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Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination, Hope, and Social Connectedness:

Examining the Predictors of Future Orientation among Emerging Adults

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Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination, Hope, and Social Connectedness: Examining the

Predictors of Future Orientation among Emerging Adults

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, my first teachers, who instilled the highest sense of values, which you modeled to the utmost degree. You planted the seed, then gave me wings and taught me how to fly in sunny or cloudy weather. Because of you, I know that life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning to dance in the rain.

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successes, while reminding me to "stretch," take a deep breath, and enjoy life in the process. This has been an unforgettable and joyous ride, to say the least. Giddy up.

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Determinants of Future Orientation among Emerging Adults

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Decisions made during the transitional age of 18-30, may influence the health and well being of individuals for many years to come. Perhaps more than any earlier life stages, emerging adults have the potential to explore new opportunities, develop their own autonomy, and play a more conscious role in shaping their own development, while overcoming difficulties that may have contributed to their vulnerability in an earlier period of life or the present. To date, few studies have focused on the positive or health promoting, psychosocial factors that contribute to future orientation, particularly among emerging adults. Guided by the Theory of Possible Selves and Social Capital Theory, this quantitative study explored the contribution of perceived discrimination, hope, and social connectedness to future orientation, using a web-based survey.

The present study found that perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and social connectedness were significantly and hope was marginally related to the future orientation of 151 emerging adults who were current or former members of the AmeriCorps program in the state of New Mexico. The findings remained significant after

controlling for race/ethnicity. Social connectedness served as a resource factor in its association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and the outcome of future orientation. Social connectedness also served a protective function, thereby moderating the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation.

Findings suggest that further examination of the potential buffering effects that may offset the negative effects of a risk, such as perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, is warranted. Attention should be given to other potential moderating and/or mediating effects in the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation in subsequent studies. Given the uniqueness of the sample in this study, future researchers should continue to examine populations participating in programs such as AmeriCorps. Results from the current study may have important implications for the value of programs that aim to build civic engagement, social connectedness, and leadership among its members and the communities that are served.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

From a developmental perspective, the period between adolescence and adulthood is of particular interest and importance. For the majority of individuals between the ages of 18-30, decisions made during this transitional period (e.g., education, career attainment, or choice of life partner) may influence health as well as life satisfaction for years to come (Maughan & Champion, 1990; Arnett, 2004). While trying to adapt to new conditions during this period, individuals often experience relatively high levels of stress as well as heavy demands (Maughan & Champion, 1990; Arnett, 2000). During this challenging time, individuals may potentially explore new opportunities, while overcoming earlier difficulties that may have contributed to their vulnerability or exposure to unhealthy habits or behaviors. Adversities or stressors, such as perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, that constitute risks at one period of development may contribute to positive adaptations despite exposure to the threat or adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Some researchers emphasize, "More than at any earlier life stage, there is the potential, and often the requirement, for the individual to play a consciously perceived role in shaping his or her own development" (Maughan & Champion, 1990, pg. 299). Opportunities taken or passed by at this stage (age 18-30) may have a major impact on the individual's possibilities for future growth and satisfaction or risk(s) of poor functioning.

According to Lerner and Brandtstadter (1999), individuals are the products as well as active producers of their own development throughout the lifespan (Brandtstadter

& Lerner, 1999). From this perspective, individuals actively contribute to and shape their own development through individual choice, self monitoring, and goal related activities. Constructs such as identity goals, life planning, and possible selves have underlying notions of intentionality and are associated with individual development (Markus & Nurius, 1987). These constructs and skills become increasingly salient during adolescence and emerging adulthood, particularly since individuals continue to formulate their identities and become more autonomous (Brandtstadter & Lerner, 1999; Arnett, 2004).

This developmental period of life (approximately age 18-30), more recently referred to as "emerging adulthood," provides possibilities not only for the perpetuation of risks but also for major shifts in developmental trajectory. As individuals move from one life stage to another, changes in role transitions and developmental life course trajectories will affect how individuals think about their future. Increasing future orientation, which is the degree to which young adults think about the long term consequences of their immediate behaviors, may be important in preventing risk taking and unhealthy behaviors, particularly among young adults who often experience many changes in their overall life course trajectory.

Future oriented thinkers tend to be more successful and make healthier choices, compared with individuals who are not future oriented (Strathman & Joireman, 2005). Future orientation has been directly linked to academic achievement and higher motivation as well as less risk taking and less substance use among adolescents

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(Strathman & Joireman, 2005; Boyd & Zimbardo, 2005). Much less is known, though, about future orientation among emerging adults. Emerging adults are typically regarded as an especially high-risk group for engaging in health compromising behaviors such as: cigarette smoking, binge drinking, alcohol and illicit drug use, risky methods of dieting, and risky sexual behaviors (DiClemente, Wingood, & Crosby, 2003). These behaviors place an individual at some level of health risk in either the short or long term; consequently, many of these health compromising behaviors have been examined extensively by researchers interested in the main effects on (negative) health outcomes. Similarly, exposure to adversity, such as racial/ethnic discrimination, as it relates directly to negative health outcomes has received increased attention in recent years, particularly among priority populations (Landrine, Klonoff, Corral, Fernandez, & Rosech, 2006).

Despite the presence of multiple risks, however, emerging adults do not automatically experience high levels of adjustment problems (Arnett, 2000). Some researchers purport that variability in outcomes for emerging adults may be attributed to the presence of protective and/or resource factors (Klein & Forehand, 2000; Rutter, 1987), which have not been extensively explored in the literature. Protective factors, or positive variables that interact with risk factors, buffer or offset their impact and are conceptualized as moderators of cumulative risk effects. In contrast, resource factors or compensatory factors lessen the impact of a risk irrespective of the level of risk experienced (Klein & Forehand, 2000) and are conceptualized as having a direct effect on adjustment.

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Given that future orientation has been positively associated with behavioral adjustment among adolescents (Strathman & Joireman, 2005), the present study examined the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation among emerging adults, in the context of protective as well as resource factors that may be present. Guided by the Theory of Possible Selves (Markus & Nurius, 1987), which assumes that individuals' self knowledge of what is possible for them to achieve has motivational properties, and Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000), which acknowledges that social networks have value and that social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups, this study examined the potential resource or protective role(s) of hope and social connectedness in the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation. Hope, which is a positive/motivational state, has been linked to a variety of goal-directed behaviors, psychological processes, and physical as well as mental health outcomes (Snyder, 2000; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). Similarly, social connectedness has been inversely related to risk related behaviors (Chipuer, Pretty, & Delorey, et al., 1999) and develops early in life, extending throughout the lifespan (Lee, 2001). Researchers have not examined perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, future orientation, hope, and social connectedness in the context of emerging adults. Moreover, our knowledge about emerging adults is heavily reliant on convenience samples of middle class, White university or college students, which has been a major criticism in the literature (Arnett & Eisenberg, 2007; Nelson & Chen, 2007).

The present study examined predictors of future orientation in an ethnically/racially diverse sample of 18-30 year olds who were not necessarily college educated. The sample for this study was drawn from the AmeriCorps State program in New Mexico, which is equivalent to a domestic peace corps that engages its members in direct service and capacity building to address unmet community needs. AmeriCorps members served full or part-time for one year or during the summertime and engaged in activities such as: tutoring and/or mentoring youth, assisting crime victims, building or remodeling homes, and restoring parks and community resources. In many ways, AmeriCorps members also mobilize community volunteers and strengthen the capacity of the organizations where they serve (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2009). AmeriCorps members are often in between attaining a college or graduate level education and pursuing a career, which makes them an ideal population of emerging adults to study.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study was four-fold. (1) First, this study examined the direct or main associations of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social connectedness on the outcome of future orientation, while controlling for race/ethnicity (see Figure 1). (2) Second, this study examined if hope and/or social connectedness serve a resource or compensatory function. More specifically, this study explored whether hope and/or social connectedness had a significant main effect on the outcome (future orientation) once the effect of the risk factor (perceived perceived racial/ethnic

discrimination) was accounted for, thereby improving or increasing future orientation. In doing so, (3) this study examined whether the direct associations were moderated by ethnicity, thereby determining if the associations among perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social connectedness, and the outcome of future orientation varied across ethnic minority (e.g., Hispanic, Native American, African American) and White (e.g., non-Hispanic) emerging adults (see Figure 1). (4) Fourth, this study explored the potential interactive associations between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and hope or social connectedness as related to future orientation. More specifically, this study examined if hope and/or social connectedness served a protective role, or buffered the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination (risk) and future orientation (see Figure 2).
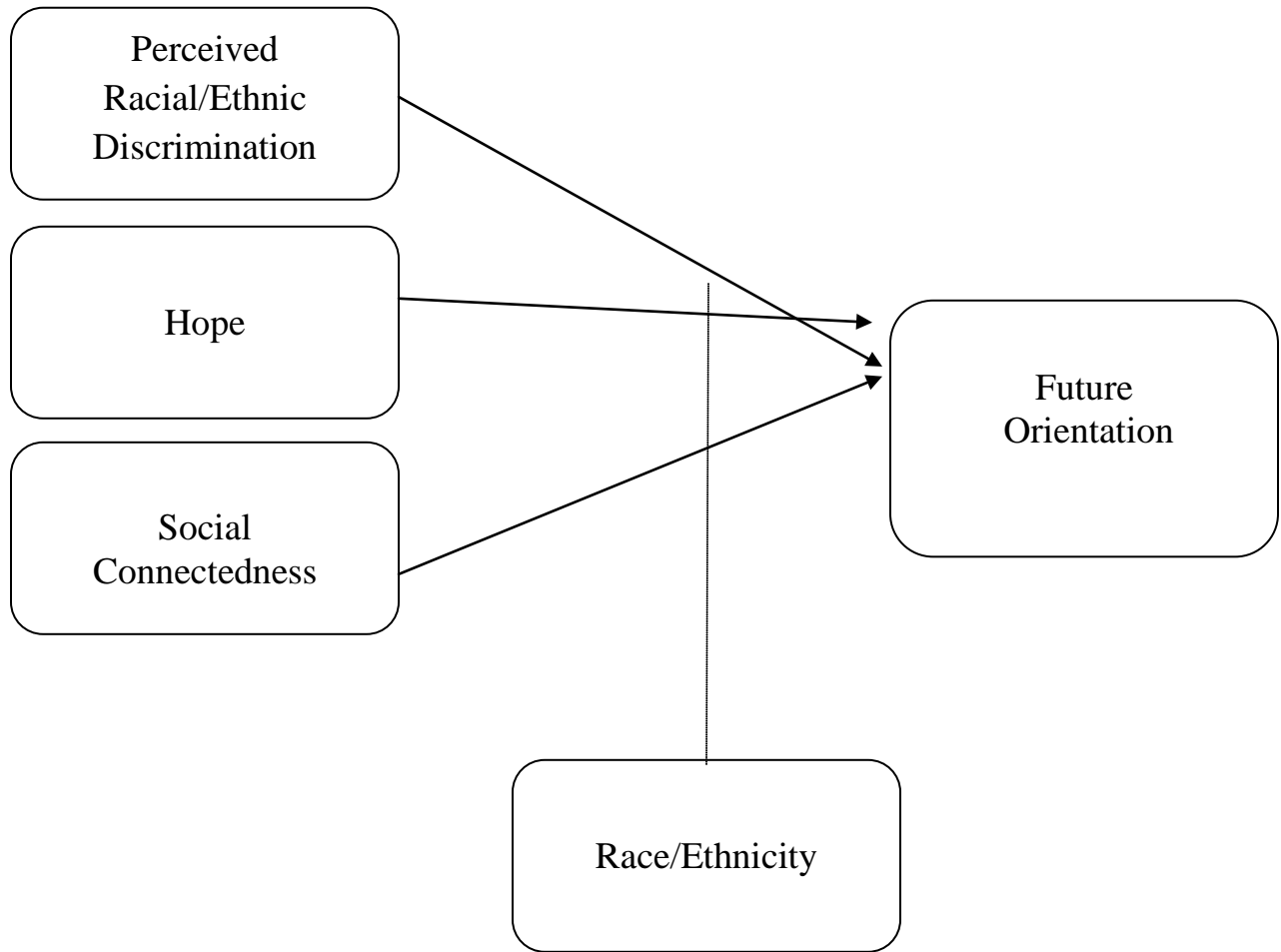
Figure 1. Conceptual model depicting the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, social connectedness, race/ethnicity, and future orientation.
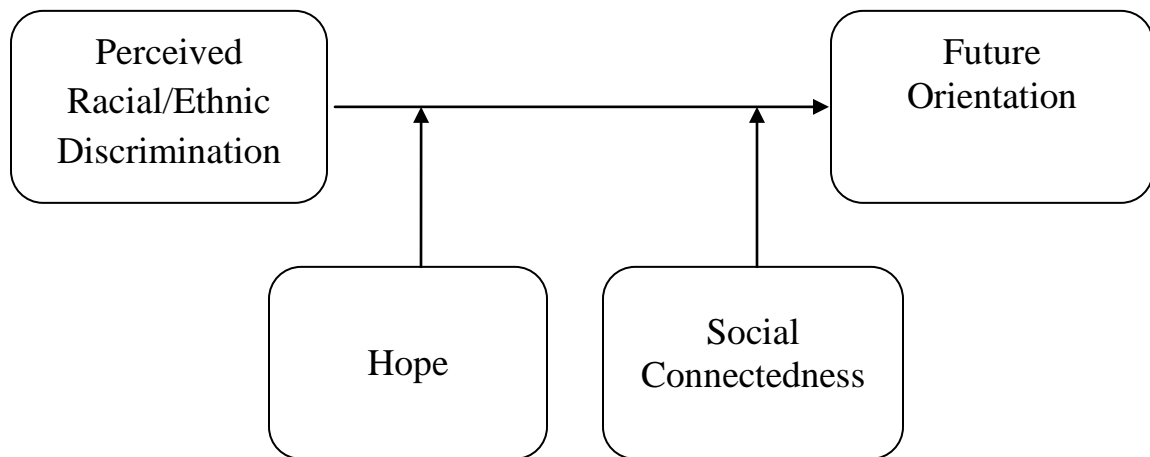
Figure 2. Conceptual model depicting hope and social connectedness as protective factors in the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation.

Hypotheses

Based on the Theory of Possible Selves and Social Capital Theory, the following hypotheses were made.

H1: Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social connectedness would each be directly associated with future orientation when controlling for race/ethnicity.

a. Higher levels of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination would be associated with lower future orientation.

b. Higher levels of hope would be associated with higher future orientation.

c. Higher levels of social connectedness would be associated with higher future orientation.

H2: Hope and social connectedness would serve a resource function in the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation.

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a. Hope would serve as a resource factor, such that a significant main effect between hope and future orientation would exist even after the risk (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination) was taken into account.

b. Social connectedness would serve as a resource factor, such that a significant main effect between social connectedness and future orientation would exist even after the impact of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was taken into account.

H3: The associations of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social connectedness to future orientation would be moderated by ethnicity.

a. The relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation would be stronger for ethnic minorities (e.g., Hispanics, Native Americans, African Americans) than for Whites (e.g., non-Hispanic, Whites).

b. The relationship between hope and future orientation would be stronger for ethnic minorities than Whites.

c. The relationship between social connectedness and future orientation would be stronger for ethnic minorities than for Whites.

H4: Hope and social connectedness would moderate the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation.

a. The association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation would be offset or buffered by high levels of hope. Hope would serve as a protective factor, such that the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future

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orientation would be weaker when levels of hope were high compared to when levels were low.

b. The association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation would be offset or buffered by high levels of social connectedness. Social connectedness would serve as a protective factor, such that the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation would be weaker when levels of social connectedness were high compared to when levels were low.

Definition of Terms

AmeriCorps- AmeriCorps is synonymous with the term "domestic Peace Corps" and is one of many programs that recognizes the importance of community participation and is designed, in part, to provide leadership and civic engagement opportunities to its program members (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2008b). On average, more than 75,000 individuals in the United States (U.S.) participate in AmeriCorps each year, the majority of which is emerging adults. With the recent passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, President Obama plans to increase the number of members to 250,000 per year. President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act into law on April 21, 2009. This legislation aims to triple the size of the AmeriCorps program over the next eight years (from 75,000 to 250,000 members), aiming to help vulnerable communities, improve education, push energy efficiency, increase access to health care, and help veterans. There are four arms of AmeriCorps

(AmeriCorps State, AmeriCorps National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC). Only members of AmeriCorps State were included in the current study.

Civic Engagement- The involvement in an activity related to community, often connected with duties and obligations (New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism, 2006). Civic engagement consists of behaviors, attitudes, and actions that reflect concerned and active membership in a community (e.g., neighborhood based efforts) and/or larger national or international movements. Involvement can range from serving on non-profit boards or school boards, to political participation, or social activism on a local or global level.

Emerging Adults/Young Adults- The developmental phase located between adolescence and adulthood during which individuals perceive themselves as neither adolescents nor fully developed adults (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults between the ages of 18-30 were included in this study.

Future Orientation- The degree to which emerging adults consider the long term consequences of their immediate behaviors (Strathman & Joireman, 2005).

Hope- A positive, motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals) (Herth, 1992).

