

Exploring Relationships Between Ethnic-Racial Identity & Adolescent Friendships

INTRODUCTION

- Understanding how students' **ethnic-racial identities (ERI)** impact their social and friend choices could inform efforts to reduce racial bias, improve equity, and promote resilience (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Byng, 1998).
- Previous research linked **centrality** (importance of ERI to overall self-image) with avoidance attitudes for BIPOC and White students (Wantchekon et al., 2022, Satterthwaite-Freiman et al., 2023), but **affirmation** (feeling good about one's ERI) with increased outgroup warmth (Whitehead et al., 2009).

AIM & HYPOTHESES

- Explore relations between ERI affirmation and centrality to in-group friendships among diverse high school students in the Midwest
- In both BIPOC and White students, higher centrality will be positively associated with *more* in-group friendships, while higher affirmation will be positively associated with *fewer* in-group friendships.

METHODS

SAMPLE & DATA COLLECTION

- 226 9th grade students in a Midwest school reported on their ERI in class during 10 consecutive school days and their friendships in May 2022.
- Most students in our sample were BIPOC (57.1%) vs. White (42.9%)
- Self-reported gender: 50.0% male, 42.0% female, and 8.0% non-binary or other gender identity.

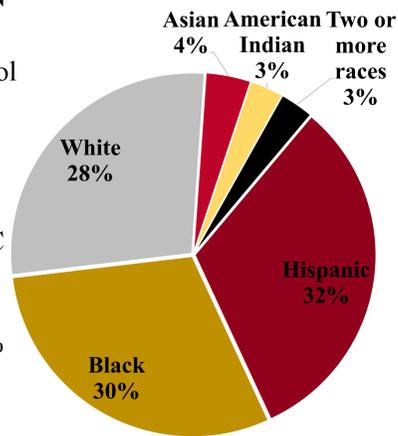


Figure 1. School Racial Demographics

MEASURES

Ethnic-Racial Identity Centrality and Affirmation

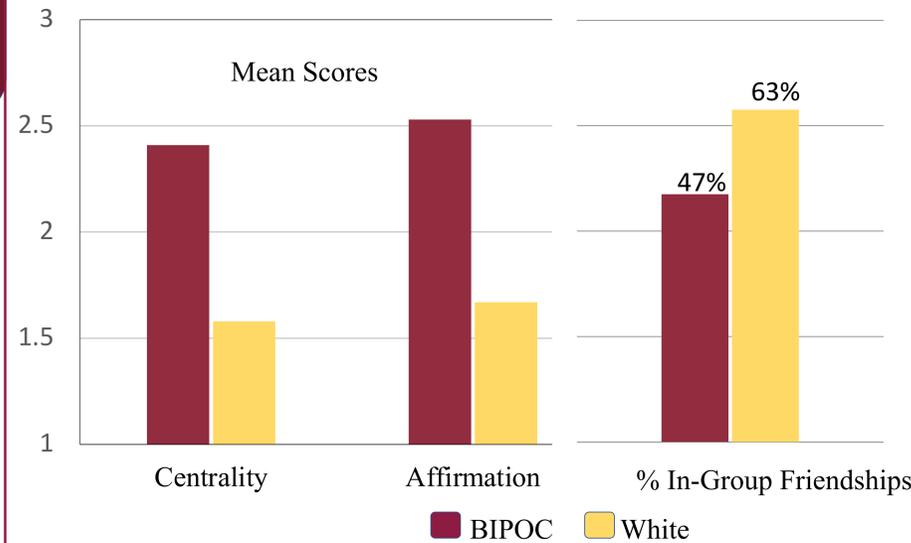
- We measured ERI *centrality* & *affirmation* using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity, created by Sellers et al., (1997) and adapted into a format for daily use by Wang (2021). Adolescents rated three statements about each on a three-point scale. These scores were averaged across days.
 - Sample statement regarding centrality: (*Feel that your race/ethnicity is an important part of your self-image*)
 - Sample statement regarding affirmation: (*Feel proud to be your race/ethnicity*)

In-Group Friendships

- Students reported their own and their five closest friends' race/ethnicity. Percentage of in-group friendship was calculated (e.g., 3 same-ethnicity friends = 60%).

