Rethinking Ethnicity and Offending: Ethnic Identity and Offending in African American Adolescents

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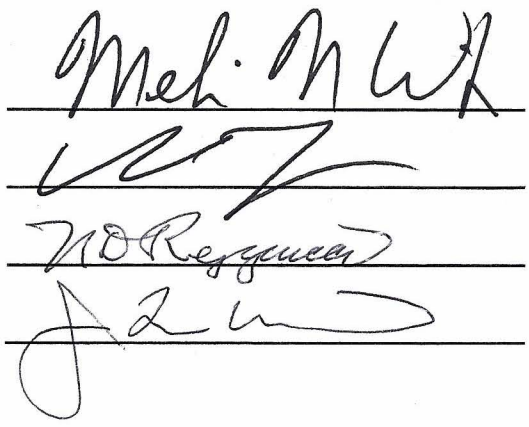

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Abstract

Comparative studies on ethnicity and offending tend to focus on categorical definitions of ethnicity and promote deficit based theories. In contrast, a current trend in the developmental literature incorporates cultural assets, resources and/or processes into our understanding of risk and resilience in African American youth development. The current longitudinal study employed a cultural resilience perspective by examining ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration as promotive and protective in regards to offending outcomes for African American adolescents transitioning into young adulthood. Ethnic identity dimensions were examined within the context of individual (negative coping) and environmental (victimization) risk factors. Participants were 196 African American youth, who were assessed two years apart, at approximately 16 and 17 years old, and at 18 and 19 years old. As expected, a promotive model of cultural resilience was supported for ethnic group affirmation/belonging in which higher levels of the affirmation/belonging dimension were related to a relative decrease in offending over a two year period and was promotive even within the context of victimization. A protective model of cultural resilience was not supported; neither ethnic identity dimension moderated the relationship between negative coping and offending, or victimization and offending. The implications of cultural resilience models for research and interventions are highlighted.

Ethnic Identity and Offending in African American Youth

African American adolescents are disproportionately represented throughout the justice system (Hartney & Silva, 2007; Pope, Lovell, & Hsia, 2002). Although evidence does exist of disparate treatment at different justice system decision-making points (Bishop, 2005; Graham & Lowry, 2004; Lieber & Fox, 2005), research suggests that an interplay of individual, familial, and environmental risk factors place many African American adolescents at higher risk for justice system involvement than are their European American peers (Fite, Wynn, & Pardini, 2009; Lynam, Moffitt, & Stouthoumer-Loeber, 1993; Holsinger & Holsinger, 2005; Peeples & Loeber, 1994; Piquero, Moffit, & Lawton, 2005; Sampson, Morenoff, & Raudenbush, 2005). Comparative studies that highlight ethnic/race related differences have been critiqued for focusing on categorical definitions of ethnicity and promoting deficit based theories (Helms, Jernigan, & Mascher, 2005; Garcia-Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, 1996). While many of the studies focusing on differential exposure to risk factors among African American youth are well-meaning attempts to explain differences that some scholars have attributed to immutable characteristics of racial group membership (Rushton & Jenson, 2005), when studies consistently emphasize the risk factors associated with being African American, they lack the ability to provide a strength-based perspective of African American youth development. Such an accumulation of risk factors prescribed for African American youth may inadvertently reify negative stereotypes regarding African American youth and delinquency.

Presently, the developmental literature uses a risk and resilience framework, in part, to emphasize a more strength-based perspective of youth development (Fergus &

Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1991). A current trend in the risk and resilience literature is the consideration of cultural resilience in which cultural assets, resources and/or processes that enhance resilience are highlighted (Garcia-Coll, Akerman, & Cicchetti, 2000; Gaylord-Harden, Burrow, & Cunningham, 2012). Instead of a deficit-based approach that focuses on risks, a cultural resilience perspective focuses on the strengths associated with being African American. Models of cultural resilience investigate resilience within the context of ethnic group histories, values, and practices. Examples can be seen in research on ethnic and racial identity (Neblett, Rivas-Drake, & Umana-Taylor, 2012; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & L'Hereux Lewis, 2006, Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003), ethnic and racial socialization (Evans, Banerjee, Meyer, Aldana, Foust, & Rowley, 2012; Neblett, White, Ford, Philip, Nguyen et al., 2008), and culturally specific coping strategies (Carothers, 2011; Greer, 2007; Utsey, Bolden, Lanier, & Williams, 2007). Such studies demonstrate how culturally relevant factors can be both promotive and protective because they increase the likelihood of positive, and decrease the likelihood of negative, developmental outcomes. Research focused on African American youths' risks for offending could benefit from a cultural resilience perspective in which risks are viewed within the context of cultural assets that decrease the likelihood of justice system involvement. The current study embraces a model of cultural resilience by using the construct of ethnic identity to explain how cultural assets and/or processes play a promotive and protective role in African American adolescents' offending and justice system involvement.

Notably, changes in ethnic identity and offending patterns are salient features of adolescence (Knight, Losoya, Cho, Chassin, Williams et al., 2012; Phinney, 1989). Longitudinal studies of ethnic identity development generally indicate that youth display changes in both the affirmation/belonging and exploration dimensions of ethnic identity during adolescence (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006; Pahl & Way, 2006; Umana-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, & Guimond, 2009). The changes in and increased significance of ethnic identity in adolescence is partially attributed to an increase in adolescent cognitive capacities. Likewise, adolescence is a period marked by changes in offending patterns, which generally peak in middle to late adolescence and then decrease or desist as youth emerge into early adulthood (Farrington, 1986; Sampson & Laub, 2003; Piquero, 2008). Contextual factors during adolescence, such as increases in peer influence and decreases in parental monitoring, can contribute to an increase in offending during adolescence (Moffit, 2003). However, a confluence of psychological and neurological maturation processes also play a significant role (Monahan, Steinberg, Cauffman, & Mulvey, 2009; Steinberg, Albert, Cauffman, Banich, Graham et al., 2008; Steinberg, Graham, O'Brien, Woolard, Cauffman et al., 2009). Given the changes in and salience of ethnic identity and offending during this developmental stage, adolescence is an optimal period in which to explore the relationship between ethnic identity and offending.

Pathways to and desistance from offending in adolescents:

The "age-crime" curve suggests that delinquency is a normative feature of adolescence and most youth naturally desist or decrease their involvement in offending as they transition into adulthood (Farrington, 1986; Sampson & Laub, 2003; Piquero, 2008).

Yet, there are a host of risk factors that can increase the likelihood of delinquency that is serious, persistent, and that extends beyond adolescence (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Moffit et al., 2002; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2004). Studies suggest that risk factors in the ecology of family, peers, and neighborhoods interact with individual characteristics to shape offending trajectories in youth (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Kohen, Leventhal, Dahinten, & McIntosh,2008; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2003). Many African American youth and families are relegated to neighborhoods marked by high structural disadvantage (McLoyd, 1990) that negatively influences neighborhood social cohesion and informal social controls; which in turn compromise parental monitoring and disciplinary practices (Kohn et al., 2008). Unfortunately, poor and ineffective parenting practices not only lack the ability to teach youth prosocial coping and self-regulation strategies (Dishion & Patterson, 2006), but also leave youth more vulnerable to the influence of negative peers (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Tolan et al., 2003). Thus the interplay of contextual and individual characteristics provides possible pathways to serious and persistent offending outcomes for African American youth.

While the developmental literature is replete with studies exploring risk factors for delinquency, less is known about factors that facilitate decreases in and desistance from delinquency as youth emerge into adulthood. Prominent themes in the empirical literature on desistance suggests that psychological maturation (Monahan et al., 2009) and the adoption of adult roles (i.e. marriage, employment) (Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 2998; Stouthamer-Loeber, Wei, Loeber, & Masten, 2004; Moffit, 2003) contributes to desistance in early adulthood. Also, more specific promotive and protective factors have been linked with desistance such as low parental stress, effective parental supervision,

and the absence of physical discipline practices (Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Stallings, & Lacourse, 2008). The current study contributes to the desistance literature, by exploring promotive and protective factors that contribute to decreases in offending behavior as youth transition from late adolescence into early adulthood. Such research is critical to identifying the elements necessary for successful interventions in the lives of at-risk African American youth.

Ethnic Identity Development

Definition. Phinney and Ong (2007) define ethnic identity as a component of the self-concept that provides individuals with a sense of "peoplehood". "Peoplehood" is associated with membership in a particular group that shares a specific cultural and historical background. Unlike racial identity, ethnic identity applies to any ethnic group regardless of political standing or phenotypical characteristics. The current study uses Phinney's (1989; 1992) ethnic identity framework which focuses on two dimensions: exploration and affirmation/belonging.

Ethnic identity exploration. The exploration dimension of ethnic identity embraces Erikson's (1968) developmental perspective. Erikson theorized that the "search for identity" was a fundamental task of adolescence in which adolescents engage in exploration in order to achieve a more stable sense of self. Marcia (1980) operationalized the exploration process by proposing a stage-like progression in identity development. Marcia believed exploration was crucial to the development of an "achieved" identity in which an individual has explored the meaning of his/her identity and has a clear commitment to his/her own identity. Similarly, Phinney conceived of exploration as a process in which an individual explores the meaning of ethnicity for

him/herself. Seeking out information about one's ethnic/cultural history or participating in ethnic/cultural activities is considered important for arriving at a clearer understanding and stronger commitment to one's ethnic group. Consistent with Marcia's (1980) theory, Phinney (1989) proposed four stage like progressions in ethnic identity development: (1) the *diffusion* stage, in which youth have neither explored their ethnic identity, nor felt a commitment to their ethnic group; (2) the *foreclosed* stage, in which youth exhibit a strong commitment to their ethnic group, but have engaged in limited or no ethnic identity exploration; (3) the *moratorium* stage, in which youth actively engage in ethnic identity exploration; (4) and the *achieved* stage, in which youth have engaged in ethnic identity exploration, and have formed a strong commitment to their ethnic identity.

Exploration into the meaning of ethnicity for adolescents may require a level of cognitive maturation more likely found in middle to late adolescence. A study by Karcher and Fisher (2004) reported an association between exploration and intergroup understanding, suggesting that exploration may require abstract reasoning skills most often found in older adolescents. Karcher and Fisher's findings are supported by Phinney's (1992) findings of age related differences in exploration, with older adolescents demonstrating more exploration than younger adolescents. Longitudinal studies by French, Seidman, Allen, and Aber (2006) and Pahl and Way (2006) also suggest that exploration peaks in middle to late adolescence. As a result, cognitive maturation may allow youth to more fully engage in ethnic identity exploration.

Ethnic group affirmation/belonging. Social identity theory provides a foundation for the affirmation/belonging dimension of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989; 1992; Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999). According to social

identity theorists Tajfel and Turner (1986), group membership is an important part of an individual's self-concept in that psychological benefits are derived from one's positive attitudes about and one's sense of belonging to a particular social group. Tajfel (1978) hypothesized that positive affiliation with one's ethnic group was critical for developing a positive self-concept in the face of discrimination. Thus, positive feelings about one's ethnic group were conceptualized as a buffer to societal stereotypes that devalued ethnic minority groups.

