing over time (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Components of ethnic-racial identity are described as reflecting both a process that starts in infancy and evolves over time, as well as content, such as attitudes and beliefs one has about their group (Williams et al., 2020). Although ethnic identity and racial identity may reflect differences between race and ethnicity, they also have shared aspects such as representing shared history, values, and cultural bonds (Woo, Fan, Tran, & Takeuchi., 2019). These terms are often used interchangeably in the literature (Williams et al., 2012). As such, ethnic-racial identity, ethnic identity, and racial identity will be used interchangeably in this study as well. In discussions regarding race, culture, and ethnicity, it is also important to address the distinction between African American, representing an ethnic identity and the racial identity of an individual being Black. When referencing racial or cultural groups, African American and Black are not always interchangeable due to Black referencing a race of people with African

ancestry worldwide (APA, 2020b). In comparison, using the identifying label “African American” was initially proposed in 1988 by Black leaders to give Black Americans “a cultural identification with their heritage and ancestral homeland” (Smith, 1992, p. 507). However, throughout the literature centered on Black and African American youth, both identifying labels are used to identify or reference Black individuals or groups. In order to reflect the literature, I will use Black and African American interchangeably throughout this study.

Ethnic-racial identity research has mainly focused on adolescence, aligning with Erikson’s psychosocial theory of human development and Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. Piaget’s (1970) theory of cognitive development illustrates the significance of adolescents entering what’s defined as the formal operational stage of cognitive development. This stage encompasses adolescents engaging in abstract thinking, deductive reasoning, hypothetical thinking, and cognitive tasks (Piaget, 1970), that are essential for adolescents’ understanding of how their ethnicity and race not only shape their identity, but also is interpreted in the world around them (Williams et al., 2021).

Erikson discusses the significance of identity formation occurring in adolescence. His research outlines eight developmental stages in which an individual must cope with a crisis that arises to achieve identity attainment: developing basic trust over mistrust, achieving autonomy over shame and doubt, demonstrating initiative versus guilt, wrestling with industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair (Munley, 1975). The identity versus role confusion developmental task is especially central to adolescence, as it is when youth consciously make attempts to solidify their identity (Kasinath, 2013). As students in adolescence begin to develop the capacity for understanding others’ perspectives and abstract thinking, they face the issue of

developing an identity that provides a foundation for adulthood and answering the question, “Who I Am?” (Kasinath, 2013, p. 1).

Erikson (1968) identified various factors that contribute to identity, including the onset of puberty, increased independence and autonomy which allows youth to explore career, ideologies, and relationships, and the emergence of new expectations related to adulthood responsibilities as they mature (Erikson, 1968, as cited in Sokol, 2009). Identity has been formed when an individual has a sense of themselves as a person and as a contributor to society (Sokol, 2009, p. 142). Identity formation allows an individual to finally answer the questions of “What is my place in this world?” and “Who am I?” (Sokol, 2009, p. 142). Identity formation further promotes a sense of well-being for youth and provides a sense of direction. Identity versus role confusion as crucial for youth forming their identities, as they master problems of childhood and become ready to face challenges of the adult world (Manning, 1998). Overcoming the developmental task of identity versus role confusion is essential for youth’s further development. When an adolescent is unable to successfully navigate this task, it leads to role confusion, causing doubt related to their purpose, question their personality, and negatively view themselves, making it central to identity formation (Sokol, 2009).

Intersection of Ethnic-Racial Identity and Racism

As adolescents develop a greater understanding of ethnicity and race, they also feel the effect of racism more deeply (Williams et al., 2021). Black youth are significantly impacted by structural racism as it is the underlying factor contributing to the opportunity gap. Interpersonal racism, defined as prejudice or discrimination displayed by those who interact with adolescents, is another type of racism Black adolescents endure (Williams et al., 2021). However, structural and interpersonal racism are just symptoms of an over encompassing disease in America: Anti-

Blackness, described as the process in which “in which interpersonal and structural racism work together to systematically marginalize Black people” (Williams et al., 2021, p. 7). This leads to Black adolescents experiencing negative outcomes in the areas of health, educational, economic, and emotional well-being. Although racism negatively impacts several aspects of positive identity development, healthy identity formation in Black youth “includes understanding the negatives views held by others about Black people and developing positive self-identity despite those negative views” (Williams et al., 2021, p. 10). In fact, Black youth having strong, positive racial identity is a protective factor that buffers the negative impacts of discrimination and other forms of racism (Williams et al., 2021). It is at this point the present study aims to investigate. Research has illustrated ethnic-racial identity being instrumental in facilitating positive academic, social, and health outcomes for Black adolescents (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Highlighting protective factors, such as ethnic-racial identity, that can combat the detrimental, negative impact of racism on Black youth and facilitate positive academic outcomes are key to closing the opportunity gap.

Study Purpose

Research has illustrated racism leading to negative academic outcomes for Black youth (Williams et al., 2021). Given the way in which the multiple layers of racism has detrimental effects on Black adolescents’ outcomes, it is important to shed light on protective factors that can buffer the harmful effects of racism. A key protective factor for Black youth is ethnic-racial identity. Healthy identity formation for Black youth is especially key since consequences are experienced in several areas of their lives if this is not achieved (Williams et al., 2021). A significant phenomenon that persists due to the multiple layers of racism is the opportunity gap; however, focusing on how to facilitate greater academic outcomes in youth can help close the

opportunity gap. Although positive ethnic-racial identity linked has been linked to self-concept and student engagement, more research is needed to understand how ethnic-racial identity can act as a mechanism to facilitate greater self-concept and student engagement for Black pre-adolescents and adolescents. Understanding the role ethnic-racial identity plays in fostering greater self-concept and student engagement in Black youth is vital to further unpacking factors that can lead to positive academic outcomes, and as such, close the opportunity gap.

The present study aims to counteract the impact of racism on Black adolescents by focusing on factors that can facilitate positive academic outcomes for Black youth. This study will extend previous research by exploring the connections between ethnic-racial identity and factors related to academic achievement: global self-concept, academic self-concept, and student engagement. This study will also build upon previous studies by evaluating the ethnic-racial identity process from a gendered lens. There is emergent research that gender differences in ethnic-racial identity processes exist for Black male and female adolescents, yet more research is needed to better understand if this process is gendered (Chavous et al., 2008; Leath, Matthews, Harrison, & Chavous, 2019).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Significant discrepancies in standardized test scores for Black and White students, otherwise known as the opportunity gap, remains concerning as the gap persists. Test score data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2020) indicated lower reading scores for Black 4th and 8th grade students in 2019 than in 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Despite trends indicating national math scores for Black 4th graders increased in 2019 in comparison to scores for Black 4th graders in 2000, math scores were found to decrease for Black 8th graders in the 2019 year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Math score trends ultimately indicated the White-Black test score gap for students in grade 4 and grade 8 in 2019 narrowed in comparison to 2000. Although progress has been made towards narrowing the opportunity gap, Black students still score significantly lower in math and reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Particularly, trends indicate a significant change in academic performance for Black adolescents between the 4th and 8th grades (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Therefore, it is especially important for researchers to focus on individual-level factors that can help facilitate positive academic outcomes for Black pre-adolescents and adolescents.

Ethnic-Racial Identity

One essential individual-level factor addressing the opportunity gap to consider is student ethnic-racial identity development. This is important since ethnic-racial identity acts as a protective factor for youth because it motivates them to pursue important goals that are relevant to their ethnic/racial group (Oyserman, Brickman, and Rhodes, 2007). When having a more developed ethnic-racial identity, Black youth are motivated to excel academically as they're

taught academic achievement is perceived as a value to the African American community (Atschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006). Through the process of forming social identities, including ethnic-racial identity, youth are given information regarding norms and expectations of behavior applicable to group membership (Oyserman et al., 2007). Racial-ethnic identity helps adolescents to 1) make sense of their belonging to group membership; 2) make meaning to present and past racism, as well as limited opportunities and success of those in their racial-ethnic groups; and 3) organize knowledge relevant to the self about personal effort (Oyserman et al., 2007). Ethnic identity has also been theorized to allow adolescents to have a secure sense of themselves, and as such, make decisions that allow them to experience healthy and psychological well-being and academic success (Miller-Cotto & Byrnes, 2016).

Empirical research has supported stronger ethnic-racial identity in Black youth fostering higher academic achievement (Kyere & Huguley, 2020), as well as being positively associated with academic performance (Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). Additionally, Black adolescents' feeling of connection to the African American community has been found to predict grade point average (GPA) (Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). Links have further been established between ethnic-racial identity and achievement, as Black adolescents having less positive and secure racial identities were associated with lower scores on achievement tests (Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). Ethnic-racial identity has also been found to buffer the impact of perceived racial discrimination on school importance for Black adolescents (Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). Multiple scholars have explored how Black youth make meaning of themselves in regard to race and ethnicity (Cross, 1971; Oyserman et al., 1995). As a result, there are various models of ethnic-racial identity development with differing dimensions that are worthy of consideration to explore which components are most central to fostering Black youth achievement. Thus, it is essential to further

understand the different components of ethnic-racial identity. The Cross Racial Identity Model theorized ethnic-racial identity as stages that individuals move through (Vandiver et al., 2002). Stage theories of ethnic-racial identity conceptualize Black people's movement through stages as a developmental process in which Black identity shifts from a raceless identity to a race-conscious identity. In the Pre-Encounter stage of Cross' model, Black individuals base their identity on mainstream values. Cross (1971) argued that individuals in this stage possessed Anti-Black and Pro-White attitudes that resulted in low self-esteem and maladaptive psychological functioning. The Encounter (Stage 2) is a period in which African Americans experience a significant event or series of events that serve as a turning point in their racial identity development, leading to a reevaluation of their relationship to American society. This encounter catapults individuals into the third stage, Immersion–Emersion, a tumultuous period during which Black individuals immerse themselves in Black culture while rejecting White culture. As their immersion progresses, Blacks again reevaluate their racial attitudes and emerge into Stage 4, Internalization. In this stage, feelings of aversion to the White culture are tempered, and internalized individuals accept being Black as one of the many identity characteristics they possess. In the fifth and final stage, Internalization–Commitment, individuals support their internalized sense of self by engaging in activities that will improve the African American community. Individuals in the Internalization stage are viewed as psychologically healthy with high self-esteem. Several scholars have examined the role of ethnic-racial identity on academic achievement using Cross' Racial Identity model. For example, Hughes, Manns, and Fond (2009) studied racial identity attitudes for Black female adolescents, finding that two dimensions (Pre-Encounter Miseducation and Immersion-Emersion Anti-White) were significantly related to school absence and academic performance. Students who endorsed negative stereotypes of Black

people and held Anti-White views had extremely low GPAs and excessive absences (Hughes et al., 2009). In comparison, students with positive views toward both Black and White groups had higher grades and fewer absences (Hughes et al., 2009).

