

African American and White Adolescents' Strategies for Managing Cultural Diversity in Predominantly White High Schools

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This study examined 3 strategies that African American and White participants (9th–12th grade) used to manage cultural diversity: multicultural, separation, and assimilation/acculturation strategies. Older African American adolescents endorsed multicultural strategies (integration/fusion and alternation) more strongly and separation less strongly than their younger African American peers. The reverse pattern was found for White adolescents. With respect to peer relations, separation and multicultural strategies were associated with cross-ethnic peer relations for both African American and White respondents. For African American adolescents, multicultural strategy endorsement was positively related to ethnic identity; particularly for older compared with younger African American adolescents, assimilation/acculturation was a strategy associated with a less strongly positive sense of ethnic identity. The results are discussed in relation to forces supporting adolescents' strategy development, and the implications of strategy usage for adjustment in predominantly White schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents in ethnically diverse schools face a challenging task to find ways to relate to individuals from their own and different cultural backgrounds. Negotiating daily contact with peers from multiple cultures has been theorized to require strategies to manage incongruities in beliefs, values, behaviors, and experiences that distinguish cultural groups (Phelen *et al.*, 1994). Yet, there has been little systematic study of either the specific strategies that adolescents rely on or the relationship of these strategies to specific aspects of adolescents' adjustment. This investigation focuses on African American and White adolescents' endorsement of 3 theoretically grounded strategies for managing cultural diversity: separation, assimilation/acculturation, and multiculturalism. First, we examine variability in strategy endorsement in relation to adolescents' ethnic group membership, parental educational attainment, and grade-level. Second, we investigate associations among adolescents' endorsement of these particular strategies and 2 aspects of adjustment in ethnically diverse schools: self-reported cross-ethnic peer relations and ethnic identity.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Individuals vary widely in their facility with language, understanding of roles and important experiences, and beliefs about the feasibility of positive relations between their own and other cultures with which they are in regular contact. These variations in beliefs and skills distinguish theoretical conceptualizations (e.g., assimilation, separation, alternation) that describe how individuals adjust in culturally diverse societies (LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993). Recently, however, researchers have called attention to the *process* of adjusting to a culturally diverse society by arguing that the skills and orientations that individuals maintain with respect to their own and other cultures coalesce into social behavioral strategies that individuals draw on to manage cultural diversity on a daily basis (Coleman, 1995). Using a series of hypothetical situations developed from interviews with students in an ethnically diverse middle school, Coleman established that adolescents' endorsement of 3 distinct strategies can be reliably measured (Coleman *et al.*, in press).³ Two of these strategies, *separation* and *assimilation/acculturation*, are monocultural in nature, reflecting a desire to associate with members of only 1 group. The separation strategy represents an orientation only toward one's own cultural group; endorsement of this strategy is theorized to involve negative

³Hypothetical situations are widely used in research on children's and adolescents' social behavior (e.g., Dodge, 1980; Erdley and Asher, 1996; Lochman *et al.*, 1993; Slaby and Guerra, 1988). Such methodology is popular because controlled comparisons among respondents are possible as each respondent encounters the same social situation. There is evidence that responses to hypothetical situations do correspond with actual behavior (Dodge and Frame, 1980).

attitudes toward members of the other group and a strongly positive orientation toward, and facility with, the communication patterns, values, and roles specific to one's own group. In contrast, endorsement of an assimilation/acculturation strategy reflects the desire for involvement only with members of a different cultural group, either because individuals reject the values and behaviors of their own group in favor of those of a different group, or because they perceive a benefit in doing so.

Multicultural strategies (integration, fusion, and alternation) involve a desire to relate positively to individuals from multiple cultural groups, and are characterized by positive attitudes toward one's own and other groups, a moderate to high degree of facility with the roles and values of multiple groups, and a belief that members of different cultures can successfully form positive relationships. Although integration, fusion, and alternation strategies differ with respect to the specific knowledge, beliefs, and skills that undergird them, each is grounded in a belief that cultural boundaries can and should be successfully navigated without compromise to membership in either culture and are theoretically argued to motivate behavior that pursues ways in which contact can be sustained (Coleman, 1995). Thus, for purposes of this investigation, integration, fusion, and alternation strategies are grouped together as multicultural strategies.

Distinctions among the 3 types of strategies (separation, assimilation/acculturation, and multicultural) can be illustrated by considering how adolescents might manage a situation involving contact with members of a different ethnic group. A common experience in ethnically diverse schools is to collaborate in a group format on academic tasks with peers who are from one's own, as well as from other ethnic groups. Endorsement of the *separation* strategy might manifest itself in adolescents working only with peers from their own ethnic group and strictly avoiding interaction with peers from other ethnic backgrounds. Students relying on an *assimilation/acculturation* strategy would attempt to blend into the working group, interacting primarily with members of the other ethnic group and doing what it would take to be successful in the group, either because they are more comfortable with these peers or because they perceive that behavior to be necessary to obtain their desired grade. In contrast, students who more strongly endorse a *multicultural* strategy would interact with all members of the learning group, perhaps taking steps to ensure that group members of all ethnic backgrounds are respected and are involved with the project. Importantly, Coleman's initial research has indicated that adolescents do not rely solely on a single strategy to handle all situations; rather, individuals maintain varying levels of expertise with all strategies and differentially apply them, depending on the situation and their facility with the strategy (Coleman *et al.*, in press). Although Coleman's model (Coleman, 1995) offers a framework for studying identifiable and potential ways in which adolescents manage an ethnically diverse school context, systematic research on endorsement of these strategies, and relationships among these specific strategies and aspects of adjustment is limited.

