

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

PROPOSAL FOR DISSERTATION

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PSYCHOLOGY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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I propose to the major professor and to the committee members a study of the following topic to be conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology: **CONTINUITY/DISCONTINUITY OF ADOLESCENT RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY: RELATIONS WITH LATER RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES AND ADJUSTMENT OUTCOMES**

### *Theoretical Perspective*

Developmental psychology is concerned with describing and explaining systematic changes within individuals and behaviors occurring over time (Lerner, 1998; Miller, 2002; Overton, 1998). While traditional theories of development conceptualized change in overly simplistic, exclusive, and reductionistic terms, (Gottlieb, Wahlsten, & Lickliter, 1998; Overton 1998), more recent developmental perspectives have proposed increasingly complex characterizations by embracing inclusive, integrative, and dynamic properties of change occurring within a life-span context (Lerner, 1998; Cairns, 1998). With these qualities as hallmarks of contemporary perspectives, development psychological approaches may inform a broad range of existing areas of psychological study by employing multiple levels of analyses and directing the integration of developmental models, leading to enhanced methodological strategies and the generation of more valuable constructs.

One construct that has elicited a great deal of attention within social science literature is that of racial identity. Numerous scholars representing a wide range of disciplines have described, measured, and explained various aspects of racial identity (e.g., Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990; Phinney et. al, 1997; Steele, 1997), particularly among racial and ethnic minorities. The principal aims pursued by racial identity research primarily fall into one of two camps of research: (a) empirical investigations of mechanisms and processes that contribute to the development of racial identities by (e.g., Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990), or (b) descriptions of associations between particular racial identities and a range of adaptive or maladaptive outcomes (e.g., Sellers & Shelton, 2000; Steele, 1997). However, few studies have attempted to synthesize these two lines of research to evaluate simultaneously both the ontogenetic and the adjustment aspects of racial identity among minority youth. Consequently, little is understood regarding the relationships between the early developmental processes contributing to the construction of racial identities and the diversity that exists in patterns of behavioral adjustment associated with different racial identities.

Even less well understood are the direction and function of these relationships during adolescence. While extensive racial identity research involves college-aged or adult populations, only a modest amount of empirical research has been dedicated to this construct in younger groups of individuals (Resnicow, et al, 1999; Stevenson, 1995). Rather, numerous studies involving adolescents and children focus on precursors

for specific racial and ethnic identities (or early racial and ethnic identity-related constructs), such as levels of race salience, race-awareness, racial mistrust, (e.g., Biafora, Taylor, Warheit, Zimmerman, & Vega, 1993; McGraw, Durm, & Durnam, 1989; Spencer, 1984). Beyond mere descriptive concepts, the relative importance of these early identity-related constructs lies in their purported associations with key adjustment outcomes including, academic achievement, levels of self-esteem and depression, delinquency, and substance use (Parham & Helms, 1985; Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999; Taylor & Turner, 2002). By integrating developmental and racial/ethnic identity literatures, the present study proposes to examine the significance of racial/ethnic identity in adolescent development using a community sample of minority youth.

#### *Purpose of Study*

The quality of early adjustment is often linked to key developmental outcomes (Cicchetti & Rogosch 2002; Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Therefore, documenting relations between early racial and ethnic identity-related constructs and both (a) later indicators of race-salience or racial identity and (b) late adolescent functioning and key indices of adjustment is significant and builds upon existing literature (DuBois et al., 2002; McLoyd & Steinberg, 1998). Using a secondary analysis of longitudinal community data, the present study seeks to document relations between adolescent race/ethnicity-related identities and patterns of adjustment in adolescence and young adulthood. This study has four aims: (1) To identify homogenous subgroups of African-American youth on the basis of their reported racial/ethnic-awareness (or salience) during adolescence. (2) To document associations between patterns of continuity/discontinuity in associations between these identity-related constructs and adolescent adjustment outcomes among homogenous clusters of minority youth. (3) To document cross-sectional relations between subgroup membership and patterns of adolescent behaviors at four times of measurement. (4) To determine whether (a) changes in racial/ethnic identity-related constructs are associated with changes in adjustment and (b) changes in patterns of adjustment are associated with changes in identity-related constructs.

#### *Significance of study*

The proposed study is significant for three reasons. First, integrating assessments of factors influencing race-related identities with related mental health and adjustment outcomes occurring over time

may promote broader interpretations of adolescent development than traditionally available. Second, by using an adolescent sample, this study will contribute to existing knowledge of how racial/ethnic identity is associated with key developmental processes and adjustment outcomes prior to adulthood. Third, documenting the continuity/discontinuity of racial/ethnic identity-related constructs and their association with adolescent development will have direct implications for identifying risk and protective factors associated with key indices of adjustment. Understanding core processes contributing to the quality of adolescent adjustment may lead to intervention and prevention strategies that increase the utilization and effectiveness of mental health services for vulnerable minority youth.