Unlike viewing ethnic-racial identity as stages individuals move through, Phinney (1992)'s model, Multigroup Ethnic Identity, conceptualized ethnic identity as encompassing four components. The first component is self-identification and ethnicity, or otherwise described as the ethnic label one chooses to use to describe oneself. Phinney (1992) highlighted the critical difference between one's ethnicity and the ethnic label an individual self-identifies with. It is important for an individual to self-identify as a member of a particular ethnic group. Phinney (1992) calls self-identification a "necessary precondition" that is vital to avoid confusing one's chosen ethnic identity with ethnicity (p. 158). The second component is identified as ethnic behaviors and practices. Phinney (1992) described these as common behaviors and practices specific to particular groups. Common ethnic behaviors and practices include being involved in social activities with other members of one's ethnic group and participating in cultural traditions. Thirdly, one's affirmation and belonging were identified as an important aspect of Phinney's model of ethnic identity. Ethnic affirmation and belonging are conceptualized as an individual feeling ethnic pride, feeling good about their background, feeling happy with being a member of their ethnic group, and feeling belonging and attached to the group. Lastly, Phinney (1992) discussed ethnic identity achievement, or one having a secure sense of self as a significant aspect. Researchers have evaluated the impact of ethnic identity on academic outcomes for Black youth using Phinney's model. For instance, Cokley and Chapman (2008) found ethnic identity was indirectly linked to Black adolescents' grade point average through academic self-concept. They further evaluated how salient ethnic identity was to greater academic achievement by

statistically eliminating its influence. Findings revealed the model was a significantly poorer fit to the data, indicating ethnic identity is an important component of academic achievement for Black students (Cokley & Chapman, 2008). Del Toro and Wang (2021) additionally examined ethnic identity commitment and identity exploration as a mediating factor between school cultural socialization and grades for Black youth. School cultural socialization is cultural socialization provided by educators and school personnel (Del Toro & Wang, 2021). Cultural socialization involves adults transmitting messages regarding ethnic-racial pride, traditions, knowledge, and history to youth (Del Toro and Wang, 2021). In schools, cultural socialization involves practices such as teachers including assignments that ask students to explore familial histories, discussing how students can use knowledge learned to address current issues in their communities, or infusing readings from Black authors into the class (Dee & Penner, 2017). The authors found ethnic-racial identity commitment fully mediated the link between school cultural socialization and grades, while identity exploration did not. These findings support ethnic-racial identity being an underlying mechanism that can facilitate youth engaging in behaviors to facilitate positive relationships with peers and teachers at school, which then leads to greater academic performance (Del Toro & Wang, 2021).

In comparison to Phinney's model, Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, and Bámaca-Gómez (2004) conceptualized ethnic identity as consisting of exploration, resolution, and affirmation. Their model, Ethnic Identity, was based upon the tenets of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) and Marcia's (1980) operationalization of Erikson's (1968) identity formation theory. Social identity theory postulates that one's identity develops from one's sense of belonging to a group, as well as an affective component that comes with belonging to the group (Tajfel, 1981). Marcia's (1980) operationalization of Erikson's (1968) identity formation theory posits that

identity develops through a process of exploration and commitment to other identity domains within one's broader social self, or self-concept. He highlighted exploration and commitment as critical to the process of identity formation. Accordingly, Umaña-Taylor et al (2004) built upon this literature for their ethnic identity model by initially examining the two areas of exploration and resolution, but later added affirmation, guided by Phinney's (1989) work on ethnic identity formation. Exploration is defined as the degree adolescents have explored the ethnicity they identify with, such as attending events to gain more knowledge about their ethnicity. Resolution is described as adolescents feeling as though they have resolved issues surrounding their ethnic group membership and have a greater understanding of their ethnicity. Lastly, the area of affirmation involves having positive or negative feelings toward one's ethnicity and feeling committed to an ethnic identity. When Borrero and Yeh (2011) examined ethnic-racial identity using Umaña-Taylor et al (2004)'s model, Ethnic Identity, with a diverse sample including Black youth, findings indicated a strong negative relationship between students' school interest and ethnic identity affirmation and collective self-esteem. Researchers interpreted these findings as indicating students in their sample who feel connected to their school do not have affirming feelings toward their cultural group or ethnicity, whereas students with low school interest and higher ethnic identity affirmation and collective self-esteem may feel a social and cultural disconnect that can happen for students of color who feel they do not align with the dominant school culture (Borrero & Yeh, 2011).

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity asserts that Black identity has four domains one: Salience, Centrality, Regard, and Ideology (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous, 1998). The first domain is Salience, which refers to the extent that one's race is relevant to self-concept at a particular time or in a particular situation. Salience is not static like

the other domains of racial identity as it can change as a result of context or circumstance. This in contrast to Centrality, Regard, and Ideology, which are conceptualized as being stable across situations one endures. Race Centrality is defined as the extent to which one emphasizes their racial group membership being a part of their overall self-concept. Racial Regard is operationalized as how positively or negatively one feels about their African American group membership. The dimension of Regard is further broken into 2 categories: 1) Private Regard, or the extent to which one feels positively towards the African American community; and 2) Positive Regard, or the extent to which one feels others view the African American community positively or negatively. The last dimension, Ideology, describes one philosophy about how members of the African American community should act. Ideology has four subcategories as well. The first is Humanist which embraces the similarities among people of all races. Second, Oppressed Minority places emphasis on the similarities between the experiences of African Americans and other oppressed minority groups. Assimilationist emphasizes the similarities shared between African Americans and mainstream society. Lastly, the domain of Nationalist places emphasis on the uniqueness of being African American. Embracing the Nationalist dimension is characterized by one supporting African American organizations and exhibiting a preference for the African American social environment.

Studies examining ethnic identity based upon the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity model in Black adolescents have linked ethnic identity to positive academic school engagement (Jones, Lee, Matlack, & Zigarelli, 2017), students' school adjustment (Medina, Rivas-Drake, Jagers, & Rowley, 2020), and achievement motivation beliefs (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018). Thomas et al (2009) also found higher Racial Centrality and Public Regard buffered the

negative consequences of high levels of perceived discrimination from teachers on academic achievement for Black youth.

Oyserman, Gant, and Ager (1995) conceptualize ethnic-racial identity encompasses three components: Connectedness, Awareness of Racism, and Embedded Achievement. Oyserman and colleagues (1995) found the components of ethnic-racial identity interact together to promote academic achievement and overall well-being. They emphasized the importance of youth endorsing all three dimensions of ethnic-racial identity, as this leads to better achievement and psychological outcomes. The first component, Connectedness, is defined as individuals feeling positively connected to their racial-ethnic group (Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007). In particular, for African Americans, connectedness is viewed as the extent to which individuals are connected with the Black community (Oyserman et al., 2007). Further, African American identity is rooted in a worldview focused on spiritualism and connectedness with one's social environment instead of a focus on the individual (Parham, 1989).

Awareness of Racism is the second element of racial-ethnic identity in Oyserman and colleagues' model (Oyserman et al., 1995). This component involves an individual understanding how out-group members view their racial-ethnic group (Oyserman et al., 1995). This component encompasses individuals being aware of how others may negatively perceive their ethnic-racial group (Oyserman et al., 2007). In other words, awareness of racism provides a framework for understanding themselves as a person who endures prejudice, racism, and exclusion from opportunities due to being an in-group member of their ethnic-racial group (Oyserman et al., 2007). For youth, this aspect of ethnic-racial identity acts as a protective factor in preventing them from perceiving negative feedback as self-relevant. Instead, youth's self-esteem is protected, as feedback is perceived with skepticism since they can understand some

negative feedback given might come from a place of prejudice or racism as opposed to support (Oyserman et al., 2007).

The last element of Oyserman's ethnic-racial identity model, Embedded Achievement, ascribes achievement or a goal valued by the in-group. Goals related to achievement, like excelling in school, provide Black youth with motivation that manifests from the desire to act in alignment with group identity (Oyserman et al., 1995). Youth who associate success in school with being a "good group member" are more likely to engage in prosocial school behaviors, further enacting racial-ethnic identity (Oyserman et al., 2007). Studies have further illustrated positive academic outcomes when studying ethnic-racial identity using Oyserman's model (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2003; Oyserman, Harrison, Bybee, 2001; Thomas, 2013). For instance, Altschul, Oyserman, and Bybee (2006) examined how racial-ethnic identity is linked to school success for Latino and Black youth across the span of two years. Results indicated Latino and Black youth whose ratings were high in the three areas of ethnic-racial identity (e.g. Awareness of Racism, Connectedness, and Embedded Achievement) were found to have higher grades at each assessment point during the two years data was collected (Altschul et al., 2006).

Research using the Oyserman model have specifically illustrated the importance of embedded achievement contributing to positive academic outcomes in Black youth. For example, Thomas (2013) examined how embedded achievement and connectedness predict academic achievement for minority youth, including Black and Latino youth across the span of three years. Results indicated embedded achievement significantly predicted better academic achievement. Similarly, the previous study discussed, Altschul et al (2006), found an interaction effect when they examined ethnic-racial identity and academic outcomes for youth. Findings from their study indicated embedded achievement moderated the effect of reported

connectedness on grades. Embedded achievement made a difference in academic outcomes, as students who reported higher connectedness and embedded achievement attained higher grades, while grades declined over time for students who reported low embedded achievement and high connectedness (Altschul et al., 2006). More research focused on examining embedded achievement and academic outcomes is needed, as Oyserman's ethnic-racial identity model has shown some evidence to be a more salient factor for Black girls as opposed to connectedness being more important for Black boys' academic success (Thomas, 2013).