Variability in Strategy Usage by Ethnic Group, Parental Education, and Grade Level

The ways in which individuals respond to cultural diversity are intricately tied to particular socioecological demands and opportunities, as well as to grade-related changes associated with adolescents and their social contexts (Coleman, 1995; LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993). At a societal level, the American ethnic stratification system creates differential demands and opportunities for members of the cultural defining majority, compared with members of minority groups. African American adolescents experience daily pressures to find ways to balance the values, beliefs, and behaviors of 2 cultures, to be successful in schools dominated by the mores of the dominant culture, and to cope with minority status and racism (Spencer and Dornbush, 1990). Further, by virtue of numerical ethnic minority status, many African American youth attend schools in which the student body consists primarily of White students (Clark, 1989). In anticipation of these demands, many African American parents specifically instill in their youth a range of ways to manage contact with White peers (Bowman and Howard, 1985; Hamm, *in press*; Phinney and Chavira, 1995; Thornton *et al.*, 1990). Indeed, research suggests that by adolescence, African American adolescents attending ethnically diverse schools have developed one or more ways to manage contact with individuals from another ethnic group (particularly White peers), and that the coping strategies they have developed have characteristics consistent with assimilation/acculturation, bicultural (multicultural), and separation strategies articulated in this investigation (Boykin, 1985; Clark, 1991; Miller, 1989; Spencer, 1999).

By virtue of belonging to the culturally defining group, White adolescents are often not pressed to develop a repertoire of ways to relate to cross-ethnic peers: This responsibility falls to members of minority groups (Fine *et al.*, 1997). Consistency between their experiences, in and out of school coupled with curricular tracking experiences that often ethnically segregate students may not necessitate that White youth develop expertise with and openness toward positive relations with cross-ethnic peers (Phelen *et al.*, 1994). Further, White parents, particularly when in a numerical ethnic majority in a community, do not appear to be a major source of understanding of and facility with other cultures (Frankenberg, 1993; Hamm, *in press*). Such socialization experiences may contribute to the characterization of many White middle class high school students as unaware and avoidant of peers from other ethnic groups, perhaps reflective of a separation strategy (e.g., Dehyle, 1986; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Phelen *et al.*, 1991). In a study in which ethnic group variability in coping strategies was directly considered among middle school students, Coleman *et al.* (*in press*) found that African American early adolescents were more likely than their White peers to endorse separation as a strategy, but did not identify other differences in strategy endorsement by ethnic group for this age group. In this investigation, we consider ethnic group variability for this sample of high school age students.

We also consider that aspects of adolescents' family socioeconomic status (SES) may independently or conjointly with ethnic group membership be associated with how students respond to school ethnic diversity, although there has been little attention to SES as a moderating variable. In the Coleman *et al.* (in press) study on early adolescents' coping strategies, students of lower, compared with middle and higher, socioeconomic backgrounds reported significantly greater usage of acculturation and multicultural (alternation and integration) strategies. Other studies suggest that parenting practices within African American families may socialize within-ethnic group differences in strategy endorsement. For instance, qualitative research on parent socialization of high school youth has indicated that African American parents with a college education more strongly encouraged a multicultural orientation in their youth, while parents with less than a college degree more typically deemphasized the significance of minority group membership in daily experience (Fordham, 1997; Hamm and Brown, 1997). We consider the independent and interactive effects of parental education in an effort to avoid confounding ethnic group and SES in adolescents' strategy endorsement (Spencer and Dornbusch, 1990) and to further develop these issues.

Finally, we examine grade-level as a factor in strategy endorsement. Differences in adolescents' endorsement of monocultural (separation and assimilation) and multicultural strategies may emerge in relation to maturing social-cognitive reasoning about ethnicity. In an application of Selman's social-cognitive theory to children's understanding of ethnicity and ethnic relations, Quintana has argued that across adolescence there is a transition in reasoning from a "group perspective of ethnicity" (Quintana, 1998; Quintana *et al.*, 1999, p. 163), in which adolescents have developed ethnic group consciousness and rudimentary understandings of how ethnic group membership may affect interpersonal relations, to a "multicultural perspective of ethnicity" (Quintana *et al.*, 1999, p. 163), which involves greater appreciation for how different groups can coexist positively, consideration of both similarities and differences between their own and other ethnic groups, and a more sophisticated understanding of how ethnic group membership is one of the many dimensions of the self and others. Given that the social-cognitive development postulated to develop across adolescence is foundational to multicultural strategy endorsement, we predict that multicultural strategy endorsement will be greater among older compared with younger adolescents. Development in social-cognitive reasoning about ethnicity may also relate to adolescents' endorsement of separation. Early, compared with middle to late, adolescents may be especially prone to exaggerated ethnic-based stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and in-group preferences (Quintana, 1998; Quintana *et al.*, 1999), characteristics basic to the separation strategy that may make endorsement of this strategy in particular more likely among early compared with middle and older adolescents.

Finally, grade-level differences in strategy endorsement may derive from students' cumulative experiences with cross-ethnic peers, rather than or in conjunction

with social–cognitive factors. By virtue of more years of attending school with cross-ethnic peers, older, compared with younger, adolescents may develop beliefs and skills that support positive cross-ethnic contact (Schofield, 1989).

Strategy Endorsement and Adolescent Adjustment in Ethnically Diverse Schools

Research on the correlates of strategies that adolescents (primarily African American) employ to cope with cultural diversity has been largely limited to academic achievement and self-esteem (e.g., Arroyo and Zigler, 1995; Clark, 1991; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Spencer *et al.*, 2001). Yet, other aspects of adjustment are pertinent to students in ethnically diverse schools: Students must forge relationships from within an ethnically diverse pool of peers, and must develop a sense of self as a member of an ethnic group in a larger, diverse society. We examine students' varying levels of endorsement of each strategy in relation to self-reported cross-ethnic peer relations and ethnic identity.

