

The Status Model of Racial Identity Development in African American Adolescents: Evidence of Structure, Trajectories, and Well-Being

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Although the identity formation model is widely used to assess adolescent ethnic identity development, the model propositions have rarely been tested. The existence of the identity statuses (diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, achieved), the proposed developmental trajectories, and whether youth in the achieved status report higher levels of psychological well-being were examined among a longitudinal sample of 224 African American adolescents, aged 11–17. Cluster analyses were used to create 4 identity statuses consistent with the theoretical model at both time points. The findings indicate that some adolescents progressed, while others regressed or remained constant across time periods. Lastly, the results generally support the assumption that individuals in the achieved status had the highest levels of psychological well-being at both time periods.

Racial identity has been one of the most widely studied constructs among African Americans (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990). Several theories have been put forth to articulate the process by which individuals develop attitudes and beliefs regarding the significance and meaning of racial group membership (e.g., Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1993) and these have been influenced by developmental models of ego identity (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966). One of the most prominent is the ethnic identity model proposed by Phinney (1989, 1992, 1993). Similar to the ego identity models, Phinney's ethnic identity model described four identity statuses through which individuals' progress developmentally in a specific manner toward a more psychologically healthy ethnic identity resolution. Surprisingly, to date few studies have investigated whether: (1) these four ethnic identity statuses exist, (2) individuals progress through these statuses within a particular sequence, or (3) specific statuses are associated with higher or lower levels of psychological well-being.

The present study explores these questions among a longitudinal sample of African American adolescents.

A number of authors have pointed out the problem with conflating the terms ethnic identity and racial identity without regard for the differences in the concepts (see Helms & Talleyrand, 1997 for further discussion). As the interest in delineating the universal attributes associated with group identity for individuals across a variety of different ethnic groups, Phinney (1992) uses the term *ethnic identity* to refer to the attitudes and beliefs that individuals hold toward their ethnic group. The focus of the present study is specifically on the development of African American adolescents' group identities. The distinction between race and ethnicity is particularly difficult for African Americans due to historical circumstances such as forced slavery and the forced severance from their indigenous African culture. We contend that it is the concept of racial membership in American society that provides the primary psychological connection among African Americans (see Sellers et al., 1998, for further discussion). As a result, throughout the present article, we use the term *ethnic identity* in reference to the conceptual model and measure developed by Phinney and colleagues, and the term *racial identity* when referring to models of group identity (including Phinney's) when applied specifically to African Americans.

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Ego Identity Development

Erikson (1968) argued that adolescence was a critical period for the development of a healthy ego identity. According to Erikson, ego identity was akin to a sense of wholeness involving the exploration of one's abilities and interests, resulting in a commitment to a crystallized identity. Building on this conceptualization, Marcia (1966) went further in describing the process by which individuals develop a crystallized and secure ego identity by proposing four statuses of ego identity development. These four statuses were defined by the extent to which the individual has explored who she or he is as well as the extent to which the individual has committed to a particular personal or ego identity. The four statuses include: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement. Individuals in a diffuse status of identity development have not committed to a particular identity nor have they begun to explore who they are. Individuals in a foreclosed status of development have committed to a particular ego identity based on the opinions of influential others without any personal exploration. Individuals in the moratorium status are engaged in exploring who they are but have not reached a point in which they have committed to a particular ego identity. Individuals in the final status of development, the achieved stage, have committed to a particular identity after having explicitly explored what that particular identity means. In his original articulation of the four ego identity statuses, Marcia (1966) proposed a strict linear progression from a diffused or foreclosed identity through a period of exploration (moratorium) before reaching an achieved ego identity state. Marcia also proposed that individuals who had successfully completed the identity development process and had reached an achieved identity status would enjoy higher levels of psychological well-being than individuals who were at less mature identity states.