More recent explanations of the affirmation/belonging dimension borrow from social psychological conceptualizations of a "collective identity" (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002) which emphasize an individual's commitment or emotional attachment to his/her ethnic group (Phinney & Ong, 2007). The importance of a social or "collective" identity extends beyond the psychological benefits of having positive attitudes about one's group. Ellemers, Spears and Doosje (2002) theorize that the strength of an individual's investment in and emotional attachment to his/her ethnic group dictates the extent to which an individual is influenced by the group values and norms. Subsequently, group values and norms can influence "perceptual, affective, and behavioral responses of individuals belonging to that group" (Ellemers et al., 2002 p. 164). In line with Ellemers and colleagues, Phinney and Ong (2007) theorize that the strength of an individual's identification with parents or other adult mentors is a key to determining the level of ethnic group affirmation/belonging.

Whereas longitudinal studies by French, Seidman, Allen and Aber (2006) and Pahl and Way (2006) report that exploration peaks in middle to late adolescence, the

same longitudinal studies report different patterns of growth for the affirmation/belonging dimension. French and colleague's findings report increases in the affirmation/belonging dimension in both early and middle adolescence. In contrast, Pahl and Way did not find growth in the affirmation/belonging dimension in a sample of youth in middle and late adolescence. They suggest that growth in the affirmation/belonging dimension precedes exploration and is more influenced by parental socialization processes in childhood and early adolescence.

Affirmation/belonging and exploration as promotive factors. Risk and resilience research has frequently used the term "protective" to refer to both main effect and interactive models (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar, 1993; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). For the sake of clarity, we will use the term "promotive" to refer to main effect models and "protective" to refer to interactive models. Consequently, promotive factors: 1) are assets, processes or resources that are associated with achieving positive or avoiding negative developmental outcomes, 2) can occur either in the presence or absence of risk, and 3) are generally analyzed with additive (e.g. main effects) models (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). In contrast, protective factors are factors that work in conjunction with other factors to buffer against negative outcomes; they will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

Ethnic identity measured as an overall construct appears to be a promotive factor for ethnic minority youth. Several studies report a positive relationship between the affirmation/belonging and exploration dimensions of ethnic identity and self-esteem (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997), self-efficacy (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookings & Seay, 1999), psychological well-being (Yasui,

Dorham, & Dishion, 2004), pro-social attitudes (Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight, 2011; Smith et al., 1999), and academic achievement (Wong, et al., 2003; Eccles, Wong, & Peck, 2006). Other studies have reported an inverse relationship between ethnic identity dimensions and offending as well as other problem behaviors. McMahon and Watts (2002) found that African American middle school students with higher levels on the combined ethnic identity dimensions demonstrated less aggressive beliefs and offending behaviors. Paschall and Hubbard (1998) found that the combined construct of ethnic identity and self-esteem in African American adolescents demonstrated an inverse relationship to propensity for violent offending.

Also, studies have examined ethnic identity as a multi-dimensional concept by exploring the unique relationship each dimension has with offending and other problem behaviors. In a longitudinal study, French, Kim and Pillado (2006) investigated the relationship between each ethnic identity dimension and offending in an urban sample of youth in early and middle adolescence. Both the affirmation/belonging and the exploration dimensions demonstrated a concurrent positive relationship in middle adolescence, but only higher levels of the affirmation/belonging dimension in middle adolescence predicted less offending one year later. Yasui and colleagues (2004) and McCreary, Slavin and Berry (1996) found similar results with the affirmation/belonging dimension demonstrating an inverse relationship to problem behaviors in African American middle and high school students.

Although ethnic identity studies vary in regards to whether or not they are looking specifically at offending, or other problem behaviors they all share similar theoretical explanations for why higher levels of ethnic identity are promotive. The predominant

explanation is that youth who have higher levels of ethnic group affirmation/belonging and exploration are not as likely to internalize and fulfill negative stereotypes about African American youth's proclivities towards delinquency (French et al, 2006; McMahon & Watts, 2004; McCreary et al., 1996). A positive ethnic identity is theorized to offset the negative impact of racism and racial discrimination on offending and other problem behaviors. Such a perspective is supported by studies finding a positive relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997), as well as ethnic identity and self-efficacy (Smith et al., 1996).

However, a more comprehensive explanation is that socialization processes that shape ethnic identity also transmit cultural values and norms, as well as prosocial strategies for adapting and regulating behavior (Yasui & Dishion, 2007). Such a perspective is key to explaining the cultural context of resilience. For example, studies highlight the promotive and protective role of restrictive parenting styles in African American families (Brody & Flor, 1998; Dearing 2004). The emphasis on parental authority and child obedience in African American families could be a reflection of communalistic values that emphasize a respect for elders. As such, parenting practices that assist youth in developing self-regulatory skills may be embedded within cultural norms and values that have the potential to enhance resilience processes. Other important cultural practices, such as the importance of religion/spirituality and extended kinship networks, have also demonstrated associations with positive developmental outcomes (Lamborn and Nguyen, 2004; Nasim et al., 2004). Consequently, ethnic identity dimensions can be viewed as a signifier of explicit and implicit socialization and cultural

processes that reinforce prosocial norms and behaviors and inhibit anti-social norms and behaviors. Investigating the promotive and protective influences of ethnic identity dimensions may be an important indicator of the strength of culturally embedded socialization processes and their influence on youths' responses to environmental and individual level risk factors.

Exploration and affirmation/belonging as protective factors. Protective factors interact with risk factors to buffer the relationship between risk factors and outcomes (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar, 1993; Luthar, et al., 2000) . Several cultural resilience studies have employed interactive models to uncover cultural assets that serve as protective factors by examining such outcomes as psychological functioning, academic achievement, as well as offending and other related problem behaviors (Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004; Eccles et al., 2006; Sellers et al., 2006; Neblett, White, Ford, Phillip, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2008). In regards to offending outcomes, Wong and colleagues (2003) found that the affirmation/belonging dimension buffered the relationship between discrimination and offending, as well as discrimination and academic achievement in a sample of youth in early adolescents. In fact, participants with the highest ratings of ethnic group affirmation/belonging and the highest ratings of perceived discrimination were rated as doing almost as well as those youth who perceived limited amounts of discrimination.

Other studies examining ethnic identity as a protective factor are noteworthy in that they explore problem behavior that could also have implications for offending and justice system involvement. Nasim, Belgrave, Jaggers, Wilson, and Owens (2007) found that overall ethnic identity, along with Africentric beliefs and religiosity, were both

promotive and protective in regards to substance use in African American youth. Also, Brook, Balka, Brook, Win and Gursen (1998) and Brooks and Pahl (2006) found aspects of each ethnic identity dimensions moderated the relationship between environmental (e.g. media influences) and individual level risk factors (e.g. high rebelliousness) for alcohol use.

Although Nasim and colleagues and Brooks and colleagues all investigated substance use and not offending behavior, their findings have important implications for cultural resilience models of offending outcomes. Cultural assets such as a positive ethnic identity may not only be a buffer against racism and racial discrimination, but may also buffer against other contextual risk factors. We expand ethnic identity research by examining ethnic identity within the context of environmental risks posed by victimization and individual risks posed by aggressive and self-destructive coping strategies.

Environmental and individual level risk factors for delinquency

African American youth are disproportionately burdened by chronic poverty. Impoverished conditions place an enormous amount of strain on African American families and increase the risk of emotional and behavioral problems in youth (Guerra, Huesmann, Tolan, Ban Acker, & Eron, 1995; McLoyd, 1990; Paschall & Hubbard, 1998). Several studies report links between structural disadvantage, deleterious neighborhood social processes, and higher rates of violence and delinquency (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; for a review see, Kohen et al., 2008; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2003). These environmental conditions can contribute to a "relentless succession of stressful events" (Guerra at al., 1995, p. 519) such as family conflict, community violence

exposure, and victimization, that tax youths' adaptive capacities and threaten developmental outcomes. Furthermore, within the urban ecology, norms dictated by the "code of the street" award status to displays of risk-taking, toughness and violence. In response to such street norms, youth may adopt negative coping strategies for protection and survival (Anderson, 1999; Fagan & Wilkinson, 198; Stewart & Simons, 2010). Consequently, two risk factors for delinquency that are particularly relevant to explore for African American youth living in less resourced urban environments are victimization and aggressive and self-destructive forms of coping.

Victimization. A byproduct of neighborhood structural disadvantage and negative neighborhood social processes is an increase in the level of community violence exposure and victimization faced by African American youth (Copeland-Linder, Lambert, Yi-Fu Chen, & Ialong, 2011; Paschall & Hubbard, 1995; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 2005). Reviews of the prevalence rates of exposure to community violence suggest that African American youth are disproportionately exposed to direct and indirect victimization. Nearly a third of youth in inner city environments report being victimized directly and nearly all children report witnessing some type of community violence (Buka, Schick, Birdthistle, & Earl, 2001; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Of pressing concern is the link between victimization and higher rates of offending (Brady, Gorman-Smith, Henry, & Tolan, 2008; Hartinger-Saunders Rittner, Wieczorek, Nochajski, & Rine, 2011; Kort-Butler, 2010).

While there appears to be sufficient evidence of a link between victimization and offending, there are multiple theoretical perspectives explaining why this link exists. The lifestyles and routine activities theory suggests that youth who associate with delinquent

peers are engaged in a high risk, delinquent lifestyle that increases the likelihood of victimization (Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991; Schaffer & Ruback, 2002). Agnew's (2002) general strain theory proposes that victimization is a stressor experienced as fair and unjust and elicits negative emotions that are coped with through delinquent behavior such as drug use or violence. The self-help theory suggests that youth who experience victimization in communities with low formal social controls engage in offending as a means to achieve retribution, restitution or to deter future victimization (Apel & Burrow, 2011; Black, 1983). More psychologically oriented theories focus on the trauma responses of victimized youth, suggesting that victimization leads to difficulties in regulating emotions and behaviors, which subsequently contributes to offending outcomes (Ford, Chapman, Connor & Cruise, 2012; Ford & Hawke, 2012; Maschi, 2006). Although each theory provides one cohesive explanation for the link between victimization and offending, each theory may actually be indicative of several subtypes of victimized youth (Cuevas, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2007).

General strain, self-help and trauma-related theories have important implications for ethnic identity related factors, that may potentially mitigate the impact of victimization on offending. In a longitudinal study, Kort-Butler (2010) found that social support and self-esteem moderated the relationship between victimization and offending. A positive relationship between victimization and offending existed for youth with lower levels of social support and self-esteem, whereas no relationship between victimization and offending existed for those youth with higher levels of social support and self-esteem. Kort-Butler suggests that internal assets such as self-esteem and external resources such as social support may increase youth's access to more legitimate strategies

for coping with victimization experiences. Consistent with Kort-Butler's findings Acceves and Cookston (2007) found that the quality of parent-child relationships buffered the relationship between victimization and offending. Acceves and Cookston conclude that youth who rate the quality of parent interactions higher may be able to turn to parents as a resource for social support in order to better cope with the experience of victimization. The degree to which ethnic group affirmation/belonging and exploration indicates not only engagement and attachment to social supports, but a connection that is positive and affirming, ethnic group affirmation/belonging and exploration could also serve as protective factors in relation to victimization and offending.