Although it is typically studied in specific developmental periods (e.g. childhood or adolescence), ethnic-racial identity is a construct known to span and evolve across one's lifetime (Williams et al., 2020). As Williams and colleagues (2020) discuss ethnic-racial identity from a lifetime lens, they note changes in one's identity in the developmental stages of infancy throughout late adulthood. However, when examining ethnic-racial identity for Black youth and related academic outcomes, several studies have centered on older adolescents in high school or college (Blash & Unger, 1995; Buckley, 2018). This is problematic as ethnic-racial identity has been found to emerge in early pre-adolescence and early adolescence. Preadolescent children have been categorized in the literature to range between 9 and 12 years old (Berkey et al., 2000; Sung et al., 2003). Additionally, developmental research indicates two domains from Oyserman's model, Connectedness and Awareness of Racism, develop before mid-adolescence (Quintana, 1998). More research evaluating ethnic-racial identity in pre- and early adolescence for Black youth is needed as this gap persists in the literature.

Gender Differences in Ethnic-Racial Identity Development

Although research has heavily focused on conceptualizing ethnic-racial identity for Black youth, a lack of knowledge remains regarding gender differences in ethnic-racial identity

development (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, Cogburn, 2008), evaluating gender differences in ethnic-racial identity is important because it aligns with viewing Black girls' and Black boys' experiences from the lens of intersectionality. Black girls experience both racism and sexism in ways Black boys do not (Crenshaw, 1991), which has implications for their ethnic-racial development. This, intersectionality is a critical lens in which to view Black youth development broadly, but specifically as it related to ethnic racial identity and achievement.

Crenshaw (1989) presented intersectionality as a theory explaining the ways in which race and gender interact to form multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences. Crenshaw utilized intersectionality to inform Black women's discrimination experiences with employment (1989) by illustrating how Black women's experiences are a product of "intersecting patterns of racism and sexism," especially within the context of male violence (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). As such, intersectionality provides a theoretical frame for illustrating how "different individual accounts are shaped by their location within social hierarchies based on upon race, sex, and sexual orientation" (Bowleg, 2008, p. 318). Black women and members of a racially minoritized group within society within and systemic structures means they are essentially marginalized across two identities (Crenshaw, 1991). This means Black women and girls experiences are different from Black men and boys.

When examining adolescent development from an intersectional lens, it's important to consider how the different ways youth make meaning of their ethnic-racial identity based on their race and gender. For example, Mims and Williams (2020) found Black girls' ethnic-racial identity was influenced by stereotypical and biased messages they receive about their identities across different settings, contexts, and systems (e.g. schools, classrooms, families, peers (Mims

and Williams, 2020). Moreover, there were differences among the Black girls in their sample with respect to their definitions of race and what race means to them. For example, when asked how they define race, many girls in the sample discussed concrete definitions of race that were focused on physical appearance such as skin tone. Considering Quintana's (2008) model of racial perspective-taking ability that youth become less literal in their perspective on race and obtain a more social perspective, Mims and Williams (2020) noted that Black girls in their sample reported understanding their own race based upon "social process related to bias and discrimination" (p. 771). This means discrimination and bias, such as stereotypes, help to form Black girls' understanding of themselves and their ethnic-racial identities. However, this also aligns with literature that supports stereotypes often enabling ethnic-racial identity development. In particular, Black girls reported learning about race in schools when topics such as slavery were covered (Mims & Williams, 2020). Although the girls in the study "make meaning" or interpret a part of their ethnic-racial identity based on stereotypes and biases about their identities, Mims and Williams (2020) highlight this does not mean they will necessarily develop negative racial identity, as they continue to develop.

Nonetheless, it remains critical to further evaluate how experiences, and furthermore, messages given, may differ between Black adolescent girls and boys due to their gender and the implications this may have for their ethnic-racial identity. One way to examine the differences in experiences and messages given is when evaluating discrimination. Black male and female adolescents have different experiences of discrimination (Seaton & Tyson, 2019). Using qualitative data, Seaton and Tyson (2019) found that in comparison to Black males, Black females reported more discrimination incidents that occurred at the intersection of race and gender. Hair scrutiny, described as others inappropriately touching or commenting on their hair

was one significant racialized experience reported by Black females. Although hair experiences were more distinct between males and females, hair issues were found to be more salient for Black girls.

Black males reported more interracial dating opportunities than Black females. Seaton and Tyson (2019) discuss Black females possibly experiencing racial discrimination from White male peers, as well as intra racial prejudice from Black male peers based on negative societal stereotypes of Black women or girls that result in the perception that Black women or girls are unattractive (Seaton & Tyson, 2019). Stereotypes surrounding Black women and girls as either asexual or hypersexual can result in the perception that Black girls are romantically undesirable (Wilkins, 2012). In comparison, stereotypes of Black men and boys of being hypermasculine or cool gives an advantage when dating, as the perception of them is appealing to women or girls of other races (Ispa-Landra, 2013). When examining this from an intersectionality lens, images of Black sexuality are gendered. As such, the differences Black adolescents experience are due to both gender and race as purported in intersectionality theory.

Black adolescents' experiences and messages given to them from the world around them can also differ based upon gender due to ethnic-racial socialization. Brown, Linver, and Evans (2010) examined if racial socialization practices differ for Black adolescent girls and boys. Results indicated Black female adolescents received higher levels of racial and ethnic socialization in comparison to male counterparts from both maternal and paternal caregivers.. Maternal caregivers socialized Black girls significantly more in the areas of African American history and ethnic pride than Black boys. In comparison, paternal caregivers only socialized differently on two dimensions: African American history and ethnic pride, with Black girls receiving more socialization in these two areas than Black boys. Given that ethnic-racial

socialization received from their parents was self-reported, Brown et al (2010) speculated that gender differences in socialization practices due to Black girls being more sensitive to socialization messages more than their male counterparts (Brown et al., 2010). They also speculated a difference might exist in boys' and girls' social environments where girls may be prompted to seek out socialization messages from parents more so than boys, whereas it may be more difficult for boys to do so in their social environments (Brown et al., 2010). They assert this may be due to Black boys being more vulnerable to experiences such as school failure, problem behaviors, and overt racism in comparison to their female counterparts, making it more difficult for Black boys to seek out or receive socialization (Brown et al., 2010)

Research has continued to evaluate the importance of ethnic-racial socialization for Black youth. For instance, Wang, Smith, Miller-Cotto, and Huguley (2020) conducted a review of 37 studies evaluating ethnic-racial socialization practices for youth and related academic outcomes. The meta-analysis indicated ethnic-racial socialization was positively related to academic performance, motivational beliefs, and engagement. Ethnic-racial socialization was most strongly related to the academic outcome of motivational beliefs. Even more so, the positive link between ethnic-racial socialization and academic outcomes were distinctly strongest for Black youth in middle and high school (Wang et al., 2020). In fact, ethnic-racial socialization and positive academic outcomes were only significant for Black youth, supporting ethnic-racial socialization as a possible protective factor (Wang et al., 2020). Although the authors noted gender could be a theoretically important moderator related to ethnic-racial socialization and academic outcomes, it was beyond the scope of their meta-analysis. More research focusing on the relationship between ethnic-racial socialization and gender as it relates to academic outcomes for Black youth remains a gap in the literature.

Although the literature is limited, studies have found gender differences in ethnic-racial identity processes for Black adolescents (Chavous et al., 2008; Leath, Matthews, Harrison, & Chavous, 2019; Rotheram-Borus, Lightfoot, Moraes, Dopkins, and LaCour, 1998). For instance, Leath et al (2019) evaluated gender variation in racial discrimination experiences at school and how the racial centrality domain of ethnic-racial identity promotes school engagement. Findings supported not only gender differences in Black adolescents' reports of discrimination but also differences in the role ethnic-racial identity played in promoting academic engagement and buffering against discrimination. Racial centrality played a stronger protective role for Black boys vulnerable to the impact of teacher discrimination on academic engagement; however, stronger centrality did not serve as a protective factor for Black girls. These findings might be due to gender socialization in schools with girls socialized to be interdependent and relational, as opposed to boys not being socialized this way in school settings (Leath et al., 2019). As such, Black girls who are more connected to their ethnic-racial identity may be more sensitive when experiencing negative race-related treatment or interactions with peers (Leath et al., 2019). Unfortunately, this is likely to result in some Black girls displaying less academic engagement. Similarly, Chavous et al (2008) found racial centrality functioned differently for Black boys and girls in relation to school racial discrimination, leading to differences in their academic experiences and outcomes. Findings from Smith et al (2020) contrasted other studies (Chavous et al., 2008; Leath et al., 2019); however, when they examined the mediating role of racial identity on Black youth's views of school cultural pluralism and school climate. School cultural pluralism is described as a school's support for cultural diversity, or how responsive a school is to racial diversity (Smith et al., 2020). Black girls and boys did not differ according to their stage of racial identity; racial/ethnic identity status did play different roles in Black student's

experiences at school. Whereas Black boys' perceptions of cultural pluralism were linked to racial/ethnic identity, Black girls' racial/ethnic identity was not linked to cultural pluralism but instead to their perceptions of school climate. More research is needed to better understand ethnic-racial identity processes from a gendered lens, especially when considering the way it serves as a protective factor to promote positive outcomes for Black youth, including academic engagement.

Ethnic-Racial Identity and Student-Self Concept

A highly studied factor connected to ethnic-racial identity is self-concept. Self-concept is broadly described as an individual's perceptions about themselves, including their personality, roles, skills, and relationships with others (Dulay, 2017); however, researchers have further conceptualized self-concept in various ways. Oyserman et al (2007) defines self-concept as a framework or structure that helps to provide individuals working answers to questions of identity, such as questions about meaning ("Who am I?") and questions about process ("What am I trying to achieve?"). Porter and Washington (1979) described self-concept as a consequence of society, as one's self-concept is impacted by the attitudes and behaviors toward them. The field has also made attempts to distinguish differences in the domains of self-concept. For instance, Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) defined self-concept in two areas commonly referenced in the literature: academic self-concept and non-academic self-concept. Academic self-concept included subject areas such as English, history, math science, while social, emotional, and physical ability and strength comprised non-academic self-concept (Shavelson et al., 1976). In comparison, other scholars have conceptualized self-concept as including six domains (Piers & Herzberg, 2007).