Recently, Marcia and other researchers, however, have backed away from proposing only one trajectory of development (Marcia, 1980, 1989; Meeus, Iedemaa, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999; Waterman, 1982, 1999). Several different trajectories of identity development have been documented (Meeus et al., 1999; Waterman, 1982). Additionally, the foreclosed identity status has been proposed in certain situations to be a successful resolution of the identity development process along with the achieved status (Waterman, 1982, 1999). Waterman (1982) has suggested that the ego identity status model is too general to be considered a specific developmental theory. He argues that the utility of the model lies in its ability to provide a useful framework

for examining various trajectories of ego identity change over time. Nonetheless, research has consistently found that individuals with achieved ego identity status report more positive well-being than individuals in the other statuses and that the moratorium status is associated with the lowest levels of well-being (Meeus et al., 1999). Regardless of whether the model is specific enough to warrant it being considered a theory, Marcia's model has sparked a considerable body of research documenting the existence of the four ego identity statuses, various trajectories of identity change, and the relationship between ego identity status and well-being (see Marcia, 1980, Meeus et al., 1999, for reviews).

Four-Status Model of Ethnic Identity Development

Marcia's (1966) four-status model of ego identity development has been used to understand the development of a variety of identities. Phinney (1989) used the model to articulate the ways in which individuals develop crystallized ethnic identities. Phinney (1989) articulated the same four ethnic identity statuses as Marcia (1966), except that these statuses were based on individuals' levels of exploration about the meaning of their ethnic membership and the extent to which they had committed to or accepted the role that their ethnic group membership plays in their life. Similar to Marcia's (1966), original formulation, a linear developmental trajectory was proposed such that the diffuse and foreclosed statuses were conceptualized as immature starting points with the moratorium status considered transitional, and the achieved status viewed as the optimal identity resolution (Phinney, 1989, 1993). As such, those individuals in the more immature ethnic identity statuses (diffuse and foreclosed) were hypothesized to exhibit less positive psychological outcomes such as feelings of inadequacy and low self-regard (Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997), while those individuals in the more mature identity status (achieved) were hypothesized to exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being (Phinney, 1993).

Research Using the Four-Status Model of Ethnic Identity Development

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) was developed to measure the components of ethnic identity identified from previous research (Phinney, 1992). The original MEIM was comprised of four subscales: affirmation and belonging, identity achievement, ethnic behaviors, and other-group orientation. The identity achievement subscale is most

relevant for investigating the four statuses of ethnic identity development, because it contains items that measure both identity exploration and commitment as opposed to separate constructs. Some researchers have endorsed the use of a composite score, summing across the three identity scales to assess levels of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992; Roberts et al., 1999). As a result, it is impossible to create the four identity statuses from a composite ethnic identity achievement subscale score. While a single composite score allows researchers to classify individuals with extreme scores into diffused and achieved statuses, this results in confusion regarding those individuals in the middle of the distribution. For example, it is impossible to distinguish between individuals in the foreclosed status (low scores on exploration and high scores on commitment) from those in the moratorium statuses (high scores on exploration and low scores on commitment). Furthermore, it becomes impossible to disentangle an individual's sense of belonging and engagement with ethnic behaviors from her or his level of identity development. A few studies have attempted to operationalize ethnic identity statuses using MEIM composite scores (Bracey, Bamaca, & Umana-Taylor, 2004; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Roberts et al., 1999). Unfortunately, the utility of these studies is limited by their use of a MEIM composite score to classify participants into ethnic identity statuses.

Given the limitation of the MEIM in operationalizing ethnic identity statuses, it is not surprising that there is a dearth of research investigating the existence of ethnic identity status, individual trajectories of progression through the statuses, and any association between ethnic identity status and well-being. We are aware of only two published studies that attempt to provide empirical evidence of the model. Phinney (1989) used structured interviews to assign 60 Asian American, African American, and Latino 10th graders into one of the identity statuses. Coders categorized 21.3% of the interviewees as having an achieved identity, while 22.9% were categorized as being in the moratorium status. Yet, coders were unable to distinguish between a diffuse and a foreclosed identity status and placed the remaining 55.7% of the sample into a new group called unexamined identity status. In a follow-up study, Phinney and Chavira (1992) re-interviewed 18 participants and coders classified participants into three identity statuses. A comparison of participants' identity status across the two time points found that 16 participants (83%) were in identity statuses that were consistent with the progression predicted by the conceptual model. Of these 16 participants, 6 par-

ticipants were rated as being in the same category as they were originally classified and 10 participants were in identity statuses defined as more mature than their previous statuses. Although these two studies provided some evidence in support of the ethnic identity model, the small and selective nature of the initial sample and the significant attrition rate severely limit the generalizability of the findings.