Aggressive and self-destructive coping as individual level risk factors. Coping can be defined as strategies individuals use to adapt to stress and can include direct or indirect efforts to address a stressor (i.e. active or avoidance coping), or efforts to alleviate stress related emotions (i.e. venting or distraction) (Compass, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen & Wadsworth, 2001). While coping strategies are often conceptualized as promotive and protective factors, specific coping responses such as aggressive and self-destructive coping can also present as risk factors. Indeed, it is important to recognize that some coping strategies may appear adaptive temporarily, but have negative long-term consequences (Brady, Gorman-Smith, Henry, Tolan, 2008; Grant, O'koon, Davis, Roache, Poindexter et al., 2000). Aggressive (i.e. cursing or fighting someone) and self-destructive (i.e.using substances, harming oneself or engaging in dangerous activities) coping responses may temporarily alleviate the emotions related to stress or provide immediate relief from the stressor itself, but may also contribute to justice system involvement.

Both qualitative and quantitative studies suggest that Anderson's (1999) "code of the streets", in which violence and risk taking are valued, may create pressures for youth in urban environments to adopt aggressive and self-destructive forms of coping for protection and survival. Unfortunately, negative strategies, even if temporarily adaptive, may subsequently contribute to justice system involvement in the long-term (Brady et al., 2008; Carothers, 2011; Rosario, Salzinger, Feldman, & Ng-Mak, 2003; Stewart & Simons, 2003). In a qualitative study of cultural and contextual influences on coping responses, a prominent theme reported by parents, teachers, and youth was concern over the impact of neighborhood stressors and street norms on youth's coping strategies (Carothers, 2011). In particular, parents and teachers expressed concern that youth's physical responses to neighborhood stressors were transferred to stressors in other contexts such as the classroom. Suppositions regarding the powerful role of the urban context are also born out in a large scale quantitative study that found neighborhood context predicted violent delinquency, above and beyond youth's own individual street code values (Stewart & Simons, 2010).

Brady and colleagues (2008) examined African American and Latino adolescents' coping in response to community violence exposure and victimization. Aggressive and self-destructive coping responses, including revenge, aggression, and responses that harm oneself, contributed to an increase in violent offending four to five years later, even after controlling for prior levels of offending. Brady and his colleagues suggest that some youth may lack a broad range of coping strategies, and thus come to rely exclusively on a more narrow range of negative coping strategies. The use of aggressive and self-destructive coping strategies may reflect a limited range of available coping responses

and resources. Youth who have higher levels of ethnic group affirmation/belonging and exploration may be more engaged in and attached to cultural supports and resources that augment coping repertoires. Youth's cultural resources may help to mitigate the relationship between aggressive and self-destructive coping and offending that is associated with justice system involvement.

Parental socialization of coping may also play an important role in the development of negative coping strategies. Kliewer, Parrish, Taylor, Jackson, Walker and colleagues (2006) theorize that parental coaching and modeling, as well as the quality of parental relationships play an important role in the development of coping responses in youth. They found that children who used aggressive coping strategies as a way to manage stressors had poorer relationships with caregivers, and had caregivers who imparted messages indicating aggressive coping was an appropriate way to handle stress. Although self-destructive coping was not considered, self-destructive coping strategies may also be influenced by parental coaching, monitoring and/or the quality of parental relationships. Socialization processes that shape ethnic identity as well as youth's attachment to parental/cultural norms and strategies for adapting to stressors, may also condition the development of negative coping strategies.

Protective/Protective model of resilience

The risk and resilience literature also refers to a protective/protective model of resilience in which a protective factor moderates a promotive factor (Brooks et al., 1999; Brooks and Pahl, 2006; Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005; Caldwell, Sellers, Bernat & Zimmerman, 2004) in order to enhance the relationship between a promotive factor and an outcome. Although aggressive and self-destructive coping are examined in the current

study as risk factors, we will also investigate social support and distraction coping as promotive factors. We propose that social support and distraction coping could be enhanced by higher levels on the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration. Incorporating a cultural resilience framework into a protective/protective model may provide further insight into the cultural context of coping. (Tolman & Grant, 2009; Carothers, 2011; Spencer, Fegley, & Hapalani, 2010; Yasui & Dishion, 2007).

Distraction coping. Several studies have explored coping responses of youth in disadvantaged urban contexts in order to uncover promotive and protective factors that assist youth in positively adapting to the stressors they experience. Coping responses can be conceptualized as dimensions (e.g. emotion-focused or problem-solving) or conceptualized as more specific sets of coping categories (e.g. avoidance, rumination, venting). Distraction coping is one type of coping strategy and can be defined as a healthy response by which youth cognitively "let go" and/or behaviorally "channel excess energy" into positive activities (Dise-Lewis, 1988). Distracting actions, such as listening to music, reading a book, or exercising hard may be beneficial to emotional regulation and/or provide a mental respite until more active or problem-oriented coping strategies can be employed.

Studies tend to focus on the relevance of distraction coping as a promotive and protective factor for depression in children and adolescents (Altshuler, Genevro, Ruble, & Bonstein, 1995; Altshuler & Ruble, 1995; Broderick, 1998), but distraction coping may have implications for delinquency as well. Dise-Lewis (1988) reported a significant inverse relationship between distraction coping and teachers ratings of youths' classroom problem behavior in sample of predominantly white middle school students. Gonzales,

Tein, Sandler, & Friedman (2001) found distraction coping to buffer the relationship between family stress and conduct problems in a sample of inner-city multi-ethnic adolescents. In contrast, Grant and colleagues (2000) found no connection between distraction coping and offending. Regardless of the mixed results, distraction coping bears some resemblance to cognitive and behavioral avoidance coping strategies which have been found in to be inversely related to delinquency (Grant et al., 2000; Rosario et al., 2003). Avoidance coping strategies may be at least temporarily adaptive in the face of uncontrollable stressors often faced by youth in more disadvantaged neighborhoods, but may also inadvertently create negative long-term consequences. For the purposes of the current study, distraction coping may be enhanced by higher levels on the affirmation/belonging and exploration dimensions. Youth with higher levels on the affirmation/belonging and exploration dimensions may have the benefit of being more fully embedded in cultural and familial contexts that promote distracting coping as a prosocial strategy for self-regulation.

Social support coping. Coping can also be considered a social process in which an individual draws upon peer, family, and community resources in order to receive emotional support, guidance, or information (Compas et al., 2001). Studies on social support coping as a promotive and protective factor have produced inconsistent results which may be a result of the source, quality, and adequacy of the support received. Rosario and colleagues (2003) found that social support from parents and/or guardians buffered the impact of victimization on delinquency, whereas peer support magnified the relationship between victimization and delinquency. Similar to Rosario and colleague, Grant and colleagues (2000) reported that higher levels of social support were related to

less externalizing behaviors and buffered the relationship between major life stressors and externalizing behaviors

Culture may provide an important context for social support coping and subsequently have important implications when studying coping in African American youth. Studies highlighting the role of African culture, history, and philosophy on people of African descent emphasize the importance of values related to communalism and collectivism (Carothers, 2011; Utsey et al., 2007). For example, a prominent theme that emerged in a qualitative study by Carothers (2011) on the cultural influences of coping in African American youth was the importance of "connections with family" as a key element in youth's coping responses to stress. Carothers theorized that African American cultural values of "interconnectedness" and "unity" played an important role in coping strategies that consisted of seeking support from immediate and extended family members. Similar to Carothers, Utsey and colleagues (2007) found that a culturally relevant coping construct referred to as "interconnectedness" predicted psychological well-being, above and beyond more traditional coping categories. Given the suggested importance of immediate and extended family members for coping in African American youth, ethnic identity may be an important indicator of the availability of these cultural resources in youths' lives. The use of social support coping may be conditioned by the extent to which higher levels of ethnic group affirmation/belonging and exploration indicate a stronger commitment to or engagement in cultural community networks.

The Current Study

Incorporation of cultural assets, resources, and/or processes into our understanding of risk and resilience in African American youth is a central focus (Garcia-

Coll et al., 2000; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012; Neblett et al., 2012). Prior research indicates that ethnic identity is both promotive and protective (French et al., 2006; McMahon & Watts, 2003; Wong et al., 2003) in relation to offending and other problem behaviors. A common conclusion is that the psychological benefits of a positive ethnic identity offset the negative influence of racism and racial discrimination on African American youth's psychosocial functioning. Theoretically, a positive ethnic identity prevents youth from internalizing and fulfilling negative stereotypes about African American youth and delinquency (French et al, 2006; McMahon & Watts, 2003; Wong et al., 2003). Furthermore, socialization processes that shape ethnic identity may also transmit cultural values and norms, as well as prosocial strategies for adapting and regulating behavior (Yasui & Dishion, 2007).

The current study investigates ethnic identity as a type of cultural resilience that is both promotive and protective in regards to offending outcomes for African American youth transitioning into young adulthood. In particular, we examine both minor and serious offending by reviewing official records of misdemeanor and felony offenses. We distinguish between minor and serious offending due to research and theory suggesting that different types of offending have different correlates, causal mechanisms, and processes related to desistance (Cauffman, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2005; Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington, & Milne, 2002; Stouthamer-Loeber, et al., 2008). Research on desistance in youth emerging into young adulthood suggests that those youth who persist in offending into adulthood generally demonstrate the most frequent and serious types of offending (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Moffit et al., 2002; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2004). Accordingly, differentiating those factors related to minor and serious offending has

important intervention and policy implications, particularly due to the societal costs of more serious offending.

This study begins by investigating the longitudinal relationship between ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration and offending in a sample of African American youth transitioning from late adolescence (16 and 17 years old) to emerging adulthood (18 and 19 years old). Ethnic identity dimensions are examined within the context of environmental and individual level risk factors in order to first determine whether or not ethnic identity dimensions play a promotive role in offending outcomes, even within the context of risk factors. Next, ethnic identity as a protective factor is investigated through examining interactions of each ethnic identity dimension with victimization, and with negative coping strategies. A final goal is to determine how processes related to ethnic group membership may enhance distraction and social support coping in order to decrease justice system involvement.

Research questions

1) **Promotive model (main effects)**

   Do the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration (wave 6) predict minor/serious offending behavior (wave 7) even when taking account community victimization, self-destructive and aggressive coping?

   a) Youth with higher levels of affirmation/belonging are expected to demonstrate a decrease in minor/serious offending.

   b) Youth with higher levels of exploration are expected to demonstrate a decrease in minor/serious offending behaviors.

2) **Protective model (interactive)**

Do the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration moderate the longitudinal relationship between victimization (wave 6) and minor and serious offending (wave 7)?

a) The relationship between victimization and minor/serious offending is reduced for youth with higher levels of affirmation/belonging.

b) The relationship between victimization and minor/serious offending is reduced for youth with higher levels of exploration.

3) **Protective model (interactive)**

Do the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration moderate the longitudinal relationship between aggressive and self-destructive coping (wave 6) and minor/serious offending (wave 7)?

a) The relationship between aggressive coping and minor/serious offending is expected to be reduced for youth with higher levels of affirmation/belonging.

b) The relationship between self-destructive coping and minor/serious offending is expected to be reduced for youth with higher levels of affirmation/belonging.

c) The relationship between aggressive coping and minor/serious offending is expected to be reduced for youth with higher levels of exploration.

d) The relationship between aggressive coping and minor/serious offending is expected to be reduced for youth with higher levels of exploration.

4) **Protective/Protective model (interactive)**

Do the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration moderate the longitudinal relationship between social support and distraction coping (wave 6) and minor/serious offending (wave 7)?

a) Among those youth with higher levels of affirmation/belonging, social support coping is expected to be associated with less minor/serious offending, whereas social support coping is expected to be associated with more minor/serious offending for youth with lower levels of affirmation/belonging.

b) Among those youth with higher levels of affirmation/belonging, distraction coping is expected to be associated with less minor/serious offending behavior, whereas distraction coping is expected to be associated with more minor/serious offending for youth with lower levels of affirmation/belonging.