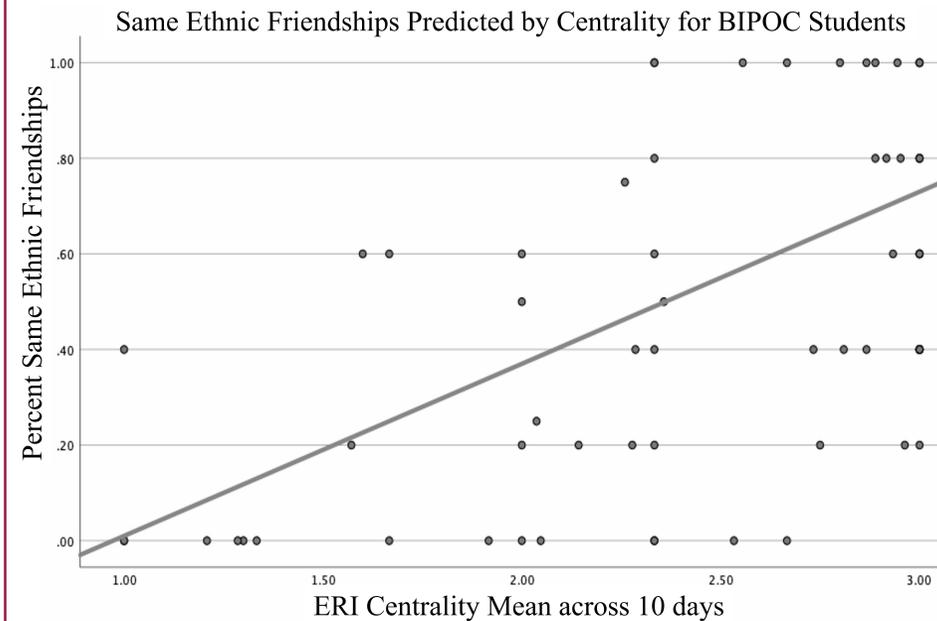
RESULTS

Figure 2. Overall Mean Values for White and BIPOC Students



Linear regression analyses were used to test the association between participants' mean centrality and affirmation scores and their % of in-group friendships.

Figure 3. Model Predicted In-Group Friendships for BIPOC students



BIPOC students whose ethnic-racial identity is more central to their self-image also have more friends who share that identity.



Institute of Child Development
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover®

Michiah VanSyckel, Eren Schnell, Katherine Gilman and Sarah Gillespie

Faculty Mentor: Gail M. Ferguson, Ph.D.
Lab: Culture and Family Life Lab (University of Minnesota)

Table 1. Regression Models Predicting Percent In-Group Friendships

	BIPOC Student Model		White Student Model	
F test	F(2, 126) = [7.28 - 19.61] p < 0.001 for all 5 models		F(2, 94) = [1.27 - 4.18] P > 0.05 for 4 of 5 models	
R ²	[0.14 - 0.26]		[0.03 - 0.08]	
	B	Standard Error	B	Standard Error
Intercept	0.058***	0.200	0.483***	0.097
Affirmation	-0.174	0.166	0.132	0.085
Centrality	0.359*	0.145	-0.048	0.076

Note. * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 ***p<0.001. B are unstandardized regression coefficients pooled across 5 imputations.

DISCUSSION

- As hypothesized, BIPOC students whose ethnicity/race are central parts of their identity are more likely to have more in-group friendships. Centrality was not a predictor for White students
- Affirmation did not predict friendships for BIPOC or White students
- In-group contact among BIPOC students may be linked to a well-rounded ERI development. Findings support efforts to foster these in-group relationships and speaks to the importance of BIPOC student groups.

LIMITATIONS

- Results may differ between BIPOC groups
- Cannot infer causality: BIPOC students with high centrality could select in-group friends, and/or having many in-group friends could increase centrality.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Explore the impact of these in-group friendships on BIPOC students' mental health, school belonging, and community engagement (Wang, 2021)
- Explore other predictors of in-group friendships for White students. School racial demographics (Fig. 1) and % in group (Fig 2) suggest that race is a selection factor for White students' friendships.

REFERENCES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- We are deeply grateful to the students and teachers who participated in Project UNITE during a turbulent academic year in the global pandemic. The project was supported by the American Psychological Foundation Visionary Grant and a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship (PI: Sarah Gillespie).