Strategy Endorsement and Cross-Ethnic Peer Relations

Numerous studies of adolescents' cross-ethnic peer relations have established that within-group relationships predominate in African American and White adolescents' school-based interaction, particularly in more intimate relationships such as friendship (Asher *et al.*, 1982; Hallinan and Williams, 1989; Hamm *et al.*, submitted; Shrum *et al.*, 1988). Although researchers have traced patterns in cross-ethnic relations to school contextual factors such as instructional practices or school demographic characteristics (Hamm *et al.*, submitted; Schofield, 1989), a focus on school-related factors neglects the skills, beliefs, and experiences, represented by the strategies for managing diversity, that students bring with them to the school environment. For example, given that separation has at its essence a distrust of members of other groups and a desire to avoid even superficial contact with members of a different culture, a tendency to employ this strategy is theorized to be negatively related to positive cross-ethnic peer relations. In contrast, the assimilation/acculturation strategy is defined in part by a rejection of members of one's primary culture and a desire to immerse oneself into the 2nd culture. Theoretically, then, adolescents who strongly endorse this strategy would maintain strongly positive attitudes toward cross-ethnic interaction and would forge relationships primarily with cross-ethnic peers. Multicultural strategies are theorized to be associated with relationships with members of both cultures. That is, in order to function successfully in multiple ethnic groups, adolescents must be "grounded" in relationships in the other ethnic groups as well as their own (Clark, 1991; LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993). We do not assume that strategy endorsement

causes cross-ethnic peer involvement; rather, it is likely that involvement (or non-involvement) with cross-ethnic peers also informs adolescents' facility with each strategy (LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993). However, we examine levels of each strategy endorsement as independent variables in relation to aspects of peer relations as dependent variables. Additionally, because interaction and relationship formation can be constrained by contextual factors such as opportunity for contact, we examine adolescents' attitudes toward, in addition to self-reported friendship and interaction with, cross-ethnic peers.

Strategy Endorsement and Ethnic Identity

Part of the identity that adolescents, particularly members of ethnic minority groups, construct involves a sense of membership in an ethnic group and attitudes, feelings, and value attached to that membership (Phinney, 1990). The extent to which adolescents endorse the 3 strategies has been theorized to relate to their ethnic identity. Reflecting the belief that one's own cultural values and practices are preferable, individuals who espouse separation as a means to manage ethnic diversity "... express a strong interest in and knowledge about their ethnic group" (Coleman, 1995, p. 732). Further, as part of the processes of search and commitment related to ethnic identity development, (Phinney, 1990) endorsement of the separation strategy may be a means for adolescents to immerse themselves in relationships and activities with same-ethnic peers, in order to develop a sense of belongingness and feelings toward one's primary group as a means to develop their ethnic identity. However, endorsement of multicultural strategies is also theoretically argued to be related to a strong sense of ethnic identity. According to stage theories of ethnic identity development, more advanced ethnic identity attainment is based on an integration of positive orientations toward other ethnic groups with a strong sense of groundedness in one's primary culture (Phinney, 1990), orientations and behaviors integral to multicultural strategies. In empirical research, higher levels of ethnic identity have been associated with more positive attitudes toward one's own and other ethnic groups (Phinney *et al.*, 1997b).

Finally, there has been suggestion that African American adolescents' endorsement of an assimilation/acculturation strategy may be related to their level of ethnic identity, specifically, that endorsement of this strategy may co-occur with minimal awareness, loyalty, and positive affect toward African American group membership (LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993). In her ethnographic study of low-income urban African American youth, Fordham (1988; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986) argued that for some African American adolescents, use of an assimilationist-type coping strategy (termed "acting White") in which adolescents downplayed African American group membership and attempted to fit into the mainstream school culture came at the expense of ambivalent feelings toward and alienation from African American culture.

In this study, we examine how adolescents' differential endorsement of the 3 strategies is associated with their reported and contemporaneous level of ethnic identity. Our analyses of these relationships are exploratory for White adolescents. Although the literature extant calls into question the relevance of ethnic identity for White adolescents, particularly those in predominantly White contexts (Phinney and Alipuria, 1990; McGuire *et al.*, 1978), it remains consistent with theory relevant to both constructs that greater endorsement of separation and multicultural strategies in particular might be associated with ethnic identity among members of the majority group in society.

In summary, 3 strategies have been identified that adolescents use to manage the process of 2nd culture acquisition: separation, assimilation/acclulturation, and multicultural. We examined adolescents' endorsement of each strategy in relation to ethnic group membership, parental educational attainment, and grade level, and as correlates of 2 aspects of adjustment, adolescents' self-reported cross-ethnic peer relations and ethnic identity development.

METHOD

Participants

Respondents were recruited from 2 high schools from a single school district in a midsized Midwestern city. Both high schools had predominantly White student bodies (74% and 83.5% White student populations). African American students constituted the next significant proportion of students from a single ethnic group; Latino students, students of Asian descent, and students of other nationalities were represented in small proportions in both schools. Students were approached in social studies classes and ethnically based (e.g., African American student organizations) or theme-based (e.g., student newspaper) extracurricular activities. Many African American students were recruited through African American student organizations. This recruitment process resulted in a total sample of 215 respondents ($n = 77$ African American and $n = 138$ White adolescents).⁴ Table I displays characteristics of the adolescent population from which these samples were taken (from school district reports) and sample characteristics of teenagers participating in this study. The overrepresentation of African American youth in the sample was intentional, in order to provide enough respondents for data analyses; the

⁴In classrooms and activities, the majority of students consented to participate in the study (85–100% of those students invited). In one high school, active parent consent was required. Among the White respondents, roughly 50% of the parents granted their youth permission to participate by returning a permission card. Among African American respondents, mailing and follow-up phone call procedures accomplished a 99% acceptance rate for youth to participate. At the second high school, passive consent procedures were utilized; less than 5% of parents of either ethnic group refused participation for their youth.