In the literature, self-concept is most often used interchangeably with self-esteem (Porter & Washington, 1979; Reynolds, 1993). Self-concept and self-esteem have both been defined as a focus on how a person thinks or feels about themselves; however, this definition of these two constructs can cause confusion on how to differentiate (King, 1997). Thus, scholars have made efforts to delineate self-concept and self-esteem from one another (King, 1997). As cited in King (1997), Beane and Lipka (1984) believe self-concept and self-esteem are two distinct dimensions. Self-concept is described as the “perception(s) one has of oneself in terms of personal attributes and the various roles which are played or fulfilled by the individual” (King, 1997, p. 69). Furthermore, self-concept is the “description of the perceived self” without a “value of judgement” (King, 1997, p. 69). As such, one’s self-concept should not be viewed as positive or negative (King, 1997). In comparison, self-esteem is described as the “evaluation one makes of the self-concept description and, more specifically, to the degree to which one is satisfied or dissatisfied with it, in whole or in part” (King, 1997, p. 69). Contrary to self-concept, one’s feelings are involved in self-esteem and is acceptably considered to be positive or negative (King, 1997).

Some scholars have described self-esteem and ethnic identity as related dimensions of self-concept in African American youth (Blash & Unger, 1995). In general, the literature on ethnic-racial identity has examined how race and ethnicity contribute to or play a role in an individual’s self-concept. However, the relationship between ethnic-racial identity and self-concept has not been as widely studied for younger African American adolescents. Most studies examining the relationship between ethnic-racial identity and self-concept for African American adolescents have primarily focused on high school (Blash & Unger, 1995; Buckley, 2018) and college-age students (Aries et al., 1998; Awad, 2007; Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Franklin, Debb,

& Colson, 2017; Williams & Chung, 2013). Fewer studies have examined these constructs among pre-adolescent African American youth in elementary and middle school. Buckley (2018) evaluated the relationship between gender role, racial identity, and global and school self-concept for African American male adolescents. A significant positive relationship between student self-concept and ethnic-racial identity for African American adolescent males was found, as both Black racial identity attitudes and gender roles significantly contributed to high self-concept (Buckley, 2018). Participants who demonstrated lower regard for being Black, or did not feel as positive about their racial group were more likely to have lower levels of self-concept (Buckley, 2018).

Similar findings have been found for African American female adolescents. Buckley and Carter (2005) examined girls' gender roles, racial identity, and self-concept in a sample of African American high school girls. Black girls who endorsed pre-encounter racial attitude, or exhibited negative attitudes toward their racial group, scored the lowest on the measure of self-concept. In comparison, Black girls who scored high on having internalized racial identity attitudes, or endorsing pro-Black/pro all racial groups attitudes, scored high on self-concept. Similar to African American males, ethnic-racial identity was significantly related to self-concept for African American females. However, more research is needed to evaluate the relationship between ethnic-racial identity and self-concept for Black girls and boys in early adolescence. This is especially important as research indicates developmental differences occur between early and middle adolescence related to the trajectory of ethnic identity (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006).

Student Engagement

School engagement has been recognized as an important factor in influencing the educational success of students (Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003). School engagement is the opposite of disaffection (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Disaffected students will typically demonstrate negative affective behaviors in the classroom, such as depression, anxiety, withdrawal from opportunities to learn, boredom, and anger (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Students who are engaged instead demonstrate effort in their learning and positive emotions, such as enthusiasm and interest in the classroom (Skinner & Belmont., 1993). Examining student engagement is important when considering the significant link it has to academic achievement (Bae & DeBusk-Lane, 2019). After conducting a meta-analysis of 69 studies on student engagement and academic achievement, Lei, Cui, and Zhou (2018) found student engagement and academic achievement were strongly and positively correlated. Similarly, Schnitzler, Holzberger, and Seidel (2020) found higher student engagement predicted higher grades.

School engagement has been operationalized in various ways since its conception, but there is consensus that it is a multidimensional construct (Appleton et al., 2008). Characterized by at least two-components, consisting of a behavioral and an emotional or affective construct (Appleton et al., 2008). Whereas some define school engagement as encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive constructs (Jimerson et al., 2003), others have proposed school engagement to include four components – behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and psychological (Appleton et al., 2008).

Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement has been defined as a student demonstrating positive conduct, such as exhibiting non-disruptive behaviors (Fredericks et al., 2004), and by how active a student

is in learning and academic tasks, such as remaining persistent and participating in class discussions (Finn, Panozzo, & Voelkl, 1995). Finn and colleagues (1995) also describe behavioral engagement involving participation in extracurricular school activities, such as sports. While some researchers include indicators of academic success as a component of behavioral engagement, other researchers consider academic achievement to be a result of exhibiting behavioral engagement (Estell & Perdue., 2013). Behavioral engagement is distinguishable from the other constructs of school engagement due to this dimension being a measurable observation of students' actions and performance (Jimerson et al., 2003). Skinner and Pitzer (2012) discuss the importance of understanding the different terms related to student engagement, including indicators and outcomes of engagement. The authors discuss indicators of engagement are action components or "goal-directed emotion-infused behavior" that lead to possible outcomes (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012, p. 25). In terms of behavioral engagement, students' grades and performance on achievement are considered outcome variables based on of the level of engagement in school (Jimerson et al., 2003), whereas the observable indicators of behavioral engagement would include on-task behavior, homework completion, effort, focus, involvement, working hard, or initiating action (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

Emotional Engagement

Research has described emotional engagement as a students' affective reaction in the classroom, such as feeling anxiety or sadness, interest, or boredom (Jimerson et al., 2003). Emotional engagement, interchangeably known as engagement in the literature, has been operationalized as how students feel towards their school, teachers, and classroom (Jimerson et al., 2003). Emotional engagement also involves a student identifying with the school, specifically feeling important to the school and valuing school related outcomes (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). In a

classroom, a student who is emotionally engaged will typically exhibit pride, vitality, zest, enthusiasm, satisfaction, and enjoyment as opposed to demonstrating disaffection (e.g. worry, anxiety, self-blame, shame, frustration, and disinterest (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Emotional reactions are essential components of disaffection, as a student's action will differ depending on the emotion they are feeling (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

Cognitive and Psychological Engagement

Although more research has focused on behavioral and affective components of school engagement, research has indicated cognitive and psychological factors are important indicators of school performance as well (Appleton, Christenson, Kim & Reschly, 2006). Appleton and colleagues (2006) differ in their conceptualization of school engagement as they include both cognitive and psychological components, in addition to behavioral and affective constructs. Cognitive and psychological engagement involve indicators that are not as observable, such as self-regulation, autonomy, and personal goals (Appleton et al., 2006).

Cognitive engagement is described as “flexibility in problem solving, preference for hard work, and positive coping in the face of failure” (Fredericks et al., 2004, p. 64). A student who is cognitively engaged will typically demonstrate mastery, willing participation, thoroughness, a preference for challenge, and will be purposeful as opposed to demonstrating disaffection behaviors (e.g. aimlessness, helplessness, unwillingness, opposition, avoidance, and apathy) (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Cognitive engagement has also been described as a student self-regulating and being strategic in the classroom (Fredericks et al., 2004). Applegate et al (2006) differs from other researchers, as they conceptualize psychological engagement as its own construct of student engagement, whereas other researchers define psychological engagement in the context of cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). For instance, Fredricks et al (2004)

conceptualized cognitive engagement as a psychological investment in learning. Theories of student engagement from Applegate et al (2006) and Skinner and Pitzer (2012) differ in particular. Skinner and Pitzer (2012) do not propose a psychological component, but instead propose an emotional component, as previously discussed. Applegate et al (2006) described psychological engagement as a student's feeling of belonging, identification with school, and membership. This conceptualization differs from Skinner and Pitzer (2012) description of emotional engagement, as they focus on the emotion the student is exhibiting, such as enthusiasm or satisfaction versus feeling bored or anxious. However, Applegate et al (2006) conceptualization of psychological engagement aligns with how Finn and Voelkl (1993) describe emotional engagement, as they focus on how students identify with their school.

Although, the cognitive and psychological constructs of school engagement overlap, they can be differentiated by their outcomes. While the cognitive subtype of school engagement leads to social awareness and relationship skills with peers and adults, the psychological subtype leads to self-awareness of feelings, emotion regulation, and conflict resolution skills within the student (Appleton et al., 2006).

The components of student engagement have theoretically been linked with the school belonging (St-Amand, Smith, & Rasmy, 2021). School belonging is noted to be a multidimensional concept with four aspects: 1) Having positive emotions toward school; 2) Students having positive relationships with peers and teachers; 3) Feeling similar to members of the school; and 4) Actively being involved at school. Students who experience high school belonging notably feel accepted, worthy, and included. Although similarities exist between the components of student engagement and school belonging, researchers have created measurement models illustrating the relationships between these two concepts (St-Amand et al., 2021). For

example, a model from (Finn, 1989, as cited in St-Amand et al., 2021) , illustrated participation in activities (e.g. student engagement) is fundamental to school success which, in turn, fosters a sense of belonging to school. Other researchers have indicated school belonging leads to school engagement (Korpershoek et al., 2020). Further, student engagement and school belonging have been evaluated with school climate. School climate is a multidimensional construct referring to “individual perceptions of moral, relational, and institutional aspects of school life” (Grazia & Molinari, 202, p. 561). Different school climate constructs are known throughout the literature. Findings from a review of school climate literature iterated four common domains of school climate including academic climate, community, safety, and institutional environment (Wang & Degol, 2016). When evaluating the relationship between student engagement, school climate, and school belonging, findings emerged supporting school climate having an effect on school belonging, and in turn, school belonging having an effect on school engagement (St-Amand et al., 2021).

Student Engagement and Student Self-Concept

Empirical studies have documented a relationship between self-concept and student engagement. Some findings have indicated self-concept is an antecedent to student engagement. In a longitudinal study of how student engagement relates to academic self-concept and achievement, Schnitzler et al (2020) found higher self-concept resulted in higher student engagement. In particular, students with higher feelings of security about mathematical abilities at the beginning of the school year demonstrated more engagement later in the year. Schnitzler et al (2020) concluded self-concept is an influential factor that predicts whether students disengage or engage at school (Schnitzler et al., 2020). Other researchers have also found school engagement to be predictive of self-concept (Bakadorava & Raufelder, 2017). For instance, researchers

examined adolescents' 8th grader's self-concept, peers and teachers as motivators, and emotional and behavioral school engagement. Researchers collected data on the 8th graders for a 2 year span longitudinal study (Bakadorava & Raufelder, 2017). Findings indicated adolescents' behavioral and emotional engagement were positively associated with students' self-concept and perceptions of peers and teachers as motivators. The authors pointed out their findings show support for the association of self-concept and engagement not declining in middle adolescence. Based on their findings, the authors suggested self-concept in adolescence represented as underestimated in the literature (Bakadorava & Raufelder, 2017). Lastly, this study yielded results indicating students' behavioral school engagement at Time Point 1 in the 8th grade predicted students' self-concept at Time Point 2 when students were then in the 9th grade (Bakadorava & Raufelder, 2017).

