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Racial Mistrust, Collective Self-Esteem, and Academic  
Achievement among Minority Students

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Among Minority Students

BY

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## Abstract

Aims of the study were to examine the relationship among racial mistrust, collective self-esteem, and academic achievement in minority students. Participants were 48 middle-school students. Half of these students attended a predominantly minority institution and the other half attended a predominantly non-minority institution. Students were asked to complete the Racial Mistrust Scale (Albertini, 2004), a modified version of the general Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), and to state their GPA. Findings revealed that levels of racial mistrust did not vary depending on the racial composition of the school a child attended. Furthermore findings indicated that Hispanic students reported higher levels of racial mistrust than Black students.

Racial Mistrust, Collective Self-Esteem, and Academic Achievement  
Among Minority Students

By the year 2020, the number of African American students in U.S. schools will increase by 3%, and the number of Hispanic and Asian students will increase by over 60% (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Moreover, minorities will represent the majority of the population under the age of 18 in Hawaii, New Mexico, California, Texas, and Florida by the year 2020. Immigration is believed to be the primary reason for these demographic changes (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001). Researchers suggest that although school personnel are aware of these demographic changes, they are not equipped to cater to needs of such a diverse student population (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001).

Over the last 30 years, African American and Hispanic students have made academic gains. However, there is still a large gap in the performance of minority students when compared to their White peers nationwide (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001). For example, in mathematics, the average score of a 17-year-old African American student is equivalent to that of a 13-year-old White student. Even greater disparities exist in other academic areas such as science. Moreover, these differences are apparent regardless of the parent's income or educational level (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001).

Additionally, studies have indicated that in the U.S. educational system, African American and Hispanic children are retained more frequently than their White peers (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001). A large number of minority students are assigned to low ability groups during their elementary years and to vocational tracks when they enter high school (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001). Minority students are overrepresented in all areas of special education, including learning disabilities and emotional handicaps (Artiles &

Trent, 1994). Furthermore, children whose cultural backgrounds are different from that of their teacher (usually, minority students) are perceived to be the cause of more behavioral problems in the classroom than their peers who are of the same background as the teacher (Bullara, 1993). Minority students are suspended and expelled from schools much more frequently than non-minority students (Bullara, 1993). Additionally, minority students have drop-out rates that are far higher than that of Whites (Meece, & Kurtz-Costes, 2001).

#### *Issues that Affect the Performance of Minority Students*

Many minority households live below the poverty line. Statistics reveal that 35% of Hispanics and African Americans with children under 18 years of age live below the poverty line (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001). Poverty affects the academic success of children in a variety of ways. For example, schools with large numbers of poor students generally have fewer resources, fewer qualified teachers, and more teachers instructing outside of their area of specialization. Apart from these conditions at school, poor students also tend to live in neighborhoods where crime occurs frequently and there is a shortage of public facilities such as libraries and museums, which are important in a child's intellectual development. Moreover, poor families are unable to provide stimulating experiences such as summer camps and travel opportunities for their children. They are also often unable to provide their children with adequate food and health care services (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001).

Psychologically, poverty has a negative effect on parental warmth which, in turn may lead to very high levels of aggression in children (McLoyd as cited in Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman & Smith, 2000). Poverty also affects the psychological well-



being of parents, which may result in harsh and inconsistent discipline practices.

Additionally, poverty affects the amount of control parents are able to have over their children. For example, in many low-income households, parents hold more than one job; this may diminish parental supervision of their children (McLoyd as cited in Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman & Smith, 2000).

Apart from lack of financial resources, many minority parents have jobs with few opportunities to acquire leadership roles. Consequently many minority parents may instill in their children compliance to authority rather than assertiveness and initiative. As a result, many minority students enter the school environment as passive rather than active learners. This is likely to have an adverse effect on their academic success (Newman et al., 2000).

Another issue that confronts minority students is the incompatibility of their school and home environments. Research has revealed that minority students may experience academic difficulties for this reason. At school, individualism is stressed; students are expected to study hard and outperform their classmates. However, at home, other values are more important. In many minority homes, the culture is collective. In those homes everyone is expected to work together towards a common goal (Newman et al., 2000).