Table I. Characteristics of High Schools and Sample

School	Racial distribution	Low SES	Gender	Grade level
<i>High schools</i>				
1	13% African American	15.2% Low	53.3% Male	29% 9th 26% 10th
	74% White	84.8% Nonlow	46.7% Female	22% 11th 23% 12th
2	11% African American	12.4% Low	50.8% Male	30% 9th 27% 10th
	83.5% White	87.6% Nonlow	49.2% Female	22% 11th 21% 12th
School	Racial distribution	Parental education	Gender	Grade level
<i>Adolescent sample (n = 212)</i>				
1	41.8% African American	12.7% High school or less 46.8% Some college/BA	45.6% Male	23.1% 9th 44.9% 10th
	55.7% White	40.5% Postsecondary	53.2% Female	15.4% 11th 16.7% 12th
2	32.4% African American	39.0% High school or less 54.3% Some college/BA	53% Male	9.1% 9th 15.9% 10th
	67.6% White	6.7% Postsecondary	47% Female	44.3% 11th 28.2% 12th

overrepresentation of sophomores and juniors resulted from the sampling strategy permitted by the schools. Different indicators of SES used by the school district versus the researchers made it difficult to assess the representativeness of the sample respondents with respect to socioeconomic background. Although the study sample included a significant proportion of youth of parents with lower educational attainment, the sample was skewed in favor of middle and upper middle class respondents.

Questionnaires

Demographic Information

Students indicated the racial or ethnic group(s) to which they belonged: African American/Black, White/Euro American/Caucasian, Asian/Asian American (specify), Latino/Hispanic American (specify), Native American/American Indian, and others (specify). Only students who identified themselves as African American or White were included in this study; the data from 1 Latino, 1 Middle Eastern, and 5 Hmong youth were excluded. Students identifying more than 1 group were not included in this investigation ($n = 8$).

Parental education was obtained from respondents, as appropriate, for mother, father, step-mother, and step-father. Parental education was coded to reflect the highest educational level of the individuals with whom the participant resided, and

was further recoded into 2 categories: high school diploma or less, or some college or college degree.⁵

Grade level in school was determined by self-report items on the questionnaire. Grade level was coded into 2 categories: lower grades (9 and 10) and upper grades (11 and 12).

Coping With Cultural Diversity Scale

The Coping with Cultural Diversity scale (CCD) (Coleman and Casali, 1994; Coleman *et al.*, in press) measures 6 strategies that adolescents use to cope with cultural diversity, in a variety of commonly experienced social situations. These strategies include separation, assimilation, acculturation, alternation, integration, and fusion. The scale consists of 9 hypothetical situations involving cross-cultural contact; scenarios and responses were developed through structured interviews with African American, White, Asian, and Latino middle school students. A sample scenario can be found in Appendix. Respondents are directed to rate, on a 7-point Likert scale, how likely they are to use each response to handle each situation. A 0 indicates that the respondent is not at all likely to use that response in that situation; a 6 would mean that the respondent would definitely use that response in that situation. The scale yields a score for each strategy (assimilation, acculturation, alternation, integration, separation, and fusion). Higher scores indicate greater likelihood of using a particular strategy.

In an initial study with this instrument and an ethnically diverse sample of adolescents (Coleman *et al.*, in press), cluster analyses indicated that the integration, fusion, and alternation subscales, and the assimilation and acculturation subscales, represented similar constructs. For this study, responses to integration, fusion, and alternation items were combined into a single scale, and responses to assimilation and acculturation items were combined into a single scale. The reduction of 6 strategies to 3 strategies was supported empirically as well as theoretically. Assimilation and acculturation were significantly correlated ($r = .60, p < .001$); alternation, integration, and fusion were highly intercorrelated as well, ($r_s = .74-.85$, all $p_s < .001$). Thus, 3 scales were created from the CCD: separation (9 items), assimilation/acculturation (18 items); multicultural (27 items). The internal consistency (Cronbach's α) of these scales are as follows: separation scale = .69, multicultural composite = .86, and assimilation/acculturation composite = .78. Reliability coefficients are reported for the total

⁵Scholars have identified the problems inherent in defining SES according to income, education, and occupation when comparing White and racial/ethnic minority youth (Banks, 1988). In this study, the additional complexity in obtaining even these traditional indicators arose; consultation with school personnel and pilot work revealed that many students could not accurately describe their parents' employment status or experiences. Parental education was therefore obtained as the most reliable proxy for SES; the reader is reminded that traditional indicators, including parental education, are imperfect measures of SES when race/ethnicity is also a factor.

sample but were found to be comparable between African American and White respondents.

Cross-Ethnic Relations

Self-reported cross-ethnic interaction, and attitudes toward cross-ethnic interaction were measured. With respect to *cross-ethnic interaction*, respondents completed a single item that assessed how likely they were to do things for fun (e.g., on the weekend, go to a movie) with at least 1 peer from a different race, on a scale of 1 (*very unlikely*) to 5 (*very likely*). Cross-ethnic friendship nomination was also determined: respondents listed the racial/ethnic background of an unlimited number of their closest friends. A proportion score was created, in which the number of cross-ethnic friends was divided by the total number of friends, to reflect the ethnic diversity of each respondent's nominated friendship network. The single-item interaction and proportion of cross-ethnic friend scores were significantly correlated ($r = .50, p < .01$) (correlations between these variables were comparable for African American and White respondents). These 2 peer measures were standardized and combined to create a composite measure of interaction with cross-ethnic peers.