Moderator- A variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent variable (e.g., race/ethnicity) and a dependent variable (e.g., future orientation) of interest (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997). Moderation was

tested in this study by creating interaction terms, which are the products of two main effects (e.g., perceived racial/ethnic discrimination x hope).

Perceived Racial/ethnic Discrimination- Self-reported experiences of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination in various situations (Landrine et al., 2006). This is a term often used to represent subordinate group members' perceptions of being treated unfairly. Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination can be conceptualized as a type of stress that necessitates significant psychosocial adjustment.

Possible Selves- An aspect of self-concept that has a future orientation. Markus and Nurius (1986) define possible selves as representations of individuals' ideas of whom or what they *might* become, whom they *would like to* become, as well as who they are *afraid of* becoming. Markus and Nurius (1986) assume that all individuals have possible selves and these selves can be easily reflected upon. The nature of possible selves and the importance to each individual can vary depending on the individual's position in the lifespan, yet possible selves can be stable and contextually grounded (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Smith & Freund, 2002). Possible selves can include positive attributes, such as symbols or reminders of hope (hoped-for selves), as well as negative attributes such as reminders about tragedies to be avoided (feared-for selves) (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Protective Factor – A personal/individual or contextual factor that offsets the negative impact of a risk factor (e.g., discrimination) on developmental or health outcomes (e.g., future orientation) (Luthar et al, 2000; Klein & Forehand, 2000). A protective factor is statistically represented as an interaction term, whereby it protects or

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buffers the individual against experiencing negative outcomes by lowering or eliminating the outcome occurrence. In the event when an individual is at elevated risk of the outcome due to one or more risk factors, protective factor(s) lessen or eliminate the (negative) outcome occurrence (e.g., negative/poor future orientation). In the event where a protective factor serves a protective function, this is often referred to as moderation (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Resource or Compensatory Factor- Refers to assets that help/enable emerging adults to avoid negative effects. Assets refer to the positive individual factors within the individual (e.g., hope) that influence an outcome (e.g., future orientation) (Klein & Forehand, 2000). In the current study, resource factors refer to an asset that is hypothesized to act in an ameliorative manner (increasing the likelihood of a more positive future orientation).

(Putnam's) Social Capital Theory- Is a contemporary, sociological theory which acknowledges that social networks have value and social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups (Putnam, 2000).

Social Connectedness- A personal attribute reflecting enduring closeness with the social world in general (Lee & Robbins, 1995).

Survey Monkey- SurveyMonkey is a private company that enables users to create their own web-based surveys. SurveyMonkey was the data collection mode chosen for the current study.

Delimitations

Current and former AmeriCorps members who were 18-30 years of age and who completed their service in New Mexico between 2004 and 2009 were recruited for this study. Consequently, results are not be generalizable to the emerging adult population or AmeriCorps members who were not participants in this study or those who participate(d) in AmeriCorps programs in other states.

Significance of Study

The study was designed to extend the emerging adulthood literature, while also contributing to the increasing knowledge and applicability of the Possible Selves as well as Social Capital theories. Few, if any published studies have examined the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation among emerging adults. Moreover, the literature is sparse in examining the role of positive constructs such as hope or social connectedness in the context of future orientation among individuals who have experienced perceived racial/ethnic discrimination. Luthar and colleagues (2000) highlight the value of researching resource or protective factors at different points in human development. The current study adds to the literature by examining hope and/or social connectedness, as serving resource (health promoting) or protective (buffering) functions in the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation.

Most existing risk and protective factor research focuses on children and/or adolescents; yet, much can be gained by having a better empirical understanding of

resource and protective factors at any point in the life cycle. Researchers and/or practitioners may be better equipped to capitalize on periods of developmental change (e.g., emerging adulthood) as unique opportunities for promoting positive adaptation, particularly when designing programs for diverse groups that may currently experience or have been previously exposed to adversity (Luthar, et al., 2000).

Since the sample for this study was drawn from current and former AmeriCorps members who served in the state of New Mexico, it was expected that the demographics of the sample would be closely related to the demographics of the entire state. According to the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 57.7% of NM residents are of ethnic minority decent, with the majority being Hispanic/Latino (41%) and Native American/American Indian (13%). Race/ethnic status is conceptualized as the self-identification by individuals according to the racial/ethnic group(s) with which they closely identify (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Researchers have consistently noted that discrimination is a ubiquitous problem that affects the lives of ethnic minorities (Landrine et al., 2006; Gee, 2002). Therefore, it is probable that some participants in the current study have experienced at least some level of racial/ethnic discrimination in their lifetime. In addition, emerging adults continue to explore new opportunities, while continuing to form their own identity, develop their own autonomy, and play a more conscious role in shaping their own development and, therefore, were an ideal age group to examine in this study. Emerging adults may be oriented to the future because of their focus on self, their life goals, and their transition into adulthood (Arnett, 2007b).

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CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Traditional approaches to understanding identity and development, such as that described by Erik Erikson in the 1960s, describe the interplay between the individual and his or her biological makeup, psychology, social recognition, and response within a historical context (Kroger, 2006). Erikson believed that every human being goes through a certain number of stages to reach his or her full development and theorized eight stages that a human being goes through from birth to death (Kroger, 2006). One developmental stage, referred to as moratorium, is characterized by individuals who are actively involved in identity exploration, but have not made a commitment. Later theorists, though, have differentially emphasized other characteristics of development in which individuals construct meaning and identity, cultural and social influences that shape identity, and the narrative of one's own life story as the foundation in the creation of identity (Arnett, 2000, 2004).

As individuals become more autonomous, they also become more selective about their social networks (Carstensen, 1993; Putnam, 2000). As individuals continue to age, they tend to place a high value on emotional satisfaction and often spend more time with familiar individuals with whom they have had rewarding relationships. This selective narrowing of social interaction maximizes positive emotional experiences and minimizes emotional risks (Mather & Carstensen, 2005). Some socioemotional selectivity theorists believe that older adults systematically hone their social networks so that available social partners satisfy their emotional needs and individuals are able to focus on the types of

goals that they are motivated to achieve. Knowledge-related goals, for example, aim at knowledge acquisition, career planning, and the development of new social relationships and other endeavors that will pay off in the future (Carstensen, 1993; Strathman & Joireman, 2005). On the other hand, emotion-related goals are aimed at emotion regulation or the pursuit of emotionally gratifying interactions with social partners and other pursuits whose benefits can be realized in the present. When people perceive their future as open ended, they tend to focus on future-oriented/knowledge-related goals but when they feel that time is running out, their focus tends to shift towards present-oriented/emotion-related goals (Carstensen, 1993; Strathman & Joireman, 2005). Researchers often compare age groups (e.g., young and old adulthood) but the shift in goal priorities is a gradual process that begins in early adulthood. Theorists contend that it is not "age" that is causing the goal shifts, but rather age-associated changes in future orientation and/or future time perspective (Strathman & Joireman, 2005; Mather & Carstensen, 2005).

Emerging Adulthood

Arnett (2000) defined emerging adulthood as the developmental phase located between adolescence and adulthood during which individuals perceive themselves as neither adolescents nor fully developed adults (see Figure 3). This phase, according to Arnett, ranges from the late teens to the late twenties (e.g., 18-30) and is characterized by five main features: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in between, and feeling that it is the age of possibility. Arnett proposes that emerging adulthood is a

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discrete phase (or stage) in the life course during which individuals are in the process of clarifying their identities while engaging in exploration of love, work, and worldviews. As opposed to every other stage in the lifespan, emerging adulthood is the phase during which individuals are least expected to commit to social institutions (Arnett, 2000). Although it is expected that emerging adults engage in social institutions, the participation does not require commitment. For example, most normal functioning children are required to attend school in the U.S., while (most) individuals in the emerging adulthood phase are not.

Compared with adults who engage in professional and family responsibilities, emerging adults tend to have more freedom and less pressure to make decisions that have lasting ramifications (Arnett, 2000). The institutional participation, such as AmeriCorps membership, in which emerging adults do choose to engage, is more volitional than earlier times in their life course (Putnam, 2000). Therefore, there is tremendous variability in the lifestyles among emerging adults, making this developmental period particularly heterogeneous (Arnett, 2007b). The benchmarks often associated with this age period have changed markedly over the past few decades, as the median age at which individuals marry and/or become parents has risen sharply in industrialized societies (Arnett & Eisenberg, 2007). Moreover, the proportion of individuals who pursue postsecondary education into their 20s has also increased.

Emerging Adulthood--- as depicted by Arnett →

A — Adolescence, Emerging Adulthood, Adulthood

B — Adolescence, Emerging Adulthood, Adulthood

C — Adolescence, Adulthood — Emerging Adulthood

D — Adolescence, Adulthood

E — Adolescence, Emerging Adulthood, Young Adulthood, Middle Adulthood, Late Adulthood

Arnett (2007a) posits that Erikson's (1950) life course paradigm, which made sense in the early to mid 20th century, no longer fits the normative pattern in industrialized societies. Instead, transitions into and out of different periods of the adult life course may be more gradual. Arnett originally proposed the B configuration above, but more recently proposed E as an improvement on B.

Figure 3. Possible configurations of emerging adulthood.

Adapted from "*Emerging adulthood: What is it, and what is it good for?*" by J.J. Arnett (2007), *Child Development Perspectives, 1*(2), 69. Copyright 2007.

Although more attention has been given to this development period in recent

years, Arnett has been criticized about the extent to which the developmental period he

describes as "emerging adulthood" should be considered "theory" or even its own life

stage (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Some researchers are concerned about the applicability of

Arnett's theory and how it may transfer to different cultural or national groups, other than

the White, middle class, American populations with which Arnett conducted his initial research (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Arnett posits that among industrialized countries, the same developmental patterns are occurring such that individuals are staying in school longer, getting married at an older age, and are delaying parenthood compared to just a few decades ago (Arnett, 2007b). Consequently, researchers have recently investigated the universality of emerging adulthood among Chinese (Nelson & Chen, 2007), Japanese (Rosenberger, 2007), Asian (Fuligni, 2007), Latin American cultures (Galambos & Loreto Martinez, 2007), and European cultures (Douglass, 2007).

Major Tenets of Emerging Adulthood

      Identity exploration. The most central characteristic of emerging adulthood is that it is a time in the life course when individuals experience the most exploration in a variety of areas, particularly in love, work, and worldviews (Arnett, 2004). Historically, research on identity formation focused on adolescence. However, this same research showed that only minimal amounts of identity achievement were developed by the time individuals completed high school and identity development continues through the teens and twenties (Arnett, 2004). Arnett (2000) posits that the exploration process begins in adolescence but making enduring decisions as a result of the exploration does not occur until the late twenties. Consequently, exploration occurs primarily during emerging adulthood. In the course of exploration, individuals develop their identities as they learn more about who they are and what they want out of life (Arnett, 2004). It is not expected that an individual will achieve identity once and for all during emerging adulthood;

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rather, it is expected that individuals will engage in increased exploration during this phase.

Identity exploration can result in instability, confusion, and rejection due to the many challenges or life stressors that arise during this phase. Still, most emerging adults are optimistic that they will eventually achieve their goals (Arnett, 2000). The freedom to explore various options is exciting and eventful, but may also be stressful as most emerging adults do not have clear ideas as to where their explorations will lead (Arnett, 2004). During this time, many individuals experience unsettlement in terms of emotional, psychological, and interpersonal stability. The exploration process may also elicit uncertainty, excitement, freedom, fear, and optimism (Arnett, 2004).

Instability. Emerging adulthood is also a phase of immense instability (Arnett, 2004). Demographic shifts have changed the nature of normative development in the late teens and twenties for individuals in industrialized societies. It is no longer normative for individuals of this age to settle into long-term adult roles. Rather, it is more normative for individuals of this age to be involved in continuous change and exploration (Arnett, 1998). As emerging adults further explore opportunities, plans may change and revisions to plans made previously may occur (Arnett, 2004). With each revision, emerging adults learn something new about themselves, which enables them to develop a clearer vision of the future they want.

As recently as 1970 the typical 21-year old was married or engaged, caring for a newborn child or pregnant, had completed their schooling, and had a full-time job or was

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a stay at home parent (Arnett, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2007a, 2007b). More recently, marriage and parenthood tend to be postponed by at least five years and education may last several more years through an extended undergraduate or post baccalaureate program (Arnett, 2000). Similarly, it is becoming more common for college-bound high school graduates to postpone college enrollment for a year or longer, while they travel or explore novel opportunities. It is also typical for emerging adults to change jobs frequently as they attempt to find employment that pays well but is also fulfilling on a personal level (Arnett, 2004).

Focus on the self. Emerging adults make many decisions for themselves, entailing the need to clarify in one's own mind what is wanted or desired (Arnett, 2004). Arnett explained that it is normal and healthy for emerging adults to be self-focused in order to develop skills, gain understanding of themselves, and begin to figure out what they want in the future. Therefore, the goal of being self-focused is to learn how to be self-sufficient, which emerging adults view as a necessary step before committing themselves to other roles in work and love. Similarly, when compared to adolescents, emerging adults tend to plan ahead, consider their future education and/or career attainment, and are better able to think about or consider their future (Steinberg, Graham, & O'Brien, 2009). The future orientation literature suggests that older individuals are more oriented to the future than adolescents due to developmental differences in self-perceptions (Steinberg et al., 2009; Strathman & Joireman, 2005).

Feeling in-between. Emerging adulthood is the age of feeling in-between and in transition (Arnett, 2000, 2004). An individual may feel as though he or she is no longer an adolescent, yet has not achieved adulthood either. These individuals are sandwiched between the restrictions and limitations of adolescence and the responsibilities of adulthood. Approximately 30% of individuals in their late twenties and early thirties report that they have reached adulthood, but only in some respects and not in others (Arnett, 2004). This finding suggests that the attainment of adulthood is a gradual process.

Researchers posit that emerging adults subjectively associate the following with reaching adulthood: being able to accept responsibility for one's self, being able to make independent decisions, being financially independent, and having minimal or no demographic transitions or changes (Arnett, 1998). Because these criteria are reached gradually, it might be expected that individuals' perceptions of reaching adulthood are gradual too.

The age of possibility. Arnett posits that emerging adulthood is the age of possibility (Arnett, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2007a). During this life stage individuals view their futures as wide open, and little about the rest of their lives has been decided with certainty. Examining future orientation in the context of emerging adulthood, therefore, seems appropriate given the assumption that individuals vary in the extent to which they consider distant outcomes in choosing their present behavior. The conceptualization emerging adults develop regarding their future (e.g., hopes, expectations, and aspirations)

is an important factor because it strongly influences identity formation, goal setting, decision-making processes, and ultimately their behavior (Nurmi, 2005; Strathman & Joireman, 2005). Most emerging adults are optimistic that they will eventually achieve their goals and life dreams (Arnett, 2007b). Previous research suggests that individuals are heavily influenced by their economic circumstances and future projections for economic opportunity (e.g., Rindfuss, Morgan, & Swicegood, 1988). In fact, some findings suggest that emerging adults from lower social class backgrounds are more optimistic than those from middle class backgrounds (Arnett, 2007b). Moreover, when compared to the middle social class, some emerging adults from lower socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds are more likely to believe that their adult lives will be better than their parents' lives have been (Arnett, 2007b). This belief further illustrates Arnett's point that most emerging adults are optimistic in their ability to achieve their goals and dreams, despite adversity they may have experienced earlier in life (Arnett, 2007b).

In emerging adulthood, many individuals have left their families of origin but have not yet made commitments in work roles/careers and/or relationships, so they have an unparalleled chance to change their lives. For those who originate from troubled or diverse backgrounds, it is during this phase in life that they have the greatest chance to try to change or modify their path or developmental trajectory (Arnett, 2004). It is during emerging adulthood that individuals have exceptional opportunity to make independent decisions. Regardless of background, Arnett (2000, 2004) explains that emerging adults experience the possibility of change.

Implications for Including Diverse Populations in Studies of Emerging Adulthood

Although the new conceptualization of "emerging adulthood" as a distinct life phase is useful in understanding the transition to adulthood for young contemporary individuals, there are several cultural implications to consider. Emerging adulthood is culturally constructed; it can exist only in societies that postpone the entry into adult roles and responsibilities until the late twenties (Facio & Micocci, 2003). Thus, this life stage most likely exists in cultures that are highly industrialized or postindustrial, and value individualism. Young people in different cultures may experience emerging adulthood differently depending on value systems and historical trends (Arnett, 1997). Historically, individuals of lower SES, minority ethnic background, and rural residents tended to complete the transition to adulthood earlier than individuals who were not in these groups (Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark, & Gordon 2003). Among individuals of higher SES families, increased educational opportunities may delay residential and financial independence as most will pursue higher education. On the other hand, individuals who enter full-time work rather than higher education are more likely to be financially self-sufficient and living in their own residence (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994).

To date, most of Arnett's research has been conducted with White, middle-class Americans and more recently, Danish citizens (Arnett, 2007a). Consequently, it is unclear if emerging adults from all SES backgrounds experience this period as a time of possibility (Arnett & Eisenberg, 2007). Arnett posited that specific characteristics of emerging adulthood likely depend on cultural context (Arnett & Eisenberg, 2007). Yet,

assumptions about the universality of this proposed period of the life course are debatable. The 2007 special section of *Child Development Perspectives* sheds light on the similarities and differences in emerging adulthood and the extent to which this period of life applies to different cultural and national groups (see Arnett & Eisenberg, 2007).