4c) Among those youth with higher levels of exploration, social support coping is expected to be associated with less minor/serious offending, whereas social support coping is expected to be associated with more minor/serious offending for youth with lower levels of exploration.

4d) Among those youth with higher levels of exploration, distraction coping is expected to be associated with less minor/serious offending behavior, whereas distraction coping is expected to be associated with more minor/serious offending for youth with lower levels of exploration.

Method

Participants

Participants were 212 African American youth who were part of a larger longitudinal family-centered intervention study (Dishion & Kavanaugh, 2003; Dishion, Kavanaugh, Scheiger, Nelson, & Kauffman, 2002; Dishion, Nelson, & Kavanaugh, 2003). All participants self-identified as either African American or as having at least one African American parent. Sixteen participants were missing court records due to either refusal from the courts to release the data or refusal from the participants to consent to the request and were omitted from the study, leaving 196 African American youth [105 (54%) boys; 91 (46%) girls]) in the final analyses. Data collected from participant interviews at wave 6 (16 and 17 years old) and wave 7 (18 and 19 years old) were examined.

Procedure

Participants for the larger longitudinal study to which the current sample belongs were recruited from three middle schools in a metropolitan community in the Pacific Northwest. In order to facilitate recruitment, the school principal sent letters home to parents introducing the intervention and inviting parents to consent to students' participation in the study. A total of 998 students (95% of all students recruited) agreed to participate.

Approximately half of the participants were randomly assigned to an ecologically-based, family-centered intervention implemented within the school context. The intervention included a universal component which established a Family Resource Center within the school, as well as selected and indicated family-centered interventions for

students who were identified as high-risk. The intervention is described in greater detail elsewhere (Dishion & Kavanaugh, 2003; Dishion et al., 2002) and is not a focus of this study. Although we intended to use intervention status as a covariate in all the analyses in order to avoid confounding the outcome variable with influences from the intervention, preliminary analyses revealed that the intervention was not significantly associated with minor (r = .02, p = .81) or serious offending (r = .08, p = .22).

The first wave of assessment interviews took place when participants were in the 6th grade. Assessment interviews were conducted annually both at school and via mail through wave 7, with an 80% retention rate. Participants were informed that their responses would be confidential and they were paid $20.00 for each assessment interview.

Measures

The interview protocol included a questionnaire for demographic information, as well as the following measures to assess ethnic identity, coping, and victimization (See Appendices A, B, and C, respectively).

Ethnic Identity, Wave 6. Ethnic identity was assessed using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Roberts et al., 1999; See Appendix A), a revised version of Phinney's (1992) MEIM that has been pared down to a 12-item questionnaire focusing on two dimensions: 1) affirmation/belonging and 2) exploration. Ethnic group affirmation/belonging is assessed through seven items that inquire about one's sense of belonging to, pride in, and positive feelings about his or her ethnic group (e.g., "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group"). Ethnic identity exploration is assessed through five items that inquire about active exploration into one's ethnic culture,

history, and traditions (e.g., "I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better"). Responses were scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). Scores were calculated using the mean of all items in the scale to measure the two distinct dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration. High scores indicate a stronger sense of affirmation/belonging and more active exploration, while low scores indicate a weaker sense of affirmation/belonging and minimal exploration. Reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha of .82 for the affirmation/belonging dimension and .68 for the exploration dimension.

Coping, Wave 6. Coping responses were identified through the Life Events and Coping Inventory (LECI; Dice-Lewis, 1988; See Appendix B), a self-report survey designed specifically to assess for stressful life events and coping responses in children and adolescents. Only the items addressing coping responses were used. Participants were asked to complete the statement "If I felt stressed, I would…" with coping responses rated on a 9-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (I would *definitely* not do this) to 9 (I would *definitely* do this). Three dimensions as reported by Dise-Lewis (1988) were assessed: 1) distraction coping, 2) self-destructive coping, 3) and aggression coping. Distraction coping items refer to pro-social coping responses that serve to distract the individual from the stressor and "channel excess energy into positive activities" (p.498; e.g., "take a walk," "read a book," "exercise hard"; α =.81). Self-destructive coping refers to harmful behaviors directed at the self as a means of coping with stress (e.g., "hurt myself physically," "drink alcohol," "do something dangerous"; α = .80). Aggressive coping is indicated by items that convey the intent to harm another person as

a means to reduce stress, either verbally, physically, or through the destruction of others' property (e.g., "hit someone," "curse at someone," "wreck someone's things"; α = .87). A fourth dimension, social support, was constructed for the purposes of this study using primarily items that indicate seeking social support as a response to stress (e.g., "talk to a teacher or psychologist", "talk to a youth group leader"; α = .72).

Victimization Wave 6. Victimization was assessed using the Victimization Questionnaire from the National Youth Study (Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985; See Appendix C), a self-report survey consisting of twelve items that ask the frequency of specific types of criminal victimization experienced over the past year. Victimization items include personal victimization ("Have you been beaten up or threatened with being beaten up?"), property victimization ("Have some of your things been taken from your locker?"), as well as victimization because of ethnic group membership ("Have you been attacked because of race or ethnic group?"). Victimization for each item was coded as: 0 (no victimization), 1 (one incident of victimization), and 2 (two or more incidences of victimization). Using this scale Cronbach's alpha was .78.

Minor and Serious Offending, Wave 6. Information on offending behavior at wave 6 was gathered from juvenile court records when participants were 16 and 17 years old. Permission was obtained from participants and their parents to search juvenile court records of all counties where youth reported living until they were 18 years old. Information gathered included the number and type of criminal offenses for which youth were arrested and adjudicated for in juvenile court at approximately 16 and 17 years old. The total number of misdemeanor offenses that participants were arrested and

adjudicated for in juvenile court indicated minor offending. Likewise, the total number of felony offenses participants to indicated serious offending.

Minor and serious offending categories were coded as continuous variables, using the raw number of misdemeanor offenses participants accrued for minor offending and the raw number of felony offenses participants accrued for serious offending. According to the juvenile court records, during wave 6 (participants = 16 and 17 years old) 36 participants (18%) had a record of one or more misdemeanors and 24 (12%) had one or more felonies.

Minor and Serious Offending, Wave 7. Information on offending behavior at wave 7 was gathered from adult court records when participants were approximately 18 and 19 years old. Permission was obtained from participants to search adult court records of all counties where youth reported living while they were 18 and 19 years old. Information gathered included the number and type of misdemeanor and felony offenses a youth was arrested and convicted of in adult criminal court. Misdemeanor offenses are offenses in which the maximum penalty is less than a one year prison sentence and includes such crimes as shoplifting/theft, lower level assault, criminal mischief, credit card fraud, or prostitution. Felony offenses are offenses that carry a minimum penalty of 1 year in jail and include such offenses as robbery, burglary, assault, drug possession and distribution, rape, and murder or attempted murder. Minor and serious offending were coded as continuous variables with the total number of misdemeanor offenses participants were arrested and convicted of in adult court indicating minor offending and the total number of felony offenses indicating serious offending.

According to the adult court records, during wave 7 when participants were approximately 18 and 19 years old, 56 (29%) participants had a record of one or more misdemeanors, and 36 (18%) participants had a record of one or more felonies.

Results

Data Analysis Strategy

Data screening and statistical analyses were conducted in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Screening of the data revealed that the offending variable was the only variable missing data. Sixteen participants were missing court records due to either refusal from the courts to release the data or refusal from the participants to consent to the request. Of the sixteen participants missing court records, seven did not have court records for the first six waves of data collection, eight did not have court records for the outcome variable wave 7 offending, and one had no court records at all. As a result, the sixteen participants missing court records were omitted from the final analyses. Although there were some outliers in the data, only victimization, minor and serious offending at wave 6, and minor and serious offending at wave 7 demonstrated skewed distributions. Thus, variables with skewed distributions were normalized with log and square root transformations.

Step-wise linear regression models were analyzed to address research questions, which included an investigation of both main and interactive effects. Four regression models were analyzed examining main and interactive effects for minor offending (e.g. misdemeanor offenses), and four regression models were analyzed addressing serious offending (e.g. felony offenses). All predictor variables were centered as consistent with Aiken and West (1991). Also, a negative binomial regression was conducted due to the

skewed dependent variable and excess of 0's; however results yielded similar findings as hierarchical multiple regression models. For the sake of parsimony multiple regression analyses only are discussed.

Statistical Power

Step-wise multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data for each research question. Power for the multiple regression models was based on Cohen's (1992) guide; α was set at .05 and power at .80. Following Cohen's (1992) guide, a sample size of approximately 119 is required to safely estimate a moderate effect size (*d* = .3) for a model with a maximum of 11 parameters. Our sample size was 196 with a maximum number of parameters (including covariates and interaction terms) being used in the final model set at 11. Therefore, our sample size allowed us sufficient power to estimate a moderate effect size.

Descriptive Statistics

Mean and Standard Deviation. The mean and standard deviations for all study variables appear in Table 1. The average rating for participants on the affirmation belonging dimension was on the higher side of a 4-point scale (*M* = 3.50, *SD* =.49). Participants' average rating on the exploration dimension was closer to the midpoint (*M* = 2.83, *SD* = .62) of a 4-point scale. Participants rated their use of more adaptive coping strategies (e.g. distraction coping, *M* = 5.47, *SD* = 1.51, social support coping, *M* = 5.38, *SD* = 1.60) close to each scale's midpoint range, while more negative coping strategies were less frequently used on average (aggressive coping, *M* = 2.00, *SD* = 1.39, Self-destructive coping, *M* = 1.80, *SD* = 1.14).

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation of Study Variables.

Variable	M	SD	Range
1. Minor Offending (w6)	.51	1.41	0 - 9
2. Serious Offending (w6)	.33	1.08	0 - 7
3. Minor offending (w7)	1.71	5.20	0 - 39
4. Serious Offending (w7)	.48	1.36	0 - 10
5. Affirm/Bel	3.50	.49	1 - 4
3. Exploration	2.83	.62	1 - 4
4. Victimization	2.12	3.33	0 - 22
5. Aggressive Cope	2.00	1.39	1 - 10
6. Self-Destructive Cope	1.80	1.14	1 - 10
7. Distraction Cope	5.47	1.51	1 - 10
8. Social Support Cope	5.38	1.60	1 - 10

Note: n = 196.

Frequency of minor and serious offenses. Table 2 and Table 3 display the number and percentage of adolescents who were arrested for a minor offense (e.g. misdemeanor) or serious offense (e.g. felony) at wave 6 (covariate) and wave 7 (outcome variable) respectively. For the current study, the frequency of minor and serious offending at wave 6 served as a covariate. At wave 6, when participants were approximately 16 and or 17 years old, 18 % of participants had been convicted of at least one or more misdemeanor offenses, and 12% of youth had been convicted of at least one or more felony offenses. In total, 21% of participants were convicted of at least one misdemeanor or felony offense at wave 6. Since a large number of youth were not arrested, the distribution was positively skewed for both the minor offending (skew value = 3.46) and serious offending variables (skew value = 3.97). As a result a log transformation was conducted, after a constant was added to each score to avoid taking

the log of zero, to bring the distribution closer to normal (minor offending, skew value = 1.93; serious offending skew value = 2.55).