At present, we are unaware of any studies that have examined the relation between the four ethnic identity statuses and measures of psychological well-being. Several studies have linked high MEIM composite scores with high self-esteem, healthy coping strategies, high mastery levels, high optimism levels, more positive family relations and peer interactions, and fewer aggressive behaviors among African American adolescents (Bracey et al., 2004; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; McMahon & Watts, 2002; Phinney, 1992; Roberts et al., 1999). For example, Martinez and Dukes (1997) assessed the relationship between ethnic identity and three indicators of well-being in a diverse sample ($N = 12,386$) of junior high and high school students. The authors created ethnic identity statuses using composite scores from the achievement subscale at the 25th and 75th percentiles. They named the following three groups: unexamined ethnic identity, searching ethnic identity, and achieved ethnic identity. Martinez and Dukes (1997) found a consistent pattern of relationships between the identity statuses and the three indicators of well-being outcomes, suggesting a positive linear relationship between the composite MEIM and psychological well-being. As noted above, there are severe limitations to using a single composite score from the MEIM to operationalize the four ethnic identity statuses (e.g., confounding the subscales). As such, it is still somewhat unclear as to whether individuals at different ethnic identity statuses differ in their levels of psychological well-being.

Current Study

The present study utilized a 2-year longitudinal sample of African American adolescents to examine three research objectives. Our first objective was to examine whether there was evidence of the four ethnic identity statuses proposed by Phinney (1989). We utilized a person approach to generate cluster profiles on measures of identity exploration and identity commitment to determine whether four ethnic identity statuses emerge among our sample. Our second objective was to determine whether adolescents progressed from one identity cluster at our initial time point to another identity cluster one year

later in a manner that is consistent with the progression of development originally proposed by Marcia (1966) and later proposed by Phinney (1989). Our final objective was to investigate whether more mature ethnic identity statuses would be associated with higher levels of psychological well-being than less mature ethnic identity statuses across two time points.

Method

Participants

The present sample consisted of 224 African American adolescents who completed the first two waves of a 3-year longitudinal study of African American racial socialization, racial identity, and psychological well-being. Sixty percent of the sample was female. At time 1, participants ranged in age from 11 to 17 with an average age of 14, and were in the 7th–10th grades. One year later, participants ranged in age from 12 to 17 years with an average age of 15, and were in the 8th–11th grades. Primary caregivers reported that their median family income was between \$40,000 and 49,000, with approximately 70% having completed some college. Students were recruited if they were identified by the school district as being of African descent. After agreeing to participate in the study, participants were given the opportunity to self-identify their race. Eighty-one percent of the participants indicated their race as being Black/African American, 16% indicated that they were Black/Caucasian or Black/Hispanic, and 3% indicated that they were from another racial background such as Black/African. Of the total 512 households identified by the schools as having a child of African American descent, 302 households (59% participation rate) participated in the first wave of the study. The 224 participants represent a retention rate of 68% from the 328 adolescents who participated in the initial wave of the study. Analyses were conducted to assess differences between those who participated at both time periods and those at time 1 only. The results indicated no differences on demographic or study variables between the two groups.

The current study utilized data generated from a longitudinal study of African American racial identity. Data for the first wave of the study were collected in the spring and summer of 2002 and data from wave 2 were collected in the spring and summer of 2003. The study focused on parental socialization as a predictor of racial identity and academic outcomes among African American adolescents attending public schools in a Midwestern city. While

all schools within the district are situated within one community, the district draws on two communities for student enrollment. The city in which the district is situated has a total population of 110,000 of which African American families comprise approximately 9% of the overall population. Black families in the present sample reflected the broader community in terms of income and education, with African American adults reporting higher family incomes and education levels than the national average for Black families. The target district contains a total of 6 middle and 4 high schools, and there was significant variation in the racial make-up of the schools. The percentage of African Americans in the 10 schools ranged from 7.2% to 64.9%.