Although studies have documented a relationship between self-concept and student engagement, some have reported conflicting findings. For instance, Singh, Chang, and Dika (2010) found students' self-concept significantly predicted school engagement for White students, but did not significantly predict school engagement for Black students in their sample. Instead, school belonging significantly predicted school engagement and grades for Black students. Singh et al (2010) discussed their findings aligning with previous studies that show how important school belonging is in promoting positive academic outcomes for diverse students. In the case of Singh and colleagues' (2010) study, school belonging was even more critical than self-concept for the Black students in their sample to promote better academic outcomes.

Ethnic-Racial Identity, Student Self-Concept, and Student Engagement

Few studies have examined the relationship between ethnic-racial identity, self-concept, and student engagement for African American adolescents. Ethnic-racial identity has been examined as a mediator when examining psychological and academic outcomes for African

American students; however, most of these studies have focused on Black college students. For example, Forrest-Bank and Cuellar (2018) evaluated how ethnic identity mediates the relationship between racial microaggression and psychological well-being. In particular, researchers focused on the psychological well-being aspects of substance abuse, psychological distress, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy. Findings indicated ethnic identity mediated the effect of microaggressions on psychological distress. In fact, ethnic identity served as a protective factor, buffering the negative impact of microaggression on the areas of psychological well-being.

Studies evaluating the mediating role of ethnic-racial identity for adolescents focused on their school environmental aspects, such as cultural pluralism and school climate (Smith et al., 2020). Researchers examined the relationships between how school value diversity, students experience of school climate, and racial/ethnic identity, finding racial/ethnic identity mediated the relationship between school value of diversity and student climate (Smith et al., 2020). Results suggested both Black boy and Black girls benefit from how their school shows support for and values diversity. To date, no studies have examined ethnic-racial identity as a mediator between self-concept and student engagement for Black adolescents, as well as if gender differences exist in this association.

Purpose of the Current Study

This study aims to examine the impact of ethnic-racial identity on self-concept behavioral student engagement. Behavioral student engagement is an important factor to examine because of how significantly linked it is to academic achievement. When considering the opportunity gap that exists between students of color, particularly African American and White adolescents, it's important to study factors that might promote or contribute to facilitating student engagement. Student self-concept has been found to significantly predict student engagement for African

American adolescents. Furthermore, ethnic-racial identity is a protective factor for African American students that is related to self-concept. However, gaps remain in the literature when examining the effect ethnic-racial identity has on the relationship between student self-concept and their engagement in school for Black adolescents. Although the literature has been overall consistent with indicating a relationship between self-concept and student engagement, and ethnic identity and self-concept, few studies have evaluated all factors and the implications for African American adolescents. The current study aims to further understand the role of ethnic-racial identity plays in promoting self-concept and school engagement for African American adolescents. This study also intends to contribute to the existing literature by evaluating how students' academic self-concept and global self-concept mediates the relationship between ethnic-racial identity and student behavioral engagement.

Furthermore, more research is needed to understand gender differences between African American male and female adolescents and the effects ethnic-racial identity has on academic outcomes. Previous findings support gender differences existing within the ethnic-racial identity process for Black males and females; however, greater understanding of ethnic-racial identity from a gendered lens is needed. As such, the current study intends to build upon previous findings by evaluating gender differences in how ethnic-racial identity impacts students' self-concept and school engagement.

Hypotheses

The present study proposed ethnic-racial identity plays a significant role in facilitating greater academic outcomes for Black pre-adolescents and adolescents. The study first proposed a model hypothesizing that ethnic-racial identity predicted students' global self-concept. Next, it was hypothesized students' global self-concept predicted student behavioral engagement. After

establishing those paths, it was hypothesized the relationship between ethnic-racial identity and behavioral engagement was mediated by global self-concept.

Next, the study proposed a model hypothesizing that ethnic-racial identity predicted students' academic self-concept. Next, it was hypothesized students' academic self-concept predicted student behavioral engagement. After establishing those paths, it was hypothesized the relationship between ethnic-racial identity and behavioral engagement was mediated by academic self-concept

Lastly, it was hypothesized the relationships between ethnic-racial identity, student global self-concept and academic self-concept, and behavioral student engagement would differ for Black girls and Black boys.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Global Self-Concept Model 1

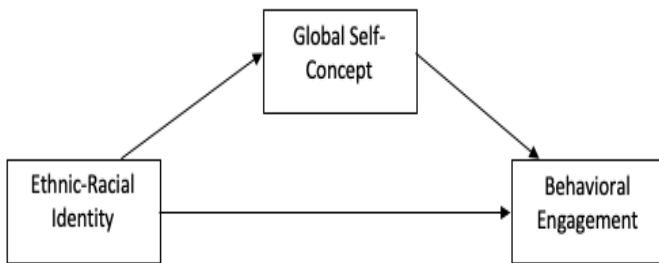
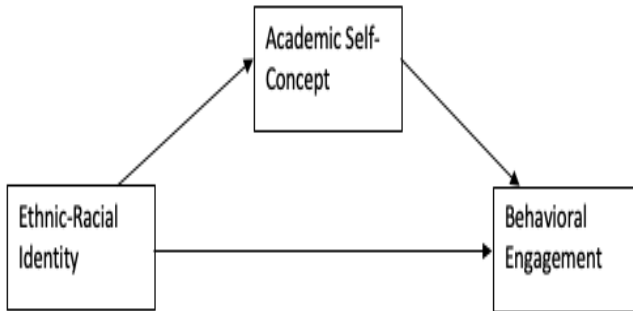


Figure 2

Hypothesized Academic Self-Concept Model 2



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study used data from the Peer Relations as Moderators of Success (PRAMS) 2008-2010 study. Subsamples from the large dataset were used. Data was collected from elementary and middle school students across 3 Texas school districts (n=166). Survey data and demographic information were collected from Black students in the 5th (n=54), 6th (n=40), 7th (n=34), and 8th grade (n=21). The sample included 68 males and 98 preadolescent and adolescent female students. Data was collected from youth across three sessions at school and information was self-reported from students.

Measures

Student self-concept. The Piers-Harris II Children's Self-Concept Scale was used to assess student's thoughts and feelings about themselves and adjustment (Piers & Herzberg, 2007). The Piers-Harris II is comprised of six subscales. The subscales assess happiness and importance of being valued by others (Happiness and Satisfaction), engagement in troublesome behaviors at home and at school (Behavioral Adjustment), absence of anxiety or worry (Freedom from Anxiety), student perceptions of academic competency and fitting in at school (Intellectual and School Status), dissatisfaction with physical appearance (Physical Appearance and Attributes), and perceptions of friendships (Popularity). A total score was also calculated for Global Concept from the 60 items on the questionnaire. The Global Concept scale and Intellectual and School Status scale were used for this study to evaluate students' global self-concept and academic self-concept. Data was interpreted based upon raw scores. In the current study sample of students, internal consistencies were .751 (global self-concept) and .755

(academic self-concept), demonstrating good internal consistency. The Alpha coefficients for this study reflects those found in other studies for the total scale and six domains ranging between .74 and .91 (Piers & Herzberg, 2007). The questionnaire was administered individually to students at school.

Student engagement. The Student Engagement questionnaire was used to measure behavioral and emotional engagement. Students completed the 18-item questionnaire. Items were adapted from the students' ratings of student' engagement and teacher rating of engagement rephrased from the students' perspective (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Connell, 1998). Of the 18 items on the questionnaire, 10 assessed behavioral engagement, 4 items assessed interest, and 4 assessed emotional engagement. In this study, only the behavioral engagement scale was evaluated. Students were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement was true for themselves on a 1 (Not true at all) to 4 (Very true) scale. Research team members read aloud student questionnaires. The engagement questionnaire was read aloud to the student and they indicated whether they 1 (really disagreed), 2(disagreed), 3 (agreed), or 4 (really agreed) with the item. Data was interpreted based upon raw scores. In the current study sample of students, for behavioral engagement, $\alpha = .785$, indicating good internal consistency.

Ethnic-racial identity. The Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale is an established measure assessing children's feelings about their racial and ethnic community and research developed questions establishing the race of their friends. The questionnaire evaluated children's view of their community, connection to the community, and children's perceptions of how others outside of their community view the community. The questionnaire was administered individually to students. The twelve items were taken from the Oyserman African American Identity Scale (1995) which includes three factors: *Embedded Achievement* as occurring within the context of

being African American, *Connectedness*, which assesses an individual's sense of self as a member of an African American community, and *Awareness of Racism* measuring an individual's sense of self as subject to prejudice, racism, and exclusion from opportunities by White Society. All three subscales, Connectedness, Embedded Achievement, and Awareness of Racism were used in this study. Data was interpreted based upon raw scores. In the current study sample of students, internal consistencies were .751 (embedded achievement), .755 (connectedness), .753 (awareness of racism), and .822 (total racial-ethnic identity). Reliability is similar to that found in previous studies with the same measures: .62-.74 (Oyserman et al., 2001), .666-.768 (Thomas, 2013).

Procedures

All research was approved by the Texas A&M University Internal Review Board. All identifying participant information has been removed from the data sets. Data on demographic information (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, grade), global self-concept, academic self-concept, student engagement, and was analyzed. Individuals with data across 2008, 2009, and 2010 were utilized.

Data Analysis

Data adequacy. Data was evaluated as adequate using preliminary statistics. First, descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted to evaluate the means and standard deviations for observed variables. Next, the variables were screened for normality and outliers using skewness and kurtosis tests. Preliminary analyses were also conducted to examine each model fit to the data (CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SEM, and Chi-Square Test of Fit). Data Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) was analyzed using the Maximum Likelihood Estimation for Missing Values (MLMV) method to account for missing data. Data was determined to be MCAR

since it met the following assumptions: 1) No systematic relationship was evaluated to exist between whether a data point was missing and missing or observed values in the dataset; and 2) The missing data was a random subset of the data.