Furthermore, adjusting to the school environment is often difficult for minority students because there are very few minority teachers, administrators, and policy makers. Thus, minority students have few role models within the school system. This is likely to reinforce a belief that minorities get low-paying jobs and members of the majority culture

acquire high-status jobs. This, in turn, is likely to affect the aspirations of many minority students (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001).

Peer pressure can also adversely affect the performance of minority students. Students, particularly at the high-school and middle-school level, are heavily influenced by their peers. Research has indicated that minority students attempt to cope with discrimination by developing an identity that is in complete contrast to that of the majority group. Consequently, many minority students, in an attempt to reject the norms of the majority culture, develop negative attitudes towards school and formal education in general (Ogbu, 1992). Consequently, many minority students intentionally underachieve in order to fit in with their peers. Many minority students who are academically successful are often described by other minority peers as “acting White” (Wong & Rowley, 2001). To avoid this dilemma, many high-achieving minority students maintain friendships with individuals from the majority culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Another issue that affects minority students is their perception of how members of the majority culture view them. Many minority students believe that they are viewed by the dominant culture as intellectually inferior. Many students fear that this belief may be confirmed if they attempt to succeed academically and then fail. Thus, in an attempt to maintain their self-esteem, these students may avoid challenging academic endeavors (Steele as cited in Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001).

Teacher expectations also adversely affect minority students. Teacher expectations affect how they treat students which, in turn, affect students' perceptions of their capabilities and their behavior in class. It has also been suggested that based on the incongruence between the home and school environments, the behavior of many minority

students is often misinterpreted by teachers. Because of this, teachers often underestimate the ability of minority students (Good & Nichols, 2001).

Immigrant minority students should not be overlooked. Researchers have found that immigrant minority students, in addition to facing many of the issues faced by their minority counterparts born in the U. S., also face a unique set of problems. Immigrant minority students face conflicts in creating relations with others because they lack the cultural knowledge to do so. Moreover, minority immigrant students also may experience problems because of language barriers, and differences in the American teaching and learning style (Ogbu, 1992).

#### *Racial Mistrust Among Minority Students*

Race relations is a hotly debated issue in America (Kohatsu, Dulay, Lam, Concepcion, Perez, Lopez, & Euler, 2000). Race-related murders, anti-immigration sentiment, and anti-affirmative-action propositions have caused friction between racial groups in the U.S. (Dovidio & Gaertner as cited in Kohatsu et al., 2000). A recent study revealed that White Americans view America as a land of equal opportunity. However, many people of color perceive America to be a “separate and unequal nation.” Furthermore, many Blacks view Whites as racially insensitive (National Conference of Christian and Jews as cited in Kohatsu et al., 2000).

*Racial mistrust* is a general feeling of suspicion towards an individual of a different racial group. It is usually based on a history of oppression by that group (Robinson, 1999). The issue of racial mistrust is very relevant to the fields of psychology and counseling. For example, lack of trust in a therapeutic relationship hinders the therapeutic process. Literature indicates that clients who trust their therapist are more

likely to be committed to therapy and have higher levels of self-disclosure (Sue & Sue as cited in Kohatsu et al., 2000).

Contemporary researchers suggest that many problems faced by minority students in the present educational system stem from racist attitudes by policy makers, administrators, and teachers (Farkas, 2003). These racist attitudes cause minority students to feel discriminated against in the educational system by both their peers and teachers. Thus, minority students harbor feelings of racial mistrust towards the majority culture (Farkas, 2003). One study in which both Hispanic and African American youth of high school-age were interviewed, found that both Hispanic and African American students complained that their teachers were emotionally distant and uncaring. Moreover, they expressed frustration that teachers often labeled them as trouble makers, and assumed they would perform poorly in mathematics (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004).

Furthermore, studies have indicated that when students feel discriminated against in their school environment because of their ethnicity, they are likely to experience depression, alienation, and anger. Additionally, they perform poorly academically and display externalizing behaviors such as fighting, swearing, and noncompliance with school regulations (Albertini, 2004).

Research has also indicated that racism, discrimination, and race-related mistrust in schools and society may place minority students at risk for school failure and increase the likelihood that they will drop out of school (Albertini, 2004). School dropout rates are highest among students who are unengaged in the academic process. Racial mistrust in the school environment is one of the factors that leads to disengagement in the educational process (Albertini, 2004).