Procedure

Participants were recruited with the support and endorsement of the school district and the local school administration. The researchers were provided with a list of middle and high school students who were identified as being African American according to their school records. All families identified by the schools as having a child of African American descent were contacted via mail or telephone and informed about the study. Parents or guardians agreeing to participate over the phone mailed an informed consent form, and all participating teens signed an assent form. At the first time period, the majority of adolescents completed the questionnaire during a session after school in a classroom setting with approximately 30 other participants. The atmosphere during administration was monitored by two or more adult project representatives. Approximately 50 teens completed the survey at alternative administration sites at the second time period, including one-on-one sessions at participants' homes, and monitored group sessions in a mall. The methods utilized at the first time point were piloted approximately 1 year before the initiation of final data collection. Approximately 206 adolescents participated in the pilot study, 150 of whom went on to participate at time 1. Students who had participated in the pilot study received a \$30 mall gift certificate for the completion of the project at time 1 and a \$40 certificate at time 2. Students not participating in the pilot study received a \$20 certificate at time 1 and a \$30 certificate at time 2.

Measures

Racial identity. The original MEIM was comprised of four subscales: affirmation and belonging, identity

achievement, racial behaviors, and other-group orientation (Phinney, 1992). The identity achievement subscale, which measured exploration and commitment, was used in the present study. Previous research using the MEIM reported a two-factor solution consisting of affirmation/belonging (affirmation, belonging and commitment items) and identity search (exploration and ethnic behavior items) (Phinney, 1992; Roberts et al., 1999). However, previous work has not exclusively focused on the achievement subscale, which measures exploration and commitment (Phinney, 1992). As the goal of the present study was to create the identity statuses from exploration and commitment levels, the appropriate rationale was to separate the achievement subscale into exploration and commitment dimensions. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to discern whether the achievement subscale consisted of two oblique latent factors with exploration and commitment items at both time periods. The results indicate a strong fit to the data for time 1 ($\chi^2 = 47.76$, $df = 13$, $\chi^2/df = 3.59$, TLI = .98, CFI = .99 and RMSEA = .11) as well as for time 2 ($\chi^2 = 65.59$, $df = 13$, $\chi^2/df = 5.05$, TLI = .97, CFI = .99 and RMSEA = .14), providing an empirical justification for separating the achievement subscale of the MEIM into exploration and commitment indices. This subscale consists of seven items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, which range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The exploration subscale consists of four items (time 1, $\alpha = .58$; time 2, $\alpha = .58$), and a sample item includes "I think a lot about what being Black means for my life." The commitment subscale has three items (time 1, $\alpha = .54$; time 2, $\alpha = .57$), and a sample item includes "I understand pretty well what being Black means to me."

The Cronbach alphas for the exploration and commitment variables were less than .70, suggesting that the subscales may have been unreliable. Using the interitem correlations for the exploration and commitment subscales, the Spearman-Brown formula was used to calculate the estimated Cronbach's alpha if the subscales contained 12 items, equal to the full-item MEIM. The estimated Cronbach alphas are as follows: exploration (time 1, $\alpha = .84$; time 2, $\alpha = .85$) and commitment (time 1, $\alpha = .85$; time 2, $\alpha = .85$). These coefficients were compared with previous research using the 12-item MEIM, and the following have been reported: $\alpha = .82$ (Roberts et al., 1999), $\alpha = .75$ (McMahon & Watts, 2002), and $\alpha = .82$ (Bracey et al., 2004). The results suggest that the four exploration and three commitment items are as reliable as previous research using the 12-item MEIM. Scores for each subscale were developed by averaging across the items, and higher scores are indicative of high levels of exploration and commitment.

Depressive symptoms. The Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D) assesses the occurrence and frequency of depressive symptomatology (Radloff, 1977). Previous research using the CES-D has identified one factor (Cole, Rabin, Smith, & Kaufman, 2004), and a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to discern whether the empirical data supported a latent factor model with 20 items. The results at time 1 indicated the following: $\chi^2 = 500$, $df = 170$, $\chi^2/df = 2.95$, TLI = .95, CFI = .96 and RMSEA = .09. The results at time 2 indicated the following: $\chi^2 = 420.7$, $df = 170$, $\chi^2/df = 2.48$, TLI = .96, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .08, suggesting evidence of one subscale. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they experienced depressive symptoms, and the scores ranged from 0 to 60. The subscale (time 1, $\alpha = .89$; time 2, $\alpha = .86$) consisted of 20 items ranging from rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day) to most or all of the time (5-7 days). A sample item includes "I did not feel like eating, my appetite was poor," and higher scores are indicative of higher depressive symptoms.