There is some empirical evidence that emerging adulthood is, to some degree, a distinct period of the life course and there are unique gender, cultural, and social class attributes (Nelson & Chen, 2007; Galambos & Loreto Martinez, 2007). Although researchers are beginning to explore emerging adulthood in contexts beyond the U.S., most studies are limited by their inclusion of participants who are currently enrolled in a college or university. The current study aimed to explore emerging adulthood further, by examining perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation in the context of individuals who are not necessarily enrolled in a college or university. It was expected that some of the AmeriCorps members surveyed would be enrolled in higher education; however, the sample would be somewhat diverse in terms of educational attainment and/or educational aspirations (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2008a).

Theoretical Considerations: Intentional Self Development as an Underlying Paradigm

Intentionality is a key contributor to adult development (Brandtstadter, 2006; Brandtstadter & Lerner, 1999). At the heart of intentional self development is the notion that individuals are the products as well as active producers of their own development throughout the lifespan (Brandtstadter & Lerner, 1999). The basic premise is that individuals actively contribute to and shape their own development through individual

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choice, self monitoring, and goal related activities. According to Brandtstadter and Lerner (1999, xi), "constructs such as identity goals, life tasks, personal projects, life planning, possible selves, and life themes" have underlying notions of intentionality and are associated with individual development. These constructs and skills become increasingly salient during adolescence and emerging adulthood, particularly since individuals continue to formulate their identities and become more autonomous.

Theory of Possible Selves

Since intentional self development assumes that individuals contribute to their own development, a possible selves framework is appropriate in the current study. Possible selves are an aspect of the self concept that has a future orientation, which influences current behavior. Possible selves have been researched across a wide variety of contexts and results indicate its utility ranging from the workplace to health behavior (Hooker, 1999). Markus and Nurius (1986) introduced the concept and theory of self-development called "possible selves," which is based on the notion that the future self acts as a motivator for behavior. According to the possible selves construct, what people hope to become, expect to become, and fear becoming influences and motivates current behavior (Markus and Nurius, 1986, 1987). Possible selves are separate from conceptions of the current self but are integrally related to the current self by how the possibilities are formed and by their influence over current behavior (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Markus and Nurius (1986) first described the concept of possible selves as formed through interaction with others, comparisons with others, and fears about what one could become.

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Markus and Nurius (1986) conceived of the possible self as built from the connection between taking on roles that conform to the expectations of others, adjusting one's behavior based on responses from others, and imagining potential roles. Prior to Markus and Nurius' (1986) work, the connection between the self and the perception of future selves remained spurious. The possible selves construct helps illuminate that connection.

The psychological Theory of Possible Selves can be utilized to understand determinants of emerging adults' future orientation, which is the extent to which individuals consider distant outcomes of their current behaviors and the extent to which individuals are influenced by these potential outcomes. Since emerging adulthood is a time of uncertainty and questioning of the self (Arnett, 2000), an individual's possible self is constantly susceptible to positive and/or negative influences (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In regard to future orientation, an individual's possible selves are linked to identity goals as those goals relate to who s/he may become. Possible selves consist of representations of long-term goals, since those long term goals are the cognitive manifestation of enduring goals and aspirations (Markus & Nurius, 1986). As emerging adults pursue different goals or activities (such as AmeriCorps participation), they are constantly receiving feedback about their ability to interact with others. Markus, Cross, and Wurf (1990) hypothesized that individuals likely construct possible selves for themselves in domains in which they feel competent that they can succeed. Therefore, possible selves function as incentives for future behavior. Possible selves that are more frequently activated are more likely to lead to a change in actions than possible selves

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that are rarely considered (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Norman & Aron, 2003). According to Cross and Markus (1991), both hoped-for and feared possible selves are capable of motivating individuals to engage in health behaviors. Individual's self knowledge of what is possible for them to achieve has motivational properties; it serves to frame behavior and guide the appropriate course of action. For example, if an emerging adult feels highly competent in his/her writing skills, then he or she may create a possible self of becoming a writer. However, if an individual does not feel highly competent in writing, then he or she will likely construct a possible self that does not highly depend on high quality writing skills in the future.

Possible selves are thought to be powerful motivators of behavior because they provide self-personalized goals to strive to attain. A possible selves' lens, therefore, is particularly useful and relevant for studying the variables that may contribute to the healthy development as well as future orientation among emerging adults in this study.

Since emerging adulthood is a period of life that may be a high risk time of development, possible selves are relevant in the lives of emerging adults who may be contemplating what the future holds and among individuals who want to play an active role in their own development. Possible selves also serve an evaluative function. Possible selves both motivate and provide a basis for self-evaluation (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). As emerging adults are developing, in addition to serving a motivating function, possible selves also help individuals judge how well they are doing along the way, which may facilitate the refinement of future possible selves.

Theoretical Considerations: Social Capital and Health

Although a Possible Selves framework is ideal in the current study, the underlying premise that individuals contribute to their own development is not sufficient in and of itself. Moreover, individuals do not exist in a vacuum and are active contributors to their own development and are also influenced by the environments in which they live (Adler, 1998; Abbott & Freeth, 2008). Researchers have shifted from an individual to an ecological focus to view individual health within the context of the social environment. A landmark report from the Institute of Medicine indicated that the next generation of prevention research should be focused on designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions that build social capital (Smedley & Syme, 2000).

Social capital, defined as features of social structure-such as trust, norms, associated membership, and networks that facilitate collective action for mutual benefit, is a concept that continues to receive considerable attention (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993; Milner 2002; Putnam, 2000). In its simplest form, social capital is about connections among people (Huysman & Wulf, 2004). Social capital was first used to describe the opportunities and advantages available to people through membership of certain communities (Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 2000) and the benefits of social capital as applied to "health" have only recently been examined (Abbott & Freeth, 2008; Lochner, Kawachi, Brennan, & Buka, 2003). Although social capital is an elusive concept to define (see Putnam, 2000), social capital is believed to play an important role in the

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functioning of community life and may be associated with variations in health between societies and communities (Pilkington, 2002; Cattell, 2001).

Social capital has been empirically linked to improved child development and adolescent well being (Vimpani, Lerner, & Keating, 2000), lower violent crime rates and youth delinquency (Hagan, Merkens, & Boehnke, 1995; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999), lower rates of teenage pregnancy (Gold, Kennedy, Connell, & Kawachi, 2002), lower susceptibility to binge drinking (Weitzman & Kawachi, 2000), reduced mortality (Kawachi, Kennedy, & Lochner et al., 1997), higher rates of self rated health (Kawachi et al., 1999), the promotion of successful youth development, lower prevalence of depression (Lin, 2000; Bullers, 2000) and reduced loneliness (Peuninx, van Tilburg, Kriegsman, Boeke, Deeg, & van Eijk, 1999), sustained participation in anti-smoking programs (Lindstrom, Hanson, Ostergren, & Berglund, 2000), higher perceptions of well being (Raphael, Renwick, Brown, Steinmetz, Sehdev, & Philips, 2001; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004), and the encouragement of political participation and the smooth functioning of democracies (Putnam, 2000). Social capital can serve as both an end and a means to the well being of citizens and their communities. Unlike the field of economic development, where some critics view social capital as a politically driven distraction and lobby for its abandonment, the field of public health holds a general consensus that social capital matters to at least some degree (Pilkington, 2002; Carlson & Chamberlain, 2003; Wollcock & Narayan, 2000; Kawachi, Kim, Coutta, & Subramanian, 2004).

From a psychological perspective, social relationships are a powerful resource for successful aging (Lang & Carstensen, 2002) and common psychological benefits from group membership or social support, might serve as underlying processes or mechanisms for the positive effects of social capital (Baltes & Carstensen, 1996; Trommsdorff, 1983). These positive effects might accrue from being in an environment with a high level of social capital or high levels of social support (Trommsdorff, 1983; Lang & Carstensen, 2002). According to Trommsdorff (1983), socialization is always future oriented, and future orientation (as a component of the person's time perspective) is an integral part of the socialized personality. The quantity and, perhaps more saliently, the quality of social relationships have been consistently associated with better physical and psychological functioning (Fratiglioni, Wang, Ericsson, Maytan, & Winblad, 2000). From this perspective, life span scholars have emphasized the proactive role of the individual in managing the social and psychological resources that contribute to successful development across adulthood (e.g., Baltes & Carstensen, 1996; Lang & Carstensen, 2002). Through the self-selection of goals and environments, people influence the course and quality of their individual lives (see Baltes & Carstensen, 1996; Elder, 1986; Elder, Shanahan, & Colerick Clipp, 1994).

Social capital, therefore, is sometimes viewed as a "conceptual missing link in community development, empowerment, and health promotion theory and practice" (Carlson & Chamberlain, 2003, p.325). There is an increased interest in investing in social capital as a strategy to improve population health and development (The World

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Bank Group, 2001). More often than not, individuals interpret social capital with a positive sentiment and social capital has been linked to other social processes. Despite its wide use in academic literature in recent years, social capital remains an elusive concept but still has great utility as a theoretical foundation for the present study. Service programs, such as AmeriCorps, are often based on the notion that civic engagement and social connectedness have merit and are associated with positive outcomes within a community. Even amongst communities/neighborhoods where resources are scarce, individuals often thrive because they feel empowered to take collective action for the mutual benefit of the community and have a strong sense of human capital (e.g., mutual aid, cooperation, empowerment, and other factors that do not necessarily require financial/monetary resources).

Given that higher levels of social capital have been associated with more health benefits for communities (The World Bank Group, 2001), it seems logical that social capital may also contribute to positive future orientation, which is the primary outcome of interest in the current study. Although social capital is a guiding theoretical framework of this study and it will not be measured on an individual or community level, the notion of "social capital" has theoretical importance given that the AmeriCorps members who participate in this study have been exposed to some social capital during their term(s) of service, which may impact how individuals perceive their future (New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism, 2006).

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Future Orientation

The conceptualization emerging adults develop regarding their future (e.g., hopes, expectations, and aspirations) is an important factor because it strongly influences identity formation, goal setting, decision-making processes, and ultimately their behavior (Kerpelman & Mosher, 2004; Lewin, 1948; Nurmi, 1991; Nuttin, 1985; Pulkkinen & Ronka, 1994; Seginer, Vermulst, & Shoyer, 2004; Trommsdorff & Lamm, 1980; Trommsdorff, Lamm, & Schmidt 1979). Future orientation is described as a complex phenomenon consisting of motivational, cognitive, and affective processes (Nurmi, 2005; Strathman & Joireman, 2005). In other words, the development of future orientation is influenced by many psychological and social factors. Strathman and colleagues (1994) defined future orientation as the extent to which individuals consider distant outcomes of their current behaviors and the extent to which individuals are influenced by these potential outcomes. Future orientation has been mentioned in the developmental literature as being linked to possible selves, which are representations or ideas individuals have about whom or what they *might* become, whom they *would like to* become, as well as who they are *afraid of* becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

In their seminal article introducing the Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) scale, Strathman and colleagues (1994) provide evidence for the reliability and validity of a scale measuring future orientation and offer important implications for how this construct affects attitudes and behaviors. A general understanding of time, knowledge about future events, planning skills, and some understanding of one's abilities

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to deal with future challenges are prerequisites of future orientation (Nurmi, 2005). Another requirement is for an individual to have developed a set of interests and values which span the near as well as distant future (Nurmi, 2005).

Future orientation is embedded in an individual's life-span development in two significant ways. First, a particular life stage and its corresponding challenges, demands, and opportunities channel the ways an individual thinks about and acts upon the future (Nurmi, 2005; Stratman & Joireman, 2005; Nurmi, 2005). These sociocultural structures, for instance, are often described as developmental tasks, role transitions, age norms, and institutional careers, which channel an individual's future orientation in numerous ways (Strathman & Joireman, 2005). Future orientation, therefore, may be particularly salient among emerging adults since individuals of this age are still undergoing role/work/educational transitions as well as exploring their identities. An individual's future orientation reflects differences in opportunities and normative expectations that may be related to gender, age, or social/cultural background. Thinking about and acting upon the future lay the foundation for how individuals select a variety of life course trajectories and direct their own development (Nurmi, 2005). For example, subsequent higher level of effort invested in the actualization of a particular goal is likely to influence an individual's developmental life course trajectory (Nurmi, 2005). According to Nurmi, "several successive stages of a future orientation need to be embarked on properly before a particular developmental trajectory is attained" (Nurmi, 2005, p. 36). Moreover, as individuals move from one life stage to another, changes in role transitions,

age-graded developmental tasks, and institutional tracks (e.g., school, career) will affect how that individual thinks about his or her own future.

Outcomes associated with future orientation. Future orientation has been positively associated with academic and behavioral adjustment (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996; Nurmi, 1991; Werner & Smith, 1992; Joireman, 1999; Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Kerley, 1993; Zimbardo, Keough, & Boyd, 1997). Although most studies have been limited to children and adolescents, increasing future orientation may be important in preventing risk taking and unhealthy behaviors. Future orientation also may play an important role in promoting positive adjustment for youth facing adversities related to low SES. Wyman and colleagues (1993) concluded that thinking about the future or having a positive future orientation was related to enhanced socioemotional development and school adjustment in a longitudinal study of 136 nine to eleven year old children living in poverty. In another study, Wyman (1992) and colleagues found that positive expectations for the future were related to characteristics of positive adjustment among children ages nine to eleven. A strong and positive association has been found between future orientation and academic achievement and persistence (Bandura, 1986; Harter, 1981; Wyman et al., 1993) and social competencies (Wyman et al., 1993; Zimbardo et al., 1997). Positive future orientation has also been related to decreases in negative behaviors such as substance use (Wyman et al., 1993; Zimbardo et al., 1997). In a national study of eighth grade students, higher educational aspirations were positively related to greater proficiency in math, reading, and science on a battery of cognitive tests

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(Mau, 1995). Additionally, among high school students, future orientation was positively associated with school attachment and school involvement and, for boys, was negatively related to substance use, aggression, and school suspensions (Somers & Gizzi, 2001). Future orientation also significantly predicted decreased substance use and aggression even after controlling for the effects of school attachment and school involvement. Keough, Zimbardo, and Boyd (1999) found that a more positive future orientation was related to decreased alcohol, drug, and tobacco use among high school students. Most studies to date have included delinquent youth or school age students in their assessment of future orientation.

Future orientation has also been associated with long-term life outcomes assessed in adulthood. In his 60 year longitudinal study, Clausen (1991) found that individuals who reported positive expectations for the future and future planning as adolescents reported fewer difficulties in marriage and career when they were in their 30s and 50s. Positive expectations for the future and future planning were also stronger predictors of upward mobility for working class adolescents than for their middle class peers (Clausen, 1991).

Rationale for examining future orientation rather than future time perspective (FTP). Adolescents and adults differ in their future orientation, or the extent to which they consider their preferences and well being in the present versus future (e.g., Strathman, Gleicher, Boninger, & Edwards, 1994; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1994; Fong & Hall, 2003). Individuals who score higher on the Consideration of Future Consequences

(CFC) scale, the measure used in the current study, are more likely to engage in social

activism, perform better in the classroom, and be more concerned about the natural state

of the environment, compared to those who score low on the CFC (Strathman, Boninger,

Gelicher, & Baker, 1994). Future orientation is often so pervasive in many aspects of

people's lives that they are rarely aware of its subtle influence or biasing power on

decisions and judgments. The CFC scale, which measures future orientation, seeks to

capture the extent to which individuals are influenced by future outcomes of their

behavior and has been found to influence a wide variety of phenomena including

persuasion (Strathman, et al., 1994a, 1994b), counterfactual thinking (Boninger, Gliecher,

& Strathman, 1994), preventive health behaviors (Dorr, Krueckeberg, Strathman, &

Wood, 1999), and recycling (Lindsey & Strathman, 2006).

  Additional evidence for the stable psychometric properties for the CFC measure is

provided by Petrocelli (2003) and discussed in Chapter Three. The central premise of

developing CFC as a construct to measure is its assumption that individuals vary in the

extent to which they are likely to consider distant outcomes in choosing their present

behavior. These individual differences are proposed to be clear and measureable using

the CFC scale (Strathman et al., 1994a, 1994b). Whereas other measures of future

orientation for adolescents and/or adults (e.g., Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory)

typically measure a general preoccupation with the future or specific future events, CFC

is concerned about the future only within the context of how possible events that take

place in the future influence decisions about present behavior (Strathman et al., 1994a).

Unlike Future Time Perspective (FTP), future orientation assumes that there are clear and reliable individual differences in the extent individuals consider future consequences in choosing present behavior. Little is known about future orientation in non-academic settings and among adults, and the CFC scale was originally developed with college students. In the current study, future orientation was operationalized as the degree to which young adults think about the long term consequences of their immediate behaviors.

Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination

While future orientation has been associated with long-term, positive and negative outcomes (e.g., less binge drinking, more social activism, greater academic achievement), the literature examining perceptions of racial/ethnic discrimination stressors tends to focus on adverse or negative effects on health (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). The term *discrimination* is used in a variety of contexts, some of which describe negative attitudes and prejudice based on class or category rather than individual merit. Krieger (2000, pg. 41) defines discrimination as "a socially structured and sanctioned phenomenon, justified by ideology and expressed in interactions, among and between individuals and institutions, intended to maintain privileges for members of dominant groups at the cost of deprivation of others." Health researchers, however, conceptualize discrimination as a type of stress that necessitates significant psychosocial adjustment (Landrine et al., 2006), which is how perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was conceptualized in the current study.