At wave 7 when youth were approximately 18 and 19 years old, 29% of youth been convicted of approximately one or more misdemeanor offenses, and 18% had been convicted of a felony offense. In total, 33% of participants were convicted of at least one misdemeanor or felony offense at wave 7. Since a large number of youth were not arrested, the distribution was positively skewed for both the minor offending variable (skew value = 4.56) and the serious offending variable (skew value = 3.95). As was the case with minor and serious offending variables at wave 6, for the minor and serious offending variables at wave 7 a log transformation was conducted, after a constant was added to each score to avoid taking the log of zero, to bring the distribution closer to normal (minor offending skew value = 1.46; serious offending skew value = 1.91).

Table 2.

Number and Percentage of Adolescents with an Arrest for a Misdemeanor or Felony Offense at Wave 6.

Offenses	0	1	2+
Misdemeanors	160 (82%)	15 (8%)	21 (10%)
Felonies	172 (88%)	7 (4%)	17 (8%)
Total Offenses	154 (79%)	12 (6%)	30 (15%)

Note: n = 196.

Table 3.

Number and Percentage of Adolescents with an Arrest for a Misdemeanor or Felony Offense at Wave 7.

Offenses	0	1	2+
Misdemeanors	140 (71%)	18 (9%)	38 (20%)
Felonies	160 (82%)	13 (7%)	23 (11%)
Total Offenses	131 (67%)	15 (8%)	50 (25%)

Note: n = 196.

Frequency of victimization. Table 4 reports the number and percentage of adolescents reporting incidents of victimization over the past year. Approximately 61% of youth experienced some form of property or personal victimization, with 13% of participants experiencing at least one incident of victimization, and 48% of youth experiencing two or more incidents of victimization. The most frequent type of victimization experienced by participants was having had things stolen in a public place, with 26% of youth having something stolen one or more times in the last year. The second most frequent type of victimization was having something taken or an attempt to do so by force, with 17% of participants having something taken or an attempt to do so by force one or more times in the last year. The distribution of the victimization scores was also positively skewed (skew value = 2.71) with almost half of youth having experienced no form of victimization. A square root transformation was conducted in order to normalize the distribution (skew value = 1.12). A constant was added to all scores in order to avoid taking the square root of zero.

Table 4

Number and Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Victimization over the Past Year.

Victimization	0	1	2+
Something taken from you, or an attemtpt to do so by force	162 (83%)	10 (5%)	24 (12%)
Car, motorcyle or bicycle ben stolen or an attempt to do so	173 (88%)	15 (8%)	8 (4%)
Things taken from your car, motorcycle or bike	177 (90%)	12 (6%)	7 (3%)
Things been damaged on purpsose	164 (84%)	17 (9%)	15 (7%)
Things been stolen from a public place	145 (74%)	25 (13%)	26(13%)
Things been taken from your locker	165 (84%)	20 (10%)	11(6%)
Been sexually attacked, raped or an attempt was made to do so	189 (96%)	4 (2%)	3 (2%)
Attacked with a weapon	179 (91%)	10 (5%)	7 (4%)
Been beaten up or threatened with being beaten up	171 (87%)	9 (5%)	16 (8%)
Pocket been picked, or purse or wallet snatched or an attempt to do so	187 (95%)	6 (3%)	3 (2%)
Been attacked because of race or ethnic group	189 (96%)	4 (2%)	3 (2%)
Been verbally attacked because of race or ethnic group	172 (88%)	9 (5%)	15 (8%)
Total Number of incidents	88 (45%)	26 (13%)	82 (48%)

Note: n = 196.

Correlations. Table 5 displays the bivariate relationship between study variables. Of particular interest is the relationship between the ethnic identity dimensions and the offending variables at wave 6 and wave 7. The affirmation/belonging dimension (w6) exhibited a concurrent, inverse, relationship with minor offending (w6) *(r* = -.19, *p* =.02), and serious offending (w6) *(r* = -.22, *p* <.01). In addition, the affirmation/belonging dimension (w6) demonstrated a longitudinal, inverse relationship, with minor offending (w7) *(r* = -.18, *p* =.01), and serious offending (w7) *(r* = -.24, *p* <.01). The exploration dimension did not have a concurrent relationship with minor*(r* = -.09, *p* =.22) or serious offending *(r* = .02, *p* =.77), nor did the exploration dimension have a longitudinal relationship with minor *(r* = -.09, *p* =.20) or serious offending *(r* = -.08, *p* =.27).

In regards to the variables hypothesized to be risk factors, victimization (*r* = .15, *p* =.04), aggressive coping (*r* = .14, *p* = .05), and self-destructive coping (*r* = .16, *p* = .03)

all demonstrated a positive longitudinal relationship with minor offending (w7). Also, victimization *(r* = .23, *p* <.01), aggressive coping *(r* = .19, *p* <.01), and self-destructive coping *(r* = .15, *p* =.03) demonstrated a longitudinal relationship with serious offending, as well. A high correlation occurred between aggressive and self-destructive coping *(r* = .63, *p* < .01) and as a result, a composite variable using both aggressive and self-destructive coping was created and renamed "negative coping" in order to reduce collinearity. Finally, distraction coping (w6) did not demonstrate a longitudinal relationship with minor *(r* = -.12, *p* =.11) or serious *(r* = -.07, *p* =.31) offending, and social support was not longitudinally related to minor *(r* = -.06, *p* =.41) or serious *(r* = -.01, *p* =.88) offending.

Overall, there were some low to moderate correlations between predictor variables, however, collinearity is not excessive and any bias in regression estimates due to collinearity is slight.

Table 5.

Study Variable Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Minor Off. (w6)	_	.58**	.41**	.38**	-.17*	-.09	.16*	.13	.15*	-.09	.06
2. Serious Off. (w6)	.58**	_	.37**	.38**	-.22	.02	.09	.12	.12	-.09	.08
3 Minor Off. (w7)	.41**	.37**	_	.53**	-.18*	-.09	.15*	.14*	.16*	-.11	-.06
4. Serious Off. (w7)	.38**	.38**	.53**	_	-.24**	-.08	.23**	.19	.15	-.07	-.01
5. Affirm/Bel	-.19*	-.22**	-.18*	-.24**	_	.42**	-.04	-.18*	-.31**	.18*	-.01
6.. Exploration	-.09	.02	-.09	-.08	.42**	_	.04	.05	.02	.31**	.15*
7. Victimization	.16*	.09	.15*	.23**	-.04	.04	_	.38*	.39**	.08	-.05
8.. Agg. Cope	.13	.12	.14*	.19*	-.18*	.05	.38**	_	.63**	.00	-.02
9.. Self-Dest. Cope	.16*	.12	.16*	.15*	-.31**	.02	.39**	.63**	_	-.01	.00
10. Distraction Cope	-.09	-.09	-.12	-.07	.18*	.31**	.08	-.00	.01	_	.36**
11. Social Sup Cope	.06	.08	-.06	-.01	-.01	.15*	-.05	-.03	.00	.36**	_

Note: n = 196.

Control Variables. Household income, participation in the intervention, gender, and prior minor and serious offending were originally proposed as the covariates for the present study. However, only two of the proposed variables demonstrated a significant relationship with minor and serious offending at wave seven: gender and prior minor and serious offending (w6). Gender demonstrated a significant relationship to minor and serious offending at wave 7 with 20% of girls, and 36% of boys convicted of a misdemeanor offense, and 11% of girls and 25% of boys convicted for a felony offense. Also, prior minor offending (w6) was significantly related to minor offending (w7) *(r* = .41, p <.01), and prior serious offending (w6) was significantly related to wave serious offending (w7) *(r* = -.38, p < .01). It is important to recognize that in including prior minor and serious offending at wave 6 as covariates, findings for the outcome variables minor and serious offending (w7) should be interpreted as a relative change in offending between wave 6 and wave 7.

Step-wise Regression Analyses

Step-wise multiple regression models were constructed to address the main and interactive effects predicted by the research questions. Since affirmation/belonging and exploration were moderately correlated (r = .42, p < .01), different regression models were used to more closely examine the independent influence of each ethnic identity dimension. Also, in order to highlight the unique role of positive and negative coping strategies, different regression models were used to assess negative coping, and distraction and social support coping. Finally, for each research question analyses were conducted using minor offending as the outcome variable and then serious offending as

the outcome variable. As a result, step-wise multiple regression analysis was conducted on eight separate regression models (see Tables 6 – 9).

Research Questions:

1) Promotive model (main effects): Do the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration (w6) predict minor/serious offending (w7) even in the context of victimization and negative coping[1]?

Promotive model with ethnic group affirmation/belonging and minor offending. A step-wise regression model (see Table 6) was used to examine the longitudinal association between affirmation/belonging and minor offending (w7) in the context of victimization and negative coping. Although both main and interactive effects were the focus of the model, for the current research question the focus is on main effects only. As illustrated (see Table 6), the covariates prior minor offending (w6) and gender were entered at step one of the model, explaining 19% of the variance in minor offending (w7). The standardized beta coefficient for prior minor offending (w6) was significant (β = .41, $p < .01$), whereas gender was not. Also, as illustrated (see Table 6), the affirmation/belonging dimension entered at step two, victimization entered at step three, and negative coping entered at step four, were not significant predictors. In summary, although affirmation/belonging, victimization, and negative coping all demonstrated significant zero-order correlations with minor offending (w7), within the context of the full regression model, affirmation/belonging, victimization and negative coping did not contribute to the explained variance above and beyond that contributed by the covariate prior minor offending (w6).

[1] Note that the original research question used aggressive coping and self-destructive coping. However, due to the high correlation between aggressive coping and self-destructive (r = .63, $p < .01$) a composite variable was constructed referred to as negative coping.

Promotive model with ethnic group affirmation/belonging and serious offending. A regression model (see Table 6) was used to examine the longitudinal association between affirmation/belonging and serious offending (w7), in the context of victimization and negative coping. Although both main and interactive effects were the focus of the model, for the current research question the focus is on main effects only. To start, prior serious offending (w6) and gender were entered at step one of the regression model as covariates. Prior serious offending (w6) was significant and explained 16% of the variance in serious offending (w7), and the affirmation/belonging dimension entered at step two was also significant (β = -.19, p < .05) and explained an additional 2% of the explained variance in serious offending (w7). Ethnic group affirmation/belonging was promotive as youth with higher levels on the affirmation/belonging (w6) dimension demonstrated a decrease in serious offending between wave 6 and wave 7, relative to youth with lower levels on the affirmation/belonging dimension. Finally, victimization entered at step three was significant (β = .16, p < .05), explaining an additional 3% of the variance in serious offending (w7). Victimization presented as a risk factor as youth with higher levels of victimization demonstrated an increase in serious offending between wave 6 and wave 7, relative to youth with lower levels of victimization.

In summary, after taking the covariates of gender and prior serious offending (w6) into account, the model at step three was significant. Both the affirmation/belonging dimension and victimization were promotive factors and explained 5% of the variance in serious offending (w7). In support of the hypothesis, ethnic group affirmation/belonging was promotive in that ethnic group affirmation/belonging significantly predicted a

relative change in offending between wave 6 and wave7, both in the absence of the risk factor victimization as seen in step two, and in the presence of the risk factor victimization as seen in step three.