Moreover, studies have found that the type of interaction that exists between teachers and their students determines, to a large extent, their level of curiosity and their love for learning (Albertini, 2004). When students perceive their teachers to be fair, students experience a greater sense of school ownership, become more engaged in the academic process and, consequently, perform better academically (Albertini, 2004). Racial mistrust has the opposite effect. Moreover, research has also indicated that many school districts, rather than attempt to solve racial issues, pay more attention to other issues such as overcrowding and teacher shortages (Albertini, 2004).

Studies of racial mistrust in middle-school black immigrant students found that 35% to 50% of Black immigrant students report having high levels of racial mistrust towards their White teachers or Whites in general (Albertini, 2004). Additionally, studies have found that for Black immigrant students, part of their acculturation process includes developing an African American identity. Furthermore, students who were in the U. S. for a longer time period and had adopted an African American identity tended to perceive greater levels of racism than students who retained the identity of their place of origin (Albertini, 2004). Another explanation for the increased level of racial mistrust among these students could be that they have firsthand experiences of prejudice from members of the majority group.

Another study on racial mistrust indicated that of the students interviewed, 16.9% believed that Black parents should teach their children not to trust White teachers. Additionally, 31.4% of the sample agreed that Blacks should be suspicious of a White person who is trying to be friendly. Seventy-five percent of the sample indicated that members of their family talk to them about problems they encounter because they are

Black (Biafora, Taylor, Warheit, Zimmerman & Vega, 1993). One study has found that among Blacks there was a strong positive correlation between level of racial mistrust and involvement in defiant activities. (Taylor, Biafora & Warheit, 1994).

#### *Collective Self-Esteem and Minority Students*

Collective self-esteem is defined as the value that people place on social or cultural groups to which they belong. These groups may be ascribed groups such as race or gender, or acquired groups such as schools or sororities (Constantine, Donnelly & Myers, 2002). Research indicates that individuals desire membership in groups that have a positive impact on their self-esteem. Moreover, people who are members of groups that actually enhance their self-esteem place great value on their group membership (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

Group membership provides individuals with a sense of belonging. Additionally, the collective identity that many groups provide acts as a buffer to help individuals confront issues that threaten their self-concept (Brewer as cited in Bettencourt, Charlton, Eubanks, Kernahan, & Fuller, 1999). Furthermore, research has indicated that a high level of collective self-esteem positively affects a person's well-being and adjustment, particularly in ethnic minority groups. One study done with a group of college students found that a higher level of collective self-esteem with campus groups was associated with better college adjustment (Bettencourt et al., 1999).

It has also been found that when adolescents value their social group, they are more likely to conform to the norms and values of that group (Constantine, Donnelly, & Myers, 2002). Consequently, in a school environment, if students value their membership as students of that institution, they are more likely to have positive interactions with their

teachers and peers. Added to this, they are more likely to follow the rules of the school and less likely to display negative behaviors.

Based on these findings, students who attend non-minority institutions and harbor high levels of racial mistrust would be expected to have negative feelings attached to being students at that school. Moreover, these negative feelings/low collective self-esteem are expected to adversely affect their academic performance.

### *Contact Hypothesis*

The contact hypothesis is that contact between different groups can reduce feelings of prejudice towards members of that group (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003). Research indicates that in order for the contact hypothesis to apply, the contact between members of different groups should be intimate and the environment should be one in which they are required to work together towards a specific goal. Additionally, all individuals should be of equal socioeconomic status, and interaction should occur in an environment where cooperation and interaction between the groups is allowed (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003).

Some researchers argue that the list of conditions necessary for positive contact between various groups to occur goes beyond those stated above. Findings have indicated that in order for prejudice against the outgroup to be reduced, experiences with the outgroup members must be positive. Additionally, these pleasant experiences must then be generalizable to all persons of their group. In other words, the individuals with whom the contact occurs must be seen as typical members of their group rather than as exceptions. If they are not viewed as typical members of their group, then prejudice towards the group will not be reduced (Bratt, 2002).

Some researchers argue that the contact hypothesis simply assumes that contact with the outgroup will be positive and a person's prejudices towards the outgroup will be reduced. However, it is likely that the opposite may occur. For example, a situation may arise in which contact with individuals from a different group result in a negative experience. Such an incident could deepen one's prejudices against the outgroup (Bratt, 2002).