Adolescents' *attitudes toward cross-ethnic interaction* were measured by the other-Group Orientations subscale of Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). This scale was developed to be applicable to members of multiple ethnic groups to measure individuals' receptivity and attitudes toward involvement with members of other ethnic groups. Items such as "I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn't try to mix together" and "I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own" constitute the 6-item scale. Respondents rate their agreement with each statement on a 4-point Likert scale that ranges from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Phinney (1992) reports reliability (Cronbach's α) to be .71 for an ethnically diverse high-school aged sample.

Ethnic Identity

Adolescents' ethnic identity was assessed with the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM, Phinney, 1992). This instrument was designed to capture components of ethnic identity common to multiple ethnic groups, and thus can be used within diverse samples of adolescents. The scale has 14 items, rated on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), that address individuals' sense of belonging to their self-identified ethnic group (e.g., I am happy that I am a member of the ethnic group that I belong to), their participation in that group's practices (e.g., I take part in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs), and the extent to which individuals have explored and committed to their ethnic group membership (e.g., I think a lot about how my life will be affected by

my ethnic group membership). Phinney (1992) reported a strong internal consistency for the scale ($\alpha = .81$ for high school youth). Acceptable validity data has also been reported for the scale (see Phinney, 1992; Phinney *et al.*, 1994). Higher scale scores indicate a more positive and more fully developed sense of ethnic identity.

RESULTS

The sample for this study included adolescents who were invited to participate from 2 generally demographically similar high schools in the same school district. We first conducted a 1-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with school as the independent variable and students' responses to the 3 strategy scores as dependent variables to determine if there were school differences in students' responses. This analysis revealed no significant difference for any strategy score, $F(1, 223) = 1.07, p = .37$.⁶ Therefore, we pooled data from the 2 schools in subsequent analyses.

Variability in Strategy Usage

Respondents' strategy composite scores were submitted to a 3-way MANOVA procedure in order to ascertain the moderating effects of ethnic group membership, parental education, and grade level on adolescents' score for each coping strategy (separation, assimilation/accommodation, and multicultural). Ethnic group showed a significant omnibus relationship with the coping strategies, $F(2, 212) = 9.49, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12$. Univariate analyses indicated that African American ($M = 2.45$), compared with White ($M = 1.91$) youth, more strongly endorsed *separation* as a strategy for managing cultural diversity, $F(1, 212) = 23.33, p < .001$. African American ($M = 3.45$) compared with White ($M = 3.09$) youth also more strongly endorsed the *multicultural* strategy, $F(1, 212) = 6.00, p < .01$. Ethnic groups did not differ with respect to their endorsement of assimilation/acculturation, $F(1, 212) = .82, ns (M = 2.58)$.

We had further proposed that grade level would be related to the extent to which adolescents endorsed particular strategies. Although a main effect of grade level was not significant, a significant omnibus ethnic group by grade level interaction was obtained, $F(2, 212) = 3.69, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$. Univariate analyses indicated that this interaction was significant for the *separation* strategy, $F(1, 212) = 4.51, p < .05$, and the *multicultural* strategy, $F(1, 212) = 3.90, p < .05$,

⁶A reviewer pointed out that strategy usage could differ systematically among African American students who were members of the African American student organizations versus those who were not members. We could not directly address this issue, as we could not reliably determine membership in the African American student groups. That is, students who were recruited through classrooms and nonethnic-based organizations versus the African American student organizations were not necessarily mutually exclusive groups of students.

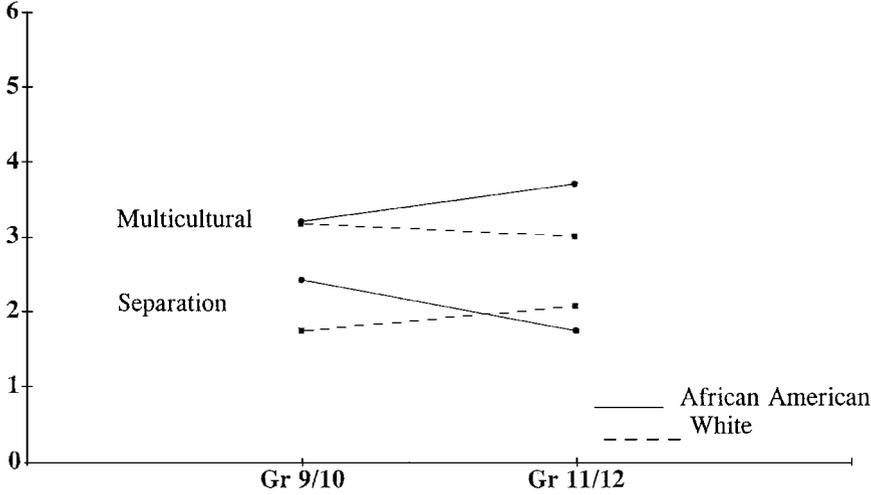


Fig. 1. Ethnic group by grade level interactions for separation and multicultural strategies.

but not for the assimilation/acclulturation strategy $F(1, 212) = .30, ns$. Figure 1 graphically represents these interactions and permits interpretation of group differences. Comparisons of younger to older adolescents on strategy endorsement revealed differences within each ethnic group. Among African American respondents, older compared to younger adolescents reported greater endorsement of the *multicultural* strategy. In comparison, older, compared to younger White, respondents were less likely to endorse a multicultural approach for coping with cultural diversity. By the latter years of high school, differences in endorsement of a multicultural strategy were evident between the African American and White respondents.