The inclusion of negative coping at step four did not add significantly to the model. Negative coping produced a significant zero-order correlation with serious offending ($r = .19$, $p < .01$), however, negative coping was also correlated with victimization ($r = .43$, $p < .01$) and affirmation/belonging ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$). Although collinearity statistics reveal that there is a small degree of collinearity between negative coping and affirmation/belonging, and negative coping and victimization, it is not excessive. The non-significant standardized beta coefficient for negative coping suggests that negative coping may share a portion of explained variance in minor offending (w7) with prior minor offending (w6), affirmation/belonging and victimization, but does not make a significant unique contribution. As a result, step three in which serious offending (w6) and gender are covariates, and affirmation/belonging and victimization are predictors, provides the most parsimonious regression model.

In order to contrast the promotive models for the different outcomes of minor and serious offending, Table 6 displays the beta-coefficients for each predictor.

Table 6.

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Models for Variables Affirmation/belonging, Victimization and Negative Coping Predicting Minor Offending (wave 7) and Serious offending (wave 7).

	Minor offending (w7)				Serious offending (w7)			
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	ΔR^2	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	ΔR^2
Step 1 covaritate				.19**				.16**
minor/serious offend (w6)	.51	.09	.37**		.35	.08	.30**	
gender	-.02	.01	-.11		-.01	.01	-.10	
Step 2				.01				.02**
affirm/belong	-.11	.10	-.09		-.17	.07	-.19*	
Step 3				.00				.03**
victimization	.04	.05	.05		.08	.04	.16*	
Step 4				.00				.00
neg. cop	.01	.05	.02		.02	.03	.06	
Step 5				.01				.00
affirm/belong x victim	-.06	.10	-.04		-.07	.07	-.07	
affirm/belong x neg. cope	-.05	.06	-.07		.04	.04	.08	
	Total R^2 = .21**				Total R^2 = .22**			

Note: n = 196. * p < .05., **p < .01.

Promotive model with ethnic identity exploration and minor offending. A step-wise regression model (see Table 7) was used to examine the longitudinal association between the exploration dimension and minor offending in the context of victimization and negative coping. Prior minor offending (w6) and gender explained 19% of the variance in minor offending, with only prior minor offending (w6) demonstrating a significant standardized beta coefficient (β = .38, p < .01). Neither ethnic identity exploration entered at step two, nor victimization entered at step three, nor negative coping entered at step four, demonstrated a significant longitudinal relationship with minor offending (w7). Victimization and negative coping did demonstrate significant zero-order correlations with offending (w7) (see Table 5), but in the context

the current regression model which includes prior minor offending (w6), neither victimization nor negative coping made a unique contribution to the explained variance in minor offending (w7).

Promotive model with ethnic identity exploration and serious offending.

Next, a regression model (see Table 9) was used to examine the longitudinal relationship between the exploration dimension and serious offending (w7) in the context of victimization and negative coping. The covariates gender and prior serious offending (w6) were introduced at step one, and the exploration dimension was introduced at step two. Ethnic identity exploration was not significant, however, victimization, entered at step three was significant ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) and did help explain an additional 4% of the variance in serious offending (w7). Youth who had higher levels of victimization at wave 6 demonstrated an increase in serious offending between wave 6 and wave 7, relative to those youth who had lower levels of victimization. As a result, victimization does present as a risk factor for serious offending. The addition of negative coping at step four of the model was not significant, and as a result negative coping does not present as a risk factor in the present model. In summary, when controlling for prior levels of serious offending (w6), exploration did not demonstrate a longitudinal association with serious offending, either in the absence or presence of the risk factor victimization.

Table 7.

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Models for Variables Ethnic Identity Exploration, Victimization and Negative Coping Predicting Minor Offending (w 7) and Serious Offending (w7).

	Minor offending (w7)				Serious offending (w7)			
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	ΔR^2	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	ΔR^2
Step 1 covaritate				.19**				.16**
minor/serious offend (w6)	.53	.09	.38**		.40	.08	.35**	
gender	-.02	.01	-.11		-.01	.01	-.10	
Step 2				.00				.00
exploration	-.06	.07	-.06		-.07	.05	-.10	
Step 3				.00				.04*
victimization	.03	.05	.04		.07	.04	.15*	
Step 4				.01				.01
neg. cope	.04	.04	.08		.03	.06	.08	
Step 5				.00				.01
exploration x victim	.04	.09	.03		-.02	.06	-.02	
exploration x neg. cope	-.03	.06	-.03		.07	.04	.11	
	Total R^2 = .20**				Total R^2 = .22**			

Note: n = 196. * p < .05., **p < .01.

2) Protective model (Interactive): Do the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration moderate the longitudinal relationship between victimization and minor/serious offending (w7)?

Protective model with ethnic group affirmation/belonging and minor offending. In order to determine whether or not the affirmation/belonging dimension was a protective factor, an interaction term constructed from the byproduct of the mean centered variables ethnic group affirmation/belonging and victimization was entered at step five of the model (see Table 6). The interaction term of affirmation/belonging by

victimization was not significant and as a result, ethnic group affirmation/belonging did not moderate the longitudinal relationship between victimization and minor offending.

Protective model with ethnic group affirmation/belonging and serious offending. An interaction term consisting of the byproduct of the mean centered variables of affirmation/belonging and victimization was entered in step five of the model (Table 6) in order to determine whether or not the affirmation/belonging dimension was a protective factor. The interaction term was not significant, and as a result affirmation/belonging did not moderate the longitudinal relationship between victimization and serious offending (w7).

Protective model with ethnic identity exploration and minor offending. An interaction term consisting of the byproduct of the mean centered variables exploration and victimization, was entered into the model at step five (Table 7) in order to determine whether or not exploration was a protective factor. The interaction term was not significant, and as a result, exploration did not moderate the relationship between victimization and minor offending (w7).

Protective model with ethnic identity exploration and serious offending. Finally, the interaction term constructed from the byproduct of the mean centered variables exploration and victimization introduced in step five of the model (see Table 7) also did not moderate the relationship between victimization and serious offending (w7).

3) Protective model for minor offending (interactive): Do the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration moderate the longitudinal relationship between negative coping (wave 6) and minor/serious offending (wave 7)?

Protective model with affirmation/belonging and minor offending. Although negative coping was not a significant predictor in the current study, the interaction between affirmation/belonging and negative coping was still investigated. An interaction term, affirmation/belonging by negative coping, was entered at step five of the regression model (see Table 6), but was not significant. Thus affirmation/belonging did not moderate the relationship between negative coping and minor offending.

Protective model with ethnic group affirmation/belonging and serious offending. For serious offending (w7) as the outcome variable, the interaction term affirmation/belonging by negative coping was entered into the model at step 5 (see Table 6), but was not significant. Similar to the results for minor offending (w7), the affirmation/belonging dimension did not moderate the longitudinal relationship between negative coping and serious offending (w7).

Protective model with ethnic identity exploration and minor offending. In order to examine the exploration dimension as a protective factor, the interaction term, exploration by negative coping was entered into the model at step five (see Table 7). The interaction term did not significantly predict offending, and as a result, exploration did not moderate the relationship between negative coping and minor offending (w6).

Protective model with ethnic identity exploration and serious offending. For serious offending as the outcome variable, the interaction term exploration by negative coping was entered into the model at step five (see Table 7) and was not significant. As such, exploration did not moderate the relationship between negative coping and serious offending.

Follow-up research question. Four additional regression models were constructed to investigate whether or not each ethnic identity dimension enhanced the hypothesized promotive effects of social support and distraction coping (Brooks et al, 1999; Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005) in relation to minor and serious offending. An interactive model was implemented and predicted that among those youth with higher levels of ethnic group affirmation/belonging, social support coping and distraction coping would be associated with less minor and serious offending (w7).

4) Protective/Protective (interactive model) for minor offending: Do the ethnic identity dimensions of affirmation/belonging and exploration moderate the longitudinal relationship between social support and distraction coping (w6) and minor offending/serious (w7)?

Protective/protective model with ethnic group affirmation/belonging and minor offending. A hierarchical regression model was created to examine the main and interactive effects of affirmation/belonging (see Table 8) and the positive coping strategies of distraction and social support coping in relation to minor offending (w7). As in the previous models, the covariates of prior minor offending (w6) and gender were entered in the first step of the model. The first step with the covariates explained 19% of the variance in minor offending, with only prior minor offending (w6) demonstrating a significant standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$). Ethnic group affirmation/belonging entered at step two was not significant, and neither was distraction coping or social support coping entered at step three. Finally, in step four neither interaction term affirmation/belonging by social support nor affirmation/belonging by distraction coping were significant. Therefore, ethnic group affirmation/belonging did not

moderate the relationship between social support and minor offending (w7) and did not moderate the relationship between distraction coping and minor offending.

Protective/protective model with affirmation/belonging and serious offending. The model for the outcome serious offending was constructed similarly to the model with the outcome minor offending (see Table 8). In the first step the covariates prior serious offending (w6) were significant, whereas gender was not. In step two the affirmation/belonging dimension was a significant predictor (β = -.16, $p < .05$), as participants who had higher levels on the affirmation/belonging dimension demonstrated a decrease in offending between wave 6 and wave 7 relative to participants with lower levels on the affirmation/belonging dimension. However, neither distraction coping nor social support coping entered at step three were significant predictors of serious offending (w7). Finally, the interaction terms entered at step four, affirmation/belonging by distraction coping and affirmation/belonging by social support coping, were not significant. As such, no support was found for the protective/protective model of the affirmation/belonging dimension.

Table 8.

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model for Variables Affirmation/Belonging, Victimization, Distraction and Social Support Coping Predicting Minor and Serious Offending (w7).

	Minor offending (w7)				Serious offending (w7)			
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	ΔR^2	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	ΔR^2
Step 1 covaritate				.19**				.16**
minor/serious offend (w6)	.56	.09	.41*		.38	.08	.33*	
gender	-.02	.01	-.12		-.02	.01	-.13	
Step 2				.01				.02*
affirm/belong	-.15	.09	-.12		-.19	.07	-.21**	
Step 3				.01				.00
distraction	-.02	.03	-.04		.00	.02	.00	
social support	- .03	.03	-.07		- .01	.02	-.04	
Step 4				.01				.02
Affirm/belong x distraction	-.07	.05	-.10		-.05	.04	-.10	
Affirm/belong x social support	-.01	.05	-.10		-.06	.04	.11	
	Total R^2 = .22**				Total R^2 = .20**			

Note: n = 196. * p < .05., **p < .01.

Protective/protective model with ethnic identity exploration and minor offending. A regression model was constructed to explore a protective/protective model for ethnic identity exploration in relation to minor offending (w7) (see Table 9). After controlling for prior minor offending (w6) and gender at step one, neither the exploration dimension entered at step two, nor were social support and distraction coping entered at step three significant predictors. Additionally, in step four, neither the interaction term exploration by distraction coping nor exploration by social support coping were significant. Thus, no support was found for a protective/protective model of ethnic identity exploration in relation to minor offending (w7).

Protective/protective model with ethnic group exploration and serious offending. A final protective/protective model using exploration as the moderator and serious offending (w7) as the outcome was constructed (see Table 9). After accounting for the covariates, prior minor offending (w6) and gender, no significant results were found for ethnic identity exploration entered at step two, or distraction coping and social support coping entered at step three. Finally, the interaction terms entered in step four, exploration by distraction coping and exploration by social support coping, were not significant. Thus, there was no support for the protective/protective model of the exploration dimension in relation to serious offending (w7).