Individual friendships are important in reducing prejudice between social groups. It is not simply the contact between racial groups that decreases stereotypes but rather the development of quality friendships with members of an outgroup (Bratt, 2002). With regard to friendships, one study found that the willingness of students to make friendships with students of other races was contingent upon how comfortable close friends were with the formation of these friendships. Students who had friends who were open to forming cross-cultural relationships were more apt to forming cross-cultural friendships (Carlson, Wilson, & Hargrave, 2003). Moreover, Ellison and Powers (1994) found that among Blacks, the strongest predictor of racial attitudes was whether or not an individual had friends from other racial groups.

A large body of research suggests that the racial composition of schools greatly affects students' attitudes towards other ethnic groups (Schofield as cited in Carlson, Wilson, & Hargrave, 2003). One study of Hispanic adolescents found that Hispanic girls in a multi-racial school had more friends from a different ethnic group when compared to Hispanics at a predominantly Hispanic school (Carlson, Wilson, & Hargrave, 2003).

Despite support for the contact hypothesis in some schools, other studies have found that even in mixed schools, students limit their friendships to students from their



ethnic group. It has also been noted that even in schools where there are students from diverse backgrounds, segregation occurs in the playground, extracurricular activities and in the cafeteria (Schofield as cited in Dixon & Durrheim, 2003).

Following this trend of thought, some theorists argue that the contact hypothesis often does not apply to the school environment because many of the necessary precursors of the contact hypothesis are not present. For example, in order for the expected outcome of contact to occur, all parties should be similar in socioeconomic status. In many institutions where individuals from a variety of ethnic groups are represented, minority students have fewer resources than their White peers. Additionally, some schools are headed by individuals who are ambivalent about race relations and who promote interaction between the races only in a superficial way (Schofield as cited in Carlson, Wilson, & Hargrave, 2003).

### *Acculturation*

Somewhat similar and closely related to the phenomenon of the contact hypothesis is acculturation. Research has indicated that when individuals from one culture engage in contact with individuals from another culture changes become evident in their speech, customs, and even values. The impact of this may be either positive or negative. In some instances it may lead to the development of new coping skills and an ability to function in culturally diverse environments. In other instances, the process may create identity confusion (Unger, Gallaher, Shakib, Ritt-Olsen, Palmer, & Johnson, 2002). Studies have, however, found that although acculturation affects the speech, values, and customs of individuals, the effects are generally more evident in the person from the non-dominant culture (Berry, 2001). Acculturation is also closely linked to a

concept known as biculturalism. It has been suggested that individuals who develop bicultural competence, which is the ability to adapt and function both within their culture of origin and their host culture, are healthier and outperform their classmates who are unable to develop bicultural competence (La Fromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993).

### Present Study

Although many studies have been conducted about racism, very little research has been done about racial mistrust in minority populations (Albertini, 2004). This study assessed racial mistrust among minority students at a predominantly minority institution and at another institution that is predominantly Anglo-American.

Based on the contact hypothesis, minority students at a predominantly non-minority institution were expected to have more favorable attitudes towards Whites. This was based on their level of contact with White students and Whites in general, resulting in the creation of cross-racial friendships.

Previous research indicates that the longer Black minority students from immigrant backgrounds live in the U. S., the higher their levels of racial mistrust. This usually develops because of negative encounters that they have had with members of the majority group. Based on this finding, it was expected that racial mistrust would be positively correlated with length of stay in the U. S. for immigrant students.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were 48 middle-school students from Manatee County School District, Florida. Their ages ranged from 11 to 15 years (mean age = 12.2). Eighteen participants were male, and 30 participants were female. Twenty-four of these students attended a predominantly minority institution and 24 attended a predominantly non-minority institution. Twenty-four of the participants were White, 14 were Black, and 10 were Hispanic. Seven of the 10 Hispanic participants were born outside of the U.S., and had lived in the U.S. for 4 to 10 years. Their GPA's for the previous semester ranged from 0.8 to 4.0, and their cumulative GPA's ranged from 1.1 to 4.0. See Appendix A and B for Consent and Assent forms.