Well-being. Overall psychological well-being was assessed by a shortened 24-item version of the Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1989). Previous research using the long version (48 items) of the measure has identified one latent factor (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess whether the empirical data supported a latent factor with 24 items at both time points. The results at time 1 indicated the following: $\chi^2 = 668$, $df = 252$, $\chi^2/df = 2.65$, TLI = .96, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .09. The results at time 2 indicated the following: $\chi^2 = 636$, $df = 252$, $\chi^2/df = 2.52$, TLI = .97, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .08, suggesting evidence of one subscale. Responses are indicated on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, and the dimensions include self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. A sample item includes "In general, I feel I am in charge of my life," and higher scores are indicative of higher levels of psychological well-being (time 1, $\alpha = .85$; time 2, $\alpha = .85$).

Results

Racial Identity Statuses

Descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Cluster analysis is an objective methodology for quantifying the structural characteristics of a set of observations (Magnusson, 1998). K-means cluster analyses were utilized to

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of the Study Variables at Time 1 and Time 2

	Age	Gender	Exploration	Commitment	Depressive Symptoms	Well-being
Time 1						
M	13.90	—	2.87	3.04	34.46	3.63
SD	1.23	—	0.61	0.61	9.96	0.53
Time 2						
M	14.85	—	2.77	3.02	34.10	3.62
SD	1.19	—	0.64	0.65	8.98	0.53

identify homogenous racial identity statuses among standardized exploration and commitment variables. K-means analyses are the most appropriate technique when there is a theoretical rationale for a specific number of clusters (Hair & Black, 2000). Given the initial hypothesis of the identity formation model, it was specified that four clusters were to be formed.

Two validation techniques were conducted to validate the cluster solutions. Hierarchical analyses were used to examine convergence with the K-means method (Hair & Black, 2000). Unlike the K-means method, Hierarchical methods do not require a priori decisions about the number of clusters to be derived. Ward’s method with Squared Euclidean Distance was used, and the agglomeration schedule was examined to identify the fusion coefficient that would indicate the maximum number of distinct groups. A large decrease in the value of the fusion coefficient occurs when similar clusters are joined, so the prior number represents the solution with the most distinct clusters. The average agreement between cluster memberships for K-means and Hierarchical analyses was consistent 84% of the time. The Monte Carlo procedure was also used to validate the cluster solution. A subset of the sample was randomly selected, and the K-means cluster technique was repeated. Cluster membership for the subset was compared with initial membership in the full sam-

ple. This procedure was repeated twice, and the results indicated that average agreement between cluster memberships was consistent 70% of the time. As such, it appears that the four-cluster solution is reliable for the present sample.

Cluster membership was defined in the context of Phinney’s (1989) identity formation model. This resulted in one cluster (time 1, $n = 29$; time 2, $n = 34$) that had significantly lower scores ($p < .01$) on the exploration and commitment subscales, which was classified as diffuse. A second cluster (time 1, $n = 48$; time 2, $n = 27$) with lower scores ($p < .01$) on the exploration subscale and higher scores on the commitment subscale was classified as foreclosed. A third cluster represents moratorium (time 1, $n = 71$; time 2, $n = 89$), with higher scores ($p < .01$) on the exploration subscale and lower scores on the commitment subscale. The final cluster was classified as achieved (time 1, $n = 76$; time 2, $n = 74$), with higher scores ($p < .01$) on both the exploration and commitment subscales. Standardized means for the exploration and commitment subscales for each cluster can be found in Table 3.

Developmental Trend

Table 4 demonstrates the proportion of individuals who moved through the identity statuses in the pro-

Table 2
Intercorrelations of the Study Variables at Time 1 and Time 2

	Age	Gender	Exploration	Commitment	Depressive Symptoms	Well-being
Age	—	-.02	.08	.03	-.12	.14*
Gender	.01	—	.11	.06	.04	.12
Exploration	.06	.17*	.29**	.53**	-.16*	.22**
Commitment	.02	.06	.52**	.34**	-.18**	.26**
Depression	-.07	.04	-.13	-.23**	.46**	-.55**
Well-being	.15*	.16*	.26**	.39**	-.45**	.55**

Note. Time 1 correlations are above the diagonal, time 2 correlations are below the diagonal; Variable stability between Time 1 and 2 is represented by bold correlations.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 3
Standardized Means for Exploration and Commitment Variables at Time 1 and Time 2