Data analyses. The hypothesized relationships between global self-concept, academic self-concept, ethnic-racial identity, and student behavioral engagement were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM is a regression-based technique in which researchers utilize a conceptual model, path diagram, and a system of equations to encapsulate relationships of observed and unobserved variables (Gunzler, Chen, Wu, & Zhang, 2013). It is used for specifying and testing linear relationships among variables (Burnette & Williams, 2005). SEM was also developed to measure multiple independent and dependent variables (Burnette & Williams, 2005). SEM can use path analyses to explain causal relationships among variables. A common use for path analyses is to examine mediation. Mediation assumes a variable can impact an outcome directly and indirectly through another variable (Fan et al., 2016).

SEM was determined to be the best statistical method for conducting a mediation analysis for this study instead of multiple regression when considering the need to test simultaneous relationships among constructs. First, SEM can simplify testing complicated mediation models within a single analysis (Gunzler et al., 2013). Additionally, SEM is a better fit when using multiple independent variables, mediators or outcomes (Gunzler et al., 2013). This advantage applies to this study, as multiple variables were utilized within this analysis. Furthermore, a benefit of using SEM are the methods to test indirect effects. Through the use of SEM, indirect effects were able to tested by running a Sobel Test, using the Baron and Kenny approach to mediation. In comparison, a regression method would require relying on ad hoc methods to evaluate indirect and total effects (Gunzler et al., 2013).

A further advantage of using SEM instead of a multiple regression method are the different assumptions of the two analyses. SEM implies a functional statistical relationship, while regression analyses imply the statistical relationship is based on a conditional expected value. As such, causal relationships in a hypothesized mediation process are expressed more appropriately using structural equations in comparison to regression analyses (Gunzler et al., 2013), allowing us to test for causality. Requirements of causality include the following: 1) Covariation: the predictor variable must correlate with the outcome variable; 2) Temporal precedence: the independent variable (exogenous variables) must precede the effect (endogenous variables) in time; and 3) Ability to control for the influence of a third variable (Oppewal, 2010). The data being used for this study did not meet the requirement of temporal precedence since all data was collected at the same time; however, the data can still help with furthering understanding associations between variables in this study.

Conducting the SEM involved the following steps: model specification, identification, parameter estimation, and model evaluation. Model specification involved defining the hypothesized relationships of the variables within the model. Next, model identification was completed to determine if the model was over-, just-, or under-identified. The models in this study were determined to be just-identified. Next, model evaluation assessed the model performance or fit of the model using the Chi-square test and fit indices, including CFI, TLI, and RMSEA.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Descriptive and correlational analyses were first reported to understand patterns of variables used in this study (see Tables 1 and 2). Next, the results of the full hypothesized models are reported (see Figures 3 - 6). Last, the results of the tests for gender moderation on the hypothesized models are reported.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted for study variables, including the means and standard deviations for the observed variables in the hypothesized model (see Table 1). The variables were screened for normality and outliers. The analysis variables did not have values that exceeded the recommended cutoff values for skewness (2), and kurtosis (7) (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Ethnic-Racial	132	33.73	6.38	12	47
Global Self	135	46.66	8.23	15	57
Academic Self	147	12.65	2.70	2	16
Behavioral Eng	140	37.46	5.32	25	48

Note. Ethnic-Racial = Ethnic-Racial Identity. Global Self = Global Self-Concept. Academic Self = Academic Self-Concept. Behavioral Eng = Behavioral Engagement.

Correlational Analyses

The zero order correlations of the observed study variables and covariates are shown in Table 1. The relationships between predictor, mediator, and outcome observed variables were observed. Students' ethnic-racial identity was not significantly related to behavioral engagement ($r = .004$), academic self-concept ($r = .054$), or global self-concept ($r = .082$). However, both mediators of academic self-concept and global self-concept were significantly related to the outcome variable of behavioral engagement, ($r = .417$) and ($r = .336$), respectively. These findings indicate for this sample, students' academic and global self-concept are more strongly related to their behavioral engagement at school than ethnic-racial identity.

Table 2

Correlational Analyses

Variable	Ethnic-Racial	Global Self	Academic Self	Behavioral Eng
Ethnic-Racial	1.0000			
Global Self	0.0820 0.3968	1.0000		
Academic Self	0.0538 0.5627	0.8547** 0.0000	1.0000	
Behavioral Eng	0.0035 0.9703	0.3359* 0.0002	0.4174** 0.0000	1.0000

Note. * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. Ethnic-Racial = Ethnic-Racial Identity. Global Self = Global Self-Concept. Academic Self = Academic Self-Concept. Behavioral Eng = Behavioral Engagement.

Structural Equation Model (Test of Hypothesized Models)

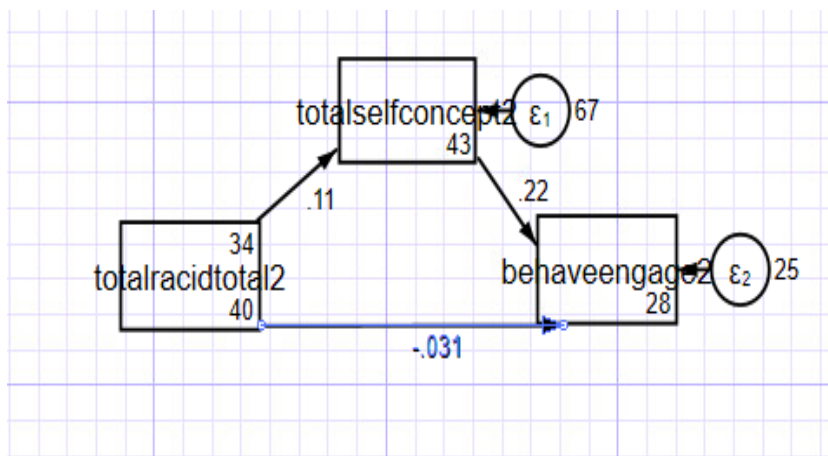
The hypothesized structural models were assessed using STATA version 17.0 (StataCorp, 2021). Figure 1 presents the hypothesized global concept model and Figure 2 presents the

academic self-concept model. The Maximum Likelihood for missing data was selected when analyzing the data to account for missing data. Model fit was examined using the Chi Square Test and fit indices (CFI, TLI, and RMSEA).

Global self-concept model. First, the direct effects of the predictor variable (ethnic-racial identity), mediator variable (global self-concept), and outcome variable (behavioral engagement) were evaluated. Analyses indicated the direct effect of ethnic-racial identity on behavioral engagement was negative and not significant ($Y_{xy} = -.031, p = .664$). Ethnic-racial identity also did not have a significant direct effect on global self-concept ($Y_{xy} = .111, p = .353$). As hypothesized, the direct effect of global self-concept on behavioral engagement was positive and significant ($Y_{xy} = .220, p < .001$). However, global self-concept did not have an indirect effect on ethnic-racial identity and behavioral engagement ($Y_{xy} = .024, p = .370$). Since these results indicated the exogenous variables did not significantly predict endogenous variables as hypothesized or have significant indirect effects, preliminary assumptions to test for a mediation effect were not met.

Figure 3

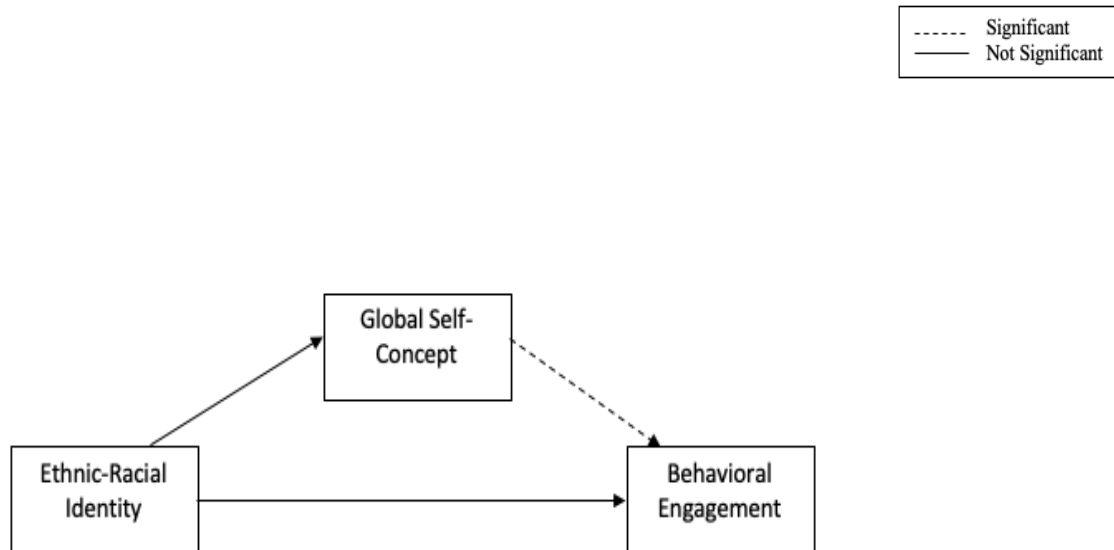
Global Self-Concept Mediation Model



Note. All paths are standardized.

Figure 4

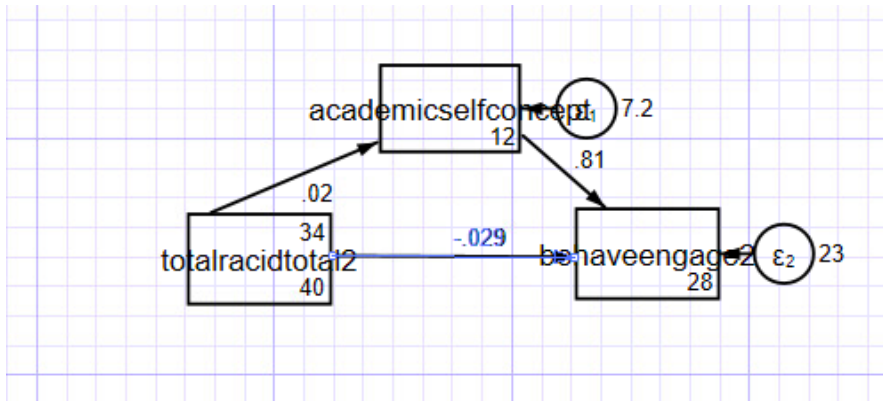
Global Self-Concept Model With Significant and Nonsignificant Pathways



Academic self-concept model. First, the direct effects of the predictor variable (ethnic-racial identity), mediator variable (academic self-concept), and outcome variable (behavioral engagement) were evaluated. Analyses indicated the direct effect of ethnic-racial identity on behavioral engagement was negative and not significant ($Y_{xy} = -.034, p = .676$). Ethnic-racial identity also did not have a significant direct effect on academic self-concept ($Y_{xy} = .020, p = .597$). As hypothesized, the direct effect of academic self-concept on behavioral engagement was positive and significant ($Y_{xy} = .808, p < .001$). However, academic self-concept did not have an indirect effect on ethnic-racial identity and behavioral engagement ($Y_{xy} = .016, p = .599$). Since these results indicated the exogenous variables did not significantly predict endogenous variables as hypothesized or have significant indirect effects, preliminary assumptions to test for a mediation effect were not met.