Traditionally, mental and/or physical health (self-report) indicators are the most common outcomes examined in relation to perceived racial/ethnic discrimination (Williams et al., 2003; Landrine et al., 2006). In a meta-analysis of 25 studies examining psychological distress and race/ethnic discrimination, 20 studies reported a positive and significant association between discrimination and distress (Williams, et al., 2003). Among four studies examining the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and a clinical diagnosis of major depression among adults, three studies found a positive association (Williams, et al., 2003). Given that racial/ethnic discrimination represents a type of stressful life experience reported by many individuals, it is important to understand this understudied construct. Moreover, research on perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and health is still evolving and most studies to date have examined the negative impact of discrimination on physical and/or mental health. Stressful experiences associated with discrimination are known to adversely affect health (Landrine et al., 2006). Much less is known, however, about the factors that may serve a compensatory/resource role (e.g., thereby increasing future orientation) or protective role (offsetting or buffering the impact of discrimination on future orientation) in an individual's conceptualization of his or her future.

According to Landrine and colleagues (2006), individuals of ethnic minority decent who perceive and report individual-level, racial/ethnic discrimination have elevated levels of physical and psychological health problems, when compared with Whites or minority cohorts that report relatively low levels of discrimination.

Traditionally, researchers have documented the association between individually perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and health (Gee, 2002) as well as the relationship between institutional discrimination and health (Landrine et al., 2006). There is limited understanding, however, of racial/ethnic discrimination reported by groups other than African Americans. The majority of research in the U.S. has focused on the experience of discrimination among African Americans, who often exhibit poorer physical and mental health as well as poorer self-rated health, than non-African Americans (Landrine, et al., 2006; Williams, et al., 2003; Guttman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002). There has been increased interest in examining perceived racial/ethnic discrimination among other racial/ethnic groups. Given that perceived racial/ethnic discrimination is associated with individuals' perceptions of health and health-related outcomes, it is likely that perceived experiences of discrimination may be associated with conceptualizations individuals have about their own future (Strathman & Joireman, 2005).

Given that stressful experiences associated with perceived racial/ethnic discrimination are known to adversely affect health (Yoo & Lee, 2005; Williams et al., 2003), and most studies to date have examined the negative impact of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination on physical and/or mental health, the current study aimed to examine perceived racial/ethnic discrimination in a different light and examined if experiences of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination on future orientation could be offset or buffered if high levels of hope and/or social connectedness were present. In other words, among individuals who report perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, would a

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positive future orientation still exist, particularly if/when high levels of hope and/or social connectedness were present?

Resource and Protective Factors

As mentioned in Chapter One, variability in outcomes for emerging adults may be attributed to the presence of protective and/or resource factors (Klein & Forehand, 2000), which have been understudied. Protective factors, or positive variables that interact with risk factors to buffer or offset their impact are conceptualized as moderators of risk effects. In contrast, resource factors or compensatory factors lessen the impact of a risk irrespective of the level of risk experienced (Klein & Forehand, 2000) and are conceptualized as having a direct effect on adjustment.

Given that future orientation has been positively associated with behavioral adjustment among adolescents (Strathman & Joireman, 2005), the present study aimed to explore the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation among emerging adults, in the context of protective as well as resource factors that may be present. Rutter (1987) introduced the concept of protective factors. A protective factor refers to "a measurable characteristic in a group of individuals or their situation that predicts positive outcomes in the context or risk or adversity" (Masten & Reed, 2002, pg. 83). A protective mechanism refers to "changes in the person's response to the risk" (Kaplan, 1999, pg. 46) as opposed to individual variability in response to risk factors. The term "protective factors" is often reserved for predictors that work only under adversity and not across all experiences (Masten & Reed, 2002; Kaplan, 1999). A

risk factor is not necessarily the opposite of a protective factor. Rather, Kaplan (1991) suggests that vulnerability is the opposite of a protective factor. Masten and Reed (2002) suggest that "assets" are the opposite of a risk factor. Therefore, some researchers conclude that contemporary use of the "protective factor" concept should be reserved to articulate those factors that moderate risk, rather than counteract the relationship between risk factors and outcomes (Masten & Reed, 2002). In the current study, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was the "risk factor" whereas hope and/or social connectedness were conceptualized as positive variables that were examined as "resource and/or protective factors"associated with the outcome (future orientation).

Hope

A number of studies have examined the direct role of hope in relation to a variety of psychological and health outcomes (for a review see Snyder et al., 2002; Snyder, 2000). There is evidence to support that hope influences effective coping, particularly during times of loss, suffering (e.g., from a terminal illness), and uncertainty (Herth, 2000; Urquhart, 1999; Cutcliffe, 1995). Although there is no universal definition of hope, there are some common elements in how this construct is described in the literature (Herth 2000; Snyder, Sympson, Ybasco et al., 1996).

As conceptualized in the current study, hope is a positive/motivational state that has been linked to a variety of goal-directed behaviors, psychological processes, and physical as well as mental health outcomes (Snyder, 2000). Evidence suggests that higher levels of hope accrue a variety of benefits among individuals, including but not limited

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to: higher academic achievement (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997), lower academic and test-taking anxiety (Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000), higher athletic achievement (Currey et al., 1997), better academic and overall life satisfaction, lower levels of depression and dysphoria (Chang, 1998; Kwon, 2000), lower levels of posttraumatic stress disorder symptomology (Crowson, Frueh, & Snyder, 2001), better adjustment following injury and/or chronic illness (Barnum, Snyder, Rapoff, & Thompson, 1998; Horton & Wallander, 2001), superior coping with chronic stress (Horton & Wallander, 2001), and better perceived ability to cope with cancer diagnosis (Irving, Snyder, & Crowson, 1998). Conversely, loss of hope has been associated with reduced quality of life (Rustoen, 1995) and a narrowing of expectations and life goals (Ringdal, 1995 as cited in Herth, 2000).

The theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the hope construct were first developed from research with older adults (Synder et al., 1991) and little research has been conducted with young adults regarding hope. The construct of hope is relevant across the lifespan and may be particularly relevant to emerging adults who tend to be goal-directed (Arnett, 2000) and oriented toward their future (Elder, 1986; Elder, Shanahan, & Colerick Clipp, 1994). Hope is a particularly relevant concept to populations experiencing stressors. Most studies to date have assessed hope among older adults or children who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening, illness (Kwon, 2000; Lewis & Kliewer, 1996; Horton & Wallander, 2001; Barnum et al., 1998). In their study of children with sickle cell disease, Lewis and Kliewer (1996) tested mediator and

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moderator models of hope, coping, and adjustment using in-home interviews, child self-reported levels of hope, coping strategies, and psychological adjustment, and parental demographic surveys. Among the 39 children in their study, hope was negatively associated with anxiety when active coping, support coping, and distraction coping were high. Further, coping strategies moderated, but did not mediate, the relationship between hope and adjustment. Avoidance coping did not moderate the relationship between hope and adjustment but was positively related to anxiety. Lewis and Kliewer (1996) did not find effects for depressive symptoms or for the functional measures of adjustment.

Among the studies reviewed, results consistently indicate that the construct of "hope" provides additional power to explain variance in outcomes beyond that which is attributable to other individual differences such as: optimism, self efficacy, problem solving, and coping. What is less documented, however, is the potential protective role hope may play in the relationship between a negative stressor (e.g., perceived racial/ethnic discrimination) and a positive outcome (e.g., future orientation). Given that hope is postulated to be associated with improved quality of life as well as physical and mental well being, and has been associated with negative stressors such as life threatening illness, it seems probable that hope may also influence the impact of risk (e.g., perceived racial/ethnic discrimination), thereby impacting the ways in which individuals perceive their future. The present study explored hope as a potential protective and/or resource factor by which participants who have experienced discrimination consider their future.

Social Connectedness

Social relationships are associated with positive effects on physical and mental health (Berkman & Glass, 2000; Almedom, 2005; Lee & Robbins, 2000). Therefore, social connectedness was also examined as a resource and protective factor in the current study. In the literature, many terms are used loosely and interchangeably to describe social networks, social support, social ties, social integration, social attachments, social bonding, social relationships, social cohesion, and the like (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001; Berkman & Glass, 2000). In this study, social connectedness is conceptualized as a personal or individual attribute that reflects enduring closeness with the social world in general. According to Lee and Robbins (1995, 2000), a sense of connectedness begins to emerge during adolescence and extends well into adult life. In their review of the literature, Karcher and Lee (2002) indicate that greater social connectedness is related to psychological happiness, increased physical health, and better coping skills. On the other hand, lower connectedness is related to more psychological difficulties and poorer physical health. The impact of social attachments made early in life on health outcomes remains an intriguing and understudied area. The vast body of epidemiologic evidence to date indicates, however, that it is adult social attachment (e.g., lack of positive, social support networks) that is linked to poor health outcomes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lee et al., 2001; Berkman & Glass, 2000).

Sociologist Emile Durkheim and Psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1969) are often credited with the earliest theories that examined the role of social relationships in health

(Berkman & Glass, 2000). The need for connectedness has been long recognized in psychology, as evidenced by Adler's (1998) concept of social interest. Adler defined social interest as an individual's attitude and relationship to society, or 'social connectedness;' this determines both success in life and mental health (Smith & Mackie, 2000). According to Smith and Mackie (2000), the pursuit of connectedness is one of the three basic motivating principles which underlie social behavior; this fundamental need for belonging and connectedness promotes social relationships. The emphasis on social connectedness is on the independent self in relation to others (Lee et al., 2001). Social connectedness, then, is not necessarily characterized by group membership or peer affiliation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

According to Self-Psychology Theory, a sense of social connectedness develops early in life and extends throughout the life span (Lee & Robbins, 1995). In childhood, for instance, parent-child attachments provide an initial sense of security and likeness with others. Whereas in adolescence, peer affiliations and group memberships tend to become more salient, allowing individuals to identify with others who share similarities, interests, and talents (Lee et al., 2001). By adulthood, the aggregate of these past and present relationship experiences are "gradually incorporated into one's overall sense of self, providing a relatively stable psychological sense of connectedness that is not susceptible to vacillations in relationships, such as the loss of a friend or social exclusion from a group" (Lee et al., p. 310). Feeling close with other people, being able to identify with others, perceiving others as friendly and approachable, and participating in social

groups and activities are characteristics of individuals who are high in social connectedness (Lee et al., 2001). Conversely, individuals who experience repeated interpersonal adversities in life (e.g., abandonment, peer rejection, isolation, discrimination), are more likely to manifest low connectedness in adulthood (Lee & Robbins, 1995). Low connected individuals often integrate these negative experiences into their sense of self and often have difficulty relating to the social world because they feel misunderstood by others (Lee et al., 2001; Lee & Robbins, 1995). Subsequently, individuals with low connectedness feel a lack of connectedness within themselves, which ultimately affects their ability to interact with others on an interpersonal level.

Feeling connected is one of the most basic human needs (Lee & Robbins, 1995). The importance of having close personal relationships and belonging to social groups has been demonstrated in theory, research, and everyday life and has been associated with healthy psychological adjustment (Berkman & Glass, 2000). Most of what we know about social connectedness stems from research involving families, peer groups, and/or school or faith-based samples (Goodenow, 1993). It is important to examine social connectedness in the various ecological environments, beyond familial or school entities, that influence emerging adults' development. Examining social connectedness among individuals, who, at some point, were civically engaged AmeriCorps members, will extend the social connectedness as well as emerging adulthood literature. In addition, the current study may contribute to our understanding of whether or not social connectedness serves a resource and/or protective function, thereby increasing future orientation.

Civic Engagement (Evidence that it works)

Deeply rooted in Social Capital Theory is civic engagement (Briggs, 2003; Putnam, 2000). At its core, civic engagement contributes to an individual's understanding of a pressing need or problem in the community, willingness to address those issues, and level of involvement developing solutions to the problem (New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism, 2006; Ranghelli, 2008). Civic engagement consists of behaviors, attitudes, and actions that reflect concerned and active membership in a community (e.g., neighborhood based efforts) and/or larger national or international movements. Involvement can range from serving on non-profit boards or school boards, to political participation, or social activism on a local or global level. More often than not, civic engagement has a ripple effect that extends beyond the direct benefits to individuals who participate (Ranghelli, 2008). Some argue that civic engagement can promote bridging social capital, which is associated with a stronger, more diverse social network and, ultimately, a healthier society (Briggs, 2003).

Although sparse, research on the outcomes of many civic engagement efforts suggests that civic engagement is important in increasing particular signifiers such as: commitment to society, community service, and multiculturalism (Kurtz, Rosenthal, & Zukin, 2003). One national study found that 15-26 year olds who took a civics class in high school were more likely than those who did not to have registered to vote, volunteer in some or most elections, stay informed of governmental issues, and participate in volunteer activities (Kurtz et al., 2003). This study also found that individuals who had a

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high school American government or civic education class were also more likely to believe they had a personal responsibility to make things better for society. A recent report by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), reports that a significantly greater number of university professors consider civic engagement to be important educational goals for undergraduates, when compared with reports from just three years ago (Wyer, 2009). This finding iterates the rising interest in programs and organizations that offer or promote civic engagement opportunities in the local community and abroad.

National service has long been a part of the social fabric and almost every U.S. President, dating back to George Washington, has discussed the inherit need for citizens to volunteer their efforts, time, and expertise to the nation. In 1906, philosopher William James provided inspiration for a national service program in his essay, which inspired patriotism (Neuman, 2009). James's essay called for universal national service to form "the moral equivalent of war" (Neuman, 2009). In 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the National and Community Service Trust Act, which was a stepping stone from the 1990 National Service Act initiated by President George H.W. Bush. This 1990 legislation formally launched AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is often thought of as a domestic peace corps and is a network of national service programs that engage Americans in intensive service to meet the nation's most critical education, public safety, health, and environmental needs (www.americorps.gov).

AmeriCorps, the program from which the sample for this study was drawn, is one of many programs that recognizes the importance of community participation and is designed, in part, to provide leadership and civic engagement opportunities to its program members. A recent report by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS) showed that AmeriCorps membership had a long-term, positive impact on civic attitudes and behaviors of the program's alumni- even eight years after completing service (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2008b). Approximately 2,000 members from 108 State and National AmeriCorps programs who completed their service in 2000-2001 were followed longitudinally. Key findings from the eight year, longitudinal study indicate that members who served reported greater life satisfaction eight years after completing service than individuals of the same age who did not serve in AmeriCorps. Longitudinal analyses also revealed that AmeriCorps participation had a significant, positive impact on members': attachment to community, understanding of community problems, sense of efficacy in working to address community needs, and participation in community meetings and events (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2008b).

Given that emerging adulthood is a time of identity exploration, possibility, and a period in which individuals make numerous life transitions- participation in the AmeriCorps Program may be a vehicle by which individuals navigate this life stage. In his best seller *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* Putnam (2001) purports that as civic engagement diminishes, so do the social network

norms and institutions that strengthen the civic health of the U.S. (Putnam, 2001;

Corporation for National & Community Service, 2008b). Emerging adults are largely

skeptical and perhaps cynical about political and religious institutions and tend to be less

civically involved and more disengaged than older generations (Arnett, 2007; Putnam,

2000). Arnett points out, however, that although traditional civic engagement among

emerging adults is relatively low, emerging adults are more likely to engage in volunteer

work than ever before (Arnett, 2007). Among college freshman who reported doing

volunteer work, the percentage increased from 66% in 1989 to 82% in 2001 (Arnett,

2007). On average, more than 8,000 individuals serve in the Peace Corps each year and

more than 75,000 participate in AmeriCorps, where the vast majority in each group are

emerging adults (Arnett, 2007; Corporation for National & Community Service 2008a,

2008b). The large number of AmeriCorps members who are emerging adults therefore, is

an indicator that individuals in this age group may be seeking opportunities that will

ultimately enhance their future.

The timing of the current study was important based on the recent election of

President Barack Obama and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009,

which was signed into law on February 17, 2009 and the Edward M. Kennedy Serve

America Act, which was signed into law on April 21, 2009. The Kennedy Serve bill aims

to triple the size of the AmeriCorps program over the next eight years (increasing from

75,000 to 250,000 members across the U.S.), aiming to help vulnerable communities,

improve education, push energy efficiency, increase access to health care, and help

veterans. The Recovery Act includes $201 million in funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service to support an expansion of AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA programs (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2009). Both legislative acts seem to be "a strong vote of confidence in the value of national service in engaging citizens who address unmet needs as well as strengthen communities" (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2009). For decades, national service programs, such as AmeriCorps, have worked in the most vulnerable communities, providing hope and helping people face economic and social needs.