Time 1	Diffuse (<i>n</i> = 29)	Foreclosed (<i>n</i> = 48)	Moratorium (<i>n</i> = 71)	Achieved (<i>n</i> = 76)
Exploration	– 1.33	– 0.88	.23	0.85
Commitment	– 1.54	– 0.00	– .47	1.03
Time 2	Diffuse (<i>n</i> = 34)	Foreclosed (<i>n</i> = 27)	Moratorium (<i>n</i> = 89)	Achieved (<i>n</i> = 74)
Exploration	– 1.27	– 1.09	.01	1.00
Commitment	– 1.44	0.48	– .42	1.00

posed order. Thirty-nine percent ($N = 88$) of the participants showed stability and remained in the same identity status across time 1 and time 2. These individuals were referred to as Constant because their identity status remained unchanged across the two time points. Thirty-three percent ($N = 74$) of the participants progressed from an identity status at time 1 to an identity status at time 2, consistent with the identity formation model. These individuals were referred to as Progressive because they demonstrated movement from a lower status to a higher status across the two time points (e.g., classified as moratorium at time 1 and achieved at time 2). Twenty-eight percent ($N = 62$) of the participants progressed from time 1 to time 2 in a manner that was inconsistent with the identity status model. These individuals were referred to as Regressive because they demonstrated movement from a higher status to a lower status across the two time points (e.g., classified as achieved at time 1 and in moratorium at time 2).

Racial Identity Status Differences in Depressive Symptoms and Well-Being

To investigate whether there were significant differences in depressive symptoms and psychological well-being, analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were conducted using the general linear model (see Table 5). Age and gender were entered as covariates in the

analyses, given hypothesized gender differences in depressive symptoms, and the significant relation between age and psychological well-being. A Bonferroni Correction was used such that results had to be significant at the .01 level ($.05/4 = .013$). The results were significant for well-being at time 1, $F(3, 220) = 8.02$, $p < .01$. Post hoc analyses indicated that achieved, moratorium, and foreclosed individuals reported higher levels of well-being than diffuse individuals (see Table 5).

At time 2, the results were significant for depressive symptoms, $F(3, 220) = 4.77$, $p < .01$, (see Table 5). Achieved individuals had fewer depressive symptoms than diffuse individuals. Likewise, foreclosed individuals reported less depressive symptoms than diffuse and moratorium individuals. The results were also consistent for well-being, $F(3, 220) = 11.87$, $p < .01$ (see Table 5). Post hoc analyses indicated that achieved individuals had higher levels of well-being than diffuse and moratorium individuals, and foreclosed individuals reported higher levels of well-being than diffuse individuals.

Trajectory Differences in Depressive Symptoms and Well-Being

Given the finding of three developmental trajectories, it was of interest to examine whether these three groups differed in depressive symptoms and

Table 4
Change in Statuses over Time

	Diffuse 2	Foreclosed 2	Moratorium 2	Achieved 2	Total 1
Diffuse1	6	4	16	3	29
Foreclosed 1	10	9	19	10	48
Moratorium 1	11	4	34	22	71
Achieved 1	7	10	20	39	76
Total 2	34	27	89	74	224

Note. Progressive individuals are above the diagonal ($n = 74$), Regressive individuals are below the diagonal ($n = 62$), Constant individuals are in bold ($n = 88$).

Table 5
Racial Identity Status Differences in Depressive Symptoms and Well-Being at Time 1 and Time 2

	Diffuse		Foreclosed		Moratorium		Achieved		F	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Time 1										
Depressive symptoms	38.00	10.09	36.27	10.31	33.11	9.95	33.28	9.42	2.67	.04
Well-being	3.21	0.59	3.58	0.59	3.72	0.41	3.76	0.50	8.02**	.10
Time 2										
Depressive symptoms	37.18	11.24	31.08	7.24	35.67	8.91	31.97	7.80	4.77**	.06
Well-being	3.29	0.60	3.67	0.55	3.51	0.47	3.87	0.45	11.87**	.14

** $p < .01$.

psychological well-being. ANCOVAs were conducted with age and gender entered as covariates. A Bonferroni correction was used such that results had to be significant at the .03 level (.05/2 = .025). The results for depressive symptoms were not significant, $F(2,219) = 2.07$, $p > .05$, suggesting that the three trajectories did not differ in their depressive symptomatology (see Table 6). The results were significant for well-being at time 2, $F(2,223) = 5.27$, $p < .01$. Post hoc analyses indicated that individuals who remained Constant in their identity status had higher levels of well-being than individuals who Regressed in their identity status (see Table 6).