With respect to the *separation* strategy, older White respondents were somewhat more likely than their younger White peers to endorse this strategy. The reverse pattern was found within the sample of African American respondents: Older compared to younger African American youth less strongly endorsed separation as a means to manage ethnic diversity.

Adolescents' endorsement of specific strategies did not differ significantly according to their parents' educational attainment; no additional interactions emerged in these analyses.

Strategy Usage and Adolescent Adjustment

Our previous analyses demonstrated that ethnic group membership and grade level were interactively related to strategy endorsement. To incorporate these

findings into analyses that related strategy endorsement to ethnic identity and to self-reports of cross-ethnic peer interaction, we first split the sample by ethnic group ($n = 77$ African American and $n = 138$ White students) and then tested for interactive effects between grade level and strategy endorsement to determine if, within each ethnic group, patterns of association among strategy endorsement and adjustment differed significantly for younger versus older adolescents. To this end, we conducted hierarchical linear regression equations on the 3 dependent variables (self-reported cross-ethnic interaction composite, other-group attitudes, and ethnic identity). Independent variables included the adolescents' grade level (coded as 1 = 11th/12th grade, 0 = 9th/10th grade), and scores on each of the 3 coping strategies (separation, assimilation/acculturation, and multicultural), as well as the three 2-way grade level \times strategy score interaction terms. Interaction terms were standardized multiplicative products of standardized univariate variables (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). Variables entered on the first step included all univariate variables; interaction terms were entered as a block on the final step of the equation.

At each step, the significance in R^2 change was assessed to determine the contribution of each block of variables. Interaction terms were further analyzed if they were significant and added a significant increment to the variance accounted for by the equation. All interaction terms that met these criteria were interpreted according to Pothoff's variation on the Johnson–Neyman procedure outlined in Aiken and West (1991). This procedure yields values of the continuous variable at which the groups of the dichotomous variable differ significantly on the dependent variable.

Strategy Endorsement and Cross-Ethnic Peer Relations

For African American respondents, with respect to other-group attitudes, more strongly positive attitudes toward relationships with cross-ethnic peers were related to weaker espousal of separation and greater endorsement of multicultural strategies. The block of interaction terms did not significantly improve the fit of the equation, suggesting that these patterns of relationship did not differ significantly according to the grade level of African American adolescents. No univariate variable emerged as a significant correlate of self-reported cross-ethnic peer interaction. Although the block of grade level \times strategy interaction terms significantly improved the fit of the equation (see Table II), and the model accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in the cross-ethnic interaction variable, no single interaction term was significantly correlated with self-reported cross-ethnic peer interaction.

For White respondents, strategy endorsement was related both to self-reported cross-ethnic peer interaction and to attitudes toward cross-ethnic interaction (see Table III). Weaker espousal of a separation strategy and greater endorsement of a multicultural strategy were associated with greater interaction with cross-ethnic peers, and also with attitudes toward cross-ethnic peer relations. For both peer

Table II. Parameter Estimates From Hierarchical Regression Equations Relating Self-reported Cross-Ethnic Peer Relations and Ethnic Identity Scores to Strategy Endorsement for African American Respondents

	Attitudes toward cross-ethnic interaction		Cross-ethnic interaction		Ethnic identity	
	<i>R</i> ²	β	<i>R</i> ²	β	<i>R</i> ²	β
Step 1	.26***		.10		.10	
Grade level		-.00		.16		.08
Separation		-.28*		-.21		-.01
Multicultural		.64***		.07		.39**
Assimilation/accumulation		.25		.18		-.19
Step 2	ns		.09*		.07*	
Grade level \times assimilation/acculturation						-.33*
Total <i>R</i> ²	.26***		.19**		.17*	

p* \leq .05; *p* \leq .01; ****p* \leq .001.

relations dependent variables, the block of interaction terms involving grade level did not significantly improve the fit of the equation.

Strategy Endorsement and Ethnic Identity

For African American adolescents, multicultural strategy endorsement scores were significantly and positively associated with ethnic identity scores. Additionally, the inclusion of the interaction term for grade level \times assimilation/acculturation strategy significantly improved the fit of the model, accounting for an additional 6% of the variance. Interpretation of this interaction term indicated that the relationship between ethnic identity and assimilation/acculturation strategy endorsement differed significantly for older versus younger African American adolescents whose assimilation/acculturation strategy score was less than .66 or greater than 2.48. The upper limit was slightly less than the mean assimilation/

Table III. Parameter Estimates From Hierarchical Regression Equations Relating Self-reported Cross-Ethnic Peer Relations and Ethnic Identity Scores to Strategy Endorsement for White Respondents

	Attitudes toward cross-ethnic interaction		Cross-ethnic interaction		Ethnic identity	
	Adj. <i>R</i> ²	β	Adj. <i>R</i> ²	β	Adj. <i>R</i> ²	β
Step 1: Univariate factors	.29***		.09*		.05	
Grade level		-.15*		.03		-.01
Separation		-.43***		-.26**		.17
Multicultural		.26**		.19*		.01
Assimilation/acculturation		.00		-.01		-.15

p* \leq .05; *p* \leq .01; ****p* \leq .001.

acculturation strategy score for African American participants; 52.8% of the African American respondents' data fell into this region of significant difference. No cases were found of a value less than the lower limit. This finding indicates that among African American participants, endorsement of the assimilation/acculturation strategy has a stronger, negative relationship with ethnic identity for older versus younger African American students—the importance of this relationship was most pronounced for respondents who reported average or higher endorsement of the assimilation/acculturation strategy.

For the White respondents, endorsement of specific strategies was not significantly associated with ethnic identity scores.