The U.S. is currently experiencing an economic crisis, which some compare to the Great Depression of the 1930s (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2009). As a result, millions of Americans are at risk and their jobs, homes, health insurance, as well as physical and psychological well being may be compromised. The Recovery Act is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart the economy and hopefully create or preserve millions of jobs, expand educational opportunities, preserve and/or improve affordable healthcare, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2009). National service and volunteering seem to be more critical than ever before. During this economic crisis, it is necessary to aid and support communities, while helping individuals cope during this difficult time. If the hypotheses from the current study hold to be true, the findings may have some utility for the AmeriCorps recruitment process and program design in the state of New Mexico (and perhaps other states as well). Fostering hope and a sense of connectedness among intact

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groups during this inopportune era could potentially benefit AmeriCorps members who

serve as well as the communities that are served. The Serve America Act is modeled after

the NM Blueprint for Civic Engagement. New Mexico was the first (and only state thus

far) to develop a blueprint for civic engagement and is also the state from which data for

this study were collected (New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism, 2006;

Webb, 2009). Now signed into law, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act may

highlight the need to conduct research on national service and warrant empirical

investigations similar to the current study (New Mexico Commission for Community

Volunteerism, 2006; Webb, 2009).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the concurrent contribution of perceived

racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social connectedness to future orientation among

emerging adults, using a web-based survey. A quantitative approach was used to examine

the direct and interactive factors that may contribute to the future orientation of emerging

adults who currently or formerly served in NM (State) AmeriCorps during 2005-2009.

Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social

connectedness would be directly associated with future orientation. Second, this study

examined the potential resource function of hope and/or social connectedness on future

orientation, after accounting for the risk (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination). Third,

this study examined whether the direct associations among perceived racial/ethnic

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discrimination, hope, and social connectedness on future orientation would be moderated by race/ethnicity. Most studies to date have not examined race/ethnic differences in hope or social connectedness. This study, therefore, examined if levels of hope and/or social connectedness varied across ethnic minorities (e.g., Hispanic, Native American) and White emerging adults. Fourth, this study hypothesized that the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation would be moderated by hope as well as social connectedness (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2 for conceptual models).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Study Design

A cross-sectional, self-report survey research design was employed. Emerging adults reported on demographic as well as the independent variables (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, social connectedness) and the dependent variable (future orientation).

Procedure and Recruitment

Participants were recruited directly from the NM Commission for Community Volunteerism. The Lieutenant Governor of NM, Diane Denish, and Executive Director of the Commission of Community Volunteerism, Gregory Webb enthusiastically supported this dissertation study. Diane Denish and Gregory Webb provided a letter of support for this study (see Appendix A), which was formally approved by the University of Texas at Austin's IRB Review Committee in February 2009. The NM Commission assumed the primary lead on the recruitment for this anonymous, web-based survey.

The researcher worked closely with the Executive Director for the NM Commission for Community Volunteerism to recruit AmeriCorps participants from the state's existing database. The Executive Director disseminated the invitation eMail to invite AmeriCorps participants (see Appendices B-C). Individuals who wished to complete the survey followed the appropriate SurveyMonkey web-link listed on the invitation to participate eMail. Data collection took place for 14 days and began on a Friday, as suggested by the literature regarding online data collection (Wright, 2005).

It was originally anticipated that at least 400 members would be invited to participate. However, limitations existed within the NM Commission's federal database. First and foremost, not all AmeriCorps members had a valid eMail address on file. Among the eMail addresses available, some members only provided their Teach for America eMail address, which was not necessarily valid because their service term had ended. Therefore, this study was limited in the number of AmeriCorps participants who could be recruited via eMail. The Executive Director of NM's Commission and his staff made numerous attempts to inform program directors about the research study prior to and once data collection began. The Executive Director made approximately ten separate follow up phone calls with program directors throughout the state regarding the SurveyMonkey web-link, data collection, and miscellaneous details about the importance of participation in this study.

Data recruitment and collection occurred in June 2009. Only eligible participants from 2005-2009 (e.g., 18 and older, service completed in NM) were invited to participate in this study. The Executive Director eMailed the initial invitation to participate in the survey. The invitation included a description of the study (see Appendix C), which was also explained in the cover letter/consent form for online research (see Appendix D). At the time of data collection, participants who agreed to complete the survey were asked to review the cover letter/consent form, indicating agreement to participate in the study. The cover letter informed participants of the purpose of the study, that no identifying information would be asked, that the information would remain anonymous, and

participation in this study was voluntary. Participants agreed to participate by clicking on the appropriate internet link, clicking continue, and beginning the survey.

Prior to beginning the survey, participants were reminded that:

a) The survey was anonymous

b) Participation or refusal to participate would not affect their current or future standing with AmeriCorps or the NM Commission for Community Volunteerism

c) Participation or refusal to participate would not affect their relationship or standing with the University of Texas-Austin

d) Immediately upon completion of the survey, each participant had the opportunity to enter into a draw for the chance to win one of 20 ($25.00) money order awards as a "thank you" for participating in this study (see Appendix F for draw information).

This study was conducted and funded solely by the researcher. There was no external, funding sponsor for this study.

To maintain confidentiality, any contact information obtained for the draw was kept on a password protected computer and the money orders were kept in a locked file cabinet until all awards were dispersed. Following the dispersal of the monetary awards, any hard copies and/or electronic copies containing participants' contact information were destroyed.

In terms of recruitment, it is important to note that on May 1, 2009 (one month

prior to data collection) the NM Commission sponsored the 11th Annual NM Governor's

Volunteerism Conference and Award Luncheon, which had approximately 650

volunteers from throughout the state in attendance. An estimated 150 of the total

attendees were current or former AmeriCorps members. Each of these members received

a dual letter, signed by the researcher and the Executive Director for the NM

Commission, in their welcome packet (see Appendix B for recruitment letter). The letter

briefly summarized the upcoming data collection for this study. The NM Commission

suggested the letter as a useful recruitment tool, which served as an announcement or

notification of the upcoming June 2009 data collection.

Mode of Data Collection

   Web-based survey. To maximize the reach of potential participants and to

minimize cost, a web-based, self-administered questionnaire was chosen as the mode of

data collection for this study. New information technologies such as the Internet and

eMail have several potential advantages over the other modes of data collection (e.g.,

paper based surveys, telephone interviews, mailed surveys). These advantages include:

the ability to reach large numbers of individuals at relatively low cost, convenience,

novelty and appeal, flexibility of use, and the level of missing/miscoded data is usually

reduced when compared with other data collection methods (Pealer, Weiler, Pigg, Miller,

& Dorman, 2001; Abbott & Freeth, 2008). Moreover, the characteristics of automated

data contribute to a reduction in data entry errors by research personnel (Fotheringham,

Owies, Leslie, & Owen, 2000; McCabe, Boyd, Couper, Crawford, & D 'Arcy, 2002). The use of Internet and eMail is continually increasing in the U.S., making this mode an ideal method for reaching large audiences at low cost. At least 73% of adults in the U.S. have Internet access, up from 66% in the same survey conducted in 2005 (Madden, 2006). Among individuals who have some college education, 84% use the Internet and more than 88% of 18-30 year-olds go online on a regular basis (Madden, 2006). More specifically, more than 65% of Internet users go online daily and 54% use eMail each day (Pew Research Center, 2005). Internet-based and eMail modalities have considerable potential as research recruitment tools and data collection strategies to attempt to reach large numbers of participants at low cost. Electronic modalities have been advantageous and well received in the past, as indicated by the NM AmeriCorps state program staff (Webb, 2009).

Participants

Two hundred sixty eight current and former AmeriCorps participants age 18 years or older were invited to participate in this cross sectional study. Of those, 77 eMails were undeliverable, leaving 191 participants who received an invitation eMail.
Of the 191 AmeriCorps invitees, 161 completed the entire survey (response rate was 84.3%). Of the 161 completed surveys, 151 met the age eligibility criteria and were included in the final data analysis for this study (93.8% of completed surveys were analyzed in this study). Only participants who reported serving at least one AmeriCorps term in the state of NM and who were between the ages of 18-30 were included in this

study. Assuming a power of .8, a priori power analysis determined a minimum sample size of 77 participants was needed to detect a 5% change in the overall model effect for the final (3rd) step in the hierarchical regression model, which includes the two-way interaction term. This sample size also yields power above .8 for all main effects. In addition, the sample size yields power above .95 for an overall model effect.

Approximately 73.5% ($n=111$) of the sample were female, whereas 26.5% ($n=40$) were male (see Table 1 for gender and race/ethnicity demographics). In terms of age, 89.4% ($n=135$) were between the ages of 18-29 and 10.6% ($n=16$) were 30 years of age. The majority of the sample (83.4%, $n=126$) reported never being married, 13.9% ($n=21$) were married, and the remaining 2.7% ($n=4$) were either separated or divorced. Approximately 88.7% ($n=134$) of the sample did not have children or dependents living at home, 7.3% ($n=11$) had 1 dependent, 2.6% ($n=4$) had 2 dependents, and the remaining 1.3% ($n=2$) had three or more dependents living in the same household. The participants in this study began their AmeriCorps service between the years 2004-2009 and completed (or are currently completing) their service between the years 2005-2009. Approximately 40.7% ($n=61$) served in a program that offered an AmeriCorps Educational Award, 17.3% ($n=26$) served in AmeriCorps State, 13.3%, ($n=20$) served in Teach for America, 12.7%, ($n=19$) served in AmeriCorps NCC, AmeriCorps National, America Vista, or Public Allies, and the remaining 16% ($n=24$) were unsure of which program they served. Only one individual did not respond to this question. See Table 2 for descriptive information about length and frequency of AmeriCorps service.

In terms of completed education, approximately 7.3% (*n*=11) have a graduate

degree, 27.8% (*n*=42) have had some graduate school, 37.1% (*n*=56) are college

graduates, 17.2% (*n*=26) have some college, 3.3% (*n*=5) reported postsecondary

education other than college, 4% (*n*=6) earned a high school diploma/GED equivalent,

and the remaining 3.3% (*n*=5) reported some high school. In general, the majority of

participants (70.2%, *n*=106) *intended* to obtain a graduate degree, and 18.5% (*n*=28)

intended to obtain a college degree (see Table 3). Consistent with Arnett's major tenets of

emerging adulthood, 35.1% of the sample reported "being unsure if I have reached full

adulthood." When asked if "this period of my life is a time of exploration" 92.7% agreed

or strongly agreed, 94.7% agreed or strongly agreed that "this period of my life is a time

of planning for the future," 82.8% agreed or strongly agreed that this is a time of "seeking

a sense of meaning," and 76.1% agreed or strongly agreed that this is a period of

"deciding on my own beliefs and values." No race/ethnicity differences existed on these

survey items, which came from Reifman, Arnett, and Colwell's (2007) Inventory of the

Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood (IDEA) survey.

Measures

Demographics. Twenty two questions assessed the following demographic

variables: age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of dependents living at home,

perceived health status, education level, parental education, location of survey

completion, AmeriCorps membership, state of AmeriCorps service and length of service,

top three reasons for joining AmeriCorps, and top three factors that participants value most about AmeriCorps experiences (see Appendix E for survey items).

   Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination. Individual-level experiences with lifetime discrimination were assessed using the *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale*, developed by Landrine and colleagues (2006). The *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale* is a modified version of the *Schedule of Racist Events (SRE)*, an 18-item measure of perceived ethnic discrimination designed for African Americans (Landrine et al., 2006). The *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale*, however is a measure of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination that can be used in health research with any racial/ethnic group (Landrine et al., 2006). Respondents were asked to think about their *entire life* and circle the number that best captured the things that happened to them. Sample items include: "How often have you been treated unfairly by teachers/professors because of your race/ethnic group," "How often have people misunderstood your intentions and motives because of your race/ethnic group," and "How often have you been called a racist name?" Response options ranged from 1 (Never) to 6 (Almost all the Time) on a Likert-type scale. A higher score indicates a greater level of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination. The 18-item measure has excellent validity and the reliability, ranging from $\alpha = .91$-$.95$ among the four ethnic groups (Whites, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans) with which the scale was originally conceptualized (Landrine et al., 2006). The reliability coefficient in the current study was $\alpha = .94$ ($N=151$), $\alpha = .91$ for Whites ($n=83$), and $\alpha = .94$ for ethnic minorities ($n=68$).

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Future orientation. Future orientation was assessed using the 12-item Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) scale (Strathman et al., 1994). Sample questions include: "I consider how things might be in the future, and try to influence those things with my day to day behavior" and "I am willing to sacrifice my immediate happiness or well-being in order to achieve future outcomes." Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the statement is characteristic of them. Response options ranged from 1 (Not Like You at All) to 5 (Very Much Like You) on a Likert-type scale. Seven items on this scale were reverse scored during data analysis. Higher scores on the CFC scale indicate a greater consideration of future consequences. This 12-item questionnaire has adequate reliability ($\alpha = .77$) and validity and has been found to predict a range of theoretically relevant outcomes (Strathman & Joireman, 2005). The reliability coefficient in the current study was $\alpha = .73$ ($N=151$), $\alpha = .74$ for Whites ($n=83$), and $\alpha = .70$ for ethnic minorities ($n=68$), which is slightly lower than what Strathman and colleagues (1994) reported. An exploratory factor analysis revealed that all items factored as expected; therefore, all 12- items were included in the current study.

Hope. Research on the role of hope in psychological processes has been aided by the development of the Herth Hope Index [HHI], which was used in the present study (Herth, 1991, 1992, 2000; Synder et al., 1991). The HHI has exhibited strong psychometric characteristics and have been employed in psychological research studies. Sample items include: "I have a positive outlook toward life," "I believe that each day has potential," and "I have short and/or long range goals" "I can recall happy/joyful

times," "I feel my life has value and worth," "I have a faith that gives me comfort," and "I have deep inner strength." Items on the HHI are prearranged to decrease bias, such that no more than two items in a row are keyed in the same direction (see Herth, 1992). The four response options range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) on a Likert-type scale. Scores are calculated by adding the total points, with total possible points ranging from 12-48. Total scores were used in this study, with a higher score indicating a higher self-report of hope.

According to Herth (1992), the HHI has been established at the sixth grade reading level and the reliability coefficient for the original scale was $\alpha = .97$ (Herth, 1992). The psychometric properties of the HHI were initially tested in a convenience sample of 172 chronically or terminally ill adults but has since been used in the context of homeless families, older adults in community and institutional settings, adults with chronic disease, individuals with first recurrence of cancer, professional caregivers, and clinical as well as populations (Snyder, 2000; Currey et al., 1997). The reliability coefficient for all 12-items in the current study was $\alpha = .78$ ($N=151$). However, an exploratory factor analysis in the current study revealed that two items ("I feel all alone" and "I feel scared about my future") should be removed, therefore increasing the internal consistency to $\alpha = .81$ ($N=151$), $\alpha = .77$ for Whites ($n=83$), and $\alpha = .86$ for ethnic minorities ($n=68$) for the remaining 10-items in the current study.

Social connectedness. Social connectedness was assessed using the *Social Connectedness Scale-Revised* (SCS-R), developed by Lee and colleagues (2001). The

SCS-R measures personal attributes that reflect enduring closeness with the social world in general. This scale measures the degree of interpersonal closeness that an individual experiences in his or her social world (e.g., friends, peers, society). The SCS-R also represents patterns of interpersonal relatedness. The 20-item SCS-R contains (10) positively and (10) negatively worded items and does not contain any subscales. Questions are asked in the present and items are totaled to yield a summed score. Higher scores indicate more social connectedness. Response options are on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). The SCS-R was developed with undergraduate students who were predominately White (62% of the N=219 sample). Sample items include: "I feel distant from people," "I see myself as friendly and approachable," and "I find myself actively involved in people's lives." The SCS-R exhibits high internal item reliability α = .92, and there are no known significant differences by gender and/or race/ethnicity (Lee et al., 2001). The reliability coefficient in the current study was α = .90 (N=151), α = .91 for Whites (n=83), and α = .89 for ethnic minorities (n=68).

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Means, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients for all predictor and outcome variables are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Due to small cell sizes, Native Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and African Americans were grouped together and coded as "1" (ethnic minorities) and non-Hispanic Anglos were grouped as Whites/Anglos and coded as "0." Preliminary analyses were conducted to identify differences across the scores of predictor and dependent variables between ethnic minorities (n=68) and Whites/Anglos (n=83) in this study. Significant mean score differences existed for two variables, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation. Ethnic minorities in this study were significantly more likely to experience and report perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and have a more negative (or lower) future orientation than were Whites/Anglos (see Table 5).

Since prior research indicates that gender differences in social connectedness exist, preliminary analyses were conducted to examine if there were main effect differences by gender (Lee & Robbins, 2000). For example, among college aged women, social connectedness is based more on relationships that emphasize intimacy and physical proximity; whereas, social connectedness among college aged men is based on relationships that emphasize power and status (Lee, Keough, & Saxton, 2002). In the current study, no gender differences existed among any of the study variables between ethnic minorities and Whites/Anglos; gender was, therefore, excluded as a covariate.

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Correlational Analyses

Given that ethnic minorities and Whites/Anglos differed significantly on two variables and hypothesis 3 supposed race/ethnicity differences, zero-order correlations were conducted separately by race/ethnicity (see Table 4). In this sample of emerging adults, significant correlations existed among covariates, predictor, and outcome variables.

Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was negatively and significantly related to future orientation, the outcome variable, for Whites/Anglos only, indicating that Whites/Anglos who reported minimal perceived racial/ethnic discrimination were more likely to report higher (more positive) future orientation. Hope was positively and significantly related to perceived racial/ethnic discrimination for ethnic minorities only, indicating that ethnic minorities who reported more perceived racial/ethnic discrimination also reported more hope. Hope was positively and significantly related to social connectedness for Whites/Anglos and ethnic minorities, indicating that individuals who reported more hope also reported more social connectedness. The outcome variable, future orientation, was positively and significantly associated with social connectedness for ethnic minorities only. This finding indicates that ethnic minorities who reported *more* social connectedness also reported a more positive future orientation. Future orientation was marginally and positively associated with hope among Whites/Anglos, indicating that more hope may be associated with a more positive future orientation among Whites/Anglos in this study.

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Diagnostic Statistics

Prior to testing study hypotheses, collinearity diagnostic statistics were examined for all regression analyses. Tolerance, which is the percentage of the variance in a given predictor that cannot be explained by the other predictors in the model (SPSS 16.0 for Windows, 2008), ranged from .33 to 1.0 in this study. According to Brace, Kemp, and Snelgar (2006), when tolerance is close to zero there is high multicollinearity and the standard error of the regression coefficients will be inflated. Likewise, if tolerance is <.20, then problems with collinearity are indicated. Since tolerance was within the recommended range in this study, mulicollinearity was not problematic. An alternative measure of multicollinearity, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), which is the reciprocal of tolerance in which larger values indicate a strong relationship between predictor variables, was also conducted. The VIF analyses ranged from 1.00 to 2.97 in this study and did not reveal problems with multicollinearity (SPSS 16.0 for Windows, 2008).

Hypothesis Testing

To test hypothesis 1, that each predictor variable would be associated with the outcome of future orientation after race/ethnicity was controlled, a series of two-step regression analyses were conducted. A separate model was examined for each predictor variable (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, social connectedness). Race/ethnicity was entered in step 1, followed by each predictor variable (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, or social connectedness) entered individually in step 2. Results from these analyses are presented in Tables 6a-6c.

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As expected, even after controlling for race/ethnicity, two predictor variables were significantly related to the outcome of future orientation (N=151) and one was marginally associated with future orientation. Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was negatively and significantly associated with future orientation (see Table 6a). Higher levels of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination were related to a more negative future orientation among emerging adults in this study, accounting for 2.7% [$F (2, 148) = 4.91$, $p<.05$] of unique variance above and beyond the significant contribution of race/ethnicity. Hope was marginally and positively associated with future orientation (see Table 6b). Higher levels of hope were related to a slightly more positive future orientation. Social connectedness was positively and significantly related to future orientation, accounting for 3.9% [$F (2, 148) = 5.89$, $p<.01$] of unique variance above and beyond the significant contribution of race/ethnicity (see Table 6c). That is, being more socially connected was related to a more positive future orientation.

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 stated that hope and social connectedness would serve a resource function in the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation. To examine the unique contribution of hope and social connectedness to future orientation after controlling for the risk (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination), separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed, with future orientation as the dependent variable, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and hope (or social connectedness) as the independent variables, and race/ethnicity as the covariate. Race/ethnicity was entered in Step 1, followed by the risk (perceived

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racial/ethnic discrimination) in Step 2, and the resource factor (hope or social connectedness) each entered individually in Step 3.

Contrary to hypothesis 2, hope did not make a significant and unique contribution to future orientation even after accounting for the risk (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination) and the covariate race/ethnicity (see Table 7a). Social connectedness did, however, make a significant and unique contribution to future orientation even after inclusion of the risk (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination), accounting for 3.2% [F (3, 147) = 5.07, $p<.01$] of unique variance above and beyond the risk and the race/ethnicity covariate (see Table 7b). That is, social connectedness acted as a resource factor.

Hypothesis 3. A series of hierarchical regression analyses were also used to test hypothesis 3, which predicted that the association of each predictor (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social connectedness) to future orientation would be moderated by ethnicity. For the linear hierarchical regression analyses, the predictor variables were centered to avoid possible multicollinearity according to Aiken and West's (1991) recommendations. Interaction terms using centered independent variables were calculated between 1) Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination x Race/Ethnicity, 2) Hope x Race/Ethnicity, and 3) Social Connectedness x Race/Ethnicity.

Separate models were examined for each 2-way interaction and all lower-level main effects were included. In step 1 of the models, the covariate race/ethnicity was entered. Step 2 included perceived racial/ethnic discrimination. Step 3 included either hope or the social connectedness predictor variable that was included in the 2-way

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interaction. Step 4 included the 2-way interaction term to be tested (e.g., Hope x Race/Ethnicity).

Contrary to hypothesis 3, associations between variables did not vary by race/ethnicity. That is, race/ethnicity x perceived racial/ethnic discrimination [β = .15, n.s.], race/ethnicity x hope [β = -.09, n.s.], and race/ethnicity x social connectedness [β = .12, n.s.] did not significantly contribute to future orientation.

Hypothesis 4

A series of hierarchical regression analyses were also used to test hypothesis 4, which predicted that the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation would be moderated by hope as well as social connectedness. Interaction terms using centered independent variables were calculated between 1) Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination x Hope, and 2) Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination x Social Connectedness.

Separate models were examined for each 2-way interaction and all lower-level main effects were included. In step 1 of the models, the covariate race/ethnicity was entered. Step 2 included perceived racial/ethnic discrimination. Step 3 included the respective predictor variable that was included in the 2-way interaction (e.g., hope or social connectedness). Step 4 included the 2-way interaction term to be tested (e.g., Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination x Hope).

Contrary to hypothesis 4, hope did not significantly interact with the predictor, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination as related to future orientation (see Table 8a).

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However, social connectedness x perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was positively and significantly related to future orientation, accounting for 3.1% [F (4, 146) = 5.21, $p<.001$] of unique variance above and beyond the significant contributions of race/ethnicity, social connectedness, and perceived racial/ethnic discrimination (see Table 8b). The significant interaction at the 95% level ($p<.05$) was probed by exploring the effect of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination on the dependent variable (future orientation) at both high [1 standard deviation (*SD*) above the mean] and low levels (1 *SD* below the mean) of the social connectedness variable (Aiken & West, 1991).

Probing the significant interaction between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and social connectedness on future orientation showed that at higher levels of social connectedness, the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation was not significant ($\beta = .01$). At lower levels of social connectedness, however, the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation was negative and significant ($\beta = -.31$, $p<.01$). As shown in Figure 4, these results indicated that at higher levels of social connectedness, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination did not influence future orientation. That is, higher levels of social connectedness protected or buffered emerging adults high in perceived racial/ethnic discrimination from having a lower (more negative) future orientation. On the other hand, at lower levels of social connectedness, this same buffering effect was not found. Instead, at lower levels of social connectedness, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was negatively associated with future orientation. That is, perceived racial/ethnic

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discrimination negatively influenced future orientation when low levels of social connectedness were present.

In summation, hypothesis 1 was partially supported such that after controlling for race/ethnicity, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, and social connectedness were significantly and hope was marginally related to the outcome of future orientation (*N*=151). Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was negatively and significantly associated with future orientation, hope was marginally and positively associated with future orientation, and social connectedness was positively and significantly related to future orientation. Hypothesis 2 was partially supported such that social connectedness (but not hope) served as a resource factor in its association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation. Hypothesis 3 was not supported and race/ethnicity did not significantly interact with any of the three predictor variables as related to future orientation, indicating that the resource role of hope was consistent across ethnic minority and White participants and the risk of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was also consistent across the two groups. Hypothesis 4 was partially supported such that social connectedness (but not hope) moderated the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and the outcome, future orientation. Higher levels of social connectedness protected or buffered emerging adults high in perceived racial/ethnic discrimination from having a lower (more negative) future orientation.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This study explored the predictors of future orientation, while tapping into a unique population. It was hypothesized that perceived racial/ethnic discrimination would contribute to lower (more negative) future orientation, while hope and social connectedness would each contribute to a more positive future orientation, and all of these associations would be stronger for racial/ethnic minorities than for Whites. Hope and social connectedness were each hypothesized to serve a resource as well as a protective role in the association between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation.

Overall findings from this study provide partial support for three of the four hypotheses and are consistent with relationships described by the Theory of Possible Selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000). Both theories suggest that although individuals actively contribute to their own development, these individuals do not exist in a vacuum and are also influenced by the environments in which they live (Adler, 1998; Abbott & Freeth, 2008). Researchers posit that stressors, such as perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, that constitute risks at one period of development may contribute to positive adaptations despite exposure to the threat or adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). In this study, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and social connectedness were directly associated with future orientation and social connectedness served both a resource (promotive function) and a protective function for emerging adult members of the AmeriCorps program. These findings suggest

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that the constructs under investigation may be important for the future orientation of emerging adults.

In support of hypotheses 1, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and social connectedness each independently and uniquely contributed to the outcome of future orientation. Hope was only marginally and positively associated with future orientation in this study. The more perceived racial/ethnic discrimination reported, the less likely that individual was to report a positive future orientation. However, individuals who reported more social connectedness were more likely to report a more positive future orientation. These findings are consistent with previous research that demonstrates racial/ethnic discrimination represents a type of stressful life experience reported by many individuals (Williams et al., 2003). It is well documented that racial/ethnic discrimination can have unfavorable effects on health and well being and these effects are significantly and reliably evident across a variety of psychological outcomes, particularly for African Americans or ethnic minority populations (Ong, Fuller-Rowell, Burrow, 2009; Williams et al., 2003). Findings also extend the literature showing that stressors associated with discrimination not only adversely affect physical (Williams et al., 2003) and mental health (Landrine et al., 2006) but also the ways in which individuals perceive their future orientation.

Social relationships and social support networks are powerful resources in the lives of young adults (Putnam, 2000; Lang & Carstensen, 2002). It is not surprising, then, that social connectedness was significantly and positively related to future orientation

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among emerging adults in this study. Katz (1982) demonstrated that as adult group members in a work setting continued to interact, they increased in consensus with one another, moving toward greater perceptual congruity. Similarly, it is likely that as group members (e.g., AmeriCorps members) work together over a long period, their common views, commitments, and solution strategies will be reinforced. Such shared perceptions, created through group processes, and acted as powerful constraints on individual attitudes and behavior in Katz's study. The patterns reported in the current study are compatible with the viewpoint that, members of groups or programs, such as AmeriCorps, may come to share a common set of beliefs about their work, educational, or volunteer setting(s).

The nature of systematic relations between future orientation and other variables, such as social connectedness, is very unclear. According to Trommsdorff (1983), socialization and socialization processes, such as social connectedness, are always future oriented. Several studies have demonstrated that future orientation develops under the influence of both cognitive maturation and social experiences (Strathman & Joireman, 2005). Such experiences may shape future orientation as a means to adapt to social situations and possibilities. In his descriptive paper that discusses the relationship between future orientation and socialization, Trommsdorff (1983) posits that socialization and future orientation are interrelated and that socialization is a life-long process by which future orientation is developed and shaped. In the current study, it may be that social connectedness is a necessary vehicle or variable that guides the future orientation

of the individual. Future studies should examine the underlying process of such interdependencies both theoretically and empirically.

In support of hypothesis 2, social connectedness also served as a resource function in the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation. Extending the existing literature, findings suggest that even when perceived racial/ethnic discrimination was present, social connectedness still positively and significantly contributed to a positive future orientation. Since the current study assessed AmeriCorps group members who were in a particular stage of development, being in an environment with a high level of social capital and/or social connectedness would, presumably, be advantageous and provide an ideal environment in which to develop. It may be that socially connected individuals have higher average levels of future orientation to begin with and, therefore, are more adept at mobilizing appropriate levels of positive emotion to regulate negative experiences, such as racial/ethnic discrimination (Trommsdorff, 1983). Alternatively, socially connected individuals may have developed a way of life that provides for relatively few negative psychosocial experiences and, therefore, are better protected against the harmful effects of negative stressors, such as discrimination (Lang & Carstensen, 2002). Similarly, these individuals may seek opportunities such as AmeriCorps participation because of shared experiences, similar backgrounds, or similar future orientations.

Contrary to hypothesis 3, the associations between the predictor variables and the outcome of future orientation did not vary by race/ethnicity, indicating that the effects of

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perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and social connectedness are consistent across the two subgroups of participants. It is possible that collapsing racial/ethnic minorities (e.g., Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics) into one group is not ideal and differences could exist between two or more of these racial/ethnic minority groups. Future studies should, therefore, include larger sample and cell sizes, whereby race/ethnicity can be assessed more closely by examining African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Whites/Non-Hispanic Whites separately rather than grouping them together as racial/ethnic minorities or Whites. Collapsing the subgroups of racial/ethnic minorities, therefore, could have obscured some of the findings or lack of findings in the current study.

Researchers purport that racial/ethnic minorities with a strong racial/ethnic identity are more inclined to: feel part of the larger community and society, maintain a positive sense of well being, have a higher self esteem, and be more resilient to life changes and stressors, compared with racial/ethnic minorities with minimal or weak racial/ethnic identity (Lee & Davis, 2000; Yip & Fuligni, 2002; Szymanski, 2009; Yoo & Lee, 2005; Barnes & Lightsey, 2005; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Consequently, researchers are becoming increasingly interested in examining the potential buffering effects that may offset the negative effects of discrimination and more research in this arena is, therefore, warranted. Although there were no race/ethnicity differences in the current study, other sociocultural variables, such as racial/ethnic identity, may be moderators of these associations and future research should examine these associations.

In support of hypothesis 4 and consistent with Social Capital Theory as well as the well documented role of social support and social networks in regard to positive adjustment (Putnam, 2000; Lang & Carstensen, 2002), social connectedness served a protective function in the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation. There is increasing evidence that the presence of, and contact with social support systems may enable people to more effectively cope with negative stressors (e.g., racial discrimination) (Caspi, Bolger, & Eckenrode, 1987). The positive functions of social resources on the connection between life's stressors and adaptation have been demonstrated empirically (Lang & Carstensen, 2002). The experience of stress (such as perceived discrimination), coupled with low levels of social support, has been found to be associated with psychological distress. Individuals who are integrated into the social system are likely to experience a more supportive milieu during times of crises and, consequently, are better able to cope with stressful events (see Serido, Almeida, & Wethington, 2004; Caspi et al., 1987). Individuals with low levels of social support, however, may be among those most adversely affected by life changes or transitions, such as those that occur during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). In most cases, it may not be possible to avoid the ongoing stressors (e.g., perceived racial/ethnic discrimination) and strains of everyday life (Landrine et al., 2006). However, it is possible for individuals to mobilize support from their social network in times of perceived need and, therefore, increase their social connectedness which in turn affects their future orientation.

In the current study, it may be that the availability of social support (in the form of high social connectedness) mitigated the possibility of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination negatively impacting an individual's future orientation. Socially connected individuals may rely on their peers for support, and therefore, may be better equipped deal with the impact of negative stressors, such as racial/ethnic discrimination, on their own future orientation (Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Noh & Kaspar, 2003). An integrative examination of both variables may be of potential value in future research (see Kwon, 2000).

Further support for the role of social support as a buffer of racial/ethnic discrimination effects comes from a study of adult immigrants. In their nationwide probability sample of Finnish, Russian, and Estonian immigrants age 18-65 (*N*=2360), Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola, and Reuter (2006) found that perceived discrimination had a significant impact on psychological well being. Moreover, there were both direct and buffering effects of social support networks on well being, such that more perceived discrimination was associated with lower psychological well being and greater anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms for all three immigrant groups. For individuals who experienced more discrimination, the more they interacted with social support networks, the less often they reported psychological stress (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006). Findings from their study provide evidence that immigrants' attitudes, self perceptions, and social as well as ethnic community support can shape their experiences and diminish the negative influence of acculturation stressors on their

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psychological well being (Jasinskaja-Lahtu et al., 2006). These findings lend support to the current study. It is possible that for emerging adults, psychological dysfunction associated with perceived racial/ethnic discrimination may hamper the establishment and maintenance of social support networks when social connectedness is low, thereby decreasing or lowering an individual's future orientation and increasing the vulnerability for negative effects of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination.

Drawing upon Self-Psychology Theory and intentional self development, Lee, Draper, and Lee (2001) examined the role of interpersonal behaviors in the relationship between social connectedness and psychological adjustment among 184 college students. The authors found that individuals with high connectedness had more appropriate interpersonal behaviors and these appropriate behaviors contributed to less psychological distress. Conversely, individuals with low connectedness had more dysfunctional interpersonal behaviors and these dysfunctional behaviors contributed to more psychological distress. The authors provide evidence to support the importance of assessing social connectedness in relation to psychological adjustment (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001).