Table 9

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model for Variables Exploration, Victimization, Distraction and Social Support Coping Predicting Minor and Serious Offending (wave 7).

	Minor offending				Serious offending			
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	ΔR^2	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	ΔR^2
Step 1 covaritate				.19**				.16**
minor/serious offend (w6)	.58	.09	.42**		.42	.08	.36*	
gender	-.02	.01	-.13		-.02	.01	-.12	
Step 2				.01				.01
exploration	-.06	.07	-.06		-.07	.05	-.10	
Step 3				.01				.00
distraction	-.02	.03	- .06		-.01	.02	.02	
social support	- .02	.03	-.05		.00	.02	-.01	
Step 4				.01				.00
exploration x distraction	-.07	.04	-.12		-.03	.03	-.07	
exploration x social support	.01	.04	.02		.04	.03	.09	
	Total R^2 = .22**				Total R^2 = .17**			

Note: n = 196. * p < .05., **p < .01

Discussion

The present study used a risk and resilience framework to investigate ethnic group affirmation/belonging and exploration as promotive and protective factors. Specifically, it examined the influence of the affirmation/belonging and exploration dimensions on the relative change in minor and serious offending over a two year period, as youth transitioned from late adolescence to early adulthood. The results supported a promotive model of ethnic group affirmation/belonging, but not ethnic identity exploration. However, neither a protective nor protective/protective model of ethnic group affirmation/belonging and exploration were supported.

A promotive model of resilience. Consistent with prior ethnic identity research on offending and other problem behaviors (French et al, 2006; McMahon & Watts, 2004; Yasui et al., 2004), we found ethnic group affirmation/belonging to be a promotive factor in relation to serious offending. As expected, youth with higher levels on the affirmation/belonging dimension demonstrated a decrease in serious offending between wave 6 (approximately 16 and 17 years old) and wave 7 (approximately 18 and 19 years old), relative to youth with lower levels on the affirmation/belonging dimension. Also, consistent with several studies that have found a link between the experience of victimization and offending (Brady et al., 2008; Hartinger-Saunders et al., 2011; Kort-Butler, 2010), victimization was a risk factor for serious offending. After controlling for prior serious offending, youth who reported higher levels of victimization at approximately 16 and 17 years old, demonstrated an increase in serious offending at approximately 18 and 19 years old, relative to youth who reported lower levels of victimization.

While much of the cultural resilience research has used discrimination as the primary risk factor in resilience models (Caldwell et al., 2004; Eccles et al, 2006; Sellers et al., 2006; Wong et al.2003), one of our goals was to explore ethnic identity in the context of risk factors other than discrimination. We chose to focus on victimization as a risk factor due to the disproportionate impact of victimization on African American youth in disadvantaged urban environments. In particular, we highlight that almost half (48%) of participants in the current study reported two or more instances of victimization, which is higher than other studies that have reported nearly a third of participants being directly victimized (Buka et al., 2001; Margolin & Gordis, 2000).

In this study, a longitudinal relationship between victimization and serious offending, above and beyond prior serious offending was found. This result calls into question the routine and lifestyles theory (Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991) that suggests the relationship between victimization and offending is specifically related to a victim's own level of offending activity. Instead, youth may resort to offending after being victimized as a way to exact revenge, retribution or to deter future victimization (Apel & Burrow, 2011).

Our primary focus was to explore the extent to which cultural assets contributed to positive outcomes within the context of environmental and individual level risk factors. To that end, our promotive model of ethnic group affirmation/belonging in relation to serious offending outcomes was supported. Higher levels of ethnic group affirmation/belonging contributed to a relative decrease in serious offending behavior two years later, and ethnic group affirmation/belonging continued to be significant even when the risk factor victimization was considered in the model. Our results revealed that the

affirmation/belonging dimension makes a small (e.g. 2%) contribution to the explained variance in serious offending. However, our demonstration of the unique contribution of ethnic group affirmation/belonging, even when taking into account prior serious offending and victimization experiences, provides additional support for the importance of cultural assets, particularly ethnic identity, when investigating resiliency in African American youth.

Although, our results suggest that a sense of belonging to, and positive feelings about one's ethnic group are forms of cultural resilience, a full explanation for the significance of the affirmation/belonging dimension is not entirely clear. Past research often highlights the promotive influence of ethnic identity on self-esteem and self-efficacy to explain the role of ethnic identity on psychological well-being and psychosocial adjustment (Phinney, 1992; Roberts et al., 1999; Smith et al., 1999). Additionally, studies examining the relationship between ethnic identity and offending suggest that a stronger connection to one's ethnic group may prevent youth from internalizing negative stereotypes about African American youths proclivities towards delinquency (French et al., 2006; McMahon & Watts, 2004; Wong et al., 2003).

In line with Yasui and Dishion (2007), we also proposed that ethnic socialization processes that shape ethnic identity play an instrumental role in shaping familial and cultural values, as well as norms and behaviors in African American youth. Thus, not only are ethnic/racial socialization processes and ethnic identity development important for learning to cope with discrimination, but socialization processes that shape ethnic identity may also be important for adapting to a variety of stressors and risk factors (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012). Consequently, being high on ethnic group

affirmation/belonging may signify a stronger attachment to ethnic, cultural and parental norms that reinforce youths' self-regulatory skills and positive strategies for adapting to stressors. Youth who had higher levels on the affirmation/belonging dimension may have been more embedded in and attached to cultural and familial norms that promote more prosocial strategies for self-regulation and adapting to stressors. As such, our results suggest that a higher level of ethnic group affirmation/belonging is a promotive factor that decreases the likelihood of justice system involvement as African American youth emerge into young adulthood.

Consistent with other studies, the affirmation/belonging dimension (Cauffman et al., 2005; Moffitt et al., 2002; Monahan et al., 2009; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2008) was related to serious, but nor minor offending. One explanation for the lack of significant findings for minor offending is that engagement in and desistance from minor offending could be more associated with normative maturational processes. It may be more difficult to distinguish youth who commit no offenses from youth who commit minor offenses. Youth who persist in offending beyond adolescence have generally committed serious and more frequent offenses (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2004; Moffit et al., 2002). Given the higher societal cost of serious offending, investigating promotive and risk factors that contribute to desistance has major intervention and policy implications.

Protective model of ethnic identity. Although we found support for a promotive model of the affirmation/belonging dimension within the context of risks posed by victimization, our results did not support a protective model of resilience. Neither ethnic group affirmation/belonging, nor exploration moderated the relationship between

victimization and offending. The lack of support for our protective model of ethnic identity could be attributed to subtypes of victimization that are differentially related to offending behavior. Some victimized youth may experience more complex trauma-related responses that impair youth's abilities to regulate emotional, cognitive and behavioral processes (Cuevas et al., 2007; Ford et al., 2012; Ford & Hawke, 2012; Maschi, 2006) As a result, culturally embedded socialization processes that shape ethnic identity and youth's adaptive and self-regulatory skills may be equally impaired and unable to buffer against trauma related responses to victimization. Culturally relevant interventions may find cultural components important for recruitment and retention, but may not directly address the trauma related processes that can contribute to future offending outcomes.

The exploration dimension of ethnic identity. In contrast to our hypothesis, but consistent with prior research (French et al., 2005; Yasui et al., 2004), the exploration dimension did not demonstrate a longitudinal relationship with minor or serious offending. Our lack of significant findings could indicate that ethnic identity exploration is related to cognitive processes (French et al., 2006; Karcher and Fischer, 2006; Pahl & Way, 2006), while the affirmation/belonging dimension is related to affective processes and psychosocial adjustment. Ethnic identity research could benefit from a more thorough examination of ethnic identity as multi-dimensional phenomena in which the associations between the distinct dimensions and outcomes in the cognitive and psychosocial domains are highlighted.

Additionally, our lack of significant results for the relationship between exploration and minor and serious offending may be due to conceptual confusion of items

on the Multi-Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Roberts et al., 1999). Ethnic identity exploration items refer to both past and current ethnic identity exploration (Schwartz , Zamboanga, Weisskirch, & Rodriguez's, 2009). Consequently, exploration as measured by the MEIM may not differentiate well between youth who are currently involved in exploration and not yet committed to an ethnic identity (e.g. moratorium stage; Marcia, 1980; Phinney, 1989), and those youth who have engaged in past exploration and have achieved a committed identity (e.g. achievement stage; Marcia, 1980; Phinney, 1989). The most recently revised version of the MEIM (Phinney & Ong, 2007) has reconstructed the exploration items to reflect past exploration only and should be included in future studies.

Cultural context of coping. Neither the protective nor the protective/protective models of resilience that were designed to explore the cultural context of coping were supported. However, even null results may provide some insights. The coping measure used in the current study may have cultural and contextual limitations. In regards to cultural limitations, studies suggest that culturally informed coping measures may strengthen the relationship between coping strategies and outcomes (Greer 2007; Utsey et al., 2007). The social support coping items in the current study could have benefited from more culturally informed social support items, such as including the full repertoire of fictive and extended kin and community members that may be sources of support in the lives of African American youth. Distraction coping items could also have included more culturally relevant items that reflect expressive elements of African American culture.

Context can also be an important factor in shaping youths' coping responses (Grant and Tolan, 2009). The coping measure used in the current study was a dispositional measure of coping which asked youth to reflect on coping strategies for stress in general. From a contextual perspective, negative coping strategies may be more specific to coping with chronic environmental stressors such as poverty and/or the presence of high levels of crime, violence, and gang activity in the neighborhood (Tolan et al., 1997). Our study may have benefitted more from a coping measure that identified specific chronic stressors empirically linked to negative coping strategies. Future studies on coping should attempt to incorporate more culturally and contextually specific coping inventories and categories.

Implications for cultural resilience models. Although the current study did not find ethnic group affirmation/belonging and exploration to be protective factors, ethnic group affirmation/belonging was a promotive factor, even within the contexts posed by victimization. The results of the current study do indicate that culturally sensitive prevention/intervention programs are a method through which cultural assets can be utilized in efforts to reduce offending and justice system involvement for African American youth. The Aban Aya Youth Project (Flay, Graumlich, Segawa, Burns, & Holliday, 2004) is an example of a culturally specific intervention program designed to reduce a host of problem behaviors in African American early adolescents. The Aban Aya Youth Project provides an Afrocentric curriculum that uses culturally specific knowledge, values, and teaching strategies in order to help youth develop cognitive-behavioral skills that can be useful in preventing problem behaviors. A social/community component of the program also recognizes the broader ecology of parents, schools, and

communities and attempts to use these contexts to reinforce skills learned through the curriculum. The curriculum in conjunction with the social/community component was associated with greater reductions in problem behaviors in comparison to a control group where youth were exposed to a curriculum that focused more generally on cultural pride and basic health issues (Jagers, Morgan-Lopez & Flay, 2009; Jagers, Morgan-Lopez, Hoard, Browne, Flay et al., 2007; Liu & Flay, 2009). The trend towards cultural resilience models and culturally relevant prevention/intervention programs represent an important shift away from the deficits and towards the strengths of African Americans.