DISCUSSION

A challenge for many contemporary adolescents is to find ways to manage contact and relations with individuals from different ethnic groups. In this investigation we examined first, variability in African American and White adolescents' endorsement of 3 theoretically grounded coping strategies for managing cultural diversity, and second, relationships among endorsement of the coping strategies and self-reported cross-ethnic peer relations and ethnic identity. Although we had expected that African American and White adolescents would differ in their endorsement of each strategy, our results paint a more complex picture, with different patterns of endorsement for separation and multicultural strategies for African American and White adolescents related to the respondents' grade level. Ninth and 10th graders from both ethnic groups reported comparable endorsement of multicultural strategies. However, compared with younger African American respondents, older (11th/12th grade) African American participants reported stronger endorsement of multicultural strategies, while older, compared with younger, White respondents less strongly endorsed multicultural strategies. Thus, in the later years of high school, ethnic group differences in endorsement of multicultural strategies were evident. With respect to the separation strategy, participants reported generally low levels of endorsement, although, consistent with findings from middle school respondents (Coleman *et al.*, in press), early in high school African American, compared to White, adolescents reported somewhat greater endorsement of this strategy. However, at the older grade levels, the strength of endorsement of separation strategy was lower among older (compared with younger) African American respondents, but slightly higher among older, compared with younger, White adolescent respondents.

We had speculated, based on recent research (Quintana *et al.*, 1999) that grade-level differences in endorsement of coping strategies may result from adolescents' emerging social-cognitive reasoning about ethnic groups and ethnic relations. Although our grade-level findings for African American adolescents are consistent

with that speculation, the findings for White adolescents are not. Quintana noted that although social–cognitive development is an important foundation for the advancement in understanding of ethnicity and ethnic relations, “. . . prerequisite experiences that act as a catalyst for this developmental movement” are also necessary (Quintana, 1998, p. 40). We speculate that the experiences related to membership in a distinct numerical ethnic minority group in the school and community, and in an ethnic minority group in larger society, offered numerous prerequisite experiences for African American students but perhaps few for White adolescents. Given the ethnic distribution of the student bodies of these schools, it is likely that a large proportion of the students with whom African American respondents had contact daily at school were White. This experience may have created ongoing opportunities for African American respondents to develop, apply, and receive feedback regarding their usage of these strategies at a time when their social–cognitive abilities were permitting more integrative and flexible thinking about ethnic groups and ethnic relations. Regular cross-ethnic interaction may have helped African American adolescents to rely less on stereotypes about cross-ethnic peers, and to forge less of an in-group orientation as they progressed through school, perhaps resulting in lowered endorsement of separation as a strategy.

Additionally, socialization experiences at school and in the home may have promoted different thinking and endorsement of coping strategies for African American and White participants. For instance, many of the African American participants in the study attended African American student support groups, which, according to a facilitator of one of the groups, offered socialization regarding how to manage membership in an ethnic minority group (Hamm, in press). Parallel experiences were not routinely available for White students in the schools. Further, research with parents of a different sample of adolescents who attended schools in this community suggested that many African American parents took steps to help their adolescents forge a solid sense of self as an African American while maintaining positive attitudes toward and relationships with White peers (Hamm, in press). In contrast, for White adolescents, by parent report, socialization with respect to ethnic group membership and ethnic relations often took the form of deferral to the school for the provision of contact and development of positive cross-ethnic attitudes and interactions. Thus, during the course of respondents’ high school experience, we speculate that, at a time when their social–cognitive maturation was permitting more integrative understanding of ethnic groups and ethnic relations, African American participants received and put to use information, support, experiences, and opportunity that encouraged the development of multicultural strategies and discouraged endorsement of separation as a strategy.

Our findings offer some support for researchers’ (e.g., Phelen *et al.*, 1991; Schofield, 1989) concerns that if White students experience little sustained contact with peers of different ethnic backgrounds, they are at risk for increased in-group behavior and ethnocentrism. More research is needed to understand forces

that may incline or disincline White adolescents to adopt particular strategies as they progress with cross-ethnic peers through high school. In general, a study designed in the spirit of Quintana *et al.* (1999), to examine the extent to which social-cognitive reasoning and specific experiences independently and interactively shape the coping strategies of adolescents of different ethnic groups, would be an important next step.

A second major finding of this study was that adolescents' endorsement of particular strategies, as measured by the CCD, was related to their ethnic identity and self-reported cross-ethnic interaction. Consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of each strategy, for both African American and White respondents, positive attitudes toward cross-ethnic interaction and relationships were related to both weaker endorsement of separation and greater endorsement of multicultural strategies. Additionally, for White adolescents, self-reported interaction and friendship with cross-ethnic peers was positively associated with endorsement of a multicultural strategy and negatively associated with endorsement of separation. These patterns of association among strategy endorsement, and attitudes and relationships hold potentially important implications for schools, agencies, and individuals interested in promoting positive cross-ethnic peer relations. Efforts to foster positive cross-ethnic peer relations should both support attitudes and behaviors related to multicultural strategy endorsement and confront attitudes and behaviors related to separation strategy endorsement. Additionally, these findings strongly support the position that efforts to foster positive cross-ethnic relations should include students from both White and ethnic minority backgrounds. The few studies that have attended to the experiences of White students in the numerical ethnic majority at school (e.g., Phelen *et al.*, 1991; Schofield, 1989) underscore that the ways in which White students manage cultural diversity shape the general school social climate in which all students develop.