Contrary to hypotheses 2 and 4, though, hope did not serve a promotive or protective/moderating role in the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation. This finding is inconsistent with the Theory of Possible Selves, which was one of the guiding theoretical frameworks of this study (Markus & Nurius, 1987). The current study found a marginal main effect, though,

between hope and future orientation (e.g., positive adjustment) and hope was significantly correlated with perceived racial/ethnic discrimination (for ethnic minorities), and social connectedness. According to Kwon (2002), it is not clear whether there are individual differences in the effects of hope on adjustment. It may be that hope cognitions, subtypes of hope (e.g., nurturing hope, generalized hope) (Clayton, Butow, Arnold, & Tattersall, 2005), or hope spectrums exist and are associated with future orientation (positive adjustment). Although pre-validated measures of hope are limited, future studies should consider using an alternative or modified measure for hope, given that the Herth Hope Index used in the current study was initially tested and validated in a sample of chronically ill adults as well as professional caregivers (Herth, 1992; Snyder, 2000). Although hope has been associated with better mental and physical health (Ringdal, 1995; Rustoen, 1995; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002), the mechanisms through which it operates and the conditions under which it has beneficial effects are just beginning to be studied (Onwuegbuzie, & Snyder, 2000). It may be necessary to further examine whether hope should be considered an interpersonal as well as intrapersonal factor, given its moderate to high correlation with social connectedness ($r = .57$, $p < .001$ for Whites and $r = .27$, $p < .05$ for racial/ethnic minorities) in the current study.

The current study also yielded interesting demographic findings, which have implications for how service programs, such as AmeriCorps, may be one avenue by which emerging adults create positive opportunities for themselves and their future orientation. Notably, more than 54% of participants in this study indicated that they

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initially joined AmeriCorps for the educational award component or joined Teach for America, which also provides a stipend to be used for tuition/education expenses. The majority of participants in this study (72%) had some college education and 94% *intended* to at least complete a bachelor's degree. Given the unique timing of this study and the April 2009 passage of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which aims to triple the size of the AmeriCorps program over the next eight years, findings from this study are still relevant regardless if the participants were educated or not. In his classic Berkeley study regarding entrance into the military and turning points in the lives of young men, Elder (1986) discusses continuity and discontinuity over the life course and how unpromising beginnings (e.g., growing up during the Great Depression) often lead to opportunity and fulfillment rather than to failure. In his cohort study of men born between 1928-1929 (*N*=214), Elder found that military service offered experiences and opportunity for reshaping the life course of many young men who had a life history of disadvantage. Moreover, military service afforded opportunities that could actually "perpetuate or accentuate prior disadvantages and advantages" (Elder, 1986, p. 238) or provide new options or experiences for the men who enlisted or were drafted during that time. Elder questions whether or not military service represents a unique process by which life disadvantage could be transformed into a life of opportunity and advantage, particularly for men who entered the military at a younger age.

This classic study has many implications given the findings elicited from the current study. First, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known

as the GI Bill, offered one full year of schooling for military veterans who entered the service before age 25 and if service was equal to at least 90 days. Similarly, the AmeriCorps program offers an educational award or stipend which varies in amount, depending on the level of service (e.g., part or full time). More than half of emerging adults in the current study indicated that they joined AmeriCorps or Teach for America for the educational stipend, which might indicate a lack of opportunity to otherwise attain a college education- similar to the men in Elder's Berkeley study (Elder, 1986).

Second, quantitative and qualitative findings from Elder's (1986) study indicate that, for some military veterans, the Army "was a place to be for a while, a place for sorting out self" (Elder, 1986, p. 236). The Theories of Possible Selves as well as Emerging Adulthood would suggest the transitional age of 18-30, and programs such as AmeriCorps, may serve as potential vehicles by which young adults figure out who they are and/or who they would like to become. Decisions made during this important life stage may have implications that are long lasting for one's developmental trajectory (Arnett, 2000; Hooker, 1999).

Since possible selves serve an evaluative function (Markus & Nurius, 1987), service in AmeriCorps (just like service in the military), may also provide individuals with the opportunity to evaluate where they have been, where they are, and consider or reconsider where they are going. For some, service in the military was detrimental (e.g., led to mental health problems or death); but for many others, military service resulted in a brighter future for some men (Elder, 1986; Elder et al., 1994). Similarly, approximately

45% of participants in the current study indicated that, among the top three factors they valued most about their AmeriCorps experience was "overcoming challenges." More striking, perhaps, is that 100% of emerging adults in the current study indicated that they value(d) the opportunity for "personal growth" or "professional growth" (learning practical experiences). Although military service fundamentally differs from service in programs such as AmeriCorps, the underlying processes that enable young adults to change or modify their own life trajectories may be similar. Understanding such change presents some challenges in the positive psychology as well as public health sciences. However, identifying the factors and/or mechanisms by which individuals are able to transform diversity (such as perceived experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination) into opportunity remains an important, yet understudied phenomenon.

From a positive psychological standpoint, individuals may be active contributors to their own development, yet they do not necessarily have control over the extraneous or external negative circumstances, such as perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, that may contribute to their overall development. Researchers, health educators, and program professionals should, therefore, work toward bridging theory with research and practice, and enable individuals to recognize or take advantage of opportunities, such as the AmeriCorps program, that may enable individuals to control the factors they can control, such as their own sense of hope and/or social connectedness.

Limitations of the Current Study

Several limitations exist regarding the current study. First, data were only collected at one time point. This cross-sectional study was, therefore, limited by its inability to predict long-term effects of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination on future orientation and the potential contributing factors. It is possible that future orientation may contribute to hope, social connectedness, and/or perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, rather than the other way around. Consequently, researchers should design longitudinal studies that can better disentangle the directionality of associations among variables.

Second, there are also limitations with the measurement methodology. All variables in this study were measured via a quantitative, self report web-based survey. Single rater designs tend to overestimate the magnitude of associations between two variables. Triangulation of data sources (e.g., AmeriCorps team members, supervisor, community members served), would provide a richer perspective on emerging adults' future orientation, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social connectedness than does the sole perspective of the individual completing the survey. A more complete understanding of the constructs under investigation would be provided if a qualitative component were also included in this study. The ability to recruit participants via electronic mail (eMail) was both advantageous and a limitation. Only two hundred sixty eight current and former AmeriCorps participants age 18 years or older were invited to participate because of limitations within the NM Commission's governmental database, which did not have eMail addresses or updated eMail addresses for its alumni. Although

the response rate was quite high, (84.3%), only AmeriCorps members with valid eMail addresses were able to participate.

Third, the current study used a unidimensional measure of racial discrimination (see Landrine et al., 2006). In a review of the literature, some researchers call for more systematical research characterizing the multiple dimensions of racism (e.g., residential segregation, institutional discrimination, gender discrimination/sexism) (see Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000; Sue et al., 2007). Future studies should, therefore, employ more detailed, multidimensional assessments of chronic as well as daily discrimination in an effort to probe their potential unique underlying processes.

Fourth, although the final number of useable surveys (*N*=151) was nearly double of what the a priori power analysis suggested (*N*=77), this minimum number estimation may be low, particularly when testing for interactions. Given that the sum score for perceived racial/ethnic discrimination ranged from 18-83 (out of a possible 18-108 points), and the overall mean was relatively low (*Mean*=28.85, *SD*=10.86), future studies should attempt to include a larger, more heterogeneous sample.

Finally, upon completion of data collection in NM, the researcher was advised that a greater number of completed surveys was desired. Consequently, with the help of the Executive Director of the New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism, the researcher attempted to recruit three other states for this study once data collection in NM was completed. Unfortunately, none of these three states were able to participate within the given timeframe of the study, although all three states were interested.

Participation in this study was not feasible for other states, primarily due to the 2009

Summer Service Campaign that was unveiled three days following data collection in New

Mexico. On June 17, 2009 President Obama launched the Summer Service Campaign,

which called upon all Americans to volunteer during the summer. The campaign began

June 22, 2009 and culminated on September 11, 2009, which is now the National Day of

Service. Commissions in each state were relied upon heavily to assist with this Summer

Service Campaign and were, therefore, unable to participate with recruitment and data

collection efforts at the time in which this study was conducted.

Conclusions and Implications for Future Research

Overall, this study which examined the relationships of perceived racial/ethnic

discrimination, hope, and social connectedness on future orientation among emerging

adults yielded several interesting results. First, two of the three predictor variables

uniquely contributed to the outcome of interest, future orientation. These contributions

were above and beyond the significant contribution of race/ethnicity. Second, social

connectedness demonstrated a resource effect in the relationship between perceived

racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation. In other words, social connectedness

had a significant and positive impact on future orientation even after accounting for the

risk (perceived racial/ethnic discrimination). The partial support for hypothesis 4, that

social connectedness moderated the association between perceived racial/ethnic

discrimination and future orientation highlights the need for future researchers to

examine the underlying processes or mechanisms in regard to social connectedness, which may contribute to emerging adults' future orientation.

Attention should be given to other potential moderating and/or mediating effects in the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and future orientation in subsequent studies. Although the literature on young adolescents and college students suggests that future oriented thinkers tend to be more successful and make healthier choices compared with individuals who are not future oriented (Strathman & Joireman, 2005), much less is known about predictors of future orientation among emerging adults. In the current study, social connectedness made positive and significant contributions to participants' future orientation but hope did not. Increasing positive life experiences, such as those associated with social connectedness, may offset negative life stressors and contribute positively to the future orientation of emerging adults.

Given the uniqueness of the sample in this study, future researchers should continue to examine populations participating in programs such as AmeriCorps. It was beyond the scope of the current study to determine if emerging adults in this sample were more or less future oriented, hopeful, and/or socially connected than emerging adults who do not participate in service programs such as AmeriCorps. A question for future researchers to address is, does exposure to community membership and/or other volunteers in communities or schools in which AmeriCorps members serve contribute to changes in the aforementioned variables? Future studies should continue to investigate if these relationships vary across different racial/ethnic and/or emerging adults groups.

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Empirical findings such as those in the current study may have important implications for

the value of programs that aim to build civic engagement, social connectedness, and

leadership among its members and the communities that are served.

Table 1. Descriptive Summary of Participant Demographics (N=151)

Variable	% (*n*)
Gender	
Male	26.5 (40)
Female	73.5 (111)
Age	
18-29	89.4 (135)
30	10.6 (16)
Race/Ethnicity	
Whites (*n=83*)	
White (Non-Hispanic)	55 (83)
Racial/Ethnic Minorities (*n=68*)	
American Indian/Alaskan Native/ Native American	8.6 (13)
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.3 (5)
Black/African American	3.3 (5)
Hispanic/Latino/Mexican American	29.8 (45)

Table 2. Descriptive Summary of Length and Frequency of AmeriCorps Service (N=151)

Variable	% (*n*)
Length of Service	
Currently Completing 1st Term	19.9 (30)
Completed Part of 1st Term	7.3 (11)
Completed All of 1st Term	30.5 (46)
Completed All of 2 Terms	37.7 (57)
Completed More Than 2 Terms	2.6 (4)
Other	2 (3)
Frequency of Service	
Full Time	82.8 (125)
Part Time	13.2 (20)
Full Time (Summer)	3.3 (5)
Other	.7 (1)

Table 3. Descriptive Summary of Participant Education Level (N=151)

Variable	% (*n*)
Education Obtained	
Some High School	3.3 (5)
High School Graduate/GED Equivalent	4 (6)
Postsecondary Other Than College	3.3 (5)
Some College	17.2 (26)
College Graduate	37.1 (56)
Some Graduate School	27.8 (42)
Graduate Degree	7.3 (11)
Education Intended	
High School Graduate/GED Equivalent	1.3 (2)
Postsecondary Other Than College	1.3 (2)
Some College	2.6 (4)
College Graduate	18.5 (28)
Some Graduate School	1.3 (2)
Graduate Degree	70.2 (106)
Other (Law/Medical/PhD Degree)	4 (7)

Table 4. Zero-Order Correlations among Predictor and Outcome Variables by Race/Ethnicity and Descriptive Statistics for Full Study Sample

	1	2	3	4	M (N=151)	SD (N=151)	α (N=151)
1. Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination	-	-.16	-.13	-.22*	28.85	10.86	.94
2. Hope	.37**	-	.57***	.19+	35.22	6.02	.81
3. Social Connectedness	-.11	.27*	-	.12	95.43	11.96	.90
4. Future Orientation	-.13	.07	.28**	-	44.55	5.45	.73

+ *p*<.10. * *p* <.05.** *p* <.01.*** *p* <.001
Note: Correlation coefficients for Whites (*n*=83) are *above* the diagonal and zero-order correlation coefficients for racial/ethnic minorities (*n*=68) are *below* the diagonal.

Table 5. Descriptive Summary of Predictor and Outcome Variable Means and Standard Deviations by Race/Ethnicity (N=151)

Variable	Scale Range	Range	*M*	*SD*		*M*	*SD*	[a] *t*
			Whites (n = 83)			*Racial/Ethnic Minorities (n = 68)*		
Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination	18-108	18-83	26.02	7.62		32.29	13.07	-3.67***
Hope	12-48	30-48	34.84	3.14		35.68	8.28	-.85
Social Connectedness	20-120	71-120	95.46	12.03		95.38	11.95	.04
Future Orientation	12-60	31-59	45.46	5.13		43.42	5.64	2.32*

[a] Degrees of freedom = 149
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$

Table 6a. Direct Association of Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination on Future Orientation (N=151)

| | Standardized Beta Coefficients | |
	Step 1	Step 2
Race/Ethnicity (0=Whites)	-.19*	-.14+
Perceived Racial/ Ethnic Discrimination		-.17*

Step 2 R^2 .06 [F (2, 148) = 4.91, p<.05]

+ *p* <.10. * *p* <.05.

Table 6b. Direct Association of Hope on Future Orientation (N=151)

| | Standardized Beta Coefficients | |
	Step 1	Step 2
Race/Ethnicity (0=Whites)	-.19*	-.19*
Hope		.14+
Step 2 R^2 .05 [F (2, 148) = 4.19, $p<.10$]		

+ $p <.10$. * $p <.05$.

Table 6c. Direct Association of Social Connectedness on Future Orientation (N=151)

| | Standardized Beta Coefficients | |
	Step 1	Step 2
Race/Ethnicity (0=Whites)	-.19*	-.19*
Social Connectedness[a,b]		.20**
Step 2 R^2 .07 [F (2, 148) = 5.89, p <.01]		

* p <.05. ** p <.01

Table 7a. The Resource Effect of Hope on Future Orientation after Controlling for Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination (N=151)

| | *Standardized Beta Coefficients* | | |
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Race/Ethnicity (0=Whites)	-.14+	-.14+	-.14+
Perceived Ethnic/ Racial Discrimination		-.17*	-.16+
Hope			.12
Step 3 R^2 .08 [F (3,147) = 4.12, n.s.]			

+ p <.10. * p <.05

Table 7b. The Resource Effect of Social Connectedness on Future Orientation after Controlling for Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination (N=151)

| | | *Standardized Beta Coefficients* | |
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Race/Ethnicity (0=Whites)	-.19*	-.14+	-.14+
Perceived Racial/ Ethnic Discrimination		-.17*	-.15+
Social Connectedness			.18*
Step 3 R^2 .09 [F (3,147) = 5.07, p <.01]			

+ p <.10. * p <.05

Table 8a. The Moderating Effect of Hope on Future Orientation (N=151)

| | *Standardized Beta Coefficients* | | | |
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Race/Ethnicity (0=Whites)	-.18*	-.14+	-.14+	
Perceived Ethnic/ Racial Discrimination		-.16+	-.15+	
Hope			.12	
Perceived Ethnic/ Racial Discrimination x Hope				.06
Step 4 R^2 .08 [$F(4, 146) = 3.20$, n.s.]				

$+ p < .10.$ * $p < .05.$

Table 8b. The Moderating Effect of Social Connectedness on Future Orientation (N=151)

| | Standardized Beta Coefficients | | | |
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Race/Ethnicity (0=Whites)	-.19*	-.14+	-.14+	-.14+
Perceived Ethnic/ Racial Discrimination		-.15+	-.15+	-.15+
Social Connectedness			.18*	
Perceived Ethnic/ Racial Discrimination x Social Connectedness				.22**

Step 4 R^2 .13 [F (4, 146) = 5.21, p <.001]

+ p <.10. * p <.05. ** p <.01

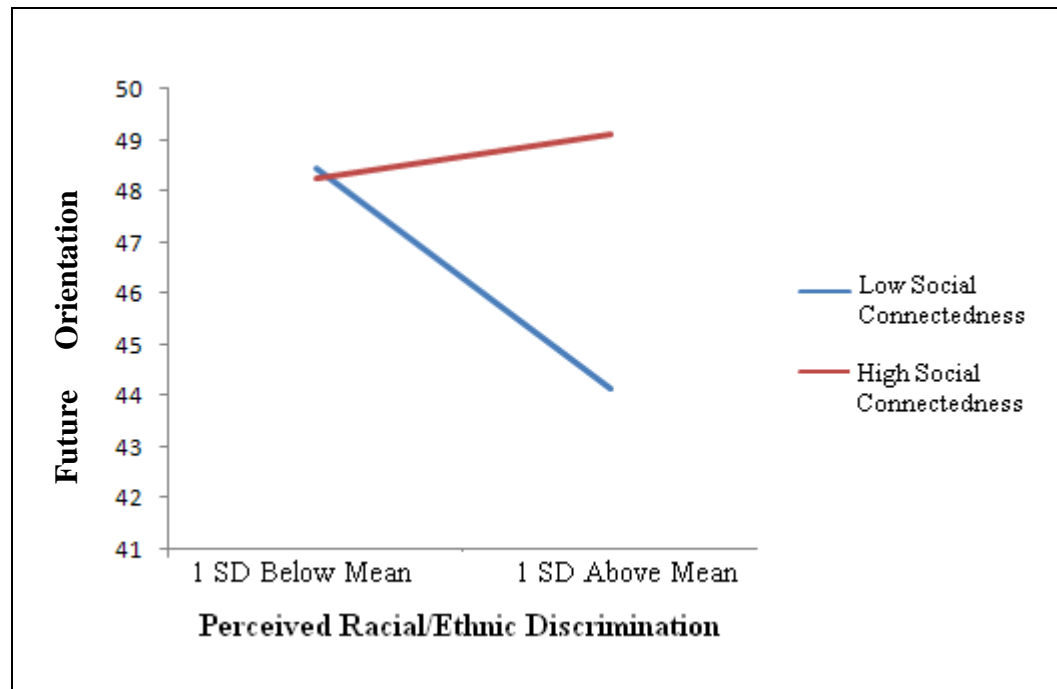*Figure 4*. Examining the perceived racial/ethnic discrimination x social connectedness interaction in relation to future orientation.