### *Methodology*

#### *Participants*

Data analyzed in this study were taken from two archived databases at Florida International University measuring racial/ethnic identity-related constructs and key measures of adolescent adjustment including substance use and indices of mental health. Both studies consist of racially/ethnically diverse samples with roughly equal proportions of White Non-Hispanic, African-American, Hispanic-foreign born, and Hispanic-native born participants originally recruited from public schools located in greater Miami-Dade County. Participants in the current study will be approximately 450 African-American youth who participated in all four waves of data collection.

#### *Description of data sets*

The first three waves of data employed in the current study were obtained from the South Florida Youth Study – a multiethnic school-based study that used interviews to assess risk factors for substance abuse in early adolescence. Data were collected via self-report paper and pencil measures administered to middle-school students (N = 4,500) in South Florida. The fourth wave of data employed in the current study was obtained from the Transitions Study – a community-based follow up of the South Florida Youth Study (N = 1803) – that used Computer Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI) methods and contains data fundamentally corresponding to that of the initial three waves.

#### *Measures*

*Racial/ethnic identity-related constructs.* To assess racial and ethnic identity-related constructs among African-American adolescents, indices of racial/ethnic awareness and pride will be used which were

drawn from previous studies conducted by Wilson (1980) and McAdoo (1983) describing mental health and family support characteristics among African-Americans.

*Psychiatric diagnoses.* The Composite International Diagnostic Interview, developed by the World Health Organization is a structured diagnostic interview that can assess disorders as defined by the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV). The brief Michigan version of the CIDI that was developed by Kesler et al. (1998) will be used in the current study.

*Substance use.* Data from both the South Florida Youth Study and the Transitions Study regarding *lifetime, past-year, and 30-day* usage of alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs will be measured continuously.

*Sexual risk behaviors.* Following a study conducted by Tubman, Gil, Wagner, & Artigues (2003) assessing risk for HIV/STD exposure among South Florida youth, the current study will use four items taken from a larger set of questions about sexual activities as indices of sexual risk behaviors. Specifically, these items tap participants' and/or their partners' (a) alcohol use prior to/during sexual intercourse, (b) drug use prior to/during sexual intercourse, (c) percentage of sexual intercourse involving protection against STD transmission, and (d) total number of sexual partners during the past year.

*Delinquency.* Delinquent behavior will be measured using 7-items taken from the Kaplan Deviance Scale (Kaplan, Johnson, & Bailey, 1986). These items probe participants' engagement in severe antisocial behaviors and require a yes or no response from participants.

*Self-esteem.* Thirteen items will be used to measure indices of self-esteem (Kaplan, Johnson, & Bailey, 1986), by tapping the average number of negative statements about oneself with which participant agreed.

#### *Procedures, Data Analyses, and Hypotheses*

Secondary data analyses for this study will be conducted using the SPSS-for Windows version 10.0 statistical software. All tests conducted throughout the study will be considered significant at  $p < .05$ . The statistical procedures to be used are as follows:

##### *Research question 1:*

Are there distinct groupings or clusters of minority youth that manifest significantly different patterns of race-related identities across four different times of measurement?

Hypothesis 1: Distinct subgroups based upon racial/ethnic identity constructs will be demonstrated for African-American youth.

Cluster analyses will be performed at each wave of data collection to identify distinct groups of participants by levels of reported racial/ethnic-identity related component variables, for both males and females.

*Research question 2:*

To what degree is racial/ethnic identity continuous or discontinuous during adolescence?

Hypothesis 2: Transitions during adolescent development will be associated with discontinuity in racial/ethnic identity.

Chi-square analyses will be used to document significant shifts in category membership between contiguous occasions of measurement.

*Research question 3:*

Are there associations between cluster membership and indices of adjustment across stages of adolescent development?

Hypothesis 3: Measures of racial/ethnic identity will be significantly associated with patterns of adjustment throughout adolescence.

MANOVAs, ANOVAs, and Chi-square tests will be conducted to detect associations between cluster membership and adjustment outcomes, at all four times of measurement.

*Research question 4:*

Are there significant reciprocal cross-time influences between racial/ethnic identity constructs and patterns of behavioral adjustment during adolescence?

Hypothesis 4: While there is reason to expect that racial/ethnic identity to predict later adjustment, the inverse remains unclear. Limited empirical findings deem this research question exploratory

To identify significant predictors of changes in (a) racial/ethnic identities and (b) indices of adjustment, hierarchical multiple regression analyses will be conducted separately for youth in different racial/ethnic groups.

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