### *Materials and Procedure*

*Racial Mistrust Scale* (Albertini, 2004). This scale contains seven items which measure a person's level of mistrust towards individuals of the dominant culture. The scale was originally designed to measure racial mistrust of Black students towards individuals of the dominant culture. However, since this study included a racially mixed group of minority students, the original scale was modified. In this study, the word "minority" was substituted for the word "black." A sample item from the scale is, "White teachers ask minority students hard questions on purpose so that they can fail." Students were asked to choose one of the following responses: 1 (*Agree a lot*), 2 (*sort of agree*), 3 (*sort of disagree*) and 4 (*disagree a lot*). There is one exception to this scoring system. Item 3 on the scale is, "Members of my family have talked to me about prejudice and racism". For this item, responses are scored on a 5-point scale: 1 (*very true for me*), 2

(*pretty true for me*), 3 (*not true for me*), 4 (*not at all true for me*), and N/A (*not applicable*).

This scale has a Cronbach's alpha of .80. Total scores for this scale can range from 7 to 28 points. Scores of 14 or less are classified as low levels of racial mistrust, scores of 15 to 20 are classified as moderate levels of racial mistrust, and scores of 21 to 28 are classified as high levels of racial mistrust. The Racial Mistrust Scale can be found in Appendix C.

*Collective Self-esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992)*. The Collective Self-Esteem Scale contains 16 items. It measures the extent to which individuals value their membership in a particular group. A sample question from the original scale is "In general others think that members of this social group are good people." Responses to these items are in a Likert-scale format with possible choices ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). This scale has high internal consistency (alpha = .85) and a 6-week test-retest correlation of .68. This original version of the Collective Self Esteem Scale asked individuals how they felt about belonging to ascribed social groups such as their ethnicity or gender. However, for the purpose of the current study the scale was modified. In this study, participants were instructed when answering questions, to think of themselves as members of the school they attend. To achieve this, the word "school" was substituted for "social group". A sample item from this scale is, "I feel good about my school". Another sample item is, "This school is an important reflection of who I am." Responses to these items are in a Likert-scale format with possible choices ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The Collective Self-Esteem Scale can be found in Appendix D.

*Demographic questions and GPA.* Participants were asked to state their GPA and provide demographic information such as ethnicity, length of stay in the U. S., age and sex. See Appendix E for GPA and demographic questions.

#### *Hypotheses and Analysis*

1. Minority students at a minority institution were expected to have higher levels of racial mistrust than minority students at a non-minority institution. This was analyzed using a *t*-test.
2. For immigrant students, length of stay in the U.S. was expected to be positively correlated with level of racial mistrust. This was analyzed using Pearson correlations.

#### Results

Results of this study indicated that there was no difference in the level of racial mistrust between minority students at a predominantly minority institution ( $M= 20.75$ ) when compared to minority students at a predominantly non-minority institution ( $M= 20.33$ ),  $t(22) = .39, p > .05$ . It should, however, be noted that of all the students surveyed, including Caucasian students, 50% of students scored in the moderately high range for racial mistrust, and the other 50% obtained racial mistrust scores in the high range. Furthermore, results indicated that levels of racial mistrust were significantly higher in Hispanic students ( $M=21.70$ ) than in black students ( $M=19.71$ ),  $t(22) = 1.99, p < .05$ .

There was no correlation between levels of racial mistrust and length of stay in the U.S.,  $r(48) = -.22, p > .05$ .

Levels of collective self-esteem were analyzed by ethnicity in each school environment, that is, minority and non-minority institutions. Results indicated that

Caucasian students ( $M = 70$ ) at a predominantly minority institution did not differ from minority students in their attitude towards their school ( $M = 71.69$ ),  $t(22) = .55$ ,  $p > .05$ . Conversely, minority students at a non-minority institution ( $M = 68.67$ ) did differ from their Caucasian peers in terms of attitude towards their school ( $M = 74.08$ ),  $t(22) = 1.3$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### Discussion

This study attempted to look at levels of racial mistrust, collective self-esteem and academic achievement among minority students. Results of this study indicated that all participants, regardless of ethnic background, had racial mistrust levels in the moderately high to high range. The Racial Mistrust Scale was designed to be used by minority students. The high levels of racial mistrust in Caucasian students indicated that Caucasian students were aware of racial inequalities in their classroom and society as a whole. Moreover, the fact that regardless of whether minorities attended a minority or non-minority institution, high levels of racial mistrust were observed, further strengthens the argument that young people are very sensitive towards racial issues and are aware of racial inequalities.