Figure 5

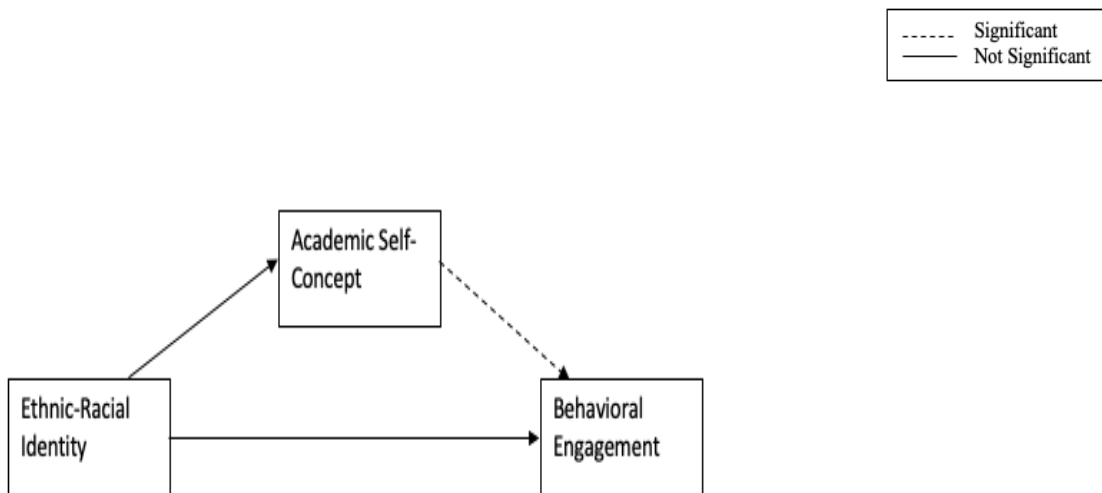
Academic Self-Concept Mediation Model



Note. All paths are standardized.

Figure 6

Academic Self-Concept Model With Significant and Nonsignificant Pathways



Gender Model

To test for gender differences for the hypothesized model, the structural paths were first evaluated unconstrained, and then constrained to be equal for boys and girls in the model. The Chi-square test of difference between the constrained and unconstrained models was not

significant for academic self-concept ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(3) = 7.814, p = 0.5039$), or global self-concept ($\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(3) = 7.814, p = 0.1944$), indicating the academic and global concept models for boys and girls were not significantly different. However, the researcher examined possible gender differences present amongst direct and indirect effects. Within the academic self-concept model, academic self-concept had a significant direct effect on behavioral engagement for boys ($Y_{xy} = .847, p < .001$) and girls ($Y_{xy} = .737, p < .05$). No significant indirect effects were present for any pathways for girls or boys within the academic self-concept model. Within the global self-concept model, global self-concept had a significant direct effect on behavioral engagement for boys ($Y_{xy} = .545, p < .001$) but not for girls ($Y_{xy} = .220, p = .067$). No significant indirect effects were present for any pathways for girls or boys within the global self-concept model.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The increasing disparity in academic outcomes, otherwise known as an “opportunity gap” persists. Even more so despairingly, despite the continuously diversifying country, the opportunity gap continues to widen. Negative academic, psychological, and emotional outcomes are detrimental for all youth, but especially Black youth because of how outcomes are exacerbated by systematic racism, discrimination, and racial bias. As a result, researchers remain focused on examining factors that can act as protective mechanisms for Black youth, who are the most significantly impact by the achievement gap. Researchers have agreed that although structural inequities both underlie and sustain the opportunity gap (Hung et al., 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2006), individual factors such as student engagement, student self-concept, and ethnic-racial identity can help with closing achievement disparities by acting as protective factors.

This study aimed to center Black youth, as well as highlight the intersectional issues related to gender and race for Black girls and boys. Research fails to center the different experiences Black boys and girls have in schools, as well as focus on individual level protective factors, such as their ethnic-racial identity. This study sought to fill the gap to understand how protective factors, such as ethnic-racial identity and self-concept, are related to greater achievement outcomes from a gendered lens. In particular, this study aimed to evaluate differences in how ethnic-racial identity and self-concept functions for Black girls and boys, leading to greater behavioral student engagement in schools. The current study extended upon previous studies centering ethnic-racial identity and academic outcomes for Black youth. This study specifically contributed to the current literature by furthering the understanding of ethnic-racial identity, self-concept, and the process of achievement outcomes based on gender for Black

youth. Although the study did not support all of the hypotheses, several important conclusions and implications are discussed in the following sections.

Ethnic-Racial Identity and Achievement Outcomes

Ethnic-racial identity did not significantly predict students' global self-concept or academic self-concept for students in this sample. This was unexpected when considering previous studies that have demonstrated the link between ethnic-racial identity and self-concept, specifically for Black youth. For example, past studies have found a positive relationship between self-concept and ethnic-racial identity for Black boys (Buckley, 2018) and for Black girls (Buckley and Carter, 2005). These findings in this study may be attributed to the younger adolescent students in the sample not having as developed ethnic-racial identity yet in comparison to the samples in previous studies were older adolescents. This finding may also indicate, for this specific sample, ethnic-racial identity was not a meaningful enough factor alone to predict their sense of academic or global self-concept. There may be other factors that are more strongly related or salient to academic and global self-concept. Furthermore, findings from this study revealed ethnic-racial identity did not significantly predict behavioral engagement for this sample. This opposed previous studies that support ethnic-racial identity significantly predicting student engagement particularly for Black youth (Leath et al., 2019).

Self-Concept and Achievement Outcomes

As hypothesized, this study also found both academic self-concept and global self-concept had significant direct effects on behavioral engagement when both boys and girls were analyzed together in each model. These findings contribute to the literature of more fully understanding the positive relationship between different areas of self-concept and behavioral student engagement for Black adolescents. Since no indirect pathways were established for

neither model, results illustrated academic self-concept and global self-concept failed to mediate the relationship between ethnic-racial identity and behavior engagement for Black youth in this sample.

Gender Differences

Finally, this study evaluated gender differences between Black boys and girls for the academic self-concept and global self-concept models. Findings illustrated there were no significant differences between both overall models based on the chi-square test of difference. However, there were differences amongst the indirect pathways for girls and boys. Academic self-concept had a direct effect on behavioral engagement for both boys and girls, whereas global self-concept only had a direct effect on behavioral engagement for boys.

Practical Implications

The research topic on ethnic-racial identity for Black youth has been a highly studied research area (Umana et al., 2014). Ethnic-racial identity is highly documented to be a protective factor for Black youth. It has been linked to positive academic, psychological, emotional, and behavioral outcomes (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). As such, several researchers have aimed to evaluate what additional factors may work in tandem with ethnic-racial identity to facilitate greater academic outcomes for youth. A factor linked to ethnic-racial identity for Black youth and other adolescents of color has been self-concept. This study specifically looked at components of global and academic self-concept and how they relate to ethnic-racial identity in facilitating greater behavioral engagement for Black youth. Mirroring the literature, this study found global and academic self-concept had a direct effect on students' behavioral engagement. This finding has important implications for educators, advocates, researchers, and clinicians working directly with Black youth. This study suggests finding ways to facilitate greater

academic self-concept for youth will be beneficial for strengthening the likelihood of youth behaviorally engaging in classes at school. Fostering individual level factors, such as students' self-concept, is vital as education is seen as a "great equalizer," especially for students who are impacted by intersecting identities, such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, sexual, or gender identities.

Gender differences in self-concept. Although global and academic self-concept were found to have direct effects on behavioral engagement for students, results of the gender models revealed differences. Academic self-concept had a direct relationship to behavioral engagement for Black boys and girls, but global self-concept was only linked to behavioral engagement for Black boys. These findings align with Black girls and women having greater positive achievement outcomes (e.g. higher grades, educational attainment) in comparison to Black boys and men (Young et al., 2018). However, this could also be explained by or be connect to research that has found Black boys and girls in adolescence reporting different experiences due to racial/ethnic discrimination. As previously noted, Black adolescent girls have reported more discriminatory experiences related to dating and hair discrimination in comparison to Black adolescent boys who did not experiences these discriminatory experiences as often (Seaton & Tyson, 2019). Specifically, Black girls faced different discriminatory experiences related to problems with interracial dating and enduring hair scrutiny (Seaton & Tyson, 2019). Black girls receive messages from the world around them which can impact how they view themselves, which can impact how they overall view themselves (Mims & Williams, 2020). It is likely Black girls' various intersecting identities inform the messages they receive, their interactions with others across various contexts, contributing to possible negative views of themselves, or their global self-concept, in spite of having greater academic self-concept.

Limitations and Future Directions

The limitations present in this study should be considered when interpreting the results. First, although it was determined the sample size in the study had sufficient power to run the analyses, the analyses would have benefited from a larger sample. Additionally, the age groups of participants and grades participants were enrolled in at the time of this study were not equally represented across grades 5th – 8th grades. A larger sample with equal representation across late elementary and middle school grades might have been able to more fully capture the relationships between ethnic-racial identity, self-concept, and behavioral engagement for Black girls and boys.