It is noteworthy that the strength of association among strategy endorsement and other-group attitudes was more pronounced than for self-reported actual relationships. Strategy endorsement may be less strongly associated with (self-reported) behavior compared with attitudes because cross-ethnic relationships are constrained by opportunity (e.g., school contextual factors, Hamm *et al.*, submitted; Phinney *et al.*, 1997b) and other processes of interpersonal attraction such as shared interests and activities (Hamm, 2000). Thus, any intervention regarding intergroup relations must take into consideration not only intraindividual orientations but also interpersonal forces and the social structure in which relationships develop.

Our findings regarding ethnic identity and strategy endorsement were partially consistent with theoretical assertions. More strongly positive multicultural strategy endorsement was positively associated with ethnic identity scores for African American youth only. This association offers potential insight into the ethnic group differences observed for multicultural strategy endorsement. Endorsement of

multicultural strategies has been argued theoretically to be related to a strong sense of self as a member of a distinct ethnic group (LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993). In the current investigation, African American adolescents, as a group, maintained more strongly positive ethnic identity scores than did their White peers. A strong sense of ethnic identity may hold less meaning for White, compared to African American, adolescents, particularly in a predominantly White school context (Phinney, 1990; Phinney *et al.*, 1997a). In addition to the experiential factors articulated previously, it may be more difficult for White adolescents to develop multicultural strategies if they lack a strong sense of their own ethnic group membership in relation to other groups. As noted previously, in a predominantly White school and community, White students may have especially little reason to question or reflect on their own ethnic group membership.

For African American participants, assimilation/acclulturation strategy endorsement was associated with ethnic identity particularly for older students who reported average or above-average endorsement of this strategy. Consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of this strategy, a characteristic of endorsement of assimilation/acclulturation is of little interest in or knowledge of one's own ethnic or cultural background, given a strong preference for and/or identification with the second culture (Coleman, 1995). The relationship between less strongly positive levels of ethnic identity and endorsement of the assimilation/acclulturation strategy echoes and offers generalizability and elaboration for Fordham's (1988; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986) observation that low-income, urban African American youth who were more assimilated into their school's mainstream culture felt less of a sense of belonging to the African American community and participated less in aspects of African American culture. Taken together, these findings call for greater research attention as compromise to ethnic identity is argued to be psychologically stressful for ethnic minority adolescents (Arroyo and Zigler, 1995; Fordham, 1988; LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993). Relatedly, Spencer *et al.* (2001) recently demonstrated that African American adolescents' strongly positive endorsement of eurocentric values were related to participants' reports of lower self-esteem and poorer academic achievement. It is possible that voluntary or encouraged adoption of this particular strategy may compromise, in particular, older African American adolescents' sense of affiliation with their culture of origin.

We note several limitations with this investigation. First, only correlational relationships were established. The design of this study did not clarify, for instance, whether endorsing a multicultural strategy facilitates the development of cross-ethnic relationships, or whether maintaining cross-ethnic relationships encourages endorsement of a multicultural strategy. Similarly, the degree of ethnic identity maintained by adolescents may lead to endorsement of specific strategies, or, conversely, endorsement of particular strategies may support certain levels of ethnic identity development. The theoretical frameworks on which the study is based (e.g., Coleman, 1995; LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993; Phelen *et al.*, 1994)

suggest that there is a reciprocal process of influence involved. That is, it is likely that students' strategy endorsement evolves in conjunction with the relationships they develop with peers and with their broader ethnic community. Longitudinal research is necessary to tease out the nature of these reciprocal relationships. We further note that strategy endorsement accounted for only a modest amount of the variance in cross-ethnic peer relations and ethnic identity. The literature extant demonstrates how multiple factors are likely to be involved in adolescents' adjustment with respect to these variables, such as contextual opportunities for relationship development and family socialization.

Students' responses to hypothetical situations and their self-reported cross-ethnic peer involvement and ethnic identity, not their actual behaviors, were measured. Other researchers (e.g., Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Peshkin, 1991; Phelen *et al.*, 1994), though studying a smaller number of participants and attending to different issues, have provided observational support for the conclusions that we have drawn in this investigation. Further, as noted earlier, self-reports of strategy usage have been demonstrated to be associated with children's and adolescents' actual behaviors related to peer conflict. Although the associations between specific strategies and adolescent adjustment grant confidence to the use of the CCD instrument, future research needs to explore through observation and interview the external validity of these findings.

Finally, participants in this study hailed from predominantly White high schools in a predominantly White community. We have speculated in interpreting our results that this context contributed to the patterns detailed in this paper for African American and White adolescents. Direct attention to classroom and school contextual factors that influence adolescents' endorsement of preferences for specific strategies is a critical next step in this area.

The findings from this investigation demonstrate that the ways in which African American and White high school students manage contact with cross-ethnic peers is related to an interaction of ethnic group membership and grade level. The same strategies that differed by grade level for African American and White adolescents, separation and multiculturalism, were associated with students' interest in and self-reported relationships with cross-ethnic peers. For African American adolescents, multiple strategy endorsements were also related to ethnic identity. We identify these surface relationships; longitudinal research must confirm and explain these trends within and across ethnic group and grade, assessing the contributions of school contextual factors and how adolescents' coping strategies are a factor in their adjustment in ethnically diverse settings.

APPENDIX

Sample Item for the Coping with Cultural Diversity Scale (Coleman and Casali, 1994). If you were doing a group project in a class with individuals who

were mostly from a different race or culture than you, how likely are you to . . .

1. make friends with someone in the group who would help you (multicultural);
2. get the group to understand what you think about the material (multicultural);
3. just work with individuals in the group who are from your race or culture? (separation);
4. do what it takes to get along? (assimilation/acculturation);
5. make sure everyone was involved in the group? (multicultural);
6. say only what you had to in order to get the grade? (assimilation/acculturation).

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