Results also indicated that Caucasian students at a predominantly minority school had as positive an attitude towards their school as did minority students. Conversely, minority students at a predominantly non-minority institution did not have as positive an attitude towards their school as their Caucasian peers. This difference may be explained by looking at the socio-cultural context of both of these institutions. The predominantly minority institution is located in an economically depressed part of the city. Generally, students who attend this school live in close proximity to the school. Therefore, many of

the Caucasian students who attend this school come from very poor families and many of these students may have developed some conformity to the minority culture based on their environment. By contrast, the predominantly minority institution is located in a very affluent part of the city. Many of the minority students who attend this school are transported from less affluent parts of the city to create a more diverse campus. Hence, these students may feel like social “misfits,” and this may result in less positive attitudes than their Caucasian peers towards their school.

Finally, the correlation between length of stay in the U.S. and level of racial mistrust was not significant. It was predicted that the longer a student remained in the U.S. from a foreign country, the greater would be their level of racial mistrust because of negative racial interactions. This hypothesis was based on a study of Black immigrant students. However, in this study all immigrant students who participated were Hispanic. In Hispanic immigrants other factors such as language competency, the development of a bicultural identity, the circumstances surrounding their entry into the U.S., country of origin, and socioeconomic status may take precedence in affecting levels of racial mistrust. Consequently, this may explain why there was no correlation between length of stay in the U.S. and levels of racial mistrust in this population.

Interestingly, it was also noted that the Hispanic students had higher levels of racial mistrust than their Black colleagues. The language barrier many Hispanics face coupled with the fact that seven of the 10 Hispanics surveyed were born outside of the U.S. may explain this finding.

One limitation of this study was that there was some difficulty in persuading a large minority sample to participate. Few minority students completed consent forms and

returned them to the school. One plausible explanation for this can be the negative stereotypes many minorities have about participating in research projects which can be linked back to research studies such as the Tuskegee project where there was a breach of trust between the researcher and participants. Such a breach may have a lasting impact on minorities. Additionally, some studies have found that immigrant minority populations are often skeptical about research of this kind, as they are afraid that participation in such studies may reveal their “true” immigration status and lead to deportation.

Race relations is a topic with much potential for future research. As these findings indicate, young people are aware of the racial inequalities that exist in society. Future research may again address the initial question of this study. Other researchers may also be interested in comparing levels of racial mistrust in smaller towns versus bigger metropolitan cities. The issue of students feeling accepted in institutions where they are the minority is also another area that can be addressed in future studies.

With regard to the implications of this study, the incorporation of multicultural classes in teacher education programs, with an emphasis on a practical component such as tutoring a child from a different ethnic background for an extensive period, should be emphasized. This is needed to develop cultural sensitivity within the school environment. Allowing students of diverse backgrounds to share information about their culture with their classmates through class presentations which may include music, dancing, historical information and food, may give minority students a greater sense of belonging in classrooms in which they are the minority. This may also sensitize other students to cultural differences. Not to be underestimated is the recruitment of more minority faculty within the education system as this can also foster better race relations for both students



and teachers. These faculty members can serve as mentors for students and consequently dispel the myth that only certain jobs are available to minorities.

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Appendix A  
**Barry University**  
**Informed Consent Form**

Your child’s participation in a research project is requested. The study examines students’ perceptions of their school and how this affects their academic performance. The research is being conducted by Charlene Mathlin, a School Psychology Intern in Manatee County and a student in the Psychology Department at Barry University. It is seeking information that will be useful in the field of School Psychology. The aims of the research are to gain a better understanding of student’s perceptions and the effect their perceptions have on their academic performance. We anticipate the number of participants to be 300.

If you decide to allow your child to participate in this research, he or she will be asked to complete a questionnaire about their feelings towards school and how minority students are treated in schools. It will take about 15-20 minutes.

Your consent for your child to participate in this study is strictly voluntary and he or she can decline to participate or choose to drop out at any time during the study. If your child decides to withdraw his or her participation, there will be no adverse effects on his or her grades or other school-related activities.