Limitations

The current study has some important strengths, particularly with its longitudinal design, sample size, and use of an at risk sample of African American youth, however, this study is also not without its limitations. First, it is important to acknowledge that our results should be interpreted cautiously, as our significant findings on the longitudinal relationship between the affirmation/belonging dimension and serious offending did not account for time that youth may have been incapacitated due to incarceration or placement in residential facilities. Unfortunately, the length of incarceration between wave 6 and wave 7 was not collected in the current dataset. Although accounting for "street time" and "incapacitation time" is considered important for longitudinal studies examining criminal careers, a longitudinal study by Piquero, Blumstein, Brame, Haapanen, Mulvey and Nagin (2001), found that estimates of criminal activity were most impacted by incapacitation time during the early 20's. Thus, the results of the current study which examined official records of offending for youth between the ages of 16 and 19 years old are not necessarily biased by not accounting for incapacitation time.

Due to significant gender differences in arrest rates observed nationally (Puzzanchera, & Adams, 2011), and in the current study, we chose to control for gender in our analyses. Unfortunately, a lack of sufficient power prevented us from conducting separate analyses for boys and for girls. As a result, we sacrificed the opportunity to explain potential gender differences in the relationship between ethnic identity dimensions and offending. Nevertheless, future analyses should examine boys and girls separately in order to assess the efficacy of each ethnic identity dimension in reducing offending for girls and boys.

Our use of self-report measures for victimization and coping do open our study up to the biases of self-report data. While future studies of coping should include multi-informant measures, from a transactional perspective of coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), self-report measures are important for assessing the person/environment interaction of coping responses. Similarly, since youth's victimization experiences may go unreported and undetected by adults and law enforcement, self-report measures of victimization are equally important.

In contrast, we were able to use official records of offending which has both strengths and weaknesses. Farrington and colleagues (1996; 2003) maintain that official records are a more objective method of measurement and a more accurate representation of serious offending. Conversely, official records may provide a more conservative estimate of overall offending than self-report measures. Official records are also susceptible to racial bias in police and court processing. Police encounters in particular may be the initial doorway through which bias is introduced into official records of offending. Most police encounters with adolescents are for minor offenses which only

result in a small percentage of arrests (Bishop, 2005; Black & Reiss, 1970). The larger role of discretion in decisions to arrest for minor offenses may make such encounters more susceptible to racially biased decisions. As such, official records of more serious offenses may not be as susceptible to racial biases in decisions to arrest.

Additionally, it is possible that by measuring the construct of offending through official records the current study may actually be measuring the level of sophistication youth have with which to avoid detection. Official records could also represent the degree with which youth have access to resources (i.e. parental, economic, and educational) that could increase the likelihood of being diverted from the justice system. However, the detection and diversion explanations may not be sufficient to account for our significant findings regarding the relationship between the affirmation/belonging dimension and serious offending, since serious offenses are more likely to be detected by law enforcement, and less likely to be diverted.

Furthermore, often difficult to access, official records of offending provide the opportunity to look exclusively at justice system involvement. Offending behavior that leads to arrest exposes youth to the potential iatrogenic effects of the justice system (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Gatti, Tremblay & Vitaro, 2009; Osgood & Bridell, 2006). In addition, the collateral consequences of an adult conviction may affect housing, employment, as well as financial aid for higher education (Nellis, 2011). Thus, exploring factors that prevent youth from justice system involvement is particularly important when examining the intersection of ethnicity and delinquency.

Future Research

Based on our findings, models of cultural resilience should continue to investigate distinct ethnic identity dimensions as promotive and protective factors within the context of discrimination, as well as other risk factors and stressors commonly faced by African American youth. For example, whereas deviant peer affiliation has been found to be a risk factor for adolescent offending (Gardner, Dishion, & Connell, 2008), group identification (Kiesner, Cadinu, Poulin, & Bucci, 2002) and parental attachment (Vitaro, Brengen, & Tremblay, 2000) have been found to moderate the relationship between deviant peers and offending. As a result, higher levels on the affirmation/belonging dimension may buffer youth from the negative influences of deviant peers.

Our findings suggest that cultural resilience research could benefit from examining how more general parenting practices (ie, positive parenting, parental monitoring, and parental attachment) are associated with ethnic socialization practices and ethnic identity. Expanding theoretical models of ethnic identity to include links between ethnic socialization, ethnic identity, and generalized parenting practices could help develop more comprehensive theoretical explanations for the promotive and protective influence of ethnic identity.

Finally, African American cultural practices and routines may foster culturally specific norms and values that play an important role in how youth learn to respond and adapt to adversity. In the current study we make explicit assumptions that ethnic identity is a signifier for a youth's identification with cultural values and norms. However, resilience research could benefit from a deeper exploration of how ethnic identity may be related to culturally specific practices and routines. Highlighting such linkages could

help explain the mechanism underlying cultural resilience processes in African American youth.

Conclusion

By taking an in-depth look at an ethnic identity in a within-participants design, our results increase understanding of how cultural assets can play a role in African American adolescent development. All too often comparative studies (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Helms et al., 2005) do not go beyond simple categorical definitions of ethnicity. In doing so, the field of developmental research is left with limited explanations for observed differences and often postulates deficit-based theories to explain observed differences. Research on ethnicity/race and offending, although well-intentioned, often succumbs to such pitfalls. As an alternative, we used cultural assets to explore the relationship between ethnicity/race and offending. Although ethnic identity dimensions were not protective, finding the affirmation/belonging dimension to be a promotive factor has important implications. Our findings contribute to a growing body of ethnic identity research that incorporates cultural resilience models into our understanding of African American adolescents so that we can better understand how to integrate the strengths associated with being African American into culturally relevant prevention and intervention programs (Caldwell et al.2004; Eccles et al. 2006; Evans et al., 2012; Gaylord-Harden, 2012; Neblett et al., 2012; Sellers et al., 2006; Wong et al, 2003).

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Appendix A.

Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

INSTRUCTIONS: In this country, people come from a lot of different cultures and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are African-American/Black, Latino, Mexican-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, American Indian, Anglo-American/Caucasian/White. Every person is born into an ethnic group, or sometimes two or more groups, but people differ on how important their ethnicity is to them, how they feel about it, and how much their behavior is affected by it. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in:
In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be: _____

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my own ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs	○	○	○	○
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.	○	○	○	○
3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means to me	○	○	○	○
4. I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own.	○	○	○	○
5. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	○	○	○	○
6. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.	○	○	○	○
7. I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn't try to mix together	○	○	○	○
8. I am not very clear about the role of my ethnicity in my life.	○	○	○	○
9. I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than my own.	○	○	○	○
10. I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group.	○	○	○	○

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
11. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	O	O	O	O
12. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups.	O	O	O	O
13. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.	O	O	O	O
14. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments	O	O	O	O
15. I don't try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups.	O	O	O	O
16. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.	O	O	O	O
17. I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups.	O	O	O	O
18. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group	O	O	O	O
19. I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own.	O	O	O	O
20. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	O	O	O	O

21. My ethnicity is *(choose one)*

- O Asian, Asian American, or Oriental
- O Black or African American
- O Hispanic or Latino
- O White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic
- O American Indian
- O Parents are from two different groups
- O Other (describe): _____

22. My biological dad's ethnicity is *(choose one)*

- O Asian, Asian American, or Oriental
- O Black or African American
- O Hispanic or Latino
- O White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic
- O American Indian
- O Parents are from two different groups
- O Other (describe) _____

23. My biological mom's ethnicity is *(choose one)*:

- O Asian, Asian American, or Oriental
- O Black or African American
- O Hispanic or Latino
- O White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic
- O American Indian
- O Parents are from two different groups
- O Other (describe)

*Note: For the purposes of this proposal only items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20 will be used in the analyses for ethnic identity as recommended in Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts & Romero (1999).

Appendix B

Life Events and Coping Inventory (LECI)

INSTRUCTIONS: Below is a list of coping behaviors--things that students your age said that they might do when they are feeling stressed. Please read each thing and think to yourself, "If I were feeling stressed, how likely is it that I would do this thing to try to cope with the stress?" Then circle the number that shows how much you think you would do each thing if you were feeling stressed. Use the rating scale below.

I would

If I felt stressed, I would. . .
1. Talk to my parents
2. Talk to my friend
3. Talk to my brother or sister
4. Get advice from someone
5. Talk to a teacher or psychologist
6. Think about it myself, try to figure it out
7. Write about it for myself only (like in a diary)
8. Write to someone else about it
9. Talk to my pet
10. Talk to a tape recorder or just to myself
11. Get away from everyone and just be alone
12. Relax, try to be less tense
13. Go to sleep or sleep it off

If I felt stressed, I would. . .	I would *definitely* not do this 1	2	I would *probably* not do this 3	4	I am *not sure* if I would do this or not 5	6	I would *probably* do this 7	8	I would *definitely* do this 9
14. Get stoned on drugs (like marijuana)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
15. Take other drugs, like pills	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
16. Take my mind off it; think about something else	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
17. Watch TV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
18. Just hold it in	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
19. Try to forget about it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
20. Take it out on myself in some way	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
21. Develop nervous habits like biting my nails or fidgeting	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
22. Smoke cigarettes	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
23. Drink alcohol	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
24. Think about committing suicide	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
25. Hurt myself physically	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
26. Eat	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
27. Clench my teeth	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
28. Stop doing my homework	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
29. Scream	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
30. Hit something, like my pillow or the wall	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
31. Throw things or break things	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
32. Crying	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

If I felt stressed, I would	I would *definitely* not do this 1	2	I would *probably* not do this 3	4	I am *not sure* if I would do this or not 5	6	I would *probably* do this 7	8	I would *definitely* do this 9
33. Clean my room or rearrange it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
34. Scribble or draw something	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
35. Listen to music	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
36. Run or exercise hard	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
37. Take a walk or a bike ride	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
38. Do a hobby or something I enjoy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
39. Think of my good points	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
40. Do something dangerous	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
41. Take it out on someone else	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
42. Hit someone or hurt someone physically	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
43. Get in a fight with someone	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
44. Yell, scream, or curse at someone	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
45. Take someone else's things	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
46. Wreck someone's things or do some vandalism	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
47. Do a sport with someone else	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
48. Go over to a friend's house	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
49. Read a book	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
50. Talk with a youth group leader	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
51. Meditate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
52. Make jokes	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix C

Victimization Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: This next set of questions is about some unpleasant things that happen to people. How many times has each of the following things happened to you in the LAST YEAR.

How many times in the last year. . .

1. Has something been taken directly from you, or an attempt made to do so by force or threatening to hurt you?	
2. Has your car, motorcycle, or bicycle been stolen or has an attempt been made to do so?	
3. Have things been taken from your car, motorcycle, or bike, such as hubcaps, books or packages, or bike locks?	
4. Have any of your things been damaged on purpose, such as car or bike tires slashed, or books and clothing ripped up?	
5. Have some of your things, such as your jacket, notebooks, or sports equipment been stolen from a public place, such as a school cafeteria, restaurant, or bowling alley?	
6. Have some of your things been taken from your locker?	
7. Have you been sexually attacked or raped, or an attempt was made to do so?	
8. Have you been attacked with a weapon, such as a gun, knife, bottle, or chair by someone other than your mother or father?	
9. Have you been beaten up or threatened with being beaten up?	
10. Has your pocket been picked, or your purse or wallet snatched, or an attempt been made to do so?	
11. Have you been attacked because of race or ethnic group?	
12. Have you been verbally attacked because of race or ethnic group?	