NEW MEXICO COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERISM
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The Honorable Lt. Governor
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Chair

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Santa Fe, New Mexico

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Santa Fe, New Mexico

Stephen Patrick Ex-Officio
Gates Foundation

February 10, 2009

Director, Office of Research Support and Compliance
University of Texas-Austin
P.O. Box 7426 Campus Mail
Austin, TX 78713

Dear UT Office of Research Support and Compliance,

It is without reservation that we write this letter of support for Ms. Denise Herrera, a Doctoral Student at the University of Texas at Austin. The New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism is delighted to grant permission for Ms. Herrera to recruit current and former AmeriCorps participants for her research study. Her project, entitled *Exploring the Determinants of Future Orientation among Young Adults,*" is designed to examine the direct and indirect associations of perceived discrimination, hope, and civic engagement to future orientation. The project entails conducting a one-time, anonymous survey via Survey Monkey, which will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes for participants to complete. Data collection for this project will occur during April 2009 - August 2009.

We understand that after administering the survey and analyzing the data, Ms. Herrera will provide a written report of the research findings to her dissertation advisor and respective committee. Ms. Herrera has our permission to use these findings for the purpose of academic research and future publications, as the data will always remain anonymous.

We, Lt. Governor Diane D. Denish and Gregory Webb, do hereby grant permission for Ms. Herrera to disseminate her survey tool to current and former New Mexico AmeriCorps participants who agree to participate. Please contact Gregory Webb at (505) 841-4841 if we can be of further assistance on this important matter.

Once this report is published, the New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism plans to utilize the research findings to evaluate our recruitment process and design.

Respectfully,

Diane D. Denish
Lt. Governor/NM Commission for
Community Volunteerism Chair

Gregory Webb
Executive Director

cc: NM Commission for Community Volunteerism

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Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

May 1, 2009

Dear AmeriCorps Alumni/Members,

Congratulations on your service and dedication to one of the fastest growing national service programs in the U.S.! As you probably know, the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* and the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act* were recently signed into law. The *Serve America Act* is modeled after the NM Blueprint for Civic Engagement and aims to triple the size of the AmeriCorps program over the next eight years.

The University of Texas-Austin is interested in learning more about your experiences/attitudes toward civic engagement, hope, and future orientation. In June 2009, I will be collecting survey data for my doctoral dissertation. **The NM Commission for Community Volunteerism will invite a random sample, via eMail, to** *participate* **in this important study.** This study aims to (further) highlight the need for continued support for programs such as AmeriCorps; national service and volunteering are more critical than ever before.

WHAT: online, anonymous, survey; takes 15-20 minutes to complete
WHY: to gain a better understanding of future orientation among NM AmeriCorps members
WHEN: June 1, 2009 – July 1, 2009
WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME: Participants will have a chance to win $25.
HOW/WHERE WILL I TAKE THE SURVEY:
The following SurveyMonkey link will become active on approximately June 1, 2009.
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=NALs859X6FrIkUqsGOCzKA_3d_3d
You will be able to access/fill out the (voluntary) survey at your own convenience. The survey link will also be available via the NM Commission's website (**http://www.newmexserve.org**).

If you have any questions, please contact Denise Herrera at **Herrera_Denise@Hotmail.com** or **(512) 791-9115.** We truly appreciate your time and participation in this unique opportunity!

Respectfully,

Denise E. Herrera, PhD Candidate   Greg Webb, MPA Executive Director

To: [Email]

From: gregory.webb@state.nm.us

Subject: NM AmeriCorps Research Study: Anonymous Survey

Body: Hello Current and Former AmeriCorps Members,

The NM Commission for Community Volunteerism needs your input to allow us to make decisions impacting the future of AmeriCorps in New Mexico. Your response will help shape programming at the state and national levels. On behalf of the Commission, the University of Texas-Austin is conducting a one-time ANONYMOUS survey, and your response is critical. Our survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Due to your leadership in AmeriCorps in New Mexico, the NM Commission has selected you for this unique opportunity.

Your decision to participate will NOT affect your standing with the NM Commission for Community Volunteerism, AmeriCorps, or the University of Texas-Austin. However, the information you provide is vital to the success of AmeriCorps programming.

By participating in this survey, you will have the chance to win one of 20 ($25 money orders). Winners will be randomly selected. Your chances of winning are greater than1 in 25. More information is listed on the cover letter of the survey.

THE DEADLINE TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY IS TUESDAY JUNE 14, 2009.

Thank you for your participation. If you have questions please feel free to contact me directly at (505) 841-4841.

In service,

Greg Webb
Executive Director
NM Commission for Community Volunteerism

TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY, PLEASE CLICK
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx
To opt out click
http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx

Appendix D: Cover Letter/Consent Form for Internet Research

You are invited to participate in a survey, entitled "Future Orientation among Young Adults." The study is being conducted by Denise E. Herrera in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education of The University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station, Campus Code D3700, Austin, TX 78731, (512) 232-6017, dherrera@mail.utexas.edu. Dr. Alexandra Loukas is the supervising faculty member of this project (512) 232-9388, alexandra.loukas@mail.utexas.edu.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of hope, social connectedness, and perceived discrimination in young adults' future orientation.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an anonymous survey, which will take about 15-20 minutes of your time. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not participate will not affect your current or future standing with AmericCorps or the University of Texas at Austin. Risks associated with this anonymous survey are no greater than everyday life. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. If you wish to withdraw from the study or have any questions, contact the investigator listed above.

There will be no costs for participating, nor will you benefit from participating. Only the Principal Investigator, Denise Herrera, will have access to the data during data collection and analyses. All data will remain anonymous throughout this study and no identifying will appear in the final dataset or any reports that are generated from the results of this study.

If you have any questions or would like to update your email address, please call Denise Herrera at (512) 232-6017 or send an eMail to dherrera@mail.utexas.edu.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact- anonymously, if you wish- the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or eMail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

IRB Approval Number: [2009-02-0057]

If you agree to participate and wish to complete the survey, click "continue."

Thank you for your time and participation ☺.

Appendix E: Survey Items

Demographics

1. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male

2. What is your current age?
   a. 18-29
   b. 30-35
   c. 36-40
   d. 41-45
   e. 46-50
   f. 51-60
   g. >61
   h. Other_____ (please specify in years)

3. How do you describe yourself?
   a. American Indian/Alaskan Native/Native American
   b. Asian/Pacific Islander
   c. Black/African American (NOT Hispanic)
   d. Hispanic/Latino/Mexican American
   e. White/Anglo (NOT Hispanic)
   f. Other _____ (please specify)

4. What is your marital status?
   a. Married
   b. Widowed
   c. Separated
   d. Divorced
   e. Never Married

5. How many children/dependents do you have living in your household?
   a. No dependents
   b. 1 dependent
   c. 2 dependents
   d. 3 dependents
   e. 4 dependents
   f. 5 or more dependents

6. What is the highest education you <u>have completed</u>?
    a. Elementary school or less
    b. Middle school or less
    c. Some high school
    d. High school graduate/GED equivalent
    e. Postsecondary school other than college
    f. Some college
    g. College graduate
    h. Some graduate school
    i. Graduate degree
    j. Other_____ (please specify)

7. What is the highest academic degree <u>you intend to obtain</u>?
    a. Elementary school or less
    b. Middle school or less
    c. Some high school
    d. High school graduate/GED equivalent
    e. Postsecondary school other than college
    f. Some college
    g. College graduate
    h. Some graduate school
    i. Graduate degree
    j. Other_____ (please specify)

8. What is the highest education your mother/maternal guardian completed?
    a. Elementary school or less
    b. Middle school or less
    c. Some high school
    d. High school graduate/GED equivalent
    e. Postsecondary school other than college
    f. Some college
    g. College graduate
    h. Some graduate school
    i. Graduate degree
    j. Other_____ (please specify)

9. What is the highest education your father/paternal guardian completed?
    a. Elementary school or less
    b. Middle school or less
    c. Some high school
    d. High school graduate/GED equivalent
    e. Postsecondary school other than college

f. Some college
g. College graduate
h. Some graduate school
i. Graduate degree
j. Other_____ (please specify)

10. Are you a current or former AmeriCorps* member?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. Did you complete at least one (AmeriCorps) service term in NM?
    a. Yes
    b. No

12. In which states did you complete your AmeriCorps service? *(you may list more than 1 if you served more than 1 service term)*
    a. State 1_____
    b. State 2_____
    c. State 3_____

13. In which year did you begin your FIRST AmeriCorps service term?
    a. 2004
    b. 2005
    c. 2006
    d. 2007
    e. 2008
    f. 2009
    g. Other (please specify)

14. In what year did you serve your LAST (most recent) AmeriCorps service term?
    a. 2004
    b. 2005
    c. 2006
    d. 2007
    e. 2008
    f. 2009
    g. Other (please specify)
    h. ptions listed here (dating back to 2000, just in case)

15. What type of AmeriCorps program are you serving in/did you serve? (you may select more than 1 if you served more than 1 service term)
    a. AmeriCorps Educational Award

b. AmeriCorps Leaders
c. AmeriCorps National
d. AmeriCorps NCCC
e. AmeriCorps State
f. AmeriCorps Tribes
g. AmeriCorps Vista
h. I don't know
i. Other (please specify)_____

16. How long did you serve in your AmeriCorps program?
    a. I am currently completing my 1st term.
    b. I completed PART of my 1st term
    c. I completed ALL of my 1st term
    d. I completed ALL of 2 terms
    e. I completed MORE THAN 2 terms of service
    f. Other (please specify) _____

17. While serving in AmeriCorps did you serve:
    a. Full time
    b. Part time
    c. Full time (summer)
    d. Other (please specify)_____

18. Are you aware of the AmeriCorps Alumni Association?
    a. Yes
    b. No
19. Where are you completing this survey?
    a. Home
    b. School
    c. Work
    d. Library
    e. Other (please specify)

20. In what year were you born? _____

21. Thinking back to the time when you FIRST JOINED AmeriCorps, please select
    your top THREE reasons for joining.
    a. A recent job loss
    b. Educational award
    c. I wanted to travel/experience a new location
    d. I wanted to help others empower themselves

e. It sounded interesting/challenging
f. I wanted to gain skills for a particular job/career
g. I wanted to work with a specific population
h. Other (please specify)

22. What are/were the top THREE factors you value most about your AmeriCorps experiences?
    a. Helping people/communities in need
    b. Educational award/loan forbearance
    c. Professional growth (learning practical experiences)
    d. Personal growth
    e. Overcoming challenges
    f. Fulfilling my civic duty/giving back
    g. Other (please specify)

Hope (Herth Hope Index)
Response options for all 12 items included:
 (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree

Stem: Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following.

23. I have a positive outlook toward life.

24. I have short and/or long range goals.

25. I feel all alone.

26. I can see possibilities in the midst of difficulties.

27. I have a faith that gives me comfort.

28. I feel scared about my future.

29. I can recall happy/joyful times.

30. I have deep inner strength.

31. I am able to give and receive caring/love.

32. I have a sense of direction.

33. I believe that each day has potential.

34. I feel my life has value and worth.

Future Orientation (Consideration of Future Consequences Scale)
Response options for all 12 items included:
(1) Extremely Uncharacteristic (2) Somewhat Characteristic (3) Uncertain (4) Somewhat Characteristic (5) Extremely Characteristic

Stem: For each of the statements below, please indicate whether or not the statement is characteristic of you.

35. I consider how things might be in the future, and try to influence those things with my day to day behavior.

36. Often I engage in a particular behavior in order to achieve outcomes that may not result for years.

37. I only act to satisfy immediate concerns, figuring the future will take care of itself.

38. My behavior is only influenced by the immediate (i.e., a matter of days or weeks) outcomes of my actions.

39. My convenience is a big factor in the decisions I make or the actions I take.

40. I am willing to sacrifice my immediate happiness or well-being in order to achieve future outcomes.

41. I think it is important to take warnings about negative outcomes seriously even if the negative outcome will not occur for many years.

42. I think it is more important to perform a behavior with important distant consequences than a behavior with less-important immediate responses.

43. I generally ignore warnings about possible future problems because I think the problems will be resolved before they reach crisis level.

44. I think that sacrificing now is usually unnecessary since future outcomes can be dealt with at a later time.

45. I only act to satisfy immediate concerns, figuring that I will take care of future problems that may occur at a later date.

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46. Since my day to day work has specific outcomes, it is more important to me than behavior that has distant outcomes.

Social Connectedness (Social Connectedness-Revised Scale)
Response options for all 20 items included:
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Somewhat Disagree (4) Agree (5) Somewhat Agree (6) Strongly Agree

Stem: Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following.

47. I feel distant from people.

48. I don't feel related to most people.

49. I feel like an outsider.

50. I see myself as a loner.

51. I feel disconnected from the world around me.

52. I don't feel I participate with anyone or any group.

53. I feel close to people.

54. Even around people I know, I don't feel that I really belong.

55. I am able to relate to my peers.

56. I catch myself losing a sense of connectedness with society.

57. I am able to connect with other people.

58. I feel understood by the people I know.

59. I see people as friendly and approachable.

60. I fit in well in new situations.

61. I have little sense of togetherness with my peers.

62. My friends feel like family.

63. I find myself actively involved in people's lives.

64. Even among my friends, there is no sense of brother/sisterhood.

65. I am in tune with the world.

66. I feel comfortable in the presence of strangers.

Emerging Adulthood (Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood Survey - IDEA)
Response options for the 5 items ranged from (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree

Stem: This period of my life is a time of:

67. …being unsure if I have reached full adulthood.
68. …exploration.
69. …planning for the future.
70. …seeking a sense of meaning.
71. …deciding on my own beliefs and values.

Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination (General Ethnic Discrimination Scale)
Response options for 17 items included:
(1) Never (2) Once in a while (3) Sometimes (4) A lot (5) Most of the time (6) Almost all of the time

Stem: As you answer the questions below, please think about your experiences over your lifetime. For each question, please choose the option that best captures the things that have happened to you.

72. How often have you been treated unfairly by teachers and professors because of your race/ethnic group?

73. How often have you been treated unfairly by your employers, bosses, and supervisors because of your race/ethnic group?
74. How often have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students, and colleagues because of your race/ethnic group?

75. How often have you been treated unfairly by people in service jobs (by store clerks, waiters, bartenders, bank tellers and others) because of your race/ethnic group?

76. How often have you been treated unfairly by strangers because of your race/ethnic group?

77. How often have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs (by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, case workers, dentists, school counselors, therapists, social workers, and others) because of your race/ethnic group?

78. How often have you been treated unfairly by neighbors because of your race/ethnic group?

79. How often have you been treated unfairly by institutions (schools, universities, law firms, the police, the courts, the Department of Social Services, the Unemployment Office and others) because of your race/ethnic group?

80. How often have you been treated unfairly by people that you thought were your friends because of your race/ethnic group?

81. How often have you been accused of suspected of doing something wrong (such as stealing, cheating, not doing your share of the work, or breaking the law) because of your race/ethnic group?

82. How often have people misunderstood your intentions and motives because of your race/ethnic group?

83. How often did you want to tell someone off for being racist towards you but didn't say anything?

84. How often have you been really angry about something racist that was done to you?

85. How often have you been forced to take drastic steps (such as filing a grievance, filing a lawsuit, quitting your job, moving away, and other actions) to deal with some racist thing that was done to you?

86. How often have you been called a racist name?

87. How often have you gotten into an argument or a fight about something racist that was done to you or done to another member of your race/ethnic group?

88. How often have you been made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit, or threatened with harm because of your race/ethnic group?

89. How *different* would your life be now if you HAD NOT BEEN treated in a racist or unfair way? (NOTE: different response options)
    a. The same as it is now
    b. A little different
    c. Different in a few ways
    d. Different in a lot of ways
    e. Different in most ways
    f. Totally different

<center>-Pop up/link to enter draw appeared here-</center>

Appendix F: Information for the Draw

Thank you for completing the survey!

As you know, your participation in this study was voluntary and your decision to participate or not will not affect your standing with AmeriCorps* or with the University of Texas-Austin. Your survey responses will be kept *completely separate* from the contact information you provide below.

If you would like to be entered into the draw for a chance to win $25, please provide contact information. Winners will be notified within 60 days of completion of this survey.

Name: _____

eMail Address: _____

Phone: _____

Mailing Address:_____

_____

How would you like to be notified if you are a winner?

Phone ☐

eMail ☐

Just mail the money order to the above address ☐

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