Discussion

The results from the present study provide empirical support for the applicability of the four identity statuses proposed by Marcia (1966) and Phinney (1989). In both time points, we find four clusters that correspond to diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved identity statuses. Unlike previous research by Phinney and her colleagues (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Chavira, 1992), the present analyses reliably distinguish between the diffuse and foreclosed statuses. The discrepancy between our results and those reported in other studies may be the result of the different methodologies that were utilized. Phinney and colleagues used qualitative data obtained from

structured interviews to classify individuals into the four identity statuses, whereas the present study uses cluster analyses for classification. Yet, it is unclear as to which of these two approaches is most valid, but the results from these two approaches should provide similar classifications of individuals. Future research may need to examine both approaches simultaneously to demonstrate the validity of the four-status structure of racial identity development. Another possible reason for the discrepancy between the present findings and previous research concerns the distinct samples used. Phinney and colleagues utilized relatively small samples of adolescents from diverse racial backgrounds, while the present study utilizes a large sample of African American adolescents. Previous research suggests that the concept of race is particularly salient for African American adolescents relative to other adolescents (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994; Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996). Consequently, racial identity development may be particularly complex for African American adolescents, but additional research with adequate samples of diverse youth is necessary to test this possibility.

The results indicate a variety of racial identity trajectories over a 1-year period. Seventy-two percent of the sample demonstrated a pattern of stability and progression consistent with the original ideas of Marcia (1966) and Phinney (1989). Of those who

Table 6
Trajectory Differences in Depressive Symptoms and Well-Being at Time 2

	Constant		Progressed		Regressed		F	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Depressive Symptoms	32.70	8.12	35.53	8.90	34.42	10.09	2.07	.02
Well-being	3.73	0.51	3.62	0.50	3.45	0.55	5.27**	.05

** $p < .01$.

progressed, 33% demonstrated progression from less mature to more mature statuses, which is consistent with prior research (Phinney & Chavira, 1992). Of the 39% who remained stable in their racial identity statuses, 55% remained in the achieved or foreclosed statuses, which is also consistent with prior empirical work (Phinney & Chavira, 1992). There is also evidence of regression as 28% of the sample changes in ways that are inconsistent with the identity formation model. For example, 22% of individuals in achieved at time 1 are in diffuse or foreclosed at time 2, and 26% of individuals in achieved at time 1 are in moratorium at time 2. This movement from a committed and explored racial identity to a less committed and explored racial identity is inconsistent with Phinney's (1992) conceptualization, but consistent with the notion of recycling (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Parham, 1989). Within the context of the Nigrescence model, Parham (1989) argues that racial identity development is not a strict linear progression with a specific end point. Furthermore, as individuals experience new challenges in adulthood, they reexamine the meaning of race and come to new resolutions regarding what it means to be Black (Parham, 1989). Although Parham (1989) and Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) discuss recycling as a phenomenon that occurs primarily among African American adults, it is possible that adolescents may recycle if they experience events that are incompatible with existing identities. Such events may result in movement toward moratorium in an attempt to reconstruct a racial identity that is compatible with these new experiences. Waterman (1982) also notes a regressive developmental trajectory within the ego identity literature, and classifies this as a normal process for some adolescents.

The present study also indicates that reaching an achieved identity status is not necessarily the endpoint of the racial identity development process. Specifically, only 33% of individuals are in the achieved status at time 2, but at the second time period, less than half of achieved youth (40%) are in moratorium. This finding may be the result of progression and/or recycling from the first time period, and is consistent with characterizations of moratorium as a transitional status (Meeus et al., 1999; Phinney, 1989). Interestingly, 12% of adolescents are in foreclosed at time 2 and this finding is consistent with theoretical and empirical research suggesting that foreclosure is a successful resolution of racial identity development (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Waterman, 1982). Yet, 15% of youth are in the diffuse status at time 2 and the majority (82%) are in the foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved

statuses at time 1. The notion that an individual can progress from having some degree of commitment and exploration to none is inconsistent with existing ego identity literature and the identity formation model. One explanation may be that some youth are investigating the role of race in their lives but discover an identity more salient than race. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) suggest that race will not be the primary identity for all youth of color and that other identities (i.e., sexual orientation or religious affiliation) may become more salient. The findings in the current study are consistent with Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) in that the theorized endpoint may not be the ultimate end for some youth of color. Yet, future research is necessary to understand the process of identity development, and to explore other salient identities for youth of color.