There are no risks anticipated nor are there any direct benefits to your child. However, this study will increase our understanding of student’s perceptions and allow us to create more effective interventions and a more conducive school climate for all students. As a research participant, any information your child provides will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Any published results of the research will refer to group averages only and no names will be used in the study. Data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from the data. All data will be destroyed after May, 2011.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your child’s participation in the study, you may contact me, Charlene Mathlin at 786-877-7934 or my supervisor, Dr.Szuchman, at 305-899-3278, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Avril Brenner, at (305)899-3020. If you are satisfied with the information provided and are willing to allow your child to participate in this research, please signify your child’s participation by signing this consent form.

**Voluntary Consent**

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this experiment by Charlene Mathlin and that I have read and understand the information presented above, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records. I give my voluntary consent for my child to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Parent*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Researcher*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Witness*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

Appendix B  
**Barry University**  
**ASSENT FORM INVOLVING MINORS**

Your participation in a research project is requested. The study examines students' perceptions of their school and how this affects their academic performance. The research is being conducted by Charlene Mathlin, a School Psychology Intern in Manatee County and a student in the Psychology Department at Barry University. It is seeking information that will be useful in the field of School Psychology. The aims of the research are to gain a better understanding of student's perceptions and the effect their perceptions have on their academic performance. We anticipate the number of participants to be 300.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your feelings towards school and how minority students are treated in schools. It will take about 15-20 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate or to drop out at any time during the study. If you decide to drop out of the study, there will be no negative consequences.

There are no risks anticipated nor are there any direct benefits to you. However, this study will increase our understanding of student's perceptions and allow us to create more effective interventions and a more conducive school climate for all students.

We explained the study to you, and we need to know whether you are willing to participate. Please sign your name below so that we can be certain whether you want to be in the study or not. Thank you.

\_\_\_\_ I am willing

\_\_\_\_ I am not willing

to participate in the research study which has been explained to me by Charlene Mathlin.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Researcher*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Child*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Parent*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

## Appendix C

*Racial Mistrust Scale (Albertini, 2004)*

Read the following questions and circle the answer that best reflects your opinion. There is no right or wrong answer for each question.

1. White teachers ask minority students hard questions on purpose so that they can fail.

1	2	3	4
agree a lot	sort of agree	sort of disagree	disagree a lot

2. When a white teacher talks to a minority student it is usually to get information that can be used against him or her.

1	2	3	4
agree a lot	sort of agree	sort of disagree	disagree a lot

3. Members of my family have talked to me about dealing with racism and prejudice.

1	2	3	4
very true for me	pretty true for me	Not true for me	Not at all true for me

4. Minorities should always be suspicious of a white person who tries to be friendly.

1	2	3	4
agree a lot	sort of agree	sort of disagree	disagree a lot

5. I always defend the rights of my ethnic group

1	2	3	4
agree a lot	sort of agree	sort of disagree	disagree a lot

6. Minority parents should teach their children not to trust white teachers.

1	2	3	4
agree a lot	sort of agree	sort of disagree	disagree a lot

7. Members of my family have told me about problems they have because they are minorities.

1	2	3	4	N/A
agree a lot	sort of agree	sort of disagree	disagree a lot	



Read the following questions and circle the answer that best reflects your opinion. There is no right or wrong answer for each question.

1. I often regret that I attend this school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

2. In general I am glad to be a student at this school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

3. Overall, I feel that being a student here is not worthwhile.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

4. I feel good about my school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

5. Overall, this school is considered good by others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

6. Most people consider my school, on the average to be better than other schools.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

7. In general, others respect this school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

8. In general others think that students at this school are good people.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

9. Overall, being part of this school has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

10. This school is an important reflection of who I am.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

11. This school is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

12. In general, being a student here is an important part of my self-image.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

13. I am a worthy member of this school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

14. I feel I don't have much to offer this school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

15. I am a cooperative member of this school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

16. I often feel I am a useless member of my school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			Neutral			strongly agree

Appendix E

*GPA and Demographic Information*

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you male or female?
3. Which of these best describes your ethnic background?
  - a. Caucasian/white      b. Black /African American      c. Hispanic
  - d. Asian                      e. multiracial                      d. other \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What was your GPA last semester? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your cumulative GPA? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Were you born in the U.S.? Yes              No
5. If you were not born in the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_