An additional limitation present in this study is the chronicity of the data, as the data for this study was collected between 2008-2010. Despite an influx of anti-Blackness and continued discriminatory experiences Black people endure individually and as a collective, a recent study from Pew Research showed that 76% of Black adults over 30 years age in the study report being Black is extremely important or very important to them (Cox & Tamir, 2022). These results illustrate that for Black American adults, race is central to their identity and impacts how they connect with one another. Although Black adolescents were not included in this study, data was collected from adults ages 18-29 as well, indicating 63% of Black adults under 30 reported being Black shapes how they think of themselves. Overall, Black Americans continue to feel connected to the Black community and view being Black as being important to their identity (Cox & Tamir, 2022). As we consider the chronicity of the data and recent statistics regarding ethnic-racial identity of Black adults, we would anticipate seeing differences in self-concept and ethnic-racial identity for Black adolescents as well, particularly possibly seeing a stronger link or direct relationship between their ethnic-racial identity and self-concept. Flannigan et al (2022)

evaluated the race and ethnicity for adolescents and found key factors that youth identified as impacting ethnic-racial formation, including school, child welfare, family, friends, media, and social media. Even more so, older youth in this study reported high school and post-secondary experiences shaped their racial-ethnic identity formation. Specifically, teachers in school and professors at Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) were reported to help Black youth feel connected to their culture and proud of their identity (Flannigan et al., 2022). These findings indicate positive experiences have helped to facilitate greater ethnic-racial identity for Black youth and can continue to do so in the midst of discriminatory experiences, anti-Blackness, and systematic racism.

Future research is needed to extend on these findings and understand how global and academic self-concept can further act as a protective factor against negative achievement outcomes for Black youth. As this study evaluated students' total ethnic-racial identity, future studies can extend this research by further evaluating how specific components relate to academic self-concept and behavioral student engagement. Specifically, it would be helpful for future studies to evaluate the embedded achievement of ethnic-racial identity and how academic self-concept may mediate the relationship to behavioral student engagement for Black youth, as well as gender differences that may exist. Although the researcher was able to determine some intersectional factors, such as the intersection of race and gender, having implications on behavioral engagement for Black girls, additional research is needed to fully capture and evaluate how intersectional identities can impact the developmental and educational experiences of Black youth.

REFERENCES

- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 369-386.
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., Kim, D., & Reschly, A. L. (2006). Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the Student Engagement Instrument. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*(5), 427-445.
- Bae, C. L., & DeBusk-Lane, M. (2019). Middle school engagement profiles: Implications for motivation and achievement in science. *Learning and Individual Differences, 74*, 101753.
- Berkey, C. S., Rockett, H. R., Field, A. E., Gillman, M. W., Frazier, A. L., Camargo, C. A., & Colditz, G. A. (2000). Activity, dietary intake, and weight changes in a longitudinal study of preadolescent and adolescent boys and girls. *Pediatrics, 105*(4), e56-e56.
- Blash, R. R., & Unger, D. G. (1995). Self-concept of African-American male youth: Self-esteem and ethnic identity. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 4*(3), 359-373.
- Brown, T. L., Linver, M. R., & Evans, M. (2010). The role of gender in the racial and ethnic socialization of African American adolescents. *Youth & Society, 41*(3), 357-381.
- Buckley, T. R. (2018). Black adolescent males: Intersections among their gender role identity and racial identity and associations with self-concept (global and school). *Child development, 89*(4), e311-e322.
- Buckley, T. R., & Carter, R. T. (2005). Black adolescent girls: Do gender role and racial identity: Impact their self-esteem?. *Sex roles, 53*(9), 647-661.
- Cheon, Y. M., Ip, P. S., & Yip, T. (2019). Adolescent profiles of ethnicity/race and

- socioeconomic status: Implications for sleep and the role of discrimination and ethnic/racial identity. In *Advances in child development and behavior* (Vol. 57, pp. 195-233). JAI.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 1241–1299.
- Dulay, S. (2017). The effect of self-concept on student achievement. In *The Factors Effecting Student Achievement* (pp. 117-132). Springer, Cham.
- Estell, D. B., & Perdue, N. H. (2013). Social support and behavioral and affective school engagement: The effects of peers, parents, and teachers. *Psychology in the Schools*, 50(4), 325-339.
- Finn, J. D., Pannozzo, G. M., & Voelkl, K. E. (1995). Disruptive and inattentive-withdrawn behavior and achievement among fourth graders. *The Elementary School Journal*, 95(5), 421-434.
- Finn, J. D., & Voelkl, K. E. (1993). School characteristics related to student engagement. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 62(3), 249-268.
- Forrest-Bank, S. S., & Cuellar, M. J. (2018). The Mediating Effects of Ethnic Identity on the Relationships between Racial Microaggression and Psychological Well-Being. *Social Work Research*, 42(1), 44–56. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svx023>
- Flores, A. (2007). Examining disparities in mathematics education: Achievement gap or opportunity gap?. *The High School Journal*, 91(1), 29-42.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109.
- French, S. E., Seidman, E., Allen, L., & Aber, J. L. (2006). The development of ethnic identity

- during adolescence. *Developmental psychology*, 42(1), 1.
- Frey, W. H. (2020). *The nation is diversifying even faster than predicted, according to new census data*. Brookings Institute.
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/new-census-data-shows-the-nation-is-diversifying-even-faster-than-predicted/>
- Furrer, C., & Skinner, E. (2003). Sense of relatedness as a factor in children's academic engagement and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(1), 148.
- Gunzler, D., Chen, T., Wu, P., & Zhang, H. (2013). Introduction to mediation analysis with structural equation modeling. *Shanghai archives of psychiatry*, 25(6), 390.
- Hair, J., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J. & Anderson, R. E. (2010) *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Educational International.
- Ispa-Landa, S. (2013). Gender, race, and justifications for group exclusion: Urban Black students bussed to affluent suburban schools. *Sociology of Education*, 86(3), 218-233.
- Jimerson, S. R., Campos, E., & Greif, J. L. (2003). Toward an understanding of definitions and measures of school engagement and related terms. *The California School Psychologist*, 8(1), 7-27.
- Lei, H., Cui, Y., & Zhou, W. (2018). Relationships between student engagement and academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 46(3), 517-528.
- Merolla, D. M., & Jackson, O. (2019). Structural racism as the fundamental cause of the academic achievement gap. *Sociology Compass*, 13(6), e12696.
- Mims, L. C., & Williams, J. L. (2020). "They Told Me What I Was Before I Could Tell Them

- What I Was”: Black Girls’ Ethnic-Racial Identity Development Within Multiple Worlds. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 35(6), 754-779.
- Munley, P. H. (1975). Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and vocational behavior. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 22(4), 314.
- National Center for Education Statistics (2020). Highlights from the 2019 Grade 4 and 8 Assessment. *National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Obtained from <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/mathematics/2019/>
- Oppewal, H. (2010). Concept of causality and conditions for causality. *Wiley International Encyclopedia of Marketing*.
- Oyserman, D. (2013). Social Identity and Self-Regulation. *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles*, 432.
- Oyserman, D., Brickman, D., & Rhodes, M. (2007). Racial-ethnic identity: Content and consequences for African American, Latino, and Latina youths. *Contesting stereotypes and creating identities: Social categories, social identities, and educational participation*, 91-114.
- Oyserman, D., Gant, L., & Ager, J. (1995). A socially contextualized model of African American identity: Possible selves and school persistence. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69(6), 1216.
- Phinney, J. S. (1992). The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of adolescent research*, 7(2), 156-176.
- Phinney, J. S. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity development in minority group adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 9(1-2), 34-49.
- Piers, E., & Herzberg, D. (2007). Piers-Harris 2. *Piers-Harris Children’s Self Concept Scale*,

Second Edition. USA: Western Psychological Services.

Porter, J. R., & Washington, R. E. (1979). Black identity and self-esteem: A review of studies of Black self-concept, 1968-1978. *Annual review of sociology*, 5(1), 53-74.

Reschly, A. L., & Christenson, S. L. (2012). Jingle, jangle, and conceptual haziness: Evolution and future directions of the engagement construct. In *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 3-19). Springer, Boston, MA.

Scottham, K. M., Sellers, R. M., & Nguyễn, H. X. (2008). A measure of racial identity in African American adolescents: The development of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity--Teen. *Cultural diversity and ethnic minority psychology*, 14(4), 297.

Seaton, E. K., & Tyson, K. (2019). The intersection of race and gender among Black American adolescents. *Child development*, 90(1), 62-70.

Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and social psychology review*, 2(1), 18-39.

Skinner, E. A., & Pitzer, J. R. (2012). Developmental dynamics of student engagement, coping, and everyday resilience. In *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 21-44). Springer, Boston, MA.

StataCorp. 2021. *Stata Statistical Software: Release 17*. College Station, TX: StataCorp LLC.

Sung, R. Y., Tong, P. C., Yu, C. W., Lau, P. W., Mok, G. T., Yam, M. C., ... & Chan, J. C. (2003). High prevalence of insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome in overweight/obese preadolescent Hong Kong Chinese children aged 9–12 years. *Diabetes Care*, 26(1), 250-251.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*. Cup

Archive.

- Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Quintana, S. M., Lee, R. M., Cross Jr, W. E., Rivas-Drake, D., Schwartz, S. J., ... & Ethnic and Racial Identity in the 21st Century Study Group. (2014). Ethnic and racial identity during adolescence and into young adulthood: An integrated conceptualization. *Child development*, 85(1), 21-39.
- Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Yazedjian, A., & Bámaca-Gómez, M. (2004). Developing the ethnic identity scale using Eriksonian and social identity perspectives. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 4(1), 9-38.
- Venzant Chambers, T. T. (2019). ROC'ing brown: Understanding the costs of desegregation using a racial opportunity cost framework. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 94(5), 535-544. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2019.1668208>
- Venzant Chambers, T. T., Huggins, K. S., Locke, L. A., & Fowler, R. M. (2014). Between a “ROC” and a school place: The role of racial opportunity cost in the educational experiences of academically successful students of color. *Educational Studies*, 50(5), 464-497.
- Verstegen, D. (2015). On doing an analysis of equity and closing the opportunity gap. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(41). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v23.1809>
- Wilkins, A. C. (2012). Becoming Black women: Intimate stories and intersectional identities. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 75(2), 173-196.
- Williams, J., Pfeifer, J., & Masten, C., Fuligni, A., Galván, A., Allen, N., & Burrow, A.,...& Rivas-Drake, D. (2021). The Intersection of Adolescent Development and Anti-Black Racism. National Scientific Council on Adolescence, Council Report 1.
- Williams, C. D., Byrd, C. M., Quintana, S. M., Anicama, C., Kiang, L., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., ...

& Whitesell, N. (2020). A lifespan model of ethnic-racial identity. *Research in Human Development, 1-31*.