Regarding our final question, we find support for the proposition that individuals in the more advanced racial identity statuses have higher levels of psychological well-being. Consistent with other research (Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Phinney, 1989), individuals in the achieved status show more positive well-being outcomes than individuals in the diffuse status at both time points. Additionally, the results indicate that individuals in the foreclosed status also show more positive well-being outcomes than individuals in the diffuse status. Thus, it appears that the presence of commitment may be most important for psychological well-being, regardless of whether this commitment results from exploration or socialization forces (Meeus et al., 1999). A number of authors have argued that parents' racial socialization practices play a vital role in racial identity development among African American children and adolescents (Coard & Sellers, in press; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Hughes & Chen, 1999; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Sanders Thompson, 1994; Stevenson, 1995). Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) suggest that a foreclosed identity in the context of positive racial socialization is a normative developmental outcome for a significant proportion of African American adolescents. To the extent that psychological well-being and depressive symptoms are indicators of healthy development, the results from the present study support this assertion.

Although the ego identity or identity formation models do not hypothesize about change differences in well-being, we find support for the idea that Regressive individuals have lower levels of well-being than Constant individuals. One explanation concerns the fact that there may be different factors as-

sociated with distinct types of change, which might influence well-being. Previous empirical research suggests that racial socialization messages are linked to adolescent racial identity (Hughes & Johnson, 2001) and positively associated with well-being indicators such as self-esteem (Constantine & Blackmon, 2001). As such, racial socialization techniques may influence constancy and progression, and also promote well-being among African American youth. Yet, racial discrimination has been proposed to be a negative stimulus for racial identity development (Cross, 1991; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001) and has been negatively linked to depressive symptoms among African American youth (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Consequently, racially discriminatory experiences may influence regression, and have negative implications for the well-being of African American youth. Yet, it is unclear why there are no significant differences in well-being for Progressive and Regressive youth, despite the fact that both evidence movement. Future research should consider the factors that influence racial identity development, and whether these factors are differentially linked to well-being for specific trajectories of change.

As one of the few studies to investigate the utility of the status model for understanding racial identity development, caution is warranted in interpreting the present findings. Although cluster analysis provides a valuable method to examine the ways in which groups of individuals are comparable and distinct from each other, it is sample dependent. Although we used a variety of techniques in which to test the reliability of our cluster solution, it is possible that the clusters found in the present study are unique to this sample. An additional limitation concerns the lack of assessment for previous development. Specifically, cluster analysis relies on participants' scores, and does not consider the presence or absence of previous exploration or commitment levels. Thus, the findings that individuals were Regressive may be an artifact of cluster analyses' failure to consider prior development. Further research is needed to explore the applicability of our findings to other African American youth in urban or rural settings, as well as members of other racial, ethnic, and age groups. Although identity development has traditionally been hypothesized to be the primary developmental task for adolescents (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966, 1980), the ubiquity of race in American society suggests that racial identity development may occur throughout the life span for African Americans (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Parham, 1989). Future research should also consider examin-

ing the relationship between racial identity content and development. Early conceptualizations of African American racial identity development proposed significant relationships between stages of racial identity development and specific racial identity attitudes (e.g., Cross, 1978; Milliones, 1980; Parham & Helms, 1985). Unfortunately, these relationships have not been empirically tested despite the identity formation model providing a framework for such empirical investigations.

In conclusion, the present study provides support for the identity status model as a conceptual framework for understanding how African American adolescents develop attitudes regarding the role that their racial membership plays in their self-conceptualization. In doing so, the present study further extends the application of the status model from its roots in the ego identity literature to the study of racial identity. Finally, we also hope that the present study serves as an example of how the four identity statuses can be operationalized upon which future